



HAMBLEN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Arnold W. Bunch, Jr., Superintendent of Schools

Hamblen County Resolution against school Vouchers

WHEREAS, the Hamblen County Board of Education is responsible for providing a local system of public education; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution of the State of Tennessee requires that the Tennessee General Assembly "provide for the maintenance, support and eligibility standards of a system of free public schools," with no mention of the maintenance or support of private schools; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee, through work of the Tennessee General Assembly, the Tennessee Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and local school boards, has established nationally recognized standards and measures for accountability in public education; and

WHEREAS, the Hamblen County Department of Education is a cornerstone of the local community, providing education services to all students regardless of background, need, or ability; and

WHEREAS, the Hamblen County Department of Education is an educational community that serves a student population of 10,269 PK – 12 students, with 27.4 % of those coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and with 32.6 % of those from Multi-Lingual backgrounds and 19.6 % of those who require English Language Learning education; and

WHEREAS, the Hamblen County Department of Education offers an array of specialized programs including special education services, career and technical education training aligned with local workforce needs, and English Language Learning which are invaluable for meeting both individual student needs and the Tennessee Constitution's requirement of a free and public education; and

WHEREAS, vouchers eliminate public accountability by channeling tax dollars into private schools that do not face state-approved academic standards, do not make budgets public, do not adhere to open meetings and records laws, do not publicly report on student achievement, and do not face the public accountability requirements contained in major federal laws, including special education, and English Second Language services; and

WHEREAS, vouchers leave many students behind, including those with the greatest needs, because vouchers channel tax dollars into private schools that are not required to accept all students nor offer the special services they may need; and

WHEREAS, vouchers give choices to private schools, not students and parents, since private schools decide if they want to accept vouchers, how many and which students they want to admit, and the potentially arbitrary reasons for which they might later dismiss a student; and

WHEREAS such lack of accountability is both fiscally irresponsible and inherently unfair to the thousands of dedicated teachers and administrators who have devoted their careers and lives to the improvement of the public education system in this State and toil daily to meet the accountability standards imposed on them by the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the fulfillment of this constitutional guarantee is heavily reliant upon adequate state funding, which is vital for equipping schools with the necessary resources to serve the various needs of Tennessee's students; and

WHEREAS, the Hamblen County Board of Education is committed to maintaining local control over its schools, ensuring that they are reflective of the community's needs and values; and

WHEREAS, Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) threaten the district's ability to maintain the quality of its educational offerings as ESAs would divert state funds to private actors and disrupt local control of education.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Hamblen County Board of Education hereby expresses its opposition to the Governor's "Education Freedom Act" as well as any other voucher or Education Savings Account legislation due to the detrimental impacts these programs will have on our students, schools, and community, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Hamblen County Board of Education urges Tennessee's General Assembly to consider the effects that Education Savings Accounts will have on local school districts and to instead seek out additional ways to support and strengthen public schools throughout the state.

Carolyn S. Holt
Carolyn Holt Clawson, Chair

Clyde Kinder
Clyde Kinder

Bradley Harville
Bradley Harville

Robert Workman

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Johnny Denton
Johnny Denton, Vice-Chair

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Darlene Smith
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