



Board of Education Office

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Date: January 13, 2020

To: Senator Steve Huffman, Ohio Senate

Representative Jena Powell, Ohio House of Representatives

Cc: Mrs. Charlotte McGuire, Ohio Board of Education

From: Kay Altenburger, Treasurer

Milton-Union Exempted Village School District

RE: EdChoice Voucher Program

I am writing today on behalf of the Milton-Union Exempted Village School District Board of Education out of extreme concern over the expanded list of Ohio schools who have been designated as EdChoice schools. Ohio's ballooning EdChoice voucher program will funnel much needed tax dollars away from public schools to private schools and undermine the work of public schools for our children. I have attached a resolution passed unanimously by the Milton-Union Board of Education on Monday, January 6, 2020 opposing EdChoice vouchers. I urge you to thoughtfully consider the implications of this legislation on providing "a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the State" as guaranteed in Ohio's Constitution and work toward possible solutions.

While we appreciate the goal of providing the best possible education to every student in Ohio, we believe the EdChoice program is flawed and will produce negative consequences for our school district:

- Flat state foundation funding, combined with increased availability of vouchers leads to financial insecurity for Milton-Union Schools. Because the district is charged with the task of providing a free and appropriate education to every student in its boundaries, we are responsible for providing costly services for our growing population of students with intense needs. In this current fiscal year, we have already increased our budget by \$125,000 to meet these needs and provide students with a pathway to success.
- At our board meetings, we are hearing more and more from several concerned citizens about Milton-Union High and Elementary Schools designated as EdChoice schools for the 2020-21

District Administration

Brad Ritchey, Ph.D. | Superintendent

Kay Altenburger | Treasurer

Laurie Grube | Director of Curriculum and Student Services

Mick Nealeigh | Director of Technology

Dan Baisden | Operations Manager

Board of Education

Lori Ginn Parsons | President

Jessica Brumbaugh | Vice President

Ben Dehus

Chris Long

Doug Thompson

Milton-Union Exempted Village Schools

school year. They fear that students are receiving a sub-standard education which translates into a lack of trust for the school district.

- This negative impact on state funding will lead to the district asking voters for an increase in local property taxes and will result in an increased tax burden on local property owners. Currently, the percentage of students in our district who are classified as economically disadvantaged is almost 37%. It is widely accepted that a student's socioeconomic status has a significant impact on standardized test scores, which unfairly punishes students and school districts with the greatest need.

We strongly encourage the Ohio legislature to reverse the expansion of the EdChoice program, and pass legislation for reform by enacting the following provisions:

- The State should directly fund new vouchers by providing a state appropriation to cover the full cost of any new vouchers awarded during the current biennium.
- It only takes a grade of D or F in one report card component, (overall building grade, value added, graduation rate, K-3 literacy), for a building to become EdChoice eligible. The current report card is flawed and under scrutiny for possible reforms. Buildings should have two or more components with D or F grades before qualifying as EdChoice eligible, particularly as long as the current flawed report card is in place.
- Currently, if a student qualifies for both EdChoice voucher programs (income-based and building performance-based), the default program is the building performance-based version. This means the payments are deducted from the school district's state aid. The default program for students who qualify for both should be the income-based voucher program funded by the State.
- As clarified in HB166, high school students no longer have to be enrolled in their public school district to qualify for an EdChoice voucher. This change takes money from districts that never received state aid for those students. It would be better for public schools if the language in HB 166 was reversed and a parameter is added to require high school students to attend a public school in the year prior to applying for an EdChoice voucher, as currently required for grades K-8.

We respectfully request that you consider the negative implications of the expansion of EdChoice vouchers and work to fix the identified problems.

Thank you for your consideration. Feel free to contact me with questions. My email address is AltenburgerK@muschools.com

Sincerely,



Kay Altenburger, Treasurer

The Board of Education of the Milton-Union Exempted Village School District, County of Miami, Ohio met in organizational/regular session at 6:30 p.m. on the 6th day of January, 2020, at 7610 Milton Potsdam Rd., West Milton, OH, with the following members present: Mrs. Brumbaugh, Mr. Dehus, Mrs. Ginn Parsons, Mrs. Stasiak Mr. Thompson

Mrs. Brumbaugh made a motion to adopt the following resolution:

MILTON-UNION EXEMPTED VILLAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-018

Resolution Opposing the State of Ohio EdChoice Scholarship (Voucher) Program

WHEREAS, the Ohio legislature has recently made amendments which greatly increase the number and availability of vouchers for students to attend private/parochial schools at public tax expense, and

WHEREAS, such vouchers will be available to numerous families and students who have never attended the Milton-Union Exempted Village School District or any other public schools and for whom state funding has never been provided to Milton-Union or any other public schools, and

WHEREAS, Milton-Union's state funding could be unjustly decreased by the amount of the vouchers provided to such families and students who have not and will not attend public schools and others who transfer to private/parochial schools, and

WHEREAS, private/parochial schools accepting students with public tax vouchers would not be required to accept all students but would be permitted to retain their selective admission policies without enforcement of other laws applicable to public schools, and

WHEREAS, private/parochial school students are not subject to the testing standards required of public school students so that the actual performance of private/parochial schools subsidized with public tax dollars will not be known, relative to equivalent public school evaluation standards, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Milton-Union Exempted Village School District Board of Education that this Board reaffirms its commitment to free accessible public schools adequately and equitably funded to guarantee a comparable education for ALL children and therefore opposes any funding programs, vouchers or otherwise, that have the effect of diverting public tax dollars away from public schools.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Treasurer is hereby authorized to forward copies of this Resolution to local representatives of the Ohio General Assembly and State Board of Education.

Mrs. Stasiak seconded the motion, and the roll being called upon the question of adoption of the resolution, the vote resulted as follows:

YAY: Mr. Dehus, Mrs. Stasiak, Mr. Thompson, Mrs. Brumbaugh, Mrs. Ginn Parsons

NAY: None

ADOPTED this 6th day of January, 2020


Treasurer