

Interested Party Written Testimony
on HB9
League of Women Voters
Of the Canton Area
February 17, 2020

Chairman and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for accepting this written testimony on HB9 from an interested party, the League of Women Voters of the Canton Area (LWVCA), in Stark County.

We, Dr. Carol Canavan and Dr. Amy Shriver Dreussi, as Co-Presidents of the LWVCA, write on behalf of our membership, most of whom have children, grandchildren, and even great grandchildren attending one or more of the eighteen public school districts that comprise the Stark County system of public schools. These school districts encompass rural, suburban, and city schools.

The majority of the private schools in our area are faith-based schools. While we honor a parent's desire to enroll their child(ren) in a private schools, public funds should not be used to support such enrollment. In North Carolina, the state spent \$12 million on vouchers to private schools in its first year of operation. \$11million of that expenditure went to faith-based schools. Ohio could find itself in a similar situation. This transfer of public funds to private faith-based schools undermines separation of church and state and negates the state's charge to provide for a system of common schools. These are principles of our democracy the League staunchly supports.

In Ohio, vouchers to private schools are largely based on the misuse of test scores. Such test scores were never designed to shame, blame, and defame our public schools, especially as private schools are not held to the same metrics to determine their quality. Indeed, private schools are not held accountable to the taxpayers, nor are they monitored for academic progress or fiscal prudence.

The following series of questions would seem to be pertinent in any discussion of publicly-funded vouchers to private schools. Evidence, accountability, and making

comparisons from a level playing field will ensure a solution that works for all parties.

1. Where is the evidence that shows private schools are superior to public schools in closing the achievement gaps between minorities and whites, East Indians, and Asians; between the poor and the middle class; between the poor and the affluent?
2. Where is the evidence that once money leaves the public school system and goes to private schools, there is accountability to the taxpayers for fiscal prudence and academic results?
3. Where is the evidence that public-funded vouchers to private schools improve opportunities for struggling students?
4. Where is the evidence that vouchers to public schools provide students a pathway out of poverty?
5. Where is the evidence that private schools are being held to the same assessment of quality standards as public schools? Level the playing field with common, fair, and credible assessment of quality standards. Otherwise, the comparison is of apples to oranges. Our students deserve better.
6. Where is the evidence that students in private schools are being taught a common body of knowledge? Our mobile society demands uniformity of content taught so that students are not at a disadvantage if they should move to another school within or outside the state.
7. Where is the evidence that vouchers to private schools expand educational opportunities for low-income students?
8. Where is the evidence that vouchers to private schools lead to less discrimination and inequity in education?
9. Where is the evidence that vouchers to private schools are a solution for families who want better educational opportunities?

Voucher programs, in all their many forms, are not ipso facto a solution for the perceived failings of public schools. What is needed are policies that address the inequities in our public educational system. Lacking accountability, evidence, and common quality standards, vouchers to private schools could become an expensive experiment our students and our country can ill afford.

E Pluribus Unum; "out of many, one. Our public schools are our last, best hope for a "United" States.