

Some private school constituents refuse to take school vouchers.

An August 29, 2025, [Ohio Capital Journal article](#) features two private school parents—one that rejects private school vouchers and one that uses them. The one who rejects vouchers stated concern for the impact on public schools. Some folks that reject vouchers for religious private schools do so because it violates their religious values. Some of the most ardent supporters of the public common school pay full tuition to private religious schools because they recognize the public good created by the common system. Some voucher recipients just want a government handout.

To use or not use private school vouchers — how two Ohio families made that decision

By: [Megan Henry](#)-August 29, 20255:00 am

Ohio's nearly universal school voucher program has a plethora of supporters and opponents — causing a divide among how families pay for private schools.

The Ohio Capital Journal talked to two parents who send their children to private school — one who uses school vouchers and the other who refuses to use vouchers.

Micah Berman does not use a school choice voucher to send his fifth grade student to the [Columbus Jewish Day School](#) in New Albany.

"I think it's critical for us to have a strong public school system and it certainly seems to me that universal vouchers are undermining that," he said.

The Bermans sent their son to kindergarten during the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when most schools were doing remote or hybrid learning. But the Columbus Jewish Day School was going back to in-person learning and they liked the school's commitment to Jewish values.

"We were trying to find the right option for each kid and part of the decision making was affected by COVID," Berman said.

The Bermans enrolled their son in Columbus Jewish Day School back in 2020 and were eligible for the Educational Choice Scholarship because Columbus City Schools was their home district, but they were not interested.

"We were very clear with (the Columbus Jewish Day School) from the beginning that ... we were not going to take the voucher," he said. "We're not going to be part of taking those resources away from the Columbus district."

Ohio lawmakers expanded the Education Choice-Expansion eligibility to 450% of the poverty line through the 2023 state budget — creating near-universal school vouchers. K-8 students can receive a \$6,166 scholarship and high schoolers can receive a \$8,408 scholarship in state funding under the expansion.

Tuition at the Jewish Day School is [\\$19,184 a year](#). The Ohio Capital Journal sent questions to the Jewish Day School, but they did not respond.

The Jewish Day School has about 60 students and Berman said the school originally mandated families getting financial aid to apply for the vouchers after the EdChoice-Expansion in 2023.

"We were definitely troubled by the idea of either encouraging or mandating parents to take the voucher," Berman said.

Berman and another parent at the school sent a letter to the Jewish Day School school board expressing their concerns over the policy and how it does not match up with the school's Jewish values.

"We chose to send our children to CJDS in large part because of its commitment to *tikkun olam*, the Jewish obligation to build a better and more equitable world," they wrote in the letter, dated Oct. 3, 2023.

The parents outlined two main concerns with the policy.

"The Board's policy puts pressure on CJDS families to betray their own values by requiring them to seek out vouchers that they may be morally and ethically opposed to in order to obtain any financial aid; and sends a message to the parents, the public, and other private and public schools that CJDS endorses and is willing to benefit from the EdChoice program, even though the program runs counter to core Jewish values and basic tenants of social justice."

The school rescinded their policy and no longer requires families to apply for the vouchers, Berman said.

"I think parents, understandably, if there's money that's going to reduce the cost of private education, there's very strong incentives to take that," Berman said. "But as you've seen, most of the people getting the vouchers are families who are already sending their kids to private schools."

Ohio nonpublic school enrollment increased about 2% from fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2024 and public school enrollment declined slightly — dropping about 6,000 students from the 2022-23 school year to the 2023-24 school year, according to [data from the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce](#).

Part of the reason the Bermans moved to Columbus was to pay taxes to Columbus City Schools and their third grader goes to an elementary school in Columbus City Schools.

"I think you have to kind of be blinding yourself to the broader reality to accept that vouchers don't have an impact on public schools," Berman said.

[Ohio spent nearly a billion dollars](#) on private school scholarship programs for the 2024 fiscal year, the first full year with near-universal school vouchers. Well more than a third of that money (\$406.7 million) was from Education Choice Expansion scholarships.

"There's no way you can take that much money and transfer it to private schools without having an impact on public schools," Berman said.

Nearly 90% of Ohio students attend public schools, according to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce.

"Private schools are just not going to be able to serve the needs of most Ohio kids," Berman said. "There are all sorts of language needs and learning needs and health needs that the public school system can address that the private schools can't."

A Franklin County judge recently [ruled that Ohio's private school voucher system is unconstitutional](#), but Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost plans on [appealing the decision](#).

"(Faith) was an added bonus"

Sarahann Tiner uses school vouchers to send two of her children — a third and first grader — to Toledo Christian Schools. Her oldest son, a fifth grader, goes to Hope Learning Academy, a Toledo charter school, but all three of her children previously attended Emmanuel Christian School.

"The only way that we're able to do that was with the school vouchers," she said.

Her oldest son first went to kindergarten at Whittier Elementary School in the Toledo Public Schools, but the Tiners started exploring Emmanuel Christian after hearing about it from a co-worker.

"I had never even had a private school on my radar because I don't have to pay anything out of pocket (with public school)," she said. "... I was never opposed to it because I grew up in church."

Emmanuel Christian's curriculum ended up being the deciding factor for the Tiners.

"We ultimately sent our kids to a Christian school because we liked the curriculum and it had nothing to do with (faith)," Tiner said. "That was an added bonus. ... it wasn't even anything to do with the fact that it's a faith-based school."

The Tiners qualified for the traditional EdChoice scholarships before the expansion. They refuse to send their three boys to Toledo Public Schools and the EdChoice vouchers are the only way they can send their children to private school, she said.

"I will either quit my job and homeschool — and that will be a nightmare, but I would do it — or my husband's just going to be working a lot of over time (if it weren't for the vouchers)," Tiner said.

Tuition at Toledo Christian Schools [costs \\$8,650 a year](#) and K-8 students can receive a \$6,166 scholarship through EdChoice, so the Tiners pay some tuition.

"If you're on the higher end of the income bracket, you're not really benefiting anyway," she said. "People aren't quitting their jobs ... so that they could get more money from a voucher that they didn't get beforehand anyway. ... It literally only helped families maybe take \$1,000 or \$2,000 off of their tuition. That's it. It's not like EdChoice is paying full tuition."

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