

Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony regarding H.B. 110.

My name is Walter Blanks Jr, and I am a proud product of the Edchoice Scholarship. People often say, “education is the great equalizer”. I think those people are on to something, but I would like to change it a little by saying “A HIGH-quality education is the great equalizer.”

A high-quality education has the ability to lift a family out of the cycle of poverty in one generation. I’ve seen it in my own life as well as the lives of other students who have used this scholarship.

School choice has been the difference maker my life. I grew up in tough neighborhoods in Columbus and often saw myself in a different school every year. I was surrounded by poverty, crime, and low expectations. School choice was my way out of my community when nothing else would work. Teachers told me I would never graduate from college and I would end up like my biological father that was out of the picture at the time. I was driven to prove everyone wrong and actually make something of myself, but I couldn’t do that in the failing school I was assigned to.

I graduated high school and college and broke free of the curses that plagued my family for generations. After graduating college, I moved out to DC where I now have the opportunity to fight for students to have the same opportunity I did. My education was my way out and many children are still trapped in failing schools.

I ask that you all really consider how this program changes the lives of children. No child should be trapped in a failing school because of how much money they make or where they live.

I have stood before this committee multiple times and unfortunately, I am on the road fighting for children to have educational opportunities across the country. I will continue to speak up for this issue.

Thank you, Chair Brenner and the members of the committee, for allowing me to share my story.