

Benton County Board of Education

Resolution Opposing Governor Lee's Education Freedom Act

January 8, 2024

WHEREAS, the Constitution of the State of Tennessee, in Article XI, Section 12, states that the Tennessee legislature "shall provide for the maintenance, support, and eligibility standards of a system of free public schools"; and

WHEREAS, the fulfillment of this constitutional guarantee is heavily reliant upon adequate state funding, which is vital for equipping schools with the necessary resources to serve the various needs of Tennessee's students; and

WHEREAS, the Benton County Board of Education is charged with governing the school district so that all students, regardless of background needs, or ability, receive the best possible educational opportunities in order to graduate prepared to enter a postsecondary institution or the workforce; and

WHEREAS, Benton County is an educational community that serves a student population of 2,122, with 68% of those coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, Benton County School System offers an array of specialized programs including special education services, career and technical education training aligned with local workforce needs, athletics, clubs, band/music, and after school tutorial services which are invaluable for meeting both individual student needs and the Tennessee Constitution's requirement of a free and public education; and

WHEREAS, Benton County School System is a cornerstone of the local community, not only providing education services to all students regardless of background, need or ability, but also employing 202 professional educators and 154 support staff members; and

WHEREAS, Benton County School System is committed to maintaining local control over its schools, ensuring that they are reflective of the community's needs and values; and

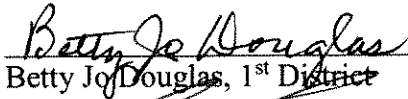
WHEREAS, Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) threaten the district's ability to maintain the quality of its educational offerings as ESAs would divert state funds to private actors and disrupt local control of education. The ESAs as being proposed, would not hold private actors to the same accountability as public schools currently are under. This being the case, it would prevent true accountability for the funds being diverted away from public schools to private actors.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Benton County Board of Education hereby expresses its opposition to the Governor's "Education Freedom Act" as well as any other voucher or Education Savings Account legislation due to the immediate and yet to be determined long range detrimental impacts these programs will have on our students, schools, and community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Benton County Board of Education urges the Tennessee General Assembly to consider the effects that Education Savings Accounts will have on local schools' districts and to instead seek out ways to support and strengthen public schools throughout the state.



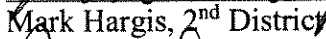
Shanna Kennon, 4th District - Chair



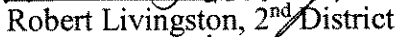
Betty Jo Douglas, 1st District



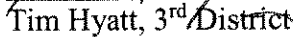
Justin Thornton, 1st District



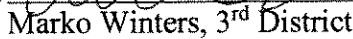
Mark Hargis, 2nd District



Robert Livingston, 2nd District



Tim Hyatt, 3rd District



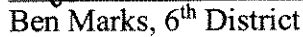
Marko Winters, 3rd District



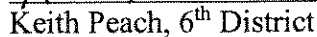
Judy Arnold, 4th District



Brent Hedge, 5th District



Ben Marks, 6th District



Keith Peach, 6th District