

Dear Parents:

Currently the Indiana General Assembly is meeting and considering new legislation. Last summer, the Indiana General Assembly assigned a committee to study Indiana teacher compensation. The committee published a report titled: "A Roadmap for Improving Indiana Teacher Compensation". The report found an average teacher salary of \$60,000 was competitive. In 2019-2020, the average teacher salary in Indiana was \$53,463.

Indiana's teacher pay is not as competitive as neighboring states. Fewer potential educators are entering the profession due to the lack of competitive pay or wages. As a result, Indiana school corporations are experiencing difficult times in attracting new talent. This issue could result in teacher shortages and larger class sizes.

"A Roadmap for Improving Indiana Teacher Compensation" concluded three factors were needed to address this issue. The report indicated the path to competitive teacher compensation involves "increasing sources of revenue for teacher pay".

HB 1005 is a bill that has passed the Indiana House of Representatives. HB 1005 sets aside thirty-three million dollars in 2022 and 2023 for Choice Scholarships. Choice Scholarships are tax deductions provided to the parents of students who would leave public school and enroll in a private or parochial school. In the past, only parents living in high poverty areas were eligible for Choice Scholarships. This bill expands the funding to parents who make up to 300% of the federal free and reduced poverty lunch poverty levels. So, someone making an annual income of \$174,000 with a family of four would be eligible for a Choice Scholarship.

HB 1005 sets up an Educational Savings Account for parents who have children in accredited private or parochial schools. The Educational Savings Account allows the parents to deposit money in the account for Special Education services, tuition, or other supplies. The parent is allowed to claim this deduction on their yearly Indiana tax return. As a result of this bill, revenue from Indiana taxes will be diverted to private and parochial schools in a grander manner than in the past.

SB 412 establishes the Indiana Education Scholarship Account. This becomes the vehicle for parents to deposit funds for Special Education services, tuition, and supplies for their student to attend a private or parochial school. This bill didn't make it out of committee to a vote on the floor of the Senate. However, this bill's language could be inserted later in a conference committee bill.

SB 413 allows foster children to receive a Choice Scholarship.

These bills will not become law unless the bills pass both houses of the Indiana General Assembly. At this point, HB 1005, SB 412, and SB 413 have not passed both houses of the Indiana General Assembly and will be introduced for consideration into the Senate in the next few weeks.

As leaders of public school corporations of White County, we see these bills contrary to measures to the Indiana General Assembly's "Roadmap for Improving Indiana Teacher Compensation". These bills would reduce state revenue collections thus reducing the amount of revenue to fund public education.

Additionally, this expansion of the Choice Scholarship program is an extension of policies and philosophies in the state of Indiana that has resulted in Indiana teacher salaries being not as competitive as surrounding midwest states. These policies divert funding which could be used to fund more competitive teacher salaries to other programs or initiatives.

If you feel strongly that HB 1005, SB 412, and SB 413 should not be enacted in law, please reach out to your legislator and request they do not support this legislation for the final vote. Below are email addresses of and phone numbers our Senator Brian Buchanan and Representative Don Lehe:

Representative Don Lehe

Phone: 800-382-9841

Email: [h25@iga.in.gov](mailto:h25@iga.in.gov)

Senator Brian Buchanan

Phone: 800-382-9841

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Sincerely,



Daniel A. Sichtung

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