

## **Jocelyn Rhynard, Dayton School Board Vice-President and Coalition Steering Committee Member, Has Compelling Article Published in Dayton Daily News**

Ms. Rhynard's thoughtful article counters one published earlier in Dayton Daily News. It supports the challenge to the constitutionality of the EdChoice voucher program.

### **VOICES: Vouchers dismantle the promise of public education**

IDEAS & VOICES

By Jocelyn Rhynard

7 hours ago

Editor's Note: Chris Wilson, founder and trustee of the Wilson Sheehan Foundation, wrote a defense of EdChoice on Tuesday.

The myth we tell ourselves that public schools are failing our students is based on the dismantling of the very system we blame.

Last month, 100 public school districts across Ohio, including Dayton Public Schools, filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the EdChoice school voucher program. The Ohio Constitution clearly directs the state to establish "a (emphasis added) thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the state." By funneling taxpayer dollars through the EdChoice voucher system, Ohio is in direct violation of the constitutional directive to fund a single educational system and instead has created multiple inefficient systems of education and weakened education for all Ohio students.

Just eight years ago, Ohio ranked 16th in the nation for schools, according to EdWeek. At that same time, the General Assembly forked over more than \$70 million to the EdChoice voucher system. Since then, Ohio has fallen to 27th in the rankings and wasted more than \$163 million dollars in 2021 for the privilege of doing so. There is no evidence that sending public tax dollars to nonpublic entities has resulted in any way an improvement in Ohio's education system, yet the state continues to waste millions of taxpayer dollars on a program that unravels the promise of public education for all. To date, Ohio has wasted close to \$900 million on this single program.

The financial cost of the EdChoice vouchers doesn't end with that price tag. When millions of dollars are sent to private entities, our public schools are left with fewer funds and resources to accomplish the mission of educating every child. Public districts still have the same costs for building and property maintenance and staff salaries. With a reduced budget, school districts have increasingly depended on raising local property taxes to make up for budget shortfalls. One of the main points of the lawsuit is that the private school voucher program exacerbates

the unconstitutional over-reliance on local property taxes in the state's funding formula for all public schools.

Adding to the increased financial burden on public schools is the state mandate to place the burden of school transportation squarely on the shoulders of public districts. In Dayton and across Ohio, public school districts by law must provide or pay for transportation for students in the district, regardless of their school enrollment. Nonpublic schools get to pass their transportation bill onto public districts, who pay millions of dollars to maintain staff, drivers, buses and transportation facilities for public and nonpublic students alike.

EdChoice vouchers also dismantle the very promise of the public good of K-12 education. Every child in Ohio has the right to be educated, and public schools welcome every student, but nonpublic schools can and do turn away students every day.

Nonpublic schools are not legally obligated to disclose their financial information to taxpayers. Nonpublic schools can and do discriminate against students based on test scores. Nonpublic schools can and do discriminate against students based on disability. Nonpublic schools can and do discriminate against students who identify as LGBTQIA+.

We deserve a strong public education system that is constitutionally funded and fiscally responsible. Continuing to send millions of taxpayer dollars to nonpublic schools is bad for students, bad for taxpayers, and bad for education in Ohio.

Jocelyn Rhynard is the Vice President of the Dayton Public Schools Board of Education.

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