

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 2/20/20
Name: Keith Kelly
Are you representing: Yourself Organization
Organization (If Applicable): Mayfield City School District
Position/Title: Superintendent
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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB9
Specific Issue: EdChoice Voucher

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party
Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 5 minutes

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

Opposed to voucher expansion.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

EdChoice Testimony
Keith Kelly, Superintendent
Mayfield City Schools

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 Keith Kelly proud superintendent of Mayfield City Schools.

Mayfield is diverse community in almost every sense of the word, socioeconomically, racially, ethnically, culturally and religiously. We believe our diversity is one of our many strengths because students learn to study, work, compete and develop relationships with others from a varying backgrounds. Ultimately, helping them to become responsible, caring and globally minded citizens.

Mayfield has a proud history of community support and the ability to provide many educational pathways, programs and services that help students find their purpose and passion as they prepare themselves for success now and after high school.

Our programs and the ways in which we engage students in learning is in alignment with the Ohio vision for learning. We believe our students will leave us better thinkers, creators, problems solvers, collaborators and possess the grit and perseverance so critically needed in today's local, national and global job markets.

For example, Mayfield students can choose from 27 Advanced Placement courses, design and build products in our fabrication lab, earn a cosmetology license, convert an old school bus into a community mobile innovation lab, customize their own learning, develop their social and emotional skills, work with engineers to learn how to design think, interpret medical research through art, solve community challenges, create a Jackson Pollack using Ozobots, start their own business, learn how to invest and the list goes on and on.

These kinds of learning experiences have little to do with the current accountability and state testing system in which the voucher system is grounded.

The expansion of the voucher program coupled with an inadequate funding model and its direct link to a highly flawed accountability system only compounds the current struggles we have in order to maintain the kind of learning experiences we all know are essential to the cultural and economic vitality of our state and nation.

A case in point, one of our elementary schools is an EdChoice School because of the literacy measure - even though - 100 percent of our 3rd graders eventually pass the test and move on to 4th grade! This highly flawed method of false accountability then allows private schools to recruit our kids through advertising and take our dollars with them. The irony is that the private schools, as we all know, are not held to the same accountability standards.

Some facts.

- Taxpayer dollars make up approximately 90 % of our operating budget. The state provides 4%. That means the burden is on the backs of the taxpayers. And there is a serious growing tax fatigue in our socioeconomically diverse community. Their ability to pay is lessening.
- If we realized our potential liability of 1.3 million dollars due to voucher expansion it would further burden our taxpayers and programs could be in jeopardy.
- One of our local private schools receives 3 times the amount of state aid we do.

The expansion of the voucher program makes no sense given that the problems of funding and accountability have yet to be solved.

Here are some questions we wrestle with.

- Do property owners want their tax dollars going to organizations with no public oversight?
- Is the premise that public schools are failing even a viable argument to support the concept of EdChoice given that the schools receiving the funds are not measured by the same standards? How do we know they're better?
- What is the State's plan to address the economic impact on public schools if this were to pass? Our public schools will still have to meet all the mandates not asked of these private institutions.
- How will you address a private school's ability to reject students that don't fit their preferred criteria when public schools cannot do the same? Isn't this discrimination if public dollars are in play?
- If all evidence suggests that poverty, and our failure to address it, is the real reason behind "failing schools," what is being done to aggressively address those issues? How are we bringing kids up to speed that lack the resources of others (early childhood education for instance)?
- Are the educational accountability mandates so obsolete that they restrict the kinds of creativity and innovation needed in public schools today? Could these mandates be part of the problem causing students to want to "escape" to a system without the mandates?

Respectfully, the expansion of the voucher program, in my opinion, is one more one size fits all policy that further threatens what is right with public education.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank our legislators - Senators Dolan and Yukow as well as Representatives Robinson and Brent for taking the time to visit Mayfield often and getting a sense of what is happening.

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.