



Fort Frye High School

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Chairman Jones and Members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee,

I am Andrew Schob, and I am fortunate to be the public school Principal of Fort Frye High located in rural Southeastern Ohio. I want to personally thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship program as the outcome of the voucher legislation will greatly impact Ohio's public school system. I am here today to plead with this committee to adopt the voucher reforms as passed by the Ohio House. The House plan represents a fundamental shift in our voucher system, from a failing schools approach, which is based on a state report card system in dire need of major changes, to an income-based approach.

Traditionally, school choice was designed to give families more control over their child's education. An income-based approach provides more options to families who typically have less means to access school choice.

However, Ohio's current performance-based approach is phenomenally flawed. I want to begin with the current state accountability system that has placed our school on the underperforming list. We value school accountability and continually use data to evaluate our strengths and areas that need improvement to plan effective teaching strategies and utilize resources that are implemented in the school and classroom. Our teachers have spent many hours this school year examining student performance to determine our successes and identify areas where students are still struggling. We changed our master schedule to allow for extra help periods, and implemented an intensive care unit or ICU for student academic work completion. We trained our teachers in effective writing strategies that can be used in all content areas to increase student mastery of concepts.

While we acknowledge that our value added and overall rating is an area that will continue to earn our attention and concerted efforts, this is a small portion of what we do in our school, and should not solely define our performance level.

Fort Frye Local Schools is a proud, small public school system. We frequently comment that “we have a Statue of Liberty in front of our school, we welcome ALL students”. Not only do we welcome all students, our attendance rate is over 95%, students come to school because they know we care about them. Unlike a private school, we cannot pick and choose our enrollment, and we guarantee that our performance as measured by the state accountability system is impacted by our open door policy! We Educate ALL students who enroll in our schools because public schooling was established hundreds of years ago for the common good.

Our doors were open for a drug addicted student when we facilitated the process of him working with local law enforcement to identify some of our worst drug dealers in the community. We also helped transport him three hours away to rehab as well assisted in obtaining donors to fund his treatment. To us, this is value added to his life and community.

It was our high school that welcomed the Signs of Suicide program through Nationwide Children’s Hospital that helped us red flag several students with imminent mental health needs. It was our staff that set in emergency rooms with kids wanting to kill themselves because we know their lives have value.

Fort Frye is also the school that redesigned its master schedule to offer an enrichment period for two days per week so kids could pursue basic skills such as managing debt, food service production, and changing a tire while other students chose to learn how to build robots, get certified in CPR and design structures in art classes. However, this will never be captured in an overall letter grade on our state report card system.

At our so-called “low-performing” school, there are over 40 hours of College Credit Plus being offered on campus by our college-credentialed teachers, and approximately 60 percent of our students successfully earn college credit before high school graduation.

In our school where supposedly students are not growing enough according to the flawed state report card system, over 100 students, approximately 25 percent of our enrollment, are provided on site mental health services through our Student Success funds - thank you by the way for including those funds in the budget!

Come to our high school during the month of May, and you will see some of our rural students driving their tractors to school because our vocational agriculture program serves over 150 students in career technical education. Our students travel across the state and nationally to compete in soils and food tests, and learn research, presentation, and careers

skills that help them be future ready! Tell me, where is that captured on our performance rating by the state?

And it is our low-rated high school that is providing internships opportunities for our students in the area of engineering, veterinarian, education and many more. Our graduation rate is 98.7 percent, which shows our success in preparing our kids for the future!

Since the writing of our great Constitution, public education was designed to promote citizenship. During the month of February, our high schoolers were involved in random acts of kindness by providing assistance at an elderly home. This spring, our students will go into our community and provide much needed community service for our local township services and many other agencies and/or people in need at our annual Community Service Day. I assure this is value-added to our community and to our student's educational experience, but again, it will never be reflected on our local district report card.

I hope that I have provided a picture of the many academic and learning successes we are proud of at Fort Frye. Schools are in the business of educating the whole child, not just some aspects as measured by standardized assessments.

This is not an attack on private schools. Rather, it is an attack on the current EdChoice system that uses a horrible report card system to identify public schools as underperforming but yet uses absolutely NO MEASURING STICK ON PRIVATE SCHOOLS WHO ARE DEEMED THE ALTERNATIVE, BETTER CHOICE. Why are accountability strings not attached to these voucher funds?

Deducting funds from local districts, that are mandated to educate ALL students, and diverting locally-voted tax dollars to pay for vouchers at private schools that are not held accountable in any manner is not the intentions of our local taxpayers. If this issue were to go to a referendum, I am confident that Ohio's voters would reject public funds being used for performance-based EdChoice Scholarships.

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 implore you to adopt the House version of this Bill. I am happy to address your questions.