

## **Testimony Before Legislature**

I am Sue Mangan and I live at 3769 Ault Park Ave. Cincinnati, Ohio 45208. I taught in Cincinnati Public Schools for 28 years, my children were educated in the CPS district, my grandchildren attend public schools and my daughter is a public school teacher. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Taxpayers and Ohio's families are fed-up with the ongoing failed experiments in education that waste millions of dollars of public money and neglect our children's educational needs. I realize that education reform is a "long-game" but after decades of experimentation without significant evidence of improvement in outcomes, it is impossible now to believe that reform is really about improving education. There are nefarious, ideological and religious forces at work that want a chunk of the public educational budget, without accountability.

You have been given a huge responsibility to work toward one goal in public education designed by Ohio's constitution: provide an efficient and equitable system of public common schools. As elected legislators entrusted with our public dollars, you have to ask yourselves why continue to push for unproven schemes without evidence that we are using objective, research-based best practices in education?

### **Issues**

- Accountability – The current required testing and school grading system is "failure-oriented." Testing is useful when it helps the teachers, students and parents better understand how to implement plans to address the educational social/emotional needs of the students. It appears now that test scores and grading schools' performance are more about proving that public schools are failing than helping teachers and students do the best they can to succeed.
- While there has been an outsized dependence on testing and grading in public schools, private and parochial schools have been held to minimal scrutiny. Therefore, it is disingenuous at best to suggest that it's the failure of public schools that justifies Ohio's current budget plan to greatly expand the use of public tax money to pay tuition for children going to unaccountable private/parochial school students.
- Public schools are subject to audit and accountability for how the tax dollars they receive are spent. Private/parochial schools can do what they want with the money. In the case of parochial Catholic schools, the Archdiocese decides how the money is spent.

- Both private and parochial schools have the independence to determine working conditions for staff. Religion can be used to justify decisions that would not be legally supported in the public forum. This is a separation of church and state issue.
- Public schools are for everyone. Private/parochial schools choose the children they want. Children who don't fit the profile they want their school to portray do not have to be accepted.
- We can have Ed Choice without paying the tuition of private/parochial schools, and without continuing to waste money on Ohio's failed charter school experiment. Cincinnati Public Schools has had tremendously successful alternative schools within our school district for 45 years. Our school district was the first in the country to offer public Montessori Education for preschool through high school. We have very popular German and other bilingual language schools. We offered STEM schools as a choice even before STEM was an acronym. We have several successful gifted schools. We are respected nationally for our Community Learning Centers model. In spite of this success we are challenged with equitable funding for programs. We consistently pass property tax levies, but are losing state money every year to voucher expansion. It is estimated that we lost over \$6.5 million last year. We can't afford more voucher expansion and loss of funding for our public schools.
- The Ohio Supreme Court has ruled three times that our over reliance on property taxes for public school funding is unconstitutional. Instead of weakening Ohio school districts by forcing them to pick up the tuition tab for families who are driven by ideology and dogma to go to private/parochial schools, Ohio families would be much better served if you found a way to fund public schools adequately, as required by our constitution. Public education deserves nothing less.
- We are facing a teacher shortage in the poorest neighborhoods, in part because we have hamstrung teachers with over-testing. Identifying public schools as failing using tools that are better measures of poverty and instability than measures of good or poor education is demoralizing. How can we you honestly hail private and parochial schools' successful when they are held to different standards? This is disheartening to the committed career, professional educators who know that lawmakers may mean well, but really don't understand the challenges of educating the general public. Listen to and respect

teachers. They are the dedicated soldiers in the field who need to be heard. Hard working dedicated teachers often feel like they are being blamed for all the social ills of society and are at risk of burnout. They need far more support than they are given.

Hopefully you will understand after these hearings that public schools need all the support you can give them, that the testing and school grading system confuses the public without improving education and that siphoning tax dollars from public schools to support private and parochial schools seriously weakens public schools. Thanks for this opportunity to speak.