



# Lincolnview Local Schools

15945 Middle Point Road, Van Wert, OH 45891

Phone: 419-968-2226 Fax: 419-968-2227

Website: [www.lincolnview.k12.oh.us](http://www.lincolnview.k12.oh.us)

Jeffrey T. Snyder, Superintendent

Troy R. Bowersock, Treasurer

Dear 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 Jeff Snyder, Superintendent of Lincolnview Local Schools, in Van Wert, Ohio. The Lincolnview Local School District is located in rural Northwest Ohio. We are an approximately 110 square mile district with close to 900 students. I am here today to testify as an opponent of the EdChoice Voucher Program. Since 2005, with the inception of the EdChoice Voucher program, its total intent was to give students living in poverty who were in a low performing district an opportunity to change to a private school district to have potentially a better opportunity of an education. Over the years, some would say that the program has worked based on its original intent; however, we (public education) are here today, over a decade later, being challenged that every student is entitled to a tax-funded choice voucher, even though an overwhelmingly large number of public schools in the state of Ohio are performing at a high level of "Excellence." The changes that were made in in this past summer's budget bill, along with changes that were made way back in 2012 legislation that has finally started to impact schools, and that have been postponed until April 1<sup>st</sup>, could have devastating financial implications if allowed to pass at the end of the moratorium. I challenge each of you to go back to the original intent of the EdChoice Voucher Program, which was instituted in 2005, and stay within the means of its objectives, meaning, and purpose.

As a public school advocate that represent parents and live in our community, teach in our schools, and mentor our great students of Lincolnview Local, we will continually do great things for students to obtain a public school education each year. Some of the highlights the past seven years are the following:

- Have purchased over 900 computer-learning devices for all students K-12.
- The introduction of new classes at the high school
  - Statistics and Probability Class
  - Pre-engineering Class
  - Bio-medical class
  - New high school cross-categorical class for special education students
- Hired a full-time Special Education Director.
- Increased the employment of our Elementary School Counselor from part-time to full-time.
- Hired a Student Resource Officer (from the Van Wert County Sheriff's Department) – to help protect our students each and every day.
- Hired a part-time Social Worker to work 2.5 days a week to bridge social and emotional needs with our students, parents, and school.

**"We Believe Everyone Can Be An Achiever Through Education."**

- Collaborated with Westwood Behavioral Health Center of Van Wert, Ohio to provide more mental health services to all K-12 students.
- Received Ohio Department of Education's "Momentum Award" in our Elementary School.
- Have developed Character Education programs in our Elementary, Jr. High, and High school.
- Our school district & students have helped raise over \$100,000.00 for the United Way of Van Wert County.
- Hired four additional special education teachers to meet the needs of our students.
- Hired over five additional educational aides to assist students of need.

As all of you can see, we continue to evolve to be the best public school district in the state of Ohio and there are so many public school districts like us. We are not failing schools and we have a passion for all students who walk through our doors each day. Our district, like many, has not seen an additional funding from the state in over 10 years; however, we find ways to impact our students and put them first each day.

One last example I would like to give you to exemplify our passion for public education is that our Lincolnview Local Schools Board of Education, as recently as of last Thursday, passed a board resolution to spend over 1.5 million dollars to upgrade a Kindergarten classroom and build three new classrooms to serve our special needs students. We have decided to build a new cross-categorical classroom for elementary special needs students who have a higher level of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive needs. We are also building a classroom that will have a sensory room and space set aside for physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech services to these students and more. So again, as each of you can see, we do want what is best for our students. We find resources any way possible to meet these needs of all students, and we consistently strive for improvement. I do not know of any public school district in the state of Ohio who is not endeavoring to accomplish these same type of things, which challenges the rationale or the new intent to give an EdChoice Voucher to all students without cause.

In conclusion, from reviewing documents of the both the Senate and the House on the EdChoice Voucher Program, we support Senate Bill 89. The reasons behind the support is that it does away completely with the performance-based vouchers and moves to a more income-based vouchers program. In addition, SB 89 makes the income-based voucher rise slowly based on the income eligibility threshold. It also requires the state to pay for the voucher program and not each individual school, as this would be very difficult to develop and maintain budgets. Lastly, SB 89 makes changes to the academic distress commission, the territory transfer provision, and commissions studies on the costs of special education, and calls for a review of the school report card.


As I finish my testimony today and realize this conversation and debate will continue to go on for many days, months, and even years, I only ask each of the elected officials sitting in front of me and also those who represent all 88 counties to make it fair for all educational institutions trying to teach all students in the state of Ohio. If you, the legislators, require all public schools to give state tests, have a local report card, require state teacher evaluations, serve gifted and special need students, balance a budget, and be transparent, then it is belief of mine and the community of Lincolnview Local Schools that any private education institution that receives an EdChoice Voucher must do the same. They must be held to the same accountability standards and transparency that you require of us each day if they decide to take EdChoice Vouchers. They (Private institutions) must serve all students, regardless of the challenges they bring (socially, behaviorally, academically, and financially). If private educational

**“We Believe Everyone Can Be An Achiever Through Education.”**

institutions communicate that they can serve any student and want to accept EdChoice Voucher students, then in my opinion, they would definitely welcome accountability and transparency to all legislators and citizens of Ohio. Accountability and transparency then must be a discussion with any new language of EdChoice now and in the future.

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 am happy to address your questions.

Respectfully,



Jeffrey T. Snyder  
Superintendent  
Lincolnview Local Schools