Testimony to the Senate Education Committee

Opposition to Senate Bill 624 – Mandatory Schools of Choice

My name is Anne Mills and I am a lifelong resident of Grosse Pointe. My husband and I chose to raise our family in Grosse Pointe because of the close community and the great school district. The Grosse Pointe Community prides itself on maintaining excellent schools. Because of this strong commitment to our schools, we have passed Hold Harmless, Sinking Fund and Capital Projects millages to make sure our children have the best education possible. These are incremental taxes our residents choose to pay that would not be paid by non-resident students. Our community is willing to pay higher taxes and make sacrifices elsewhere in order to keep The Grosse Pointe Public School System one of the best in the State. We are fortunate to have an elected school board who believes in our schools and maintains our district with the highest standards while facing numerous budget cuts from the State. Our school board has done an excellent job of making cuts outside of teaching staff to keep class sizes small in order to promote the best learning environment for our children. That being said, it is the goal of this community to maintain local control over our school district.

I am also an employee of a school district that has chosen to be a school of choice district. I have worked in this district for fifteen years and I have seen the dramatic change that has taken place since we have become a school of choice district. In the years since becoming school of choice, the students who should be attending our district have chosen to leave for others districts. The sense of community is gone because the majority of the students attending our schools don't live within the district. The reason our resident students are leaving for other districts is because the incoming school of choice students do not have the strong academic foundation that our resident students have. Another concern is that school of choice students are very transient. This makes it extremely difficult for districts to raise their test scores because districts are not working with the same group of students year after year.

As a parent of two elementary school age children, I fear that the state will mandate schools of choice. I fear that what has happened in the district where I work will happen in the district where I live.

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