

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 opportunities for Ohio families in House Bill 96.

My name is LaShonna Kirk, and I am a parent of 1 child in Heath, Licking Co., Ohio. Our family has directly experienced both the challenges and opportunities within Ohio's education system. Like many parents, we simply want what is best for our children—a learning environment where they can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Unfortunately, for too many families, those choices are limited based on income, geography, or other barriers.

When we discovered the Education Savings Account (ESA) option, it was a game-changer for our family. ESAs provide families like ours the flexibility to customize our children's education—whether that's accessing tutoring, curriculum, therapies, or private school tuition. This freedom allows us to meet our children's unique learning needs in ways that a one-size-fits-all approach never could.

That said, there are important improvements needed. First, it is critical that ESAs are funded at 100% of the EdChoice scholarships so that all students are treated equally. No child's potential should be discounted because of the educational pathway their family chooses. In addition, eliminating or flattening the financial means testing will open the door for more families—working families who may not qualify under current guidelines but still struggle to afford quality options.

Education should not be a privilege tied to ZIP codes or income brackets. It should be a right that all Ohio families can access equally. I respectfully urge you to fully fund ESAs and remove income-based restrictions so that all families can make the best educational choices for their children.

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

Sincerely,
LaShonna Kirk
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