

Chairperson Brenner , Ranking Member Ingram and Members of the Senate Committee on Primary and Secondary Education, good afternoon. My name is Joe Spiccia and I am the Superintendent of the Wickliffe City School District. With me today is Julie Ramos, Director of Strategic Innovation for the Wickliffe Schools. We appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony in opposition to the proposed expansion of vouchers for Ohio's private schools.

We begin with several questions for your consideration:

- A. Is it reasonable to simply give public money to private organizations without holding them accountable?
- B. Is it reasonable to have expectations for one system but not another?
- C. Is it reasonable to expand vouchers and not fully fund public schools?
- D. Is it reasonable to ask the general assembly to act in a non-partisan manner, support the majority of students and families in Ohio and act in their best interests?
- E. Does Ohio have the ability to fund multiple parallel educational systems?

Today, we are going focus our attention on accountability measures as they may impact the expansion of vouchers.

We make three recommendations with regard to accountability measures and school vouchers:

- Financial audits are required for public schools. We are recommending that if vouchers are expanded throughout the state that schools receiving them have to meet all of the same reporting requirements public schools currently face. In the days in which private school parents paid tuition, financial accountability rested with parents, now that public money is being given to private organizations, the tax payer has a stake in how their tax dollars are being spent. As we learned from ECOT without a level of financial accountability consequences could be negative for the taxpayers of the State of Ohio. You will likely recall ECOT defrauded the State of Ohio out of almost \$200 million.
- Public schools have dozens of regulations related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, licensure, and have significant reporting responsibilities. Academic requirements and regulations to which public schools are held to account should apply to all schools accepting public money. For example:
 - Financial Literacy, Venereal Disease Instruction, Opioid Prevention, CPR/AED, Dating Violence Prevention, Four Credits of English, Four Credits of Math (including Algebra II or equivalent), Three Credits of Science, Health, Physical Education, Fine Arts, World Language, Technology, Computer Science, College Credit Plus Offerings, Appropriate Educational Program for Students with Disabilities...
- Like public schools, from an enrollment perspective, schools receiving vouchers, should have to accept all students who choose to enroll and once enrolled those schools should not be able to withdraw them because they do not meet a particular competency, have disciplinary issues, have attendance issues, or do not espouse to the school's core values/beliefs. Public schools have to accept all students that reside within the district's boundaries regardless of mitigating factors and must provide an appropriate education to all of them. In addition, if a public school does not have capacity for additional students

and additional students arrive, the public school must accept them and provide an appropriate education program for them.

To be clear, we do not oppose school choice. Parents have the right to choose, Private Religious Schools- Denomination of their choosing Private Secular Schools Home School, Charter Schools. Public Schools... We oppose the expansion of vouchers. In Ohio, Vouchers already exist... Public money transports private school students, pays for special education services, public grant money is provided to private schools, autism scholarships, equipment, technology, textbooks. In fact, private school students who live in Wickliffe already receive more money from the state than do public school students in the Wickliffe City School District.

Over 70% of students in Ohio who already receive or will become eligible to receive vouchers, never attended public schools. Expansion of vouchers equates to a tax subsidy. As proposed, vouchers become the "Schools' Choice" not parent/family choice because private schools have the option to accept or not accept students, to reject students who may need additional supports, present disciplinary problems, and/or do not match the private schools' core values and beliefs.

We oppose vouchers because school vouchers do not lead to improved academic outcomes. Research demonstrates just the opposite is true. In Ohio, the Cincinnati Enquirer did a comparison study between voucher and public-school outcomes, the study found 88% of public schools outperformed voucher schools. This fact comes from an analysis of 2.5 million test scores. Students that previously attended voucher schools who return to public schools found their academic performance improve. Studies in Ohio, Arkansas, Washington D.C., Alabama, Indiana, Louisiana demonstrate this fact.

We oppose vouchers, but if voucher expansion does occur, at least take the necessary steps to hold schools receiving vouchers to a standard of accountability equal to that of public schools.

Thank you for your time. We are happy to respond to questions you may have.