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Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Driehaus and members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Jessica Lynch, and I am the parent of Anthony Adams, a 4th grader at Calumet Christian School. We live in the Franklinton/Hilltop area, and his home school is Starling. For grades 1 through 3, he attended a nearby charter school that, though better than Starling, was still struggling academically. Anthony wasn't being challenged and would breeze through any homework he brought home. An unfortunate truth about schools in general is that they have to cater to the majority, and the majority of children in these schools come from families who are unable to support them academically for one reason or another. The teachers have to slow their pace and lessen the homework load to prevent their entire class from failing that grade. Additionally, behavioral standards also cater to the majority and teachers have to be okay with some disagreeable behavior to prevent their entire class from being in detention every day. God blessed my husband with a job that allows him to be home early and me with one that has very flexible hours. Combine that with a high value for education and maturity, and we were able to offer Anthony the support he needed to excel.

I was able to go to Calumet as a child, and I loved it. I always wanted to be able to send my children there, but we were at a place where we just couldn't afford it, especially when Atticus, my two year old, was born and I dropped from being a full-time employee to a contract based employee. At Calumet, the teachers and staff have a high value for the character development of their students as well as their academic growth. They start healthy academic and spiritual training at young ages and, combined with a stable home environment, I was able to achieve valedictorian in public high school while resisting the road blocks of drug use and teenage pregnancy that prevent so many of our youth from even reaching graduation, let alone flourishing.

When I first heard about the EdChoice program, I thought it was too good to be true. I knew I

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had to jump on that opportunity, and it was a good thing I did because that window of open enrollment at Calumet was drawing to a close, and for that I am very grateful. My friend and I were able to secure the final two spots in the 4th grade for our boys, but both of them had to attend summer school to prepare them for the academic differences they were about to experience. Anthony was familiar with summer school, but the two hours a day he spent preparing for Calumet were harder than the 6 hours he spent in previous summer schools.

Anthony hasn't had it easy at Calumet, and he struggles to keep up academically. I often wish that we had been able to start him there earlier and allow him to get caught up sooner. His behavior has also been a problem because he had gotten used to the standards in place at his old school. Despite this deficit in his academic and behavioral education Anthony has shown improvement over the past year. This is especially true considering how much his teacher and principal are trying to come beside him and support him. If it weren't for the current EdChoice voucher, Anthony would still be at the local charter school, breezing through the homework but falling behind on the statewide tests, unable to learn the value of sacrifice and hard work.

Anthony continues to face challenges at Calumet for two reasons. The first one is that Anthony has ADHD, a mental health diagnosis with significant consequences in a school setting. Additionally, I am NOT Anthony's mother I am his aunt. This poses unique challenges as he struggles to understand why he does not get to go home to his mother after school and why she, herself, has been so long in the process of getting her GED. I admit, I have been tempted by the thought of how much easier it would be for Anthony to return to the charter school or even to Starling. But then I remember I don't want easy for my kids I want beneficial, I want challenging. I know Anthony will never be at the top of his class, but if he grows up to be a responsible graduate who values hard work and accepts the challenges thrown his way then I will have done my job as a parent and Calumet will have done their job as a school.

Please, continue your support of the Ohio EdChoice Scholarship, and the other scholarship

programs that are benefiting thousands of families across Ohio. These programs are helping students across Ohio, just like Anthony, get the best, quality education they can, in an environment that is best suited for their unique needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the Ohio EdChoice scholarship. I will be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.