



Groveport Madison Schools District Service Center

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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. I am Garilee Ogden, superintendent of Groveport Madison Local Schools

I am here 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. As it stands, it will continue as an ever-evolving and every-growing list of schools that have been deemed as failures. Our district alone will increase from four to six buildings on the list of our 10 schools district-wide.

The income-based approach is much healthier for all stakeholders as it focuses on what matters, which is opportunity for the K-12 students of Ohio. As you know, Ohio today 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. We recently were on the ballot two times in a row to pass an operating levy to bring in 5.6 million a year, in which we were successful in passing. That funding only allowed us to maintain operations and programming as we have it today. Without that funding, we would not be able to provide the academic programs that our students deserve. We pay out just

The mission of Groveport Madison Schools is to build a community of learners, leaders and responsible citizens.

Every Student, Every Lesson, Every Day

over 1 million dollars a year to EdChoice vouchers, and that calculation does not include schools that will be added this year to the EdChoice list if things do not change. That cost in turn, impacts the quality of educational programming we are providing at present for the students attending our schools.

We have worked hard as a district to increase our state report card measures moving many of them from F letter grades to C's and B's just in a few years.

We offer seven high school pathways to college or industry credentials so that our students can be successful in a future of their choosing.

Not only are we paying out over 1 million dollars in vouchers, we are also spending over \$300,000 in staffing and ancillary support to students in private and/or parochial schools. We are currently transporting 883 students to private and parochial schools as well, and this number would only increase and cost our district more money if the EdChoice Voucher program remains as is.

Furthermore, I would like to note that our students and teachers are spending too much time on state and federally mandated testing. Tests that are not diagnostic in nature to help us fine tune our support to individual students needs. As we work to meet the demands of those assessments, the schools receiving EdChoice vouchers, are not held to the same demands. We are also not able to be selective in the students we serve as our private and parochial schools are able to do. We serve all students, as it should be.

I would like to be clear----I am not opposed to accountability, I embrace measuring our successes and using data to define our deficiencies for improvement, but I am opposed to supporting a broken system.

I believe we can do better if we truly pull together and collaborate and develop a system that is just, fair and still includes accountability for all parties, and one that benefits the very people that we are all here about today....our students.

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.

