

Written Testimony
Before the
House Education and Career Readiness Committee
Joseph Spiccia
Superintendent, Wickliffe City School District
November 27, 2017

Chairman Brenner, and Honorable Members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for allowing me to address you today. My name is Joseph Spiccia. I am the Superintendent of the Wickliffe City School District. I also serve as the Chair of the Lake/Geauga Superintendents' Collaborative, which includes all of the public school districts in Lake and Geauga Counties and serves approximately 45,000 students. Julie Ramos, the Director of Strategic Innovation in the Wickliffe Schools and Dr. Michael Hanlon, the Superintendent of the Chardon Local School District have provided additional input into this testimony.

The introduction of House Bill 200 is troubling to the Wickliffe City School District and the Collaborative. Current funding of public education is not adequate, as evidenced by the "funding cap." For example in Wickliffe we are calculated at \$3.7 million in state funding. Due to the cap we received \$2.3 million a difference of \$1.4 million. Further, with the phase out of

the Tangible Personal Property reimbursement, the Wickliffe City School District is seeing a further erosion of funds. Specifically, in FY15, the district received \$2.1 million from Tangible Personal Property Tax reimbursements, representing 10% of our total budget. In FY17, the district received \$1.6 million, representing 6.6% of our total budget. As the phase out continues, the district will continue to see a reduction of funding from the State. Other districts in our collaborative face similar funding concerns.

For example, in FY15 the Chardon Local School district, in neighboring Geauga County, received \$977,841 in the form of a Tangible Personal Property Tax Supplement Payment. This represented approximately 3.14% of the district's entire General Fund expenditures in the same year. In FY18, the district receives no supplemental payment. In November 2017, voters in the Chardon district rejected an operating levy that proposed to address the shortfall due to the elimination of this revenue. This loss in revenue is further exacerbated by a state share that continues to reduce per-pupil support to the district (\$1270/pupil in FY 2017). Among the concerns stated by voters following the loss was skepticism that the Legislature will continue to reduce district funding as long as residents continue to absorb the reductions through voted property tax increases.

The expansion of vouchers will further erode funding to public school districts who are already underfunded. While the provision has been made that school districts will not see direct deductions from district state funding amounts, it is reasonable to assume that the proposed voucher program will further reduce the collective amount available to fund the PK-12 budget at the state level. As a result, public school districts will see an overall indirect reduction in state funding amounts that will continue to impact their financial outlook.

This bill expands vouchers to students in all school districts, regardless of the academic report card rating of their school building or school district. In fact, there is no evidence that the current voucher system has been effective in improving student performance. Students in public schools continue to outperform students who are currently receiving EdChoice voucher dollars. It is concerning that we would expand a program that has not proven to be effective at a time when there are not adequate resources for public education in Ohio.

It is also troubling that in a time when the development of successive biennial budgets that meet all identified needs is, at best, a challenging task, that the proposed legislation would contribute excess funds to education accounts for participating students. This creation of private funding would occur in a time when the message

from our elected officials is that they share the concern that we are unable to adequately fund public education in Ohio due to dwindling resources. It seems counterintuitive that the Legislature would approve private funding accounts for individual students as opposed to continuing to enhance the performance of our statewide educational system.

We, and on behalf of the L/G Collaborative urge the committee to not support this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns.