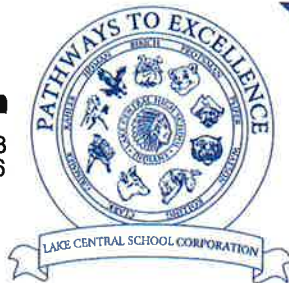


Lake Central School Corporation

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Sandy Lessentine, School Board Member
Dr. Jennifer Medlen, School Board Member

February 16, 2021

Dear Members of the Indiana General Assembly,

As the proud governing Board of one of the largest school districts in the State of Indiana, we want to share our concerns about the proposed "school choice" legislation currently being considered by your members. The decisions made over the past several years, that siphoned money away from public schools to support families who choose private schools, should also be reviewed. We oppose these decisions for a variety of reasons.

Public schools are open to all, and we help our students to reach great potential. This includes children from impoverished households, as well as those with significant learning differences and severe English language deficits. Public schools serve the neediest among us, and we need appropriate resources to complete our mission. We open our doors to every student who is rejected by private schools for a variety of reasons or for *no stated reason*.

Laws governing schools are passed to improve the quality of life for children in our state, and yet, private schools are permitted to pick and choose the guidelines they want to implement. Not too long ago, a local charter school failed to administer the statewide test and was still allowed to operate. If a law is passed for the good of public school students, then shouldn't it also apply to all students? If accountability of public schools is important to protect students and taxpayers, shouldn't accountability of all schools who accept tax dollars be the logical way to operate?

Indiana ranked 39th in per-pupil spending in 2018. The past ten years of increases in state support, while appreciated, has not kept Indiana's teacher salaries from falling behind salaries in neighboring states and across the nation. Not coincidentally, the beginning of the stagnation of wages, resulting in a teacher shortage in Indiana public schools, corresponds with the implementation of a voucher system that has seen growth in the amount of taxpayer dollars going to support children in private schools. Our teacher shortage concerns Governor Holcomb, and he commissioned the Next Level Teacher Compensation report that was released in December 2020. In a year where our Governor states he is interested in addressing the teacher shortage, moving a large portion of new K-12 support to private schools does not make sense.

We implore you to stop increasing support to schools that are not open to all and do not answer to taxpayers. As you work toward making Indiana a better place to live, learn, and work, remember that Indiana's public schools serve over 90% of our students. The inclusiveness of public schools should be the overriding factor used by our leaders when determining how our state disburses its financial support. Indiana elected leaders, thank you for faithfully serving the citizens of Indiana and for your consideration of our plea.

Lake Central School Board of Trustees


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