

School Choice

My name is Cassandra Juarez and I am one of those students who has benefited from a community of concerned citizens providing me with options in my pursuit of the highest quality education possible.

The many students who are in the Horizon program have a choice: they may attend a low performing neighborhood school, or attend a private school, which provides a superior education. So, I ask you, what is choice? Choice is the power, right, or possibility to choose. Having the option to choose gives you power, freewill and freedom.

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "we have inalienable rights, of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The right to choose a quality education is in keeping with these most basic guaranteed rights. Everyone should have the right to choose his or her future. Whether a student wants to be a doctor, lawyer, or a teacher; that should be their choice. School choice gives those who cannot afford to move to a neighborhood with better schools a chance to improve their education. It helps students find a good private school with the option of a great future for those who wish to be successful in life. I formally attended a neighborhood school. But my parents made the choice to give me a better future by enrolling me in the Horizon Program. If they had not put me in this program, I would not be standing here today.

Today there are many children who have no hope for a better future due to the educationally disadvantaged programs in their school. It is a fact that students truly do care about their education and most importantly their future. And those students should get the opportunity to better their lives by choosing what school they wish to attend.

Some opponents believe that school choice eliminates some students because of learning differences. Many parents do not sign up their children for the program because of these beliefs. But I know that my Horizon scholarship does accept students with learning differences. I know because I am one of those students. I am dyslexic. And I have been in the Horizon program for five years. There are a lot of other students who have learning differences in the Horizon Program and we all are choosing to better our futures.

So, here I stand before you today, 8 months away from graduation and the beginning of my college career. I have a bright future ahead of me. My future is bright because I have had the opportunity to learn more than I ever would have I attended my neighborhood school. I have been prepared for college and beyond, by a loving family, loving teachers, and by people who don't even know who I am. But what does the future hold for future graduates? Will they have the same opportunity I have had? Will they have the same bright future I have today? Their future is in your hands.