

Good afternoon Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Jacob Bowling and I would like to tell you why school choice is so important to my family. My wife, Jennifer, and I have been blessed with four amazing children - all special in their own way. We have decided to send all of our children through private school since they began going to school. This was not an easy decision for our family, but we felt it was the right one. Our oldest child struggled with anxiety and shyness and began becoming overwhelmed with the idea of beginning Kindergarten at our local public school. We found a smaller private school where she felt more comfortable and began her academic career flourishing. Since then, we have made many sacrifices to make private school a reality for our whole family. This meant we began to budget with the idea of all our children being able to attend the same school as their siblings. This would mean that a pretty significant portion of our income would be designated to tuition payments, which was a decision we were glad to make. Like a lot of important decisions, it came at a cost. This decision and sacrifice meant that we were not going to be able to do other things like save for our children's college. As we prepare to send another child off to college, I can see how tuition vouchers would have helped us be able to fund 529 plans to help our children continue their education to become leaders in their fields and in their communities. Speaking of community, since most, if not all, of our discretionary spending went towards tuition, we have been unable to support our community as we would like. Many local shops and restaurants have decided to call our community home and we would like to be able to help support those local businesses. Many times, we have not been able to support our local businesses because we felt the investment into our children's education was always more important. If my family were afforded the same opportunity that other families in Ohio received by having the opportunity for school choice with a voucher to offset tuition, we would be better members of our community and have our children's education be limitless. We don't regret our decision, but we feel like the state has set up a system that doesn't treat all families fairly. If a school building is not meeting standards or a family's income is low then the state can see the benefit in giving that student options. Why those families? Surely if the state can recognize that there might be a better option for those families, then there might be a better option for all families? It seems that at every turn we are told not to put our child into a box and let them grow and learn in the way that works best for them - well I guess that means as long as it is at the school that coincides with their address. This has never been about our public school district, it is about our children. We hope that our public schools do amazing. It benefits us all to have amazing schools that produce outstanding students that become outstanding citizens. It helps provide employees for local businesses and raises our property value. A good school district should benefit all of us, but all of those benefits mean nothing to us as parents when our children feel lost and left behind because our school district isn't what is best for them. Our children have flourished at the private schools they have attended. Making honor rolls, participating in sports, participating in the arts, taking college credit plus classes, involved in community service, chosen for Honors Societies, and became leaders at their school all while becoming college ready. So I want all families to be able to make the choice for their child's education based on their child, not based on where they live. I would like to see all families be given the same resources to make decisions based on each child and not what the state decides to give to some

families and not others. Ohio, the time to fund students and not systems is now. Thank you and God bless our country and state.