

All Ohio school-age children have the constitutional right to attend the public common schools in their district of residence at taxpayers' expense. Period! Taxpayers' support for private schools is not permitted.

A main talking point by the education privatization crowd is that parents have the right to choose where their children attend school at taxpayers' expense. A dogmatic Ohio Senator justifying school vouchers for wealthy parents said something to the effect that it is about time these high-income individuals get some of their taxes back for private school education.

To be clear, parents in Ohio have always had the right to opt out of the public common school system at their own expense. Article VI, section 2 of the Ohio Constitution requires the General Assembly to secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools but does not require public school attendance so long as parents provide for a legal alternative.

Article VI, section 3 requires the General Assembly to make provision by law for the organization, administration, and control of the public school system supported by public funds. Nothing here about supporting private schools with public funds.

All schools that receive public funds should be governed by a publicly-elected board of education and operated under the organization, administration and control of the state as required by Article VI, section 3.

A constitutional amendment would be necessary for public money being allocated to private schooling. There is no constitutional authority for a return of tax funds to individuals to support their private choice of private education. Neither is there constitutional authority for direct tax support for private schools.

Article VI, section 2: The General Assembly shall make such provisions, by taxation, or otherwise, as, with the income arising from the school trust fund, 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 3: Provision shall be made by law for the organization, administration and control of the public school system of the state supported by public funds: provided, that each school district embraced wholly or in part within any city shall have the power by referendum vote to determine for itself the number of members and the organization of the district board of education, and provision shall be made by law for the exercise of this power by such school districts.