

CC4308 4.21.26 Tuesday

Akron Public Schools to hold a forum on vouchers.

Attached below is an article regarding a forum on school vouchers and school funding scheduled for April 21

Akron Public Schools to host forum on vouchers, funding and 'devastating' effects on public education

Summit County school districts, Akron Mayor Shammus Malik and state lawmakers will discuss EdChoice vouchers, school funding and proposed legislation Tuesday evening at Firestone Community Learning Center

by Carissa Woytach

April 20, 2026

Akron Public Schools will host a community forum Tuesday at Firestone Community Learning Center with school districts throughout Summit County to highlight what they say are threats to public education.

Elected officials who represent districts throughout the county, along with Akron Mayor Shammus Malik and state legislators, will provide attendees with information on school funding, EdChoice vouchers and proposed state legislation that could impact public schools.

Participating districts include Akron, Copley-Fairlawn, Cuyahoga Falls, Hudson, Manchester, Mogadore, Stow-Munroe Falls, Tallmadge and Twinsburg. Doors will open at 5 p.m., with the program to run from 6 to 7:30 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

"In Ohio, we have always had local control for our education ... and now the state is coming in and placing all these mandates and restrictions, which are, in many cases, moving local control to state control and having a devastating effect on public education," said Akron Education Association President Pat Shipe.

Voucher costs continue to rise.

Shipe said Tuesday's event is not political but is meant to highlight the importance of public education as a backbone of the community — and the devastation that can occur when it is destabilized.

Those threats, Shipe said, include the expanded EdChoice voucher program, which allows the vast majority of Ohio families to use a state-funded voucher to send their child to a private or religious school.

According to the most recent state report card, about 3,400 students in Akron used EdChoice vouchers to attend a non-public school for the 2024-25 school year rather than attend APS.

That same school year, the state spent more than \$1 billion on vouchers.

A coalition of public districts challenged the program's legality in 2022. Akron Public Schools joined the lawsuit in 2024.

Last year, a Franklin County Common Pleas judge ruled that EdChoice was unconstitutional. The state has appealed the ruling.

School funding issue at core

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School funding as a whole has also been an issue for districts — and for Mary Outley, the Akron Public Schools superintendent.

In her State of the Akron Public Schools speech last month, Outley said the district spends \$3 million a year to transport Akron children to non-APS schools. Shipe said it's because public school districts must provide busing for students attending private, religious and charter schools or incur fines from the state.

More financial challenges are ahead. APS is preparing for \$11 million in budget cuts for the 2026-27 school year — and for deeper cuts in the 2027-28 and 2028-29 school years — due to the way Ohio public school funding is split between local taxes and state dollars.

The Fair School Funding plan, first approved by state legislators in 2021, was meant to rectify an overreliance on local property taxes.

In the most recent state budget, the mechanisms used to allocate funds to local schools based on the cost to educate students were not updated.

Beyond the state's funding formula, a push to totally eliminate property taxes would further slash school funding.

State proposes building capacity change

Shipe also highlighted Ohio Senate Bill 311, which, if passed, would require school districts to offer to sell or lease buildings at under 60% capacity to a charter or nonpublic school. The proposal does not apply to career-technical facilities, Shipe said, but would impact buildings that serve high-need or medically fragile students, like an autism unit which has a much lower enrollment cap than a standard classroom.

The bill remains in the Senate Education Committee.

"This is an informational forum to give the facts concerning issues around some of this legislation, to inform the public and to give them some kind of idea on how they can advocate for public schools and what their next steps would be," Shipe said.

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