

RESOLUTION OPPOSING GOVERNOR LEE'S EDUCATION FREEDOM ACT

Oneida Special School District

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 Oneida Special School District 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, Oneida Special School District is an educational community that serves a student population of 1,448 students, with 61.28% of those coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, 74% of our student population resides outside of the Oneida Special School District boundaries, with only 26% residing inside. These statistics exhibit a classic example of "school choice" between the local school systems within our area; and

WHEREAS, Oneida Special School District offers a diverse range of specialized programs and enrichment opportunities tailored to meet the individual needs of students within our rural community. These programs include, but are not limited to, Special Education services, English as a Second Language (ESL) services, Response to Intervention (RTI) services, after school tutoring programs, the Oneida Pathways Academy, and a variety of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses designed to align with local workforce needs. These services are invaluable for meeting both individual student needs and the Tennessee Constitution's requirement of a free and public education; and

WHEREAS, Oneida Special School District is a cornerstone of the local community, not only providing education services to all students regardless of background, need, or ability, but also employing 342 staff members;

WHEREAS, Oneida Special School District 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.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Oneida Special School District 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 detrimental impacts these programs will have on our students, schools, and community, and

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

THIS RESOLUTION is adopted as of this 4th day of January, 2024, by the Oneida Special School District Board of Education.

Nancy B Williamson

Dr. Nancy Williamson, Chairman

Kevin Byrd

Mr. Kevin Byrd, Vice Chairman

Danny W. Cross

Dr. Danny Cross, Board Member

Dorothy Watson

Mrs. Dorothy Watson, Board Member

(absent)

Mr. Mark Matthews, Board Member