

Pastor Ben Huelskamp, Catholic school graduate, in a June 2 Ohio Capital Journal discloses why he opposes Ohio's private school voucher program.

Dr. Huelskamp's article is very compelling against the use of public tax money to support the EdChoice voucher scheme. An extremely important paragraph in his article suggests that the voucher advocates behind the voucher movement are not the recipients of vouchers but the "well-funded interests who benefit financially and politically from a system that keeps public schools underfunded and undefended."

We should also be honest about who is pushing this agenda and why. The loudest, most politically organized voucher advocates in Ohio aren't struggling families looking for alternatives. They're well-funded interests who benefit financially and politically from a system that keeps public schools underfunded and undefended.

Some of the most fierce opponents of the EdChoice voucher project are those who had an extensive private school education.

I went to Catholic school for 13 years. I still oppose Ohio's private school voucher program

The Rev. Ben Huelskamp

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"No child will be denied a Catholic education."

That was the promise I heard throughout my childhood, a commitment by the Catholic schools I attended that no family would be turned away because they couldn't afford tuition. It wasn't a marketing slogan. It was a moral declaration: that access to a values-grounded education shouldn't depend on a family's bank account.

My parents believed that. They sacrificed for it. They paid tuition out of pocket while also paying the taxes that funded Ohio's public schools. They never complained about that arrangement.

In fact, my parents and others like them who made the same choice acknowledged freely that a voucher program would have made their lives easier. Yet, they chose to carry that cost anyway, because they understood something that Ohio's voucher advocates seem to have forgotten: a commitment to your own children's education doesn't require defunding someone else's.

I'm an ordained minister and pastor now. I still carry the values those schools gave me. And I am firmly, unequivocally opposed to Ohio's school voucher program.

Here's the truth that voucher advocates don't want examined too closely: this debate was never really about parents like mine. It was never about helping working families stretch toward a private education for their kids. The numbers make that plain.

Roughly 90% of Ohio's EdChoice voucher scholarships are going to students who were already enrolled in private school, meaning this public money is simply reimbursing families for a choice they've already made. That's not expanding access. That's a subsidy.

And it comes directly at the expense of the 90% of Ohio students who attend public schools.

Every dollar redirected through a voucher is a dollar that doesn't reach the speech therapist, the school counselor, the science lab, or the building in desperate need of renovation where most kids in a community still show up to every morning.

Ohio began a Fair School Funding Plan that legislators failed to fully implement. Vouchers don't fill that gap, they widen it. Certain politicians are prioritizing private school students with more public dollars per pupil than the local public school receives.

We need to call that what it is: theft from our children.

If you live outside Columbus, Cleveland, or Cincinnati, the voucher math becomes even more absurd.

Proponents love to talk about “school choice” as though choice is universally available. But choice requires options, and in rural Ohio, in the small towns and scattered townships that make up most of our state, there often aren’t any. Many rural counties have no private schools at all. When voucher money leaves those districts, it doesn’t help a child find a better option. It simply vanishes from a community that can’t afford to lose it.

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“School choice,” in practice, often means the school’s choice: private institutions can select which students they accept, aren’t subject to the same curriculum standards or financial audits as public schools, and employ teachers held to lower certification requirements. The accountability flows one direction toward public schools while the money flows the other.

My Catholic education gave me something I treasure. It was made possible by a community that meant it when they said no child would be left out and by parents who were willing to sacrifice so I could be part of it. None of it required draining resources from a kid in Guernsey County or Champaign County whose only school is already doing more with less.

Ohio can do better. Fund our public schools as though every child in every county deserves a real education. Not a voucher. A school.

Rev. Dr. Ben Huelskamp is the Executive Director of [LOVEboldly](#) and the Pastor of [Blue Ocean Faith Columbus](#)