

House Bill 9
Conference Committee Testimony
February 17, 2020

Paul F. Shaw CPA CGMA RSBFO
Treasurer and Chief Fiscal Officer
Logan-Hocking Local School District
Hocking, Perry and Vinton Counties, Ohio



Good morning Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program.

My name is Paul Shaw, and I have had the honor and privilege to serve as Treasurer and Chief Fiscal Officer of Logan-Hocking Local School District in Hocking, Perry and Vinton Counties for the past 28 years. My wife Debra is a retired administrator/faculty member of the Ohio University Patton College of Education, former elementary teacher in Bexley City Schools and former board member of the Perry-Hocking Educational Service Center. Our families have resided on our family farms in Hocking County since 1829. Our roots run deep. Our commitment and dedication to current and future generations of our Appalachian region are unwavering. Public education is a critical component of our existence.

I come before you today to encourage state leaders to put an end to laws that force public school districts and their taxpayers to pay for PRIVATE school tuition. Ohio's Educational Choice Scholarship (EdChoice) Program is having and will incur additional devastating effects on school districts like ours. Our voters have NEVER APPROVED funding private school tuition with their local public property tax dollars. They would be OUTRAGED if they knew and understood that this transfer of their hard earned tax dollars to nonpublic entities was taking place. Furthermore, I would like to remind you that the Ohio Constitution imposes upon the state the specific obligation to secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools. The state legislators, through their individual oaths of office, are bound to uphold the Constitution. Funding of private non-accountable schools with public dollars does NOT fulfill this constitutional mandate! To the contrary, the resulting "system" would be neither thorough nor efficient.

The Logan-Hocking Local School District is located nearly an hour drive southeast of Columbus down State Route 33. It covers 317 square miles and serves approximately 3,800 students. It is included in Ohio Department of Education's Typology 1 – Rural agriculture, high poverty, low/medium wealth. Approximately 55% of its operations are funded by the State. This percentage is declining as the District becomes more reliant on its local taxpayers.

In Logan-Hocking, we still strive as a community to work together to provide equal opportunities for all of our students. As the wisdom of our state forefathers has required to date, we continue to maintain a separation of church and state regarding educational opportunities. We respect community members who choose to send their students to the local Catholic or Christian schools, at their own expense. Even though they do not attend our "public" schools, we continue to work collaboratively together. We share federally mandated resources re Title I, Title 2A and Title 4. We provide related services via our professional teachers, aides, etc. to our non-public students in our public buildings, on our public

buses/vans, and on our public lands. Truly, we consider all the students of our community as “ours” – whether they attend public or private schools.

Facing the challenges of on-line schools in Ohio and the unfortunate consequences that many times results, Logan-Hocking School District has developed its own alternative, on-line school. Knowing that no one can educate OUR students better than US, the District provides its own, separate physical locations (high school (58 students) and middle school(41 students) where students using our on-line resources are required to meet each week a minimum of six hours with professional staff and support. We recognize that all students do not learn the same; providing this alternative delivery system of education has been a win-win-win for all. While not inexpensive to operate, it is best for OUR students. That is what we strive for at Logan-Hocking Schools.

By design, Logan-Hocking Schools and other public school districts do not discriminate. Public schools are the “great equalizer”, able to empower every child to fulfill his or her potential, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic circumstance or religious affiliation. Locally elected boards of education are the backbone of public schools; this community ownership, which is strong at Logan-Hocking Local, safeguards transparency, accountability, and equity and excellence in education for every child. I believe the State of Ohio and its legislature should put forth its efforts to improve the public school systems across this great State, not dissect it with additional school voucher alternatives.

As a compromise, SB 89 would halt the practice of awarding private school tuition vouchers based on a flawed report card system and paid for using non-voter approved local tax dollars. Instead, vouchers would be awarded to students solely based on family income, the priority being those students most in need. The costs for this income-based program, called the Buckeye Opportunity Scholarship program, would be covered by the state. It would remove the program’s reliance on a flawed report card system that currently punishes districts. Going forward, local funds would no longer be required to subsidize private school tuition, and that is a step in the right direction.

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 conference committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide input regarding Ohio’s EdChoice Voucher program. I am happy to address your questions.

Additional Attachment

On October 23, 1993 my wife Debra and I travelled to the Perry County to hear the initial DeRolph case proceedings in the Perry County Common Pleas Court. We took with us our nine month old twin sons, Paul Elijah and Otto Joshua. Debra, a former Bexley City Schools teacher, appropriately labeled the twins “equity” and “adequacy”, placing nametags on the twins’ stroller which we pushed up the stairs and into the courtroom. Sixteen years later we met with Governor Strickland as his Evidence-Based Model (EBM) of funding public schools in Ohio was wavering in the balance. Time had passed. Children had continued to be educated under an unconstitutionally funded state system. With courage and boldness, the Governor and legislature adopted the EBM plan which moved us towards the constitutionally required goal of providing a thorough and efficient education to Ohio students. It also focused on the real goal of any school funding model system, which is to provide a high quality public educational opportunity for every student in the state, regardless of geography. See the attached picture of our twins from 1993(at Perry County Court House) and in 2009 when we celebrated the passage of the EBM funding plan with the Governor and Attorney Nick Pittner.

Additional Note: The Logan-Hocking Local Board of Education unanimously passed a resolution opposing the State of Ohio EdChoice Scholarship Program at its January 27, 2020 Regular Board Meeting.



THE LOGAN DAILY NEWS
Friday, Aug. 1, 1993
12 Pages
\$2.00
**School Financing System
Declared Unconstitutional**



"Well done, good and faithful servant." Matthew 25:21

*10/23/1993
Perry County*

*2009
Ohio Statehouse
Cabinet Room*

*Governor's
Mansions
Rudisill*