

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

My name is Lanie Montgomery, and I reside in eastern Delaware County with my husband and five children. Like most families, we place a high value on education. After exploring various educational opportunities, from public school to home education, our family decided to send our youngest children to Columbus Classical Academy (CCA). Our daughters are in their second year at CCA and are in the sixth grade.

Our family chose CCA because it not only provides a broad liberal arts education grounded in the Western tradition, but it also reinforces the virtues we are trying to instill in our children. Since our children have been attending CCA, their math and reading skills have improved, as well as their overall study habits. Additionally, the conversations we have with our sixth graders are intelligent and thought-provoking. For example, one evening they were discussing the philosophies of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. My husband and I did not even know who he was until we were in college. Our experience with CCA gives us the confidence that our children will not only acquire the skills they need to contribute to society, but they are also developing the characteristics that make them thoughtful, charitable citizens.

Through exploring several educational options, I have come to appreciate school choice. A solution that works for one family may not work for another. However, while we enjoy educational freedom, funding for students differs widely, depending on where they attend. In our case, since CCA is a non-chartered, non-public (NCNP) school, my children are not eligible for State support.

I was encouraged to see that the Ohio House included funding for NCNP schools in its version of the budget by establishing Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs). I am asking the Senate to maintain that language in its version of the budget. I would also appreciate it if the Senate would fund ESAs at 100% of the EdChoice Scholarships to ensure that all students get the same support across the State.

Families that send their children to NCNP schools make significant sacrifices. If it were not for the generous support of private scholarships, many could not afford tuition. Even with such scholarships, families still struggle to afford to send their children to the school of their choice. Other families would like to send their children to CCA but cannot because of tuition costs. ESAs would eliminate this additional financial hardship placed on families and would expand educational opportunities to more students throughout the State.

I urge you to recognize the value and positive outcomes that NCNP schools like CCA provide to students. Maintaining the House's inclusion of ESAs and funding them equitably at 100% of the EdChoice Scholarship amount would ensure that all Ohio students, regardless of their chosen educational path, receive the support necessary to receive a quality education.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide written testimony on supporting education opportunity for Ohio families in House Bill 96, through the establishment of ESAs for students attending NCNP schools.

Lanie Montgomery