

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 Kevin Larson. My wife, Jessica, and I and our five children currently reside in Westerville. I'm here today to acknowledge that while school choice was expanded in the last state operating budget cycle through the EdChoice Scholarship Program, there are still a significant number of Ohio families who have been left out.

Our three oldest children currently attend Columbus Classical Academy. My wife and I chose this option because we were interested in pursuing a classical education for our children. The school provides an education that not only imparts knowledge but also helps the students grow in virtue.

My wife and I have witnessed our children's growth in knowledge and virtue both at home and at the school during morning assembly, annual concerts, plays, and other school events. One example I would like to highlight is student recitation that happens during morning assembly. It brings us great joy as parents to watch each of our children confidently reciting from memory various poems, documents, or speeches in front of the entire school body to include teachers, staff, and parents. Some memorable recitations include when our oldest son recited the opening and closing portions of the Declaration of Independence, when our daughter recited Longfellow's eight-stanza poem, The Village Blacksmith, and when our younger son recited My Shadow by Robert Louis Stevenson. In addition to the challenge of simply memorizing the selections, our children have grown in the virtue of fortitude through the practice of public recitation. This is just one example of the type of education our children are receiving at their school.

While we appreciate the education our children are receiving, sending them to a non-chartered school comes at a cost. To be honest, the financial cost puts a substantial strain on our family finances to the point where we have had to consider other options, especially as our younger children reach school age. The establishment of a non-chartered educational savings account program would help make this type of educational opportunity more affordable not only for my family but for many others.

I urge the Committee to favorably report Senate Bill 68 to make school choice truly universal in the Buckeye State. Knowing that the state operating budget cycle is the avenue for advancing bold, transformational public policy, I urge the legislature to bring the Non-chartered Education Savings Account Program to fruition during this decisive and impactful process. It would make a world of difference for a significant number of Ohio families.

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