

Former Ohio Teacher of the Year Maureen Reedy: The “public” must be put back into public education.

Maureen Reedy is a passionate advocate of public education. She taught in a suburban school district for 30 years. Her appeal is for all to support the voucher litigation. She authorized the use of her article in this post.

The “public” must be put back into public education in Ohio.

Instead of pushing current legislation like Senate Bill 11 that would take one billion dollars from public schools to fund private and religious school vouchers, Ohio’s lawmakers need to uphold Ohio’s constitutional promise to keep public tax dollars out of private schools.

We Ohioans love our public schools.

Most of us attended neighborhood public schools, which continue to be the schools of choice for our children and grandchildren. Our public schools are community hubs that educate over 90% (1.7 million) of Ohio’s children; students come together from all backgrounds to learn and build understanding and acceptance of others.

Public education in Ohio is a 172-year-old promise, created on the constitutional belief that public schools are the fundamental foundation for the public good; a necessary tool to build an educated democracy and sustainable futures for our children in these challenging times.

Why then, are Ohio lawmakers churning out private school voucher legislation that takes hundreds of millions of public-school tax dollars per year from our neighborhood schools to pay for private and religious school education?

School vouchers violate the Ohio Constitution. That is why over 210 public school districts have filed the “Vouchers Hurt Ohio” lawsuit challenging EdChoice Vouchers for their unconstitutional use of state school funds for private school tuition.

Public dollars should not fund private and religious school tuition.

Ohio’s constitution has some of the strongest language in the country specifying that state funds are for public (common) schools only.

“The General Assembly ... will secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the state; but no religious or other sect, or sects, shall ever have any exclusive right to, or control of, any part of the school funds of this state,” Article VI, Section 2 of the Ohio Constitution reads.

Just as Ohio's founders intended, there is not one single word in the Ohio Constitution that allows the use of state dollars for private and religious school tuition.

Ohio’s first attempt at school vouchers began as a temporary pilot in 2006, and is now a refund and

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rebate school privatization program that reimburses families who never intended to send their children to public schools.

The "Runaway Voucher Train" must be stopped in Ohio's State House.

Private school vouchers have ballooned out of control, initially taking away \$42 million of public-school funding in 2008 and expanding to \$350 million in 2022.

Senate Bill 11 has been introduced to make every child in Ohio eligible for a private EdChoice school voucher, which could immediately take a billion dollars out of the finite supply of state school funds for over 90% of Ohio's children whose families choose public schools.

When we let vouchers siphon funds from our public schools, our kids do not have the resources they need to succeed, and that hurts us all.

EdChoice Vouchers for private schools means more school levies and higher property taxes. State funding for private schools is not only unconstitutional, it is unsustainable for Ohio taxpayers.

This brings us full circle to the crucial choice for the future of public education in Ohio. Public schools open their doors to children of all ability levels; welcoming students from diverse religions, cultures and nationalities.

Overall, Ohio's public schools continue to outperform private voucher schools.

Public schools mirror the rising challenges of society today. Teachers are not just teaching, but also taking care of rising numbers of children in crises with mental and physical health challenges, which prevent them from learning. Instead of divesting in public education, Ohio needs to re-invest in our public schools.

Let's face it. The only way to stop this runaway school voucher train is through a lawsuit.

Thousands of Ohio citizens have tried to get legislators to put the brakes on EdChoice vouchers and fulfill their oath to the state's constitution: state school funding is solely for Ohio's public-school districts.

The majority of Ohio's legislators continue to steer our children and families in the wrong direction.

Vouchers Hurt Ohio.

The numbers are growing.

The movement is strong.

JOIN over 210 Public School Districts in our VOUCHERS HURT OHIO LAWSUIT TODAY:

vouchershurtohio.com

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Maureen Reedy is a former Ohio Teacher of the Year and Upper Arlington City School District Teacher of the Year, retired after a 30-year career as a public-school teacher. She is a founding member of Public Education Partners, the largest nonprofit, all-volunteer Public Education advocacy group in Ohio.