

## Ohio Education Association

### Voucher Program Expansion – OEA Opposed

**Status:** Multiple Bills

Several bills in the Ohio legislature propose massive expansions in eligibility for school vouchers. Voucher programs use public taxpayer money to pay for private school tuition for students. This comes at the expense of the approximately 90% of students who attend Ohio's public schools. **OEA opposes the expansion of voucher eligibility or the creation of new voucher programs.** Rather than expanding voucher eligibility, now is the time to fully implement the Fair School Funding Plan to meet the needs of Ohio's students.

Legislative proposals to expand voucher eligibility include:

- **HB 33-** Governor DeWine's executive budget proposal calls for an increase in the eligibility for the income-based EdChoice voucher program from 250% of federal poverty guidelines (\$75,000 for a family of four) to 400% (120,000 for a family of four).
- **SB 11-** Sponsored by Senator Sandra O'Brien (R- Rome), SB 11 allows for universal eligibility under the EdChoice voucher program. All K-12 students, regardless of family income, would be eligible for vouchers. The bill also increases the homeschooling tax credit from \$250 to \$2,000. The fiscal note on the bill estimates an annual cost of \$536 million a year just to pay the cost of vouchers for students who currently attend private schools.
- **HB 11-** Sponsored by Representatives Riordan McClain (R- Nevada) and Marilyn John (R- Shelby), HB 11 is a universal voucher bill that would make all K-12 students eligible for a new "backpack scholarship." If enacted, the bill would provide funds for tuition at private schools and for homeschooling. Unlike current voucher programs, HB 11 would pay for tuition at both chartered and non-chartered private schools. Largely unregulated non-chartered schools are not eligible to participate in EdChoice. The fiscal note for HB 11 estimated a cost of \$1.1 billion a year.

#### Talking points

- Voucher plans drain needed resources from public school children—90% of Ohio's students. Passage of universal vouchers would blow a hole in the state budget and undercut the ability to fully and fairly fund Ohio's public schools.
- Current voucher plans in Ohio have little oversight. HB 11 includes funding for non-chartered private schools and homeschooling which offer no oversight or accountability for taxpayer money.
- Spending money on private school tuition is not an effective use of taxpayer dollars. Studies have shown that nearly 90% of voucher students do worse on state tests than students in public schools in the same zip codes.
- Families that choose to send their children to private schools should not expect the state's taxpayers to pay for that choice.
- Private schools pick and choose which students to accept and charge tuition over and above the voucher amount, unlike the public schools which are free to attend and open to all. Rather than throwing money at private school tuition, our policymakers need to finish the job and fully implement the Fair School Funding Plan.

**Retirement Security Impact:** Any proposal that diverts resources from or limits state funding to public schools will have an impact on the ability for districts to recruit and retain staff. As staffing shortages persist, while more and more staff retire, the declining population contributing into Ohio's retirement systems could threaten the future solvency of state pension plans.