Kasich's decision comes less than a week after the Ohio Parole Board recommended that Williams-Bolar be denied a pardon or any clemency. Ohio Gov. John Kasich on Wednesday reduced the charges of Kelley Williams-Bolar to misdemeanors, giving the Akron mother of two a chance to move forward without the blemish of a felony on her record.

Kasich's decision comes less than a week after the Ohio Parole Board recommended that Williams-Bolar be denied a pardon or any clemency.

Williams-Bolar was convicted by a jury in January for tampering with records to send her children to suburban schools when the family did not live in the Copley-Fairlawn School District. She spent nine days in jail and was required to complete 80 hours of community service.

"Right now Kelley is ecstatic," said David Singleton, a lawyer with the Ohio Justice Institute who represented Williams-Bolar.

"Now that this is not hanging over her head, she can resume her studies at the University of Akron and continue working toward becoming a teacher," Singleton told BlackAmericaWeb.com.

Kasich said the reduction of the charges is not a pass, but a second chance.

"When I first heard about this situation, it seemed to me that the penalty was excessive for the offense. In addition, the penalty could exclude her from certain economic opportunities for the rest of her life," Kasich said in a written statement. "So, today I've reduced those felony convictions to what I think are the more appropriate, first degree misdemeanors. No one should interpret this as a pass — it's a second chance."

The case of Williams-Bolar has attracted national attention from civil rights leaders and

education advocates.

Tuesday, Color of Change, an Internet-based civil rights group, started asking its members to flood the governor's office with phone calls voicing their concerns. Change.org, another advocacy group, was pushing its petition drive on behalf of Williams-Bolar. More than 180,000 people across the country had signed as of Tuesday night.

"Gov. Kasich's decision today to reduce Ms. Williams-Bolar's offenses from felonies to misdemeanors is proof that he heard the ColorOfChange.org community loud and clear," said Rashad Robinson, executive director of the organization. "It has long been obvious that the punishment this single mother faced far outweighed whatever missteps she made in the quest to keep her children safe."

Boyce Watkins, a Syracuse University professor and civil rights advocate who has maintained contact with Williams-Bolar, also applauded the governor.

"Gov. Kasich is a Tea Partying Republican, but he did the right thing," Watkins told BlackAmericaWeb.com. "He connected to humanity. He saw her as a mother trying to get her children into a good school."

Watkins said the case of Williams-Bolar shines a light on a broader issue in America – inequity in public education.

"Why should she have to break the law," he asked "for something that should be a fundamental right?"

Prior to the governor's decision, Watkins said, Williams-Bolar was being haranged in her local community. "They have been torturing this woman, because this issue has focused national attention on Akron," he said.

Summit County Ohio Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh has led in presenting the case against Williams-Bolar.

She released the following statement :

"I greatly appreciate the time and care the jury took when considering this case. After hearing all of the evidence, the jury upheld the laws set forth by the Ohio legislature that state that tampering with government documents is a felony offense. And I was pleased that the Ohio Parole Board also carefully considered all of the facts on this case, including information that was discovered between the conclusion of Ms. Williams-Bolar's trial and her clemency hearing.

"Governor Kasich is not required to uphold a jury's verdict, nor must he follow the Parole Board's recommendation to reject clemency, even when that recommendation is unanimous."

Prior to her conviction in January, Williams-Bolar had worked .....