



# North Royalton City Schools

6579 Royalton Road • North Royalton, Ohio 44133

Phone: (440) 237-8800 • Fax: (440) 582-7336 • [www.northroyaltonsd.org](http://www.northroyaltonsd.org)

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## **House Bill 9 Conference Committee**

### **House Bill 9 Testimony**

#### **Terry Delap, Board of Education Member, North Royalton City School District**

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 conference committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program. My name is Terry DeLap and I am a member of the North Royalton Board of Education.

The North Royalton City Schools is a district of 4,000 students. We proudly serve the communities of North Royalton and Broadview Heights in Northeast Ohio. Our District has Blue Ribbon schools and Hall of Fame schools. At our high school, we have a 96% graduation rate. We offer more than 34 extracurricular activities and clubs and 26 interscholastic sports, numerous Advanced Placement classes and a marching band that has earned a superior rating at the state OMEA Contest for 30 straight years. Students earn National Merit Honors and perfect ACT scores. I can go on about other accolades, but the point is that the North Royalton City Schools, and specifically North Royalton High School, do not underperform. In addition, we have a community that supports our schools by renewing tax levies that are earmarked specifically for the schools and in 2017 approved a \$88.9 million bond issue to construct and renovate our educational facilities. I am here to tell you that communities such as North Royalton and Broadview Heights would not show this kind of support for underperforming schools. To say that North Royalton High School is a failing school because of a very confusing value-added measure on a subcategory of the state report card is simply a misrepresentation of the truth. The state report card system needs to be corrected and I know there are other committees that are working on this. We are all in favor of accountability, but the measures need to be sensible and not based on a complicated and confusing formula like value-added.

As a taxpayer, I know when I vote for local tax issues, it is with the understanding and guarantee that every dollar will stay with the local entity that it is earmarked for, be that the public library,

police and fire, or the schools. The EdChoice voucher system frays the public trust of the election system if locally generated tax dollars for the schools are given to support private schools. The North Royalton City Schools receive approximately \$1,500 in state foundation per student. Our District is consistently one of the lowest in per-pupil spending in Cuyahoga County at just over \$11,000 per student. Much of the differences in the state foundation aid and our spending per pupil is made up of locally generated tax dollars. The EdChoice Voucher program, by giving \$6,000 per pupil to private schools, would mean that \$4,500 locally generated tax dollars specifically passed to go to the operation of the North Royalton City Schools would leave our District and be sent to private schools. It is estimated that \$775,000 per year, or \$3.1 million over a four year period would leave our District. We would have no alternative but to put a levy on the ballot, which would be nearly impossible to pass when the community sees that money is going to fund private tuition vouchers. Our voters are informed citizens that have expressed concern when our legislatures pass legislation diverting \$4,500 of local generated dollars to private schools. Additionally, by funneling public tax dollars to private schools it will cause us to reduce our programs and services and harm the students of the North Royalton City School District. I urge you to maintain the spirit of our levies and keep the dollars within our school buildings for its intended use.

Additionally, as a former small business owner, I organized my company in North Royalton and then Broadview Heights due to the strength of the communities. I know that when large corporations look to relocate or when people look to start a business they want to choose a state and city that has a thriving economy. They are also looking for high-quality schools for their employees. The EdChoice Voucher program, by labeling over 1,200 schools as poor performing, can and will have a negative impact of economic growth in our state and place our state at a disadvantage to neighboring states. I ask that you work together to come up with a solution based on valid measures and reliable data that will not punish local communities and school districts and harm the overall economy of the State of Ohio.

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.