

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of strengthening and expanding education opportunity for Ohio families in House Bill 96.

We are writing to you as a family deeply committed to providing the best possible education for our children. Like many Ohio families, we have faced challenges in finding the right educational environment to help our kids thrive. Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) have given us hope—but we believe there is more that can and should be done to make school choice a true option for all families.

Let us share a bit of our story. Our son is Deaf and we live in the Newark City School District. Newark declined enrollment in Liberty Middle School, but wanted to send him to Columbus for service. He only needs an American Sign Language interpreter for access to education and really wanted to be a part of the community he lives in. He was declined even after multiple meetings. It is not fair or equitable. We chose to enroll him in a private school and unfortunately our family has struggled paying out of pocket for his access (ASL interpreter).

ESAs offer families like ours the flexibility to tailor our children's education to their unique learning styles and needs. They allow us to invest in tutoring, curriculum, or schools that better serve our child's potential. However, for many families across Ohio, these benefits remain out of reach due to funding inequities and restrictive financial eligibility requirements.

We strongly believe the following changes are necessary:

1. **ESAs must be funded at 100% of the EdChoice scholarship level.** All students, regardless of the path they take, deserve **equal access** to educational resources. Anything less creates an unfair, two-tiered system.
2. **Means testing should be eliminated or significantly flattened.** Every family should have the right to choose what is best for their children without being penalized based on income. Education is not a luxury—it's a fundamental right, and that right shouldn't be limited by outdated financial barriers.

We ask you to support legislation that reflects these values. School choice should not just be a phrase; it should be a reality for every Ohio family, regardless of zip code or income.

Thank you for your service to our state and for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,  
Kathryn Harker  
Newark, Ohio  
[Kathy.harker@yahoo.com](mailto:Kathy.harker@yahoo.com)

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on supporting education opportunity for Ohio families in House Bill 96. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.