

June 19, 2017

TO: OH Representative Brenner, Chair, House Education & Career Readiness Committee
OH Representative Fedor, Ranking member, Education & Career Readiness
Committee

FR: Kathleen Knight Abowitz, educator and citizen, Oxford, Ohio

RE: HB 200 Opportunity Scholarship Program
Opponent Testimony

Thank you for taking the time to consider testimony from citizens about HB 200. As a citizen with advanced degrees in education and over 20 years working in educational policy research areas, I draw upon this experience, but more importantly, upon confirmed research evidence to justify and explain my position *against* HB 200.

The first and most important flaw in HB 200 is that it funds the expansion of voucher programs in Ohio which have been proven to have zero positive and negative impact upon student achievement. In other words, these programs don't deliver on their promises to improve education for all children. There have now been several large-scale, high quality studies which show the negative impact of these programs on student achievement, *especially in math*. Chris Lubienski, professor of educational policy at Indiana University, has been studying the impact of educational choice policies for many years. "There is no evidence that vouchers work" as a means to increase the achievement of students, says Dr. Lubienski. Lubienski summarizes the current evidence on this very brief but informative video (1 of 9 in a series of videos here):
<http://www.raiseyourhandtexas.org/school-vouchers/dr-chris-lubienski-vouchers-hurt-texas-vulnerable-kids/>

How can advocates of HB 200 claim to be helping the most academically disadvantaged children when high quality research studies have shown they do not achieve gains in achievement based on test scores and other measures?

The second flaw in all voucher programs is that they use public funds to send children to private schools, which segregate children by race, class, and religion. While this has been approved by the Supreme Court of the United States, this policy is bad for our republic. Our public schools are the training grounds for citizenship, among the only places in our republic where diverse citizens can learn to work together in a non-sectarian way. Private schools, by design in some cases and unintentionally in other cases, segregate, typically by race and social class, but also often by religion (as many private schools are religiously-based). Citizens of *all* religious viewpoints and those with no religion learn to understand one another and work together toward the betterment of all. Using public tax dollars to fund private education is a poor policy for training citizens who can not just tolerate but work with those of a diverse range of religious viewpoints.

The third flaw in HB 200 is that it renders those private schools that receive public tax dollars in the form of tuition unaccountable to legislature and taxpayers. Our legislatures for many years now have been ramping up accountability policies, to make sure that public school teachers and principals are delivering on providing an excellent education for all children. Voucher programs do *not* hold those private schools accountable. Those schools do not have to meet testing goals. They do not get graded by the state. They do not have to be audited by the state. Quite simply, private schools are government-constructed loopholes of educational accountability. They set up a different set of rules for private education providers. How is that fair or just?