

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 68, which would establish the Non-chartered Educational Savings Account Program in Ohio.

My name is Robyn Houze, and I reside in the Olentangy Local School District.

After several disappointing parent teacher conferences and paying for significant outside tutoring, we realized that our local public school district, even with its coveted Ohio 5 Star Rating was failing our two boys. We felt forced to find a new school to provide the learning that they deserved. After much research, the right solution for our family was a nonchartered school. It would have been easier to choose a chartered nonpublic school that offered the financial advantage of the Ohio Ed Choice voucher to cover tuition costs. But a chartered school doesn't offer a significantly different academic program from the public school due to following many of the same state regulations and academic philosophies. Our choice in school has resulted in financial sacrifices but we are now watching our children learning leaps and bounds academically ahead of their public counterparts. We are seeing them thrive instead of falling through the cracks. We know that the change has altered their life paths to ones of potential for great success rather than struggle and disappointment.

Across Ohio, public schools are failing many of our students. Even with spending significant money on software apps to teach students in addition to teacher salaries they are still failing to produce high schoolers who can do math in their head or read past the middle school level. Ohio schools are failing to produce the next generation of US Military: Soldiers, Airman, Sailors, Marines and Guardians who have the required mental and physical toughness to defend this great nation. Public schools are lowering the bar for our Ohio kids with group-based student-led classrooms where teachers and students are co-equals. Ohio kids deserve much better, and Ohio needs educational change if the next generation is to be capable of civic virtue to advance the quality of life in our state.

Private schools like the one our boys attend offer an education rooted in knowledge, truth and virtue that provides a foundation for independent, responsible, happy lives. It is a school that builds grit, confidence, and fortitude in its scholars. One that instills the joy of learning to equip them with a lifetime of knowledge.

Giving parents more affordable options to find the right fit for their students is an immediate step to improving education in Ohio. I urge you to consider removing the means testing from this bill. As written, it is creating income discrimination against hard working Ohio families. Families financial picture cannot be told by one's "adjusted gross income" number. Higher gross income is not a direct correlation to disposable income. Dual income families often have more household expenses and higher costs for afterschool care and summer camps. Universal school choice only exists if everyone is granted the full monetary amount.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 68. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.