

News Release from the Ohio Coalition for Equity and Adequacy of School Funding regarding a bill introduced in the Ohio House of Representatives designed to intimidate school districts.

The attached News Release responds to Representative Jamie Callender's HB671. This bill is an admission that the State of Ohio cannot efficaciously defend the EdChoice Voucher program in court. Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program is a welfare program, primarily for those who can already afford tuition to private schools.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 4, 2026

**Vouchers Hurt Ohio Coalition of 330-plus School Districts
Denounce Rep. Callender's Bullying and Intimidation Tactics**
*Coalition Stands Ready to Challenge Any Legislation that Withholds Funding
from Districts that Protect Ohioans' Constitutional Rights*

COLUMBUS - Members of the Vouchers Hurt Ohio coalition of more than 330 school districts challenging the constitutionality of the harmful \$1.7 billion EdChoice private school voucher scheme today denounced a proposal by state Rep. Jamie Callender to punish public schools for joining the lawsuit by withholding public tax dollars from the districts and the public school children they serve.

"This appears to be another attempt to intimidate and bully. Mr. Callender is a lawyer. He should know better. The school districts have a long-standing constitutional right to pursue legal action on behalf of their students," said Eric Brown, former Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court and chairman of the Vouchers Hurt Ohio Steering Committee. "The Coalition stands behind its members and is prepared to immediately challenge any legislation that withholds funding from districts that protect Ohioans' constitutional rights."

"Mr. Callender is saying to school districts if you are advocating for your students by challenging the constitutionality of EdChoice private school vouchers, then you will be punished by losing tax dollars Ohioans have paid to support public schools. Think about that. He is actually saying, we will fund one set of public schools that remain silent and withhold funding from another set of schools that refuse to remain silent," said William L. Phillis with the Ohio Coalition for Equity & Adequacy of School Funding and Vouchers Hurt Ohio.

"Mr. Callender's proposal is dangerous because it is not just about vouchers. It would remove the ability for school districts to challenge unconstitutional legislation. It would open the door to block other public entities like cities and townships and counties that receive state funding from their constitutional right to appeal to the court system," said Jocelyn Rhynard, an elected Board of Education member for the Dayton City Schools and a VHO Steering Committee member.

"We have more than 330 school districts in our coalition, and it is growing as more and more superintendents, treasurers, and board members in public districts feel the harmful impact of the legislature siphoning away \$1.7 billion for private school vouchers that benefit primarily wealthy families and religious schools," said Nneka Slade Jackson, an elected Board President for Richmond Heights Local Schools and a VHO Steering Committee member.

"These bullying tactics failed when State Auditor Keith Faber tried to intimidate our participating districts. Our coalition's membership grew. Franklin County Judge Jaiza Page ruled the EdChoice private school voucher program is unconstitutional on three counts. Our case is now before the 10th District Court of Appeals. We have a solid case, and it is clear that the anti-public school, pro-voucher crowd is sweating," said Dan Heintz, an elected Board of Education member for the Cleveland Heights University Heights School District, a teacher in the Chardon Local School District, and a VHO Steering Committee member.

The Ohio Coalition for Equity & Adequacy of School Funding is working with Vouchers Hurt Ohio, a growing coalition of more than 330 public school districts that have come together to sue the state over the unconstitutional and harmful private school voucher program.

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