

Opponent Testimony on Ohio House Bill 96

Submitted to the Ohio House Education Committee

Carolyn Pinney, Parent and Lakewood, Ohio Resident

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the committee:

My name is Carolyn Pinney. I'm not an educator. I'm not a lobbyist. I'm just a parent—a parent of children in Ohio's public schools. And I am here because House Bill 96 is not just a budget bill. It is a moral crossroads.

This bill continues to divert taxpayer dollars from our public schools and hand them to private institutions through the EdChoice voucher program. And that's being sold as "school choice." But let's be honest—**it's not school choice if the school gets to choose the student.**

Vouchers don't come with rights. They don't guarantee admission. Private schools can—and often do—deny access based on religion, disability, academic record, or just because a child doesn't "fit." At **Saint Paschal Baylon School**, their EdChoice Voucher FAQ document makes this crystal clear: 7th and 8th grade students are only accepted if they're coming from another Catholic school. So unless you're already in the club, the door is shut. That's not choice. That's exclusion—with a price tag.

And about that price tag: schools like **Lakewood Catholic Academy** don't just charge tuition—they charge different rates based on your religion. The highest tuition is for families who are not part of a Catholic parish. Let me repeat that: our public dollars are now subsidizing private schools that charge families more if they're not Catholic.

This is not a neutral policy. This is a pipeline of public money flowing into private, religious, and exclusive institutions. Many of these schools already have multimillion-dollar endowments and entire advancement departments dedicated to fundraising. They are not underfunded—they are overfunded. And they are thriving while our public schools are drowning.

Meanwhile, we haven't even finished funding the **Fair School Funding Plan**—the one plan we have that would finally give every Ohio kid, no matter their zip code, a fair shot. Instead of finishing that job, this legislature is writing checks to wealthy families who don't need help—because these vouchers have no income cap.

Let's call this what it is: **a reverse Robin Hood scheme**. We are taking from the middle class and the poor and handing it to the wealthy under the pretense of "freedom." But freedom without access is not freedom. Freedom without fairness is not freedom. And freedom without public investment is just a privilege in disguise.

And if that weren't enough, there's another bill floating through this chamber that would require the **Ten Commandments to be posted in every public school classroom**. So let me get this straight: you're defunding public schools to fund private religious schools—and then trying to turn public schools into religious spaces, too?

That's not education. That's indoctrination. That's not policy. That's a violation of public trust.

I want to raise my children in a state that values truth over ideology, fairness over favoritism, and education over indoctrination. I want to live in an Ohio that invests in all its children—not just the ones who go to the “right” schools or belong to the “right” religion.

You still have the chance to do the right thing.

Reject House Bill 96.

Finish funding the Fair School Funding Plan.

Protect Ohio's public schools—and the future they promise to every single child.

Thank you.