

The Coalition/Vouchers Hurt Ohio (VHO) response to Jamie Callender's walking back (part way back) on HB671, the Bully Bill.

After a storm of defiant opposition to the Bully Bill, Representative Callender publicly stated that he would reduce the penalty to Coalition/VHO school district members. Attached is a News Release stating the Coalition/VHO's response to the reduced penalty gesture. HB671 is an unconstitutional threat to school districts and is unconstitutional regardless of the level of financial extortion.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 16, 2026

Vouchers Hurt Ohio Issue Statement

Regarding Callender's Backtracking on Public School Bully Bill

COLUMBUS - Vouchers Hurt Ohio representatives issued statements today after state Rep. Jamie Callender backtracked on his position regarding his proposed "Public School Bully Bill." After intense public pressure, Callender told a reporter he was going to amend his proposal from withholding *all* public tax dollars from the state to public schools that had joined the Vouchers Hurt Ohio to withholding the fees the districts are paying to fund the lawsuit.

A growing coalition of more than 330 public schools has joined Vouchers Hurt Ohio to challenge the unconstitutional EdChoice private school voucher program that will cost taxpayers \$1.7 billion in the next two years. Franklin County Judge Jaiza Page ruled in June, 2025 that EdChoice violates the Ohio Constitution on three counts.

The statements from Vouchers Hurt Ohio:

"The bill will still penalize school districts and continues to be unconstitutional. Whether it is a dime or \$1 million, it's unconstitutional. The legislature should be listening to Judge Page, and address the unconstitutional EdChoice private school voucher program that is siphoning away \$1.7 billion from underfunded, shortchanged public schools and public school children," said Eric Brown, former Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court and former Columbus City Schools Board of Education member.

"During the budget process, the legislature decides to fund public schools at a specific amount to meet their Constitutional obligation to provide a "thorough and efficient education" to Ohio's students. They cannot pass a budget and months later reduce that amount just because they don't like the idea that public schools are challenging an unconstitutional alternative system of schools that will take in a whopping \$1.7 billion in the next two years. If they pass this bill, we will immediately move to challenge it with an injunction, and we will win because it is blatantly unconstitutional," said Mark Wallach, an attorney with McCarthy, Lebit, Crystal, Liffman, who is heading the litigation challenging the EdChoice voucher program.

"Rep. Callender presents his proposed legislation as though the coalition is somehow wasting school funds, using it on frivolous litigation. Our lawsuit uncovered a blatant problem in the way state lawmakers continue to inadequately and inequitably fund our public schools. Judge Page has already found this program, EdChoice, to be unconstitutional. State lawmakers should be appreciative that we have uncovered this unconstitutional issue so they can fix it," said William L. Phillis, with Vouchers Hurt Ohio and the Ohio Coalition for Equity & Adequacy of School Funding.

Callender backtracked in an interview that can be viewed [here](#).

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