



Kankakee Valley School Corporation

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Mission statement:

*Our mission is to guide students
to become informed, engaged
citizens, and curious, lifelong
learners.*

March 3, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Currently, the Indiana General Assembly is meeting and considering new legislation. In support of our students at Kankakee Valley School Corporation and the 94% of Indiana students who attend public schools, we strongly oppose House Bill 1005, Senate Bill 412 and Senate Bill 413. In our communities, our public schools provide vital services supporting our children and families. This fact has been reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Again and again, our schools have risen to the occasion.

We all benefit from strong public schools – public school parents, business owners, and community members. 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. 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 students to attend a private or parochial school. This bill did not 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.

Monitoring these education savings accounts will require the state to create a whole new department in the Treasurer's Office. The Legislative Service Agency estimates this new office will increase the size of the state government with a cost of over five million dollars a year.

Voucher expansion in the form of the Choice Scholarships and Education Savings Accounts divert significant monies away from public schools, and lack oversight and accountability. Public schools provide a strong educational environment for Indiana's children and Education Savings Accounts, if enacted, and expanded school vouchers would put this environment at risk by directing resources away from those schools to nonpublic schools and/or home schools that are not subject to the same rigorous scrutiny for their use of taxpayer resources.

During the 2019 State of the State Address, Governor Holcomb announced that he was forming the Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission as a part of his effort to make teacher pay competitive with surrounding states. The commission was tasked with determining what constitutes competitive teacher compensation in Indiana and with providing recommendations for how to achieve it. The released report states an additional \$600M investment in public education is needed to increase teacher compensation to be competitive with surrounding states. When the state revenue forecast showed an opportunity to increase state support of public schools, we were pleasantly surprised. HB 1005 is reported to cost \$202M over two years. The cost of HB 1005 should be diverted back into the public school funding formula and begin the work on the recommendation of the Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission Report.

Home of the Kougars

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.

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

Representative Doug Gutwein
Phone: 800-382-9841
Email: h16@iga.in.gov

Senator Ed Charbonneau
Phone: 800-382-9841
Email: Senator.Charbonneau@iga.in.gov

Please join us in encouraging our legislators to reject the newest attack on public education. The parents, students, and public school employees of Kankakee Valley School Corporation deserve their support.

Educationally Yours,

Don Street
Superintendent

Allisa Schnick
Assistant Superintendent