

Prepared Notes for Charter School Funding

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Our second resolution has to do with the way that charter schools are funded. I personally believe that charter schools have a place in a comprehensive system of public education, but the mechanism employed by the state to fund those schools is devastating to our district. As Jeff mentioned, on average, the state sends us a little under \$2000/student under the formula, but deducts over \$13,000 (on average) for each student who lives in Worthington and attends a tuition-free charter or community school. The scarier statistic for me is the trajectory of these expenditures. A back of the napkin projection indicates that within 5 years, around 1 in every 3 dollars the state of Ohio sends us is going to go to charter school tuition - funds that we will never see and have no control over, yet, the state will tell our constituents that Worthington is still receiving those funds and they will be counted as expenditures on our balance sheet and in cost per pupil statistics.

The resolution does not call for the state to eliminate charter schools, it merely asks that the state not use our district as middleman. If the state wants charter schools, it should fund them directly and fund Worthington in accordance with the formula that was just passed by the General Assembly.

As long as we're on the subject, however, let me make a few comments about "choice". First of all, I am a pro-choice school board member because the alternative is to believe that the very best placement for every one of Ohio's 1.7 million school kids is, by a happy coincidence, the school around the block, a concept that I find ridiculous. A comprehensive system of public education should include schools that fit the kid, rather than trying to shoehorn the kid into a predetermined model. I would offer the following thought, however. The current model of charter school funding actually eliminates choice from the mix. Let me say that again. The current model of charter school funding actually eliminates choice- namely, the choice of staying with your public school district. Let's say that Worthington decided to open a school that specializes in autistic children. The current state funding formula would give us exactly zero dollars to do this (because we are capped). Any other entity who wants to provide those services will receive from Worthington taxpayers up to \$27,000 to do the same job. We cannot compete on that basis which is really a shame because I believe that with equivalent funding, our teachers and administrators can compete with anyone assuming a critical mass of students needing a particular service or curriculum.

The only other comment I would offer on the subject is a purely political one, but I'm going to say it anyway. The Democrats have gleefully jumped all over ODE and the legislature for giving charter schools a pass on accountability - and so they should - but their implicit message is that if charter schools were performing, the current funding model would be just fine. Our resolution tonight would still apply even if charter schools were rated A+. The funding model is not sustainable for public education. Worthington will eventually have to start passing levies to make up for the ever increasing funding stream we do not get from the state and frankly, no one is going to eagerly vote on levies so that their neighbors kid can attend a community school. Levies pass because there is a perceived connection between housing values and the quality of the local school district. The current community school funding model threatens to break that connection and when then happens, local funding for both traditional and charter schools will dry up.