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Resolution on 2013-2015 Wisconsin Biennial Budget Voucher Funding

Whereas, the school board, administrators, teachers, staff, parents and community members of the School District of Fort Atkinson are united in our effort to provide all children with the highest quality educational opportunities possible, and;

Whereas, the school District of Fort Atkinson supports local control and the ability of the elected Board of Education to make decisions to support the learning of our students, and;

Whereas, private school voucher advocates have consistently pushed for expanding the use of taxpayer-funded vouchers to pay tuition for students in private schools in Wisconsin, targeting students with specific needs and those in particular communities, and;

Whereas, the Governor has proposed expanding voucher programs into many more communities and has proposed increasing that state payments to voucher schools by \$600 and \$1,400 per K-8 and high school student, respectively, in his proposed 2013-15 state budget, while freezing public school spending,

Therefore, the School District of Fort Atkinson School Board resolves to express its dissatisfaction with the governor's proposal and to inform parents and taxpayers of our district and the legislators who represent our district of the following facts about voucher programs:

Fact #1 — Vouchers Do Not Improve Student Achievement

According to multiple studies of private school voucher programs in the District of Columbia, Milwaukee, and Cleveland, students offered vouchers do not perform better in reading and math than students in public schools.

In 2011, the non-partisan Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau released a five-year longitudinal study, which concluded that students in Milwaukee using vouchers to attend private schools perform no better on standardized tests than their counterparts in public schools.

Fact #2 — Vouchers Avoid or Eliminate Public Accountability

Vouchers channel taxpayer dollars into private schools that can be operated by for-profit (or not-for-profit) organizations, and are not bound by most state instructional requirements or graduation standards, are not subject to either the state's accountability system (i.e., no school report cards are issued for voucher schools) or the public accountability requirements contained in major federal laws, including special education.

Voucher schools are not governed by locally elected school board members who must stand for election or re-election, and do not adhere to open meetings and public records laws.

Voucher schools do not have to employ highly qualified teachers who have a background in the subjects they teach; in fact, they do not even have to hire certified or licensed teachers. Voucher schools do not have to accept all students, nor do they have to provide students with the same due process protections afforded students by public schools. And even if a student is admitted to a private voucher school, the school can later reject him or her for numerous reasons of its own choosing.

Fact #3—Vouchers Both Drain Resources Away From Public Schools and Increase Local Property Taxes In Any Community Where They Are Established

If the private school voucher program were forced to expand to our community in the future, our district would lose state aid (to the voucher schools) and our school board would, effectively, have to raise property taxes to replace the aid lost to the voucher schools or lose that funding permanently under the state-imposed revenue limits.

It's one thing for a school board to levy property taxes for the schools they govern, but it's an entirely different thing to effectively force a locally-elected school board to raise property taxes because a portion of its state aid has been sent to a private school without oversight or accountability by either an elected school board or local taxpayers.

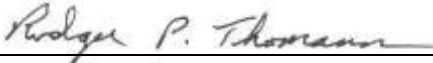
Our community's property taxes should not be raised in order to pay for parents to send their children to private schools, and that's effectively what happens in communities where there are voucher programs.

Further, if raising property taxes enough to cover the entire "voucher shortfall" would place too great a burden on already cash-strapped property taxpayers and our board is unable to levy for all the state aid lost to voucher schools, voucher expansion will directly lead to reductions in student services and quality educational opportunities for public school students.

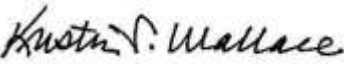
Therefore, Be It Further Resolved, that the School District of Fort Atkinson Board of Education calls on Gov. Walker, Sen. Neal Kedzie, Sen. Tim Cullen, Rep. Stephen Nass, and Rep. Andy Jorgenson and Joint Committee on Finance to remove all voucher expansion proposals from the state budget bill.

Resolution passed unanimously on March 21, 2013.


Respectfully submitted,
School District of Fort Atkinson Board of Education


Mr. Rodger Thomann, President


Mrs. Carrie Chisholm, Vice-President


Mrs. Kristin Wallace, Treasurer


Mr. Scott Johnson, Clerk


Mr. Bob Chady, Member