**Date:** January 16, 2023

**Subject:** Please support Gov. Reynolds' school choice (ESA) legislation

Dear Members of the Iowa Legislature,

Just as our neighboring state of Wisconsin has a longstanding and successful school choice program, Iowa now should join such states offering school choice.  If Iowa public schools were uniformly excellent, it would be one thing.  However, public schools often prioritize the wrong things, and the outcomes here in Cedar Rapids are far from uniformly excellent.

For example, the Cedar Rapids district in recent years has removed two middle school police officers.  This, even though it is acknowledged that weapons are brought into these schools. Moreover, the school board’s removal defied the public will expressed in a 2021 district survey, which found that 75 percent of roughly 2,000 community members favored keeping the school-based cops.

Here is more detail from 2021 on the unfortunate removal of well-liked “school resource officers.” As part of the contract negotiations, Deputy CR School District Administrator Nicole Kooiker stated in writing on August 19: “We understand the District will handle and will assume all responsibility for handling any incidents that occur in the middle school buildings in the absence of the SRO officers.”

Then, four months later on December 17, a student brought a loaded gun into McKinley Middle School during school hours. Felony gun charges resulted. After learning of this shocking breach of security, should parents of McKinley Middle School students not be able to direct their tax dollars toward the school of their choice?

Ms. Kooiker has pledged to “assume all responsibility” for incidents threatening violence, but she will not as effectively deter violence as the McKinley school officer might have. Needless to say, the loaded gun incident angered McKinley parents.

Please support Gov. Reynolds’ school choice bill.  I believe most state legislators support my view. Besides, competition between public and private schools is healthy.

I look forward to your approval of school choice.

Sincerely,

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