

Jeffery S. Fouke - Treasurer
Washington Local School District – Lucas County

My name is Jeff Fouke, Treasurer of Washington Local Schools located in Toledo and Washington Township in Lucas County. I have been a Treasurer for over 23 years, the past 20 years at Washington Local Schools.

I have seen the elimination of the personal property tax, a local tax that annually raised \$15 million, and replaced with Commercial Activity Tax which is a state tax. Schools were told we would be held harmless with the personal property tax loss payments and the corresponding increase in state aid. And the first few years that was somewhat true. The Personal Property Tax Loss Payments was \$8.7 million per year and our state aid increased.

Fast forward to now, and these same payments are now only \$2.9 million per year and our state aid is capped. And our state personal property tax loss payments are being decreased by \$480,000 per year. As we are a capped district, this means we are receiving over \$14 million less than the School formula states we should be receiving. We have 2,000 students at our high school that are not being funded by the state because of the cap. And just when we thought state funding could not get any worse, the state has now frozen our state aid for two years. The lack of consistent state funding has caused our district to have gone to our voters 8 times since 2000 and we have been successful 7 times. This demonstrates the amazing support our community has for our school district. This includes the passage of the November 2019 levy. Our community has had the opportunity to vote on the zoo levy, senior levy, CSB levy, Imagination Station levy and many more levies in Lucas County. Not once have they voted for local tax dollars to support a private school. But none the less, their local tax dollars are now going to private school without the opportunity to vote on it.

We weathered the charter school debacle losing over \$2.7 million annually to charter schools. And we now have another school funding challenge with EdChoice vouchers while at the same time we still do not have a working school funding formula.

When I prepared the May 2019 Forecast, I assumed maybe 15 students would be eligible for the EdChoice voucher based on the current law. However, by the time I prepared the November 2019 Forecast over 130 students had applied. This was caused by a change in state law that eliminated the requirement that the voucher student had to attend a public school prior to receiving the voucher. This unexpectedly added \$700,000 to my expenditures this year. As our state aid is frozen and has been capped, these are local funds going to a private school that can legally discriminate in their enrollment of their students. One fourth of our new voter approved tax levy is now going to a private school that is legally allowed to discriminate against the students they will accept. This discrimination is on gender, physical ability, academic ability as well as the family's wealth. Not all students are accepted by the private school, the private schools are permitted to pick and choose who they will accept. These vouchers are supporting discrimination at the same time these private schools are receiving millions of dollars in public funds without the public accountability that always comes with public funds. In fact, one local private school has over 70 percent of their students receiving vouchers. When does a private school become a public school if over half of the tuition revenue came from public funds?

Our high school became EdChoice because of state tests. This allowed students, over 100 students who were already attending a private school, to receive \$6,000 to attend a perceived better school. Imagine our surprise when every private high school in our area, except one, had lower test scores than our high school. How did the State address the lower private school test scores? The law was changed and private schools are no longer required to take the same tests as public schools.

EdChoice is also misunderstood. The student and parent do not get to choose which private school will educate the student; they only get to choose where they will be able to apply to attend the private school. The private school will get to choose which students they will educate. And if the private school does change its mind on the student they have already enrolled, the private school tells the student they no longer can attend.

In summary the EdChoice voucher is flawed. It allows local tax dollars, our public dollars, to go to a private school that is allowed to discriminate on the students it enrolls, and in most instances have lower test scores than our high school. Please do not take our local taxpayers' money, they work too hard for their money.