

HB9 Conference Committee - Colleen Moidu

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 conference committee,

My name is Colleen Moidu and I am Westerville Resident. I am a graduate of Westerville South High School, attended Case Western Reserve University and I am now raising my three kids in the Westerville Community so that they can attend Westerville City Schools.

I also served as the co-chair for our district's levy campaign this past fall. Our biggest challenge in this campaign was helping our community understand how school funding works and why our district and districts across the state need to ask local taxpayers for additional money.

For example:

- Fiction: Our public schools are funded by the state. Why do you need our money?
- Fact: In Westerville, due to underfunding from the state, we essentially did not receive funding for 3,000 of our 15,000 students.

- Fiction: My property values keep going up. The schools keep getting more money when that happens.
- Fact: HB 920 makes it so that does NOT happen. The amount collected from a levy passed stays essentially the same even as property values, costs of education and enrollment increase.

While I'm sure all of you are well aware of these facts, many in our communities are not, and I was not prior to this campaign. What is created is a relationship where the public school district, one of the most valuable assets to a community, is responsible for educating, not only the students in their buildings, but the community. They must educate the community about this flawed system in order to have the funding necessary to educate students and maintain valuable programming.

And they do that. Over and over again, they do that. I just spent 6 months this past year on a levy campaign to ensure our schools had the funding they needed. I was joined by dozens of other community members who gave their time and resources because we recognize how important this is for our community, our students and our future.

Our schools work hard to meet the needs of our diverse student population. One metric of success is, in my book, is the literacy rate at the end of the third grade. You can look at our numbers and see lower levels are literacy at benchmark points leading up to third grade. 1 in 10 of our students is an English Learner. This and other factors contribute to that lower literacy rate coming into school in the early years. The fact that our district has a 99% pass rate on the 3rd grade reading guarantee but is hurt on the scorecard because of these earlier benchmarks is a flawed and unfair metric.

1. The fact that these flawed/unfair metrics are used to determine a school's eligibility for EdChoice Vouchers is irresponsible
2. The fact that public funds would be given to a private institution that is NOT held to these same standards is absolutely appalling

Without a change to the EdChoice program we are looking at having at least another \$1.2 million taken away from the students we serve. This deduction would be for students that we have never educated and have never received any state funding for. This is in addition to the approximately \$4 million for charter schools. This is in addition to the already underfunded amounts of \$11.5 million the district loses to the funding formula.

We are not opposed to school choice in Westerville City Schools. What we are opposed to is the syphoning out of public tax dollars that are being sent to private schools.

As a mother, a taxpayer, a voter, and levy co-chair I am here today to urge you to not take any money away from our public schools. If you do continue to provide state money to private schools then they must be held accountable for our tax dollars. Our voters passed a levy in November for Westerville City Schools with ballot language that clearly stated the funds would go to Westerville City Schools.

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee, thank you for your time and for listening to my testimony.