

SOUTH EUCLID-LYNDHURST TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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John Kilgore - President

Sean Naughton - Vice President

Sarah Ball, Treasurer

Amber Berkobein - Secretary

February 16, 2020

Dear Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

Good day! My name is John Kilgore and I am the current President of the South Euclid Lyndhurst Teachers Association (or SELTA). Being the leader of some very dedicated and hard-working educators in a district where students have lots of needs, I am writing to urge you to support efforts to curb the harmful expansion of EdChoice vouchers that allow parents to send their children to private schools. As a public educator, I have seen how they are hurting my district's ability to serve the needs of the students who deserve a quality public education by forcing the district to pay for the private school tuition. This problem will only get worse if something isn't done by the legislature. Therefore, I want you to know the following:

- South Euclid-Lyndhurst City Schools is a great public school district. Staff are invested in bringing out the best in their students and the Board has been fiscally responsible while also providing the community's students with the education they need to be prepared for our competitive world.
- As a taxpayer, I do not want a single penny of the tax money I have approved through my vote to be diverted from my district to a private school. The tax money I provide to my school district allows me to elect a Board of Education and to exert reasonable input regarding my expectations for my district. I do not have any similar control over spending or programming for private schools. They should not get my tax money.
- I believe this diversion is or should be an unlawful diversion of my tax dollars.
- Any effort by you to reimburse my school district for dollars diverted from my school district through funds collected at the state level would be unacceptable to me. This is simply another way of diverting public money to private schools or companies. That money is public money that should be used to help fund my school district, and, properly directed, this money would slow down the rate at which I have to approve the next local school tax levy to keep my schools functioning.

Public schools service over 90% of students and sending funds from public schools to private schools will only continue to deteriorate public school districts. Statewide EdChoice vouchers have grown from 40 districts to 140 districts over the last year, and next year because of a flawed state report card system, over 1,200 buildings will be eligible, including 3 in the South Euclid-Lyndhurst City School District.

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Currently, South Euclid-Lyndhurst has a levy on the ballot in March. How successful do you think that levy would be if voters in the district knew that a portion of their voted revenue was being diverted to private schools? Residents vote in favor of our school levies because they want the students we serve in the public schools to be able to compete with surrounding districts and in the real world. From talking with residents to gain levy support, I can tell you they want that money used to improve OUR schools, not sent to private schools. When they vote like I vote in favor of the school levy, they are voting in support of financing for the South Euclid-Lyndhurst City School District, not whatever private school someone suggests. Additionally, SELTA is completely opposed to using state revenue to reimburse districts that lose money to accomplish an EdChoice program. You and I both know that is simply a shell game, diverting money that could be used to support our public schools and delay the need for the next levy that you and I will both pay to our schools. The Ohio system of public school funding (ruled unconstitutional numerous times) has us again in a situation that only hurts the future of levy passage by diverting funds.

Please understand that I support the right of parents to send their children to private school, but I strongly oppose the use of public funds to do so. Public education remains the choice of more than 90% of Ohio's students. Your focus should not be on creating alternatives to public education that are publicly funded. I encourage you to stand up for my students by taking immediate action to mitigate the harmful effects of EdChoice vouchers. There are deeper issues that I and my SELTA Executive Board would be happy to discuss with you if you would ever like to attend one of our meetings to discuss school issues. Thank you for your consideration and please let me know where you stand on the issue of EdChoice. We will be watching your vote.

Sincerely,



John Kilgore, SELTA President