RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION OF THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION
OF KNOX COUNTY, TENNESSEE
IN OPPOSITION TO VOUCHERS

/7- 001

PROPOSED BY:
AMBER ROUNTREE

WHEREAS, the Knox County Board of Education is responsible for providing a local system of public education; and

WHEREAS, there is pending legislation before the Tennessee General Assembly that would create a voucher program allowing students to use public education funds to pay for private school tuition; and

WHEREAS, more than 50 years have passed since private school vouchers were first proposed, and during that time proponents have spent millions of dollars attempting to convince the public and lawmakers of the concept's efficacy, and yet, five decades later, vouchers still remain controversial, unproven and unpopular; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution of the State of Tennessee requires that the Tennessee General Assembly "provide for the maintenance, support and eligibility standards of a system of free public schools", with no mention of the maintenance or support of private schools; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee, through work of the Tennessee General Assembly, the Tennessee Department of Education, the State Board of Education and local school boards, has established nationally recognized standards and measures for accountability in public education; and

WHEREAS, vouchers eliminate public accountability by channeling tax dollars into private schools that do not face state-approved academic standards, do not make budgets public, do not adhere to open meetings and records laws, do not publicly report on student achievement, and do not face the public accountability requirements contained in major federal laws, including special education; and

WHEREAS, vouchers have not been effective at improving student achievement or closing the achievement gap, with the most credible research finding little or no difference in voucher and public school students' performance; and

WHEREAS, vouchers leave many students behind, including those with the greatest needs, because vouchers channel tax dollars into private schools that are not required to accept all students, nor offer the special services they may need; and

WHEREAS, vouchers give choices to private schools, not students and parents, since private schools decide if they want to accept vouchers, how many and which students they want to admit, and the potentially arbitrary reasons for which they might later dismiss a student; and

WHEREAS, many proponents argue that vouchers give students a choice in education, but fail to realize that Knox County Schools affords many excellent educational choices for all students including: magnet programs at the elementary, middle and high school level, STEM programs at each level, a Career Technical High School, an International Baccalaureate Middle and High School, and the Paul Kelley Volunteer Academy. Each of these schools is open to all students throughout the county. The Knox County Schools also has a successful community schools program in 14 schools. Through the liberal transfer policy of the Board of Education students may also attend other traditional public schools within the district; and

WHEREAS, voucher programs divert critical dollars and commitment from public schools to pay private school tuition for a few students, including many who already attend private schools; and

WHEREAS, vouchers are an inefficient use of taxpayer money because they compel taxpayers to support two school systems: one public and one private, the latter of which is not accountable to all the taxpayers supporting it; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION AS FOLLOWS:

The Knox County Board of Education opposes any legislation or other similar effort to create a voucher program in Tennessee that would divert money intended for public education to private schools.

ADOPTED BY THE ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD OF KNOX COUNTY, TENNESSEE, MEETING IN REGULAR SESSION ON THE _11th_ **DAY OF** _January_ , **2017.**

Patti Lou Bounds 1-11-17
Board Chair   Date

Witness:

Terri L Coatney 1/11/2017
Notary Public   Date

My commission expires: _9/30/2017_