

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Also thank you for the work you have already done in expanding school choice in Ohio.

I am here to advocate for three things related to expanding educational choice in Ohio and make Ohio more attractive for raising a family compared to other states.

- Establish an Educational Savings Account program.
- Fund it equal to the EdChoice voucher program.
- Flatten the means testing curve for both vouchers and future ESAs.

Ohio needs to establish an educational savings account program for students to attend non-chartered schools that is equal in value to the current EdChoice voucher. If you believe in Education Choice for Ohio families, why is the door closed if choosing a non-chartered school.

Over the last 10 years, our personal property tax expense has increased by 38%. Of that increase during the same period, our local school district's take of those property taxes increased by 42%.

When we moved into our home in 2009, we did so fully expecting our children to attend Olentangy Local Schools. Unfortunately, our two boys were falling through the cracks and our family had to make a major course correction to improve their education outcome. Isn't that a parent's role and ultimately doesn't Ohio benefit when children's education outcomes are improved? I'm sure this comes as no surprise, but our decision has come with significant financial sacrifice.

Today 75.31% of our property taxes go to the Local Schools and an additional 3.62% goes to the Joint Vocational School. So, a total of nearly 79% of our property tax bill goes to a public education system that does not meet the needs of our boys. Our property tax bill is over \$14,000 which means we are paying more than \$11,000 each year to support our local school district. And that's just one household in Delaware County. As a side note, thank you to the committee for looking into the excess reserves school districts are holding.

Often in Ohio, tuition cost to send your student to a chartered school are similar to the cost to send them to a non-chartered school. This is what healthy competition does. For example, you can look up the rates for Worthington Christian and Columbus Classical Academy, two schools located within a few miles of one another, and see the costs to attend are comparable. I have heard story after story of students leaving non-chartered schools for chartered schools as a result of the expansion of the EdChoice voucher program. Non-charter schools are fully educating the children, not giving them a partial education, so why would they only get 3/4 of the funding as opposed to the other choice school?

Ohio needs to create an ESA program. One that allows parents to choose the best school for their family without having a finger on the scale pushing families in one direction or another based on

financial incentives to factor into the equation which one is more cost effective to the family because it is covered by the current voucher program or covered at a larger amount.

When determining eligibility for aid to attend a school the means testing curve needs to be flattened to allow more families to afford different school options.

The current means testing is too steep of a curve and is discouraging Ohio parents from working rather than encouraging economic growth in Ohio. More income does not mean more disposable income. If you own a home, you have more expenses than if you rent. Discretionary income can quickly vanish as life events present curve balls to a family's budget. Such as the roof needs replaced, or a vehicle breaks down. We unexpectedly had to replace our HVAC last year which was bill of \$24,000. If you have two working parents, then you have daycare costs or after/before school costs in addition to summer camp costs. My cousins are paying nearly \$2,000 a month for Infant day care and summer camps in Ohio easily run \$300 a week.

To illustrate this let's look at two examples with salary information taken from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Smith Family

Two working parents with two kids (infant and 1st grader).

Family Income: \$157,000

Mike and Anna met at work, married and both continue to work at a Radio and Television Broadcasting Station.

- Mike is a Human Resource Specialist making \$78,000 per year.
- Anna is a Network and Computer Systems Administrator making \$79,000 per year.
- Total income is \$157,000 which is above 500% of the FPL for a family of four.

Childcare costs: \$33,000

- Day care per year (2,000 x 12 months) = \$24,000
- Summer Camps (300 x 12 week of summer) = \$3,600
- Before and aftercare during school year (\$600 x 9 months) = \$5,400

Income after deducting just childcare costs: \$124,000

(Note: This does not include any other deduction of costs related to both parents working such as need for additional vehicle, gasoline, clothing expense, etc.)

Thomas Family

One working parent with two kids (infant and 1st grader).

Family Income: \$132,000

Chris and Julie met as Business majors at The Ohio State University, and both worked at different corporations prior to their second child being born.

- Chris is an Advertising and Promotions Manager making \$132,000.
- Julie is not employed.
- Total income falls below 450% FPL

Childcare costs: \$0

Income after deducting childcare costs: \$132,000

The Thomas family qualifies for the full EdChoice voucher amount, but Smith family does not.

Is it right that the Smith family pay more for their student's education because both parents are employed?

While these are not real families the data is real and similar real-life scenarios can be found across the state.

The means testing curve needs to be flattened to 650% of the FPL. So that more Ohio families are not penalized when it comes to educational options by improving their total family income.

In conclusion all Ohio students need to be treated fairly. First non-charter schools need to be included in Ohio's school choice options with an ESA program. Second, we need to increase the ESA amount to match the EdChoice voucher amount. And finally, the means testing curve needs to be flattened because more income is not a direct correlation to disposable income. Life happens and families must take care of a variety of often unexpected expenses.

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.

Salary Data source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics <https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/industry/516100>