

Chairman Jones, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Conference Committee for House Bill 9, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Fergus Donnelly and I am in 5th grade at Roxboro Elementary School in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District.

I am here today to tell you about how immature the ideas for EdChoice are. We all need public schools that are high quality, and don't put teachers' jobs at risk because Ohio decided to take \$7,000,000 away from our public schools for private and religious schools (this year alone).

This is violating the Federal Constitution. On the Constitution it says state is separated from the church.

Without a high quality public education, a lot of kids will go without education that teaches them other important stuff like music, arts, language, and more.

If you want to give private and religious schools vouchers, fine. But use state funds, not our public school budget.

Thank you.

Chairman Jones, ranking member Robinson, and members of the conference committee for house bill nine, thank you for allowing me to come forward and testify today.

My name is Cassandra Sisson, I am 15 years old and currently in my tenth grade year at Cleveland Heights High School, of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights city school district. I have attended schools in the district my entire life, and plan to continue in the district until I graduate from high school in the year two-thousand twenty two. Growing up in the district, I have been introduced to countless opportunities and programs intended to help me enter the workforce as a productive and responsible citizen. I currently participate in the Heights High Symphony, the stage crew, the science Olympiad team, and I started my first year on the girls' soccer team earlier this year. These extracurricular activities are central to my education, and in many ways, these programs have helped me find some of the happiest parts of my life. They have served as a strong support system through the highs and lows of my school life. I have met the most amazing people that I would have not had the courage to get to know if not for the amazing cooperative environment at Heights. In many ways I have found a second family, that I know will always be there no matter how far apart we will be in the future. The school district has helped me experience a taste of the many possibilities my life holds, and without these experiences I would still be a scared little freshman with no clue of what I wanted to pursue in life. I will *always* be grateful for these opportunities. But I fear that the students that come after me will not have the same chances that I have had.

In my community, there are a large number of private and religious schools, and because of this the Heights district is hugely affected by the use of EdChoice vouchers. This year alone, my district has lost *seven million dollars*. Seven million dollars that could have gone towards extra security, more counselors, more teachers, so that I would have to sit in an English class of twenty nine people and still be expected to learn the material to its full extent. Our district is suffering, my education is affected, along with the education of *seventeen hundred* [1500] students at the high school alone. I should not have to sit by and watch as my sister loses her art class, her model United Nations program, her lacrosse team. Because she doesn't deserve that. She, like every other public school student in the state of Ohio, deserves a high quality public education, paid for by public funds. EdChoice vouchers are taking away the funds intended for my education, for her education, and for the education of hundreds of thousands of *public* school students in the state of Ohio. It is because of this, I ask you to give the students of Ohio public schools the education they deserve, and fund all EdChoice vouchers directly from *state* funds.

Thank you for your time.

Chairman Jones, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Conference Committee for House Bill 9, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Damari Loretz. I'm 18 years old, and a senior at Cleveland Heights High School in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District.

Although I excel in all subjects, my favorite is English. However, often times I need extra help with organization.

At Heights I'm involved in many programs, including National Honor Society, and the Minority Student Achievement Network, just to name a couple. These experiences mean the world to me because they allow me to showcase my academic intelligence, while also allowing me to make a difference in my school and the community.

Our community has a number of private and religious schools. AS a result, my school district is negatively affected by Ed Choice vouchers. These vouchers took \$7 million from my school district this year alone. The number is expected to rise in the years to come, which is deeply concerning. I believe students in private schools should have the best education possible, but not at the expense of mine. 94% of the students receiving these vouchers have never even stepped foot in my district. These vouchers take away money intended for my education. These vouchers take away my teachers and academic resources. These vouchers are in no way just nor fair to anyone who attends, works for, or pays taxes going towards our education system. Ed Choice vouchers should be funded directly from the state, instead of depriving students in the public education system of resources they need to achieve academic success.

It's been said time and time again that our district's public school system is failing. As a public school student, I strongly disagree. However, if that were the case, how would the solution to fixing a failing system ever be taking away our funding?

Chairman Jones, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Conference Committee for House Bill 9, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Carolina Imka and I am a senior at Cleveland Heights High School. I've gone to school in the District for 13 years. For 13 years I've learned math and science and social studies from great teachers. Teachers whose jobs are now at risk because our district is losing millions of dollars to pay for Ed Choice Vouchers. Special money factored into our budget to pay other students' education. Why is that okay? Ed Choice is by any and all means stifling the 5,000 plus students in the CH-UH school district. It's all very complicated and strune with politics, but if you strip that all away, there is one simple question that stands... Why do they deserve it more? The simple answer is they don't.

I am a product of public schooling and I have an overall 4.0 Grade Point Average. I currently sit at 36th in my class. I've represented this District proudly for 2 years in the First Ring Leadership Academy. I've worked along side 2 Superintendents during my high school career... Performed in 8 musicals on the high school stage... National Honors Society... AP classes... the list could go on. But I'm not here to prove to you that I'm an impressive student... I'm here for the students who aren't there yet. They won't get there if the District's budget continues to be drained. By passing this bill, you are agreeing that those students shouldn't get a chance. Public school students are often already at a disadvantage so they absolutely deserve to get the same education as everyone else. We deserve a chance.

Good morning chairman Jones and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you.

My name is Xavier Routh, I'm in 11th grade at Cleveland Heights High School. Up until 9th grade, I went to private school. I choose to come to public school for multiple reasons, and am very glad I made that choice. From an academic perspective, Cleveland Heights High School gives me access to a quality education. Through dozens of different AP programs and many memorable and exceptional teachers, so far I have received an education I am proud of. Cleveland Heights High School has a quality instrumental music program that I participate in. It has extracurricular opportunities such as the golf team or the tennis team that I am glad I am a part of. I went to Heights because I knew I could get as good of an education there as at any other school.

The idea that Cleveland Heights is a failing school is factually incorrect. If Cleveland Heights is a failing school, how did I score a 5 on the AP US history test? If Cleveland Heights is a failing school, how did I learn enough math to score highly on my PSAT? Taking away funding from my school, based on this incorrect idea, will only hurt my education and my classmates' education.

The most important thing about Heights to me, as a kid coming from 8 years of private education, is the parallels to the real world. Public school is real life. Not everything is perfect, not every teacher is great. At public school, I'm not sheltered or pampered, I get to be exposed to how things really are. I think there is great value to this culture. By bringing different groups of kids —of different races, economic backgrounds, religions, beliefs, etc. into the same building and the same environment kids can better understand life after high school.

Students in public education are equally important as those in private education. It is vital to our community that my school receives the funding it deserves, and that those funds aren't taken away based on a misconception of a failing school.

Thank you.

Good morning Chairman Jones, and Committee members. My name is Ethan Quill. I currently am in 11th grade at Cleveland Heights High School. I participate in varsity hockey, varsity baseball and varsity golf which I am the captain of. I also participate in National Honor Society, Tri-M Music Society, and an after school jazz combo. I also maintain a 4.0 GPA. I have come here today not to saway your politics of these education bills bout out of concern of the future for public education. I grew up going to all public schools and I am forever greatfull for my edperience. I've grown up around people from all kinds of racial, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds which is a life lesson that can not be taught in a classroom. Yet it in my opinion, this is the most education thing my school can offer.

My mother went to prestigious religious schools but chose to send my older sister and I to a public school. This is due to her experience of getting out of her bubble at being at all girls schools. She found herself in a culture shock in college. She wasn't at the same educational level as public school kids. She also found it very difficult to talk to people outside of her white female social group. Not because she didn't want to, but because she didn't know how. She never learned. And my ability to conect with anybody is something I can proudly and easily take for granted at my high school.

Along with my education, by going to a school of people from all backgrounds, my public high school gives students opportunities to take multiple AP classes. I currently am enrolled in 4 of those AP classes.

Along with exelerated academic choices available at Cleveland Heights we are also very well know for our arts department. In the 2-1/2 years I've been at Cleveland Heights I have seen students go on and do amazing things in the arts. Most going to highly compaititive schools persuing careers in the arts. Cleveland Orchestra members often times send their children to Cleveland Heights: currently 2 of my classmates' parents are members of one of the best orchestras in the world.

If these vouchers continue the way they are going, it is likely that we will have to cut parts of our arts department, restricting a creative outlet and prize of our city.

It also doesn't go without saying that our students go on to do amazing things. Going to colleges such as Dartmouth, Vanderbilt, Case Western Reserve University, Harvard Law and many more. Many local business owners are Cleveland Heights graduates.

Some notable alumni include: Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, a former U.S. Ambassador of Malta, 3 Superbowl winners in the last 3 years, Shelton Gibson, Jason Kelce and Travis Kelce being the most recent. Donald Glaser a Noble Prize winning physicist. Bert L. Wolstein a local philanthropist. Lastly Peter B. Lewis the CEO of Progressive.

If Cleveland Heights was a failing school then why is it that we produce highly educated and respected alumni? I don't believe that the state tests are a good method to use when discussing funding. My high school doesn't score well but that is not an accurate reflection of my school.

Public school is just as good as any private school. We are not perfect but that is no reason to take \$7 million out of our budget to pay for private and religious education.