

Honorable Members of the Conference Committee:

The school grade and voucher systems are hurting our school district, Cleveland Heights-University Heights. The system is an unfunded mandate from the Ohio State Legislature to our community to divert local property taxes to pay for vouchers. The cost of vouchers to our district is substantial: 10 million dollars this year and more in future years.

My requests are simple:

- **Eliminate the school grade system.**
 - If you like doing statistics, calculate the correlation between school grade and percent disadvantaged. Poverty explains 50% of the variance in school grade. The correlation is big, the same magnitude as for the relation between smoking and cancer. We have an excellent school system but our low grade is largely explained by having many low-income students. This is an ideal situation to help lift students out of poverty, but our low school grade and the associated loss of funding due to vouchers will hurt their chances.
- **Eliminate vouchers**
 - Our community has a long history of offering many private school options. The families who choose private schools also have a long history of paying for that option without a voucher. Meanwhile, the tremendous effort we need to spend to support our public schools was not spent with the intent of funding vouchers, but for funding our public schools.
- If you find it politically impossible to eliminate the grade system and voucher system, please **fund the vouchers entirely from state funds**. Eliminate the mandate to spend local property taxes to pay for vouchers.

To provide a little background, I am familiar with excellent education (B.S. Physics, Stanford class of 1990. Ph.D. Physics, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, with stops at Harvard and Northwestern before taking a position at the Cleveland Clinic). Our school system has provided and continues to provide an excellent education for my 15-year old son, starting in kindergarten and continuing today. That our district received a “D” is a head-scratcher. That we get penalized for that score is infuriating.

Sincerely,

Ken Sakaie, Ph.D.

3121 Berkshire Rd.

Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

216-645-7302