

School Choice – A Student’s Perspective

Testimony on:

Education Without Limits: Exploring the Benefits of School Choice

for a hearing before the

House Committee on Education and Workforce

Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education

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Testimony by:

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the U.S. House Committee on Education and Workforce. My name is Walter Blanks Jr., I am a spokesperson for the American Federation for Children, and I am here today because school choice changed my life.

I grew up in Ohio, where my local public school was failing me. Every day, I walked into a classroom where I felt unseen, unheard, and unchallenged. I struggled academically, and my parents knew that if something didn't change, I would never reach my full potential. But like so many families, we could not afford private school tuition on our own.

My parents had reached their breaking point when I found myself sitting in the principal's office after being attacked by a group of other students. Instead of addressing the immediate issue, the principal turned to my mother and said, "If you give us five years, we'll have the middle school and high school turned around, and Walter will be able to thrive." Without hesitation, my mother looked him in the eye and said, "In five years, Walter will either be in jail or in a body bag—and we don't have time for either." She took my hand, we left, and from that moment on, I never stepped foot in that school again.

Thankfully, my parents applied for, and I received a school choice scholarship through the state of Ohio's Edchoice Scholarship Program, which gave me the opportunity to attend a private school that completely transformed my life. For the first time, I was in an environment that nurtured my potential. I went from a student who struggled to one who thrived. That opportunity set me on a path that led me here today, advocating for students who are just like I was.

My journey has taken me places I never could have imagined—including the White House, where I met President Trump. I'll never forget looking him in the eye and telling him that I

wanted his job someday. That moment wasn't just about ambition—it was about recognizing that when students are given the right opportunities, there are no limits to what they can achieve. My life is living proof.

Unfortunately, too many students across the country are still waiting for their chance. That's why I also support the Educational Choice for Children Act (ECCA). The ECCA would give students in every state access to scholarships, opening doors to schools that best meet their needs. For some, it's the difference between struggling and succeeding. For others, it's quite literally a lifesaver. I appreciate the Members of the Committee who have supported this important bill and urge every representative to support this life-changing opportunity.

Every child deserves the same opportunity I had—the chance to succeed, to dream big, and to write their own future. I have had great success because of my school choice journey and firmly believe more students should have that chance. Thank you.