

House Bill 11: Opposition Testimony

4/24/2023

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Traci Cottrell, a lifelong Ohio resident, 27-year educator, present and former student of Ohio's Public School System from kindergarten through my Master's degree and beyond. I wouldn't have wanted my education any other way.

My public education in Canton City Schools, The University of Akron, Kent State University, and The Ohio State University helped me become the person I am today. I was taught to think critically and holistically. My education in Canton is the reason I became a teacher. I am, unequivocally, an advocate for public schools with elected Boards of Education.

As a classroom teacher, I have seen the impact that vouchers have had on schools siphoning money from public school districts causing Boards to scramble to reduce their budgets. These budget cuts impact the students with reductions to vital programs and courses.

With 90% of our school children attending public schools, how is it fair that communities elect Boards and vote on levies, then the money is stripped from those schools by the state to support vouchers for a small number of students in those communities?

In 1997, Ohio's school funding was found unconstitutional with the DeRolph decision. Judge Scott Gwin came to Hartford Middle School in Canton to talk with staff and students about being a judge. One of the decisions he talked about was DeRolph. He told us the issue with school funding came before the courts three times, and all three times it was the same decision: schools funding is unconstitutional. He also told us that the third time was the last and the court said it was up to the legislature to fix it.

It took over 20 years for the Ohio Legislature to fund Ohio schools fairly and constitutionally. Now, many in this body plan to drain our public schools by supporting more vouchers. House Bill 11 is estimated to \$1.1 billion dollars a year. How is it that this is even a plan when most of Ohio's students attend public schools?

A final point is schools who receive vouchers don't have to accept all students. I know because I have experienced this in my district. When I was in Canton, we had many students come back to our schools because we are a public school and turned no one away. Schools who receive vouchers don't have to follow the same standards as public schools.

In the end, vouchers strip millions from our public schools, cause those schools to cut programs and courses, and voucher schools don't play by the same rules as public schools do.

I am urging this body to vote no on this bill.

Traci C. Cottrell