

I am writing to address House Bill 9 in comparison to Senate Bill 89.

The House Plan is actually the beginning of a solution that low income district students have been searching for. It ends the failed schools model for vouchers, by forming a plan whereby failed schools will be able to prove they are not failures, but are quite successful. The House Plan moves to an income based plan for vouchers that prioritizes the low income district students, without taking local tax dollars away from low income districts.

It is difficult to go to work every day and do the best you are capable of when you know that under the current testing plan, you are destined to fail. The report card system currently in use, based on testing, is designed to make good schools appear as failures. It is not easy knowing you teach at one of the best districts in the state, while the report card says the district is a failure. The system to evaluate schools is a failure, not the schools themselves. The House Plan addresses this, and can be a step to fix it.

The House Plan correctly funds vouchers directly, rather than a deduction from the student's district. The system currently diverts locally approved property taxes to private school vouchers. This re-assignment of funds further harms already financially strapped districts. I totally disagree with the diversion of public school funds to private school vouchers.

The House Plan creates a committee to evaluate the fairness of tests. The committee will also evaluate Federal and State requirements for testing. This committee will lead to a fair and equitable way for the Legislature to hold both public **and** private schools accountable. The system we are using does not accomplish this. It is merely a plan for failure on the part of administration, faculty and staff of public schools.

As an educator and small business owner, I am aware of what works and does not work in public schools. The focus of public schools should be the preparation of students to enter the work force and/or succeed in college. We are at a point in time in the history of education where reform is needed. Real reform, both in the funding model and the tools used to check and hold schools responsible. School districts are not opposed to being held responsible for instruction and success of students, but the models and tools used need to be fair, to all districts. From the district that has a household average income of \$150,000 right down to the district with \$20,000 household income. From the district of \$500,000 houses on every lot to the largely agricultural districts. The funding models and testing models need to be fair and equitable to all students. The answer is not vouchers and pulling funds away from already poor districts.

College does not work for every student. Nor is it needed for every student. We find ourselves in a job market where laborers and skilled trades are searching for workers, workers that are not there. We are severely short on all of these skilled and unskilled occupations. What these students need is fair and equitable high school educations. An education provided by a good, successful and well-funded Ohio school.

The low income districts are the districts that provide these students. They are determined and intelligent individuals who are needed very badly in today's job market. These students need to be encouraged not discouraged, and deserve to be provided a fair and equitable high school

education. They are agriculturists, mechanics, welders, operators, plumbers, electricians, and truckers. The House Plan for SB 89 begins the journey to level the playing field for all school districts in Ohio.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Skinner
Ag Education Instructor
FFA Advisor
Northern Local Schools
Thornville, Ohio