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**HAL GREGORY**, Superintendent

[www.oregoncityschools.org](http://www.oregoncityschools.org)

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February 19, 2020

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 Hal Gregory, Superintendent of Oregon City Schools. Appearing with me today are:

**Greg Row**, OCS Parent of three students, Aubree (K), Lincoln (4), Sutton (7)

**Vivian Stuller**, OCS Parent of two students, Brock (6), Andrew (10)

**Carol Ann Molnar**, OCS School Board President

**Terri Hook**, OCS District Lead Teacher and President of The Oregon City Federation of Teachers

**Jane Fruth**, OCS District Treasurer

**Jeff Straka**, Principal, Jerusalem Elementary

We are just a small sampling of many educators, board members, and parents from the Oregon City Schools community who are concerned about the negative consequences of EdChoice vouchers on our public school district and to the impact on public education.

We are here today to encourage you to adopt the meaningful voucher reforms as passed by the Ohio House and being considered by the Ohio Senate, especially to eliminate any voucher being linked to a building performance level which would be paid for by public funds from public school districts.

The financial impact of this program to OCS is uncertain. Currently, OCS is aware of ten students who do not attend OCS but attend private schools who would qualify for the EdChoice voucher next year. There is no way to calculate the financial impact of families choosing to attend private schools in the future. The funding of just these ten students until graduation is estimated at \$470,000. This level of funding taken from our budget is unsustainable without going back to our voters for additional levies.

OCS spends \$12,459 per student which is right at the state average. Every penny of these funds allow us to take care of and educate ALL of our students and manage the overwhelming number of unfunded mandates. OCS is currently on the ballot for new operational monies with a 4.95 mill levy on March

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17, 2020. Passing levies is difficult enough, but now we are passing levies on behalf of private schools, without the private schools having any accountability to our local community, like Oregon City Schools has.

OCS can't afford to lose additional funding. We have already been dealing with the negative impact of HB 66 for many years now, losing an additional \$1,445,773 during the next 5-years, eventually losing over \$10,000,000 when these funds are completely gone. We were told our district would be held harmless which clearly is not the case. Every dollar is needed.

Even with these financial challenges, OCS is providing the most comprehensive education in the history of our school system. Here are a few of our recent accomplishments. OCS is.....

- First in the area to have nurses at each school (6).
- First in the area to have School Resource Officers at each school (6).
- First in the area to have a fully operational Pediatric Doctor's office on the campus of Clay HS.
- First in the area to have a fully operational Student-Led Credit Union and ATM on the campus of Clay HS.
- First in the area to have a job placement office on the campus of Clay HS.
- Using Gov. Dewine's wellness funds, we now have in place access to Direct Mental health services, in school, during the day.
- Provide on-going professional learning opportunities using researched based instructional practices implementing rigor and relevance for our students adapting what and how we teach to today's learners.
- Fully integrated technology for all students K-12.
- Thirteen Career Technical Programs at Clay HS, beginning a new construction program in 2020.

OCS is proud to serve students with a variety of needs, skills, backgrounds and goals. We have economically disadvantaged students with 45% qualifying for free and reduced lunches. Over 13% of students are identified with a disability in grades PreK-12. We have special education programs in all six buildings including two separate facility programs educating our most challenging students. Programs for Gifted and Talented students are in all buildings with honors students excelling in AP and CCP courses. We take great pride in developing students for the world of work with 13 career technical programs embedding into our comprehensive high school. We have something for everyone!

Public schools are accountable for every student who comes to us. There are laws and regulations governing our every move and action. The number of public school mandates are in the thousands, and mostly unfunded. Regulations keep coming and always cost money. There is so much oversight, public schools hire a large number of leaders to just deal with mandates and reporting. The majority of these mandates are because we accept public funds.

I recently received a legislative update which provides an outline of educational bills of interest. The majority of the bills focused on public schools and increased regulation. One bill focuses on mandating "bottle filling stations and drinking fountains in *certain public school* buildings" There is no mention of

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private schools. Why not impose this requirement on private schools receiving public money. Private school students also drink water.

Private schools are receiving more public money than ever before. I encourage equal accountability moving forward.

I recently posed this question to our community. **Question:** If two OCS schools are low performing, then what category does (local private school) fall into? **Answer:** No category, because private schools do not get a grade/rating like public schools. I ask why? Don't we want our parents and families to make informed decisions about choice? Public schools are judged unfairly by a biased grade card system. This system is what allows public money to go to private schools, yet private schools are not judged or required to provide any kind of data to the public. Currently we have an extremely flawed and biased system.

Based on the minimal EdChoice public data available, private schools do not perform at the levels many public schools do, and this is the case in our community. If our schools are low performing based on data, then many private schools are even lower performing based on data.

We encourage equal accountability for all schools, private and public, who accept any amount of public funds. The OCS Board of Education passed a resolution supporting this message.

We have two parents here with who will share their thoughts on why they don't want their tax dollars used for public schools and why they support Oregon City Schools.

**Mrs. Vivian Stuller**

**Mr. Greg Row**

Again, we are here today to encourage you to adopt the meaningful voucher reforms as passed by the Ohio House and being considered by the Ohio Senate, especially to eliminate any voucher being linked to a building performance level which would be paid for by public funds from public school districts.

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. We are happy to address any questions you may have for us.

Sincerely,



Hal D. Gregory  
Superintendent  
Oregon City Schools - Go Eagles!

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