

A RESOLUTION

**OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
OF KNOX COUNTY, TENNESSEE
OPPOSING SCHOOL VOUCHERS**

**Requested and Prepared by:
Jennifer Owen**

WHEREAS, the Knox County Board of Education is responsible for managing all public schools established or that may be established under its jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, there is pending legislation before the Tennessee General Assembly that would create a voucher program allowing students to use public education funds to pay for private school tuition (voucher programs also are known as “opportunity scholarships,” “education savings,” “tax credits” or similar terms); and

WHEREAS, proponents have spent millions to convince the public and lawmakers of their efficacy, yet, more than five decades after introduction, vouchers remain controversial, unproven and unpopular; 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;” and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee has established nationally recognized standards and measures for accountability in public education; and

WHEREAS, vouchers eliminate accountability, by channeling taxes to private schools without the same

- academic or testing requirements,
- public budgets or reports on student achievement,
- open meetings and records law adherence,
- public accountability requirements in major federal laws, including special education laws; and

WHEREAS, vouchers have not been effective at improving student achievement or closing the achievement gap; and

WHEREAS, vouchers leave 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, underfunded public schools are less able to attract and retain teachers; and

WHEREAS, vouchers give choices to private entities, rather than to parents and students, since the providers decide whether to accept vouchers, how many and which students to admit, and potentially arbitrary reasons they might dismiss a student; and

WHEREAS, the Knox County Board of Education provides numerous academic choices (magnet, STEM, International Baccalaureate, career/technical programs, community schools, etc.) and has a liberal transfer policy which allows students to attend other traditional schools in the district; and

WHEREAS, vouchers divert critical funds from public schools to pay private school tuition for a few students, including those who already attend private schools; and

WHEREAS, vouchers are inefficient, compelling taxpayers to support two school systems: one public and one private, the latter of which is not accountable to all taxpayers supporting it;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Knox County Board of Education opposes any legislation or other similar effort to create a voucher program in Tennessee that would divert money intended for public education to private entities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution shall be delivered to the Governor, each member of the Tennessee General Assembly, the Knox County Mayor and County Commission, the Knoxville City Mayor and City Council, and the Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Aldermen of the Town of Farragut.

ADOPTED BY THE ELECTED KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION, meeting in regular session on the 12th of December, 2018, with this Resolution to take immediate effect, the public welfare requiring it.

Terry Housteau-Hill

Terry Housteau-Hill
Board Chair

Resolution # 18-003

Witness:

Terri L. Coatney 12/12/2018
Terri L. Coatney Date

Approved as to form:

Gary Dupler 12/12/18
Gary Dupler, Deputy Law Director Date

Approved by
Knox County Board of Education

12/12/2018 (40)