

**Testimony of  
Dr. Romules Durant, CEO/Superintendent of the Toledo Public Schools  
&  
Ryan Stechschulte, CFO/Treasurer of Toledo Public Schools  
before the  
Conference Committee on HB 9**

**February 20, 2020**

Chairman Jones and members of the Conference Committee on House Bill 9, thank you for taking the time to listen to our testimony.

My name is Dr. Romules Durant, CEO/Superintendent of the Toledo Public Schools and testifying with me today is Ryan Stechschulte, CFO/Treasurer of Toledo Public Schools.

- This year, Toledo Public Schools is mandated to fund an additional \$5.7 million dollars in Ed Choice scholarships to students in our community.
- With that additional amount, our district is facing a total deduction of over \$15 million.
- Adding to our mounting frustration is that students now taking advantage of EdChoice have never attended Toledo Public Schools. How can they compare one of our schools to another if they've never sat in one of our classrooms, met with one of our teachers – it does not seem to be a fair system.

Let us break it down to simple facts –make it a true comparison...apples to apples:

1. Accountability – Hold Private Schools to the Same Criteria that Public Schools Must Meet
  - Academic Performance – we deserve to be compared against the private schools using the same academic measures. What's their Performance Index? I can tell you ours because of the state report card. You do not know the scores from the private schools because they are not mandated to make their results public.
  - Their claims are that of excellence – they should have to prove that claim each year, just as a public school has to do.
2. Private school need to comply with the same state financial audits that public schools are required to fulfil each year.
  - Are they good stewards of public funds? We have to show our fiscal responsibility each year, so, let the private schools do the same.

3. Private school leaders need to gain an understanding of the biggest stressor that faces a public school Superintendent and that is going to the community and asking voters to approve a levy.
  - A majority of voters in our community do not have school-aged children, let alone students enrolled in a TPS school. Yet we continue to have levies overwhelmingly supported by voters.
  - Private school leaders should have to make a similar ask to their parents. They should have to campaign to their parents and then take a vote when considering an increase in tuition – it would only be fair.
  
4. Private schools need to be institutions for all
  - No admission criteria; no restrictions; they need to accept any student that applies to the school.
  - That includes students with special needs, past disciplinary issues, those that require mental health supports, etc.

Governor DeWine recently noted that we recall the original intention of private school vouchers, which was to help students without means to escape failing schools. If a student has never attended a Toledo Public School, how can we say they are escaping a failing school? I feel it would be more accurate to say these families are simply reacting to high-pressure marketing, erroneous misconceptions about public education or religious preference.

Thank you for allowing us to testify and we will answer any questions you may have.