

Attorney Dave Fournier: School levies are natural result of Ohio's voucher program

Mr. Fournier's article, published August 12, 2026, in the Toledo Blade, is a strong statement of condemnation of Ohio's EdChoice voucher program. It is being used in this venue to support the Coalition/VHO position against the State's EdChoice voucher plan. This is NOT an endorsement of his candidacy for State Representative in House District 44.

Attorney Fournier is a product of the private school system. It is obvious that attorney Fournier has read and understands Article VI, section 2 of the Ohio Constitution.

In his article, attorney Fournier eloquently connects the voucher scheme with the property tax problem.

To the editor: School levies are natural result of Ohio's voucher program

DAVE FOURNIER AUG 12, 2026 6:38 AM

This fall, Sylvania Schools will ask voters to approve an earned income-tax levy, and the district has laid out what would happen if it fails: half-day kindergarten, the end of high school busing, deep cuts to special education, and fewer support staff. It is a sobering list, but is not evidence that Sylvania Schools have been careless. It is the bill that comes due when the state stops paying its share.

According to Policy Matters Ohio, over the current two-year state budget, Ohio's legislature underfunded public schools by more than \$2.75 billion —the difference between what the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan promised and what lawmakers actually appropriated. In that same budget, the state committed roughly \$2.4 billion to private-school vouchers. The public system that educates about 90 percent of Ohio's children was shortchanged, while a parallel private system was expanded.

That is a choice.

It was made in Columbus, but the consequences are felt in Sylvania and in every other district in the state.

If you are angry about your property taxes and income taxes climbing, this is a large part of why. When the state pulls dollars out of public education, districts are left with one option: come back to local voters and ask for more. The underfunding of our public schools and your rising tax bill are not two separate grievances. They are cause and effect. Every levy on your ballot is, in part, a bill forwarded from the statehouse.

Here is what should trouble every taxpayer, whether or not you have children in the schools: a large share of that voucher money is not helping low-income families. It is subsidizing families who were already paying for private school tuition. When Ohio made vouchers universal in 2023, it removed income limits. The year that change took effect, the state handed out nearly 69,000 new expansion vouchers, but private school enrollment grew by only about 3,700 students. In other words, roughly 65,000 of those vouchers went to families who were already sending their children to private school.

Let me be clear — I am not against private education. I am a product of it. I received an excellent education from Ladyfield Catholic School through eighth grade, then St. John's Jesuit, and I am grateful for it. But my parents paid full tuition to make that choice, in addition to their property and income taxes.

Ohio has a constitutional obligation to provide a "thorough and efficient" system of public schools for every child in the state. We do not have a constitutional obligation to subsidize private tuition for families who choose, as mine did, to opt out of the public system.

The accountability gap is just as stark. Public schools have to admit and keep every child. They must serve every student with a disability, and meet state academic standards. They open their books: in any

public district, you can find exactly how much is spent on administration versus the classroom, because it is reported.

Private schools accepting voucher dollars operate under none of these requirements. They can select their students. They are not bound by the special-education obligations public schools carry, and there is no comparable public accounting for how those voucher dollars are spent. If you believe your local district is mismanaging its resources, you can vote for new board members to right the ship. You have no such oversight over the private schools cashing voucher checks.

I've spent my career as a benefits attorney advising the trustees of pension and health funds — people entrusted with other people's money and held to a strict duty to manage it in the best interest of the people it belongs to. That is the standard I believe public money should meet, wherever it goes.

Local taxpayers are being asked to carry a burden Columbus created — shortchanging public schools while expanding subsidies for families who never needed them. I am not asking to end vouchers. I am asking to return the program to what it was before the 2023 universal expansion, with income limits and real eligibility standards, so that public dollars go first to the schools that educate the vast majority of Ohio's children.

That is the obligation Columbus has walked away from. It is the one I am running to restore.

Mr. Fournier, of Whitehouse, is an employee-benefits attorney and is the Democratic candidate for State Representative for Ohio House District 44.

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