

Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Manchester, Ranking Minority Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments to you today on House Bill 9. My name is Patrick Schymanski. I am currently the Legislative Liaison for Elida Local Schools, a public school that borders the western edge of Lima Ohio.

To me, the conversation needs to move away for choice since it already exists. The issue is really funding and where this funding will come from. I should point out that currently, Elida Local Schools grade card avoids being part of the Ed Choice Voucher program. We are just one failing grade away. Also, I am a Catholic who graduated from a small Catholic school in Michigan.

We all know ultimately that public school funding comes from our taxpayers. But now we are suggesting that taxpayer dollars come from local property taxpayers. That would be a severe financial hardship for my school. Our district does include close to 20% of the city of Lima, including some of the subsidized housing. We are a smaller school district comprised of 2,500 students. We have 48% of our families classified as economic disadvantaged. Around 54% of our elementary school students are on free or reduced lunch, about 52% of our middle school students also get free or reduced lunch and in high, less students apply so we are about 46%. Currently we spend \$9,771 per student, well under the state and national average of \$12,400. Approximately 40% of our funding, per the ODE District Profile Report is foundation funding from the state. Our ability to raise local funds is limited. Our Median income is \$31,900 and 36% of our households and 41% of our residents are age 50 or older. At this age, our residents are rightly concerned with income preservation to insure they have sufficient funds to last through retirement.

As we talk choice, we cannot forget where the money comes from. I cannot support any legislation that puts our older residents at risk. The current Ed Choice legislation slipped into the biennium budget bill places extraordinary hardship on the elderly in my school district as well as all of Allen County. Our area is one that passing any tax increase is difficult. We have been fortunate to pass building construction projects for a new high school and recently through the Ohio Schools Facility commission, a new elementary. But we do have a long history of failed operating levy attempts. Our residents constantly said that we should get the additional funds from the state. Therefore, if you choose to allow Ed Choice to continue, there are many communities like mine that will not support additional funding for vouchers. Legislative decisions should not put the financial wellbeing of any school district at risk of going on the ballot because of legislative policy. I believe that, if you persist in funding vouchers, that funding must come directly from the state. Therefore, I urge you to hold public school districts harmless in this voucher debate.

Finally, please remember that approving vouchers does not relieve you of the constitutional responsibility to fund public schools. There are many schools like Elida that since 2004 have either had their funding frozen or capped. Specifically, since 2004, Elida has never been fully funded to the state education formula.

Thank you for this ability to express my thoughts.

Respectfully,

Patrick Schymanski

Legislative Liaison, Elida Local School Board member