

Dear Members of the House Education Committee:

Please accept this as my testimony against HB1003. I really believe that in this time of limited tax dollars, every available tax dollar must go to the State's first priority which must be the public schools.

Tony Lux

February 15, 2011

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**TESTIMONY AGAINST HB1003**

The reasons for "School Reform" are the 20%-30% of students in the State of Indiana who are below grade level and who are part of the Achievement Gap that exist based on race, poverty and special needs. Any legislation aimed at "school reform" must be measured against how well that legislation will address these achievement gaps and help our lowest achieving students.

State officials have been faced with diminished State revenue and have stated that they had no choice but to reduce hundreds of millions of dollars that had been approved for public schools. State officials have also said that universally acknowledged policies and programs such as mandatory Kindergarten, fully funded full day kindergarten, and extended after school and summer remediation that would directly address the needs of our lowest achieving students and help close achievement gaps, cannot be funded due to the shortage of State revenue.

However, on the heels of those statements comes current legislation like HB1003 and HB1002 which actually diverts even more millions of dollars away from public schools and from State tax revenue that could actually be used for the above mentioned programs. So now it is no longer a question of whether tax revenue exists, because it does exist in the form of millions of dollars in private school vouchers.

State officials are misleading the public into believing that there isn't any State revenue to fund public schools at the levels they were promised and that there isn't any State revenue for much needed valuable programs that could directly address improving the education of our neediest children.

The public is being further misled to believe that private school vouchers will improve the achievement of our lowest performing students. Private schools do not accept the lowest performing students unless they are assured, through their screening processes, that both students and parents will be compliant and supportive. If not, they are rejected or returned later to their public school. Of course there are students of poverty and color that can be successful in any school, but private schools do screen their students based on the probability and potential of the student and parent for success. This is the new segregation of students for private schools and Charter Schools. Segregation based on compliance, capability and potential for success. The vast majority of Private Schools have strict conditions on which students they will take. For the vast majority of charter schools that take in absolutely any student who walks in their door without restriction, they are not even as successful as the average public school.

The current proposals for "school reform" are a reflection of a philosophy of abandonment and abdication of responsibility by the Department of Education and other State officials to fund programs that will actually improve student instruction and actually improve student achievement. Rather than develop such programs, the mantra is to convince the public that by simply choosing another school all will be well. This is an illusion. The only thing that

school choice will result in will be musical chairs among a proliferation of hundreds of tiny and financially inefficient charter schools and existing private schools that are not better equipped, if not less equipped, to educate our lowest performing and educationally resistant students.

In a time of economic recession and with limited State tax dollars, every tax dollar is important. And those dollars must be used first to either replace funds withheld from public schools or to fund much needed intervention programs that will actually result in raising the achievement level of our lowest students.

Sincerely,

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