Resolution #13 Moved: Evans Second: Poeschl

RESOLUTION in Support of the Wisconsin Voucher Taxpayer Transparency Bill (Assembly Bill 267 and Senate Bill 183)

WHEREAS, the Oshkosh Area School District School Board, administrators, educators, staff, parents and community members of Oshkosh are united in our effort to provide all children with the highest quality educational opportunities possible; and

WHEREAS, the Oshkosh Area School District (OASD) supports local control and the ability of the elected school board to make decisions to support the learning of our students; and

WHEREAS, private school voucher advocates have consistently pushed for expanding the use of taxpayer-funded vouchers to pay tuition for students in private schools in Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, the Governor and members of the Wisconsin Legislature have proposed expanding voucher programs into many more communities and have proposed increasing state payments to voucher schools; and

WHEREAS, a recent memo from the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau demonstrated that payments to voucher schools under the Governor’s proposed budget would range from $7,757 to $8,403 per student by 2018. Including all of Governor Walker’s proposed increases, in some cases public schools might receive as much as $1,700 less per student at $6,703; and

WHEREAS, the same memo also shows that tax dollars for voucher operators are increasing 12 times faster than total public school aids and that voucher payments would more than double over eight years. At the same time, net general aids that support public schools and reduce property taxes would fall by 1.3%; and

WHEREAS, the voucher amount is $7,323 for pupils in grades K-8 and $7,969 for pupils in grades 9-12; and

WHEREAS, Assembly Bill 267 and Senate Bill 183, the “Wisconsin Voucher Taxpayer Transparency Bill,” authored by State Rep. Dana Wachs (D-Eau Claire) would require property tax bills to include information from
the school district where the property is located regarding the amount of any
net reduction in state aid, if any, to the district as a result of pupils enrolled in
the statewide voucher program, the Racine voucher program, or the
Milwaukee voucher program; and

WHEREAS, the increase in statewide property taxes due to school boards
levying to offset lost aid due to the voucher system was over $25 million in
2016-17. The statewide property tax impact is estimated to grow to $37
million in 2017-18 and to $47 million in 2018-19; and

WHEREAS, the OASD was required to levy $886,622 in taxpayer dollars to
be allocated to the statewide voucher program in 2016-17, and local
taxpayers are not provided with information about their tax dollars being
spent on private and voucher schools. When private school voucher programs
expand in our community, OASD loses state aid (to the voucher schools) and
our school board must raise additional property taxes to replace the aid lost to
the voucher schools or lose that funding permanently under the state-imposed
revenue limits; and

WHEREAS, just as property tax bills show how much money goes to public
schools and technical colleges, taxpayers deserve to know the cost of
expanding the voucher program; and

WHEREAS, it bears repeating that voucher schools are not bound by most
state instructional requirements or graduation standards, are not subject to
either the state’s accountability system (i.e., no school report cards are issued
for voucher schools), are not held to the public accountability requirements
contained in major federal laws, including special education, are not
governed by locally elected school board members who must stand for
election or reelection, do not have to accept all students, nor do they have to
provide students with the same due process protections in public schools, do
not have to employ teachers who have a background in the subjects they
teach, and do not have to adhere to open meetings and public record laws;
and

WHEREAS, the voters of Wisconsin have never had an opportunity to vote
on whether or not Wisconsin should have a taxpayer-supported voucher
program; and
FURTHER, multiple studies throughout the nation have shown that school voucher programs do not perform better in reading and math than students in public schools, and the nonpartisan Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau released a five-year longitudinal study in 2011 which concluded that students in Milwaukee using vouchers to attend private schools perform no better on standardized tests than their counterparts in public schools.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Oshkosh Area School District Board of Education calls on Governor Walker, the Wisconsin State Assembly, and the Wisconsin Senate to support the Wisconsin Voucher Taxpayer Transparency Bill in an effort to be open, honest, and transparent with the taxpayers of Oshkosh and Wisconsin.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, being all of the members of the School Board for the Oshkosh Area School District, have executed this resolution this 24th day of January, 2018.

Allison Garner, President
Dr. Barbara Herzog, Vice President
Jim Evans, Clerk
Kelly Olmsted, Treasurer

Stephanie Carlin
Steve Eliasen
Bob Poeschl

Unanimous upon roll call. The resolution was adopted.