

## **HB 136**

### **Statewide Voucher Proposal Legislation**

#### **Background**

HB 136 creates the Parental Choice and Taxpayer Savings Scholarship (voucher) Program (PACT), a new statewide program allowing K-12 students to use a voucher to attend private schools. Click [here](#) for a copy of the latest version of the bill.

The bill:

- Expands vouchers to students in all school districts, regardless of the academic report card rating of the school building or school district. The only qualifier for eligibility is household income. Students whose family income is less than \$95,000 would qualify.
- Allows students currently enrolled in private schools to be eligible for the voucher (phases in over four years).
- If the private school tuition is less than the voucher amount, it allows parents to bank the excess dollars for college tuition and textbooks at any private school or college in Ohio.
- Deducts funding for the voucher from the resident school district's funding (aggregate amount deducted from district cannot exceed a district's state aid funding.)

#### **Talking Points on HB 136**

- HB 136 strikes at the very heart of Ohio's obligation to maintain a "system" that provides a free public education to all students. It really represents a watershed public policy decision.
- Should state and local tax dollars be utilized to subsidize private school tuition even when excellent public options are available?
- Should public money be used to decrease the cost of private school for a few [those who are accepted, can afford tuition, are already attending private school] regardless of the costs to the majority of students still served by the public schools?
- Given the lack of evidence for academic achievement, the cloud of uncertainty facing school budgets and the potential negative impacts of HB 136, the statewide expansion of vouchers is unwise and unwarranted.
- HB 136 turns the state's obligation to provide a thorough and efficient "system" of public education into a private benefit, resulting in an unprecedented level of voucher expansion that could impact every school district in the state!
- Vouchers waste taxpayer money. Vouchers force taxpayers to support two school systems: one public and one private. Existing private school students usually are eligible to receive vouchers, creating a new cost to taxpayers.
- HB 136 would make students currently enrolled in private schools eligible over the next four years, adding additional costs to school districts and the state of Ohio that was not considered during the state budget deliberations.
- We believe that privatization in the name of choice jeopardizes the good of the whole. By diverting dollars for a few, the ability of public school districts to meet

federal and state standards is compromised and students' educational experiences will suffer.

### **Talking Points on Vouchers Generally**

- Vouchers abandon public schools and drain away critical dollars. Vouchers divert attention, commitment and dollars from public schools to pay private school tuition for a few students, including many who already are in private schools. Public money should be invested in strengthening the schools that educate the vast majority of our students – our *public* schools.
- Vouchers eliminate public accountability. In stark contrast to the strong requirements faced by public schools, private voucher schools do not have to meet certain state and federal requirements, including Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) standards of hiring “highly qualified” teachers, testing requirements and Adequate Yearly Progress, nor do they have to accept all students. Existing voucher programs in Ohio and other states have suffered from scandal and fraud due to the lack of public accountability inherent in these programs.
- Vouchers in no way raise student achievement for all. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report to Congress on the Cleveland and Milwaukee voucher programs noted that the most credible research found “*little or no difference in voucher and public school students’ performance.*”
- Vouchers leave behind many students, including those with the greatest needs. Vouchers leave behind many disadvantaged students because private schools may not accept them or do not offer special services they need.
- Vouchers give choices to private schools, not parents. Private schools decide if they want to accept vouchers, and then how many students they want to admit. And even if a voucher student does gain acceptance into a private school, the school can later reject him or her for numerous reasons, as the evaluator in Milwaukee’s program documented. The lawmaker who founded the Milwaukee voucher program later questioned the dismissal of students by private schools, and criticized the ability of private schools to select parents and students instead of parents selecting schools as proponents typically claim will occur.