



CLERMONT NORTHEASTERN SCHOOLS

2792 US Highway 50 • Batavia, OH 45103
(513) 625-1211 • Fax: (513) 625-6080 • cneschools.org

February 13, 2020

I am writing today to encourage the committee to adopt the meaningful voucher reforms as passed by the Ohio House.

The House plan represents a fundamental shift in our voucher system, from a failing schools approach to an income-based approach.

The failing schools model has failed Ohio. If we double down on it, Ohio will erratically lurch from year to year with an ever-evolving and ever-growing list of schools that have been deemed failures.

The income-based approach is much healthier because it focuses on what really matters, which is opportunity for young people. It's important to remember that is why we are here.

The House plan also represents a fundamental shift in how these vouchers would be funded as well.

As you know, Ohio currently uses the deduct method to fund performance-based EdChoice vouchers, which is fundamentally flawed. By inappropriately deducting aid from local districts, it diverts locally-voted tax dollars to pay for vouchers.

A better approach is the one contained in the House plan, which is for the state to fund these vouchers. In my view, if the state is going to issue vouchers, the state should pay for them, not use some sort of shell game to prop them up with locally-voted property taxes.

By the way, imagine being a superintendent, school board member or a teacher and trying to explain this shell game to people in your community – especially when you are trying to pass a levy.

My final point really gets to the very heart of why we're here today, and that's Ohio's school accountability system. Let me be clear. No one here today...no one in our classrooms...is opposed accountability. I embrace it because I believe in the work we're doing. What we and educators have a problem with is our broken system.

Our students and teachers are spending too much time on state and federally mandated testing. These are not diagnostic tests designed to help inform and improve the education we are providing to students. These are high-pressure, high-stakes tests that have taken on a life of their own.

I believe we can do better if all of us – legislators, educators, and parents truly collaborate and develop a school accountability system that works for all Ohio schools, but most importantly, for Ohio students.

Thank you,

Michael Brandt
Superintendent

Treasurer Fax: (513) 625-6080	Transportation (513) 732-3957	Food Service (513) 625-1544	Preschool 463 South Broadway Owensville, OH 45160 (513) 625-1211	Elementary School 5347 Hutchinson Road Batavia, OH 45103 (513) 625-1211 Fax: (513) 625-2710	Middle School 2792 US Highway 50 Batavia, OH 45103 (513) 625-1211 Fax: (513) 625-3325	High School 5327 Hutchinson Road Batavia, OH 45103 (513) 625-1211 Fax: (513) 625-3328
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Ohio Senate Members:

Louis Blessing, District 8/Hamilton County, Education Committee member
Cecil Thomas, District 9/Hamilton County
Steve Wilson, District 7/Hamilton County
Terry Johnson, District 14/Clermont County
Peggy Lehner, Chair – Education Committee

Ohio House of Representatives Members:

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Bill Seitz, District 30/Hamilton County
Catherine Ingram, District 32/Hamilton, Primary and Secondary Education Committee member
John Becker, District 65/Clermont County
Doug Green, District 66/Clermont County
Don Jones, District 95/Harrison County, Primary and Secondary Education Committee chair

House Bill 9 Conference Committee:

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Phillip Robinson, District 6
Senator Matt Huffman, District 12
Senator Bob Peterson, District 17
Senator Teresa Fedor, District 11