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Fact Sheet: The Backpack Bill

The Backpack Bill empowers families to choose the educational option that best meets their needs. It ties state resources directly to the student so that Ohio funds students and teachers instead of buildings and bureaucrats. The Backpack Bill allows students to have the state's allocated education funding for each student follow them to the schools they attend. This reform will ensure strong funding for educational opportunities while cultivating innovation in schools and opportunity for all children.



Overview

The Backpack Bill helps every student in Ohio by allowing children to access an Education Scholarship Account (ESA). ESAs expand upon the idea of Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship program— a program that allows a limited number of students to access state dollars to pay for tuition at a chartered nonpublic school. Under the Backpack Bill, all students would be eligible to access an ESA for a wider variety of educational expenses, including homeschool educational resources. However, no student would be required to accept an ESA and could choose to remain in their local public school if it is the best fit.

Today, six states have ESA programs: Arizona, Florida, Nevada, Tennessee, Mississippi, and West Virginia. West Virginia was the first state to allow every public-school student in the state to access an ESA in the spring of 2021.

Why the Backpack Bill

1. **When it comes to education, one size doesn't fit all.** Ohio needs education opportunities that are as diverse as the students we serve. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the need to provide accessible educational options to families. It will be years before we know how seriously academic performances have deteriorated. Columbus City Schools' 2021 on-track graduation rate is as low as 35% in some schools.¹ According to a recent report from the Economic Policy Institute, "Our public education system was not built, nor prepared, to cope with a situation like this—we lack the structures to sustain effective teaching and learning during the shutdown and to provide the safety net supports that many children receive in school."² Education should meet the unique needs of the child.

¹ Columbus City Schools work to get seniors 'on track' to graduate despite COVID, The Columbus Dispatch, May 14th, 2021.

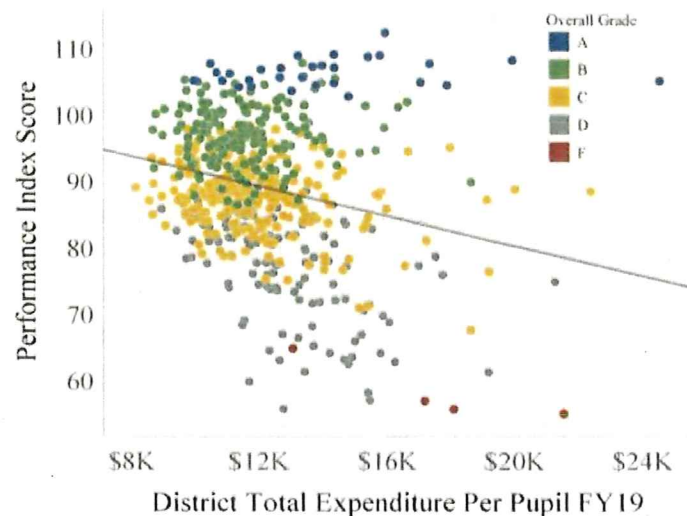
² COVID-19 and student performance, equity, and U.S. education policy, Economic Policy Institute, September 2020.



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2. **School Choice saves the taxpayer money.** Current Education Revenue per student in the state averages \$14,000.³ HB 1 (formerly called Cupp-Patterson) averages the funding as \$6,110 per student. The Backpack Bill would use the baseline amount of state revenue per student as determined by the education funding formula in HB 1. Only state dollars, not federal or local funds would be used. This baseline amount is lower than current district averages, saving the taxpayer money on students who opt-in to school choice.



3. **Competition breeds excellence.** Under free-market principles, more education options will encourage all schools to perform better. The Ohio Auditor research shows that expenditure per pupil does not determine Student Achievement. Similarly, there is a range of expenditures even among high performing districts.⁴
4. **All students benefit from Educational Freedom.** EdChoice Scholarships only address low-income students or those assigned to a failing school. Currently, to qualify for an EdChoice Scholarship a student must be enrolled in a “failing” school district (generally inner city) or their family must be 250% or lower federal poverty level. Many suburban middle-class neighborhoods don’t allow open enrollment into their public schools and the other education opportunities don’t include or qualify for EdChoice scholarships as an option in these areas. Even students who choose to remain in their public school benefit from school choice programs. (See *Dispelling Myths* attachment.)

³ **Total Revenue Per Pupil** is the total revenue from all sources combined on a per-pupil basis.

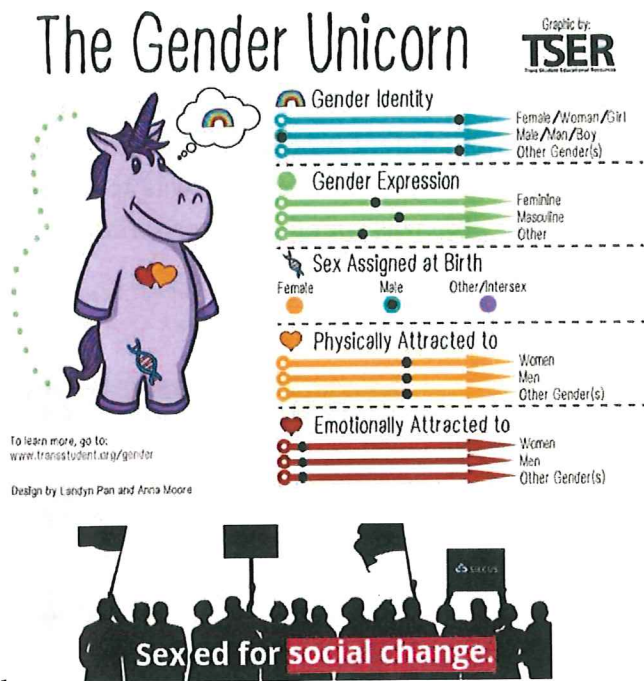
⁴ *Student Achievement Summary*, Ohio Department of Education Performance Audit, Ohio Auditor, 2021



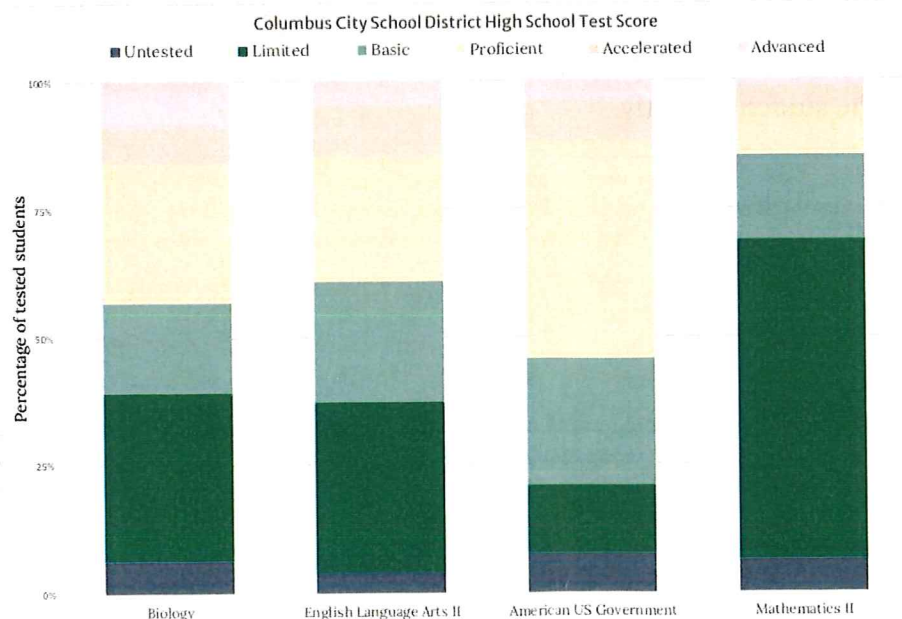
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5. **Parents are powerless to fight against political and sexualized materials.** Across Ohio, students have hypersexualized and political curriculum forced on them daily. This is a problem in urban, rural, and suburban schools. Parents are powerless to stop the school and save their children from these materials. Curriculum like the Gender Unicorn or materials from SEICUS, also known as sex ed for social change, are rampant across the state. The Backpack Bill will bring true accountability to Ohio's education system because parents will now be empowered to hold schools accountable.



6. **Too many public schools are well-funded but underperforming.** In 2019, the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school district spent \$21,222 per student (the 4th highest in the state) while being in the bottom 20% statewide in achievement and failing every single student progress marker on their state report card. The expenditures over the past two years have only increased without academic change. Overspending without results has created generations of failure.

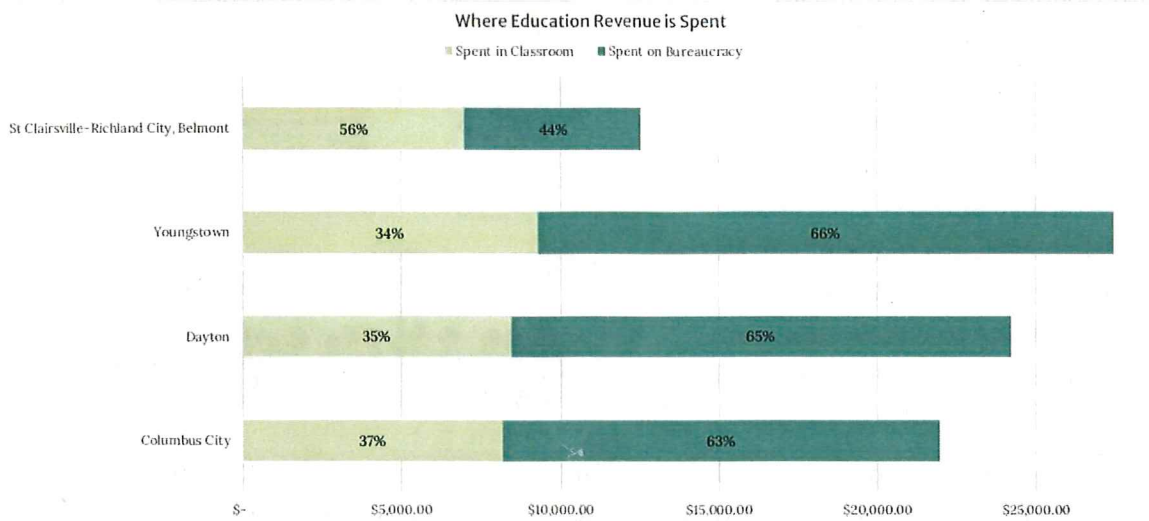




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7. **Fund teachers and students not buildings and bureaucrats.** Many public schools spend less than 50% of education revenue in the classroom.⁵ The average across the state is 58% spent on instruction costs. In the Cupp Report for 2020, Columbus City Schools revenue per student was \$21,939.18 and their instructional spending per student was \$8,170.10. If only 37% of revenue was spent on students and teachers in the classroom, the other 63% was spent on bureaucracy.



8. **Ohio doesn't underfund education; we misspend the money.** In FY 2020, Ohio Spent \$10.6 billion on education. \$7.9 Billion was from the State General Revenue Fund. The remainder of the funding comes from the Ohio Lottery, Property Tax, Federal Tax and Stimulus, and other local sources.⁶ Ohio ranks 18th in the nation in spending per pupil.⁷ Our system is better funded than most of the country, however, that spending needs to be funding the student directly.

⁵ **Instructional Expenditure Per Pupil** includes all costs associated with the actual service of instructional delivery to the students. These items strictly apply to the school buildings and do not include costs associated with the central office. They include the salaries and benefits of the teaching personnel and other instructional expenses.

⁶ Ohio Department of Education, Overview of School Funding

⁷ School District Budgets, Legislative Budget Office of the Legislative Service Commission, December 2020