



March 2023 - Covering Jan-March 2023

## Member Editorial

### Expanding Private School Vouchers Will Starve Public Schools, Again

By Sandy Stephenson

A lively and well attended February meeting featured **Kim Cook**, president of A-Tiger, the political arm of the Alachua County Education Association, (ACEA), speaking to us about expansion of the voucher program or Educational Spending Account (ESA) in HB1.

In 2003 Governor Jeb Bush and company initiated the “school choice” program originally intended for low-income students and students with disabilities who were attending “low performing” schools.

HB1 converts vouchers to be issued to ANY student kindergarten through 12th grade so they may attend a private school. There is no income level so the super wealthy may apply to help offset tuition they are most likely already paying.

Private schools are under no obligation to admit students with special needs, minority students or LGBT students. Private schools are not required to have certified teachers. In fact, their teachers don’t even have to have a college degree. They are not required to follow the standards and curriculum established by the Florida Department of Education. Private school students do not have to take any type of assessment test to assert their progress. They are receiving money from

**Former VT governor Howard Dean summarized this issue best:**

*“The path to a better future goes directly through our public schools. I have nothing against private schools, parochial schools and homeschooling, and I think the parents with the means and inclination should choose whatever they believe is best for their children. But, those choices cannot compete and cannot come at the expense of what has been... the great equalizer in our society, a free and equal education.”*

the state but do not have to meet even the minimum requirements public schools meet.

Where does this money come from? Either directly from the public school district the student resides in or the general education funds from the state. Either way



*Kim Cook addresses our DWCLA*

this robs the local school district. Other states such as Arizona who have moved to universal vouchers saw 80% of voucher funds go to students already enrolled in private schools or home schooled. The predicted cost of implementing a universal voucher system was vastly underestimated in other states where vouchers were implemented. The National Education Policy Center extrapolated the public cost of instituting universal vouchers at an increase of 11% to 33%. This fiscal year (22-23) Florida’s total education spending is 27.2 billion. Calculating 33% of 27.2 billion equals an 8 billion increase to the state education budget. That increase will do little to help public schools since it will be used to fund vouchers.

There is no conclusive evidence of private school students’ achievements because no documentation is required. However, investing money in public education has shown improvements in student achievement because class sizes will be

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# DWCLA NEWSLETTER



## RISSI CHERIE

I've lived in Florida for more than 37 years, after moving here from Pennsylvania. My husband, Michael Woodward's law office is in Interlachen (Putnam County), and he didn't want a long commute. Two miles fit the bill.

I've been an Interior Designer for many years (1997-2018). I'm a Certified Window Fashions Expert in soft fashions. What I love to do, watercolor painting, sourdough bread baking, plus cookies and pies. Also, reading novels. My husband and I are members of Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA). I love classical, especially baroque, music, and yoga which I practice twice a week.

In the past I studied Classical ballet en pointe – my most admired roles were Mary Magdalene, with a pas de deux in Jesus Christ, Superstar, and Big Bird in Sesame Street. Of course, I was in The Nutcracker many times. Back in Pennsylvania I was a Juried Potter doing wheel-thrown bowls, mugs, casseroles, etc.

**How long have you been a member of DWCLA?** 3 years. I joined about July 2020.



One of Rissi's many watercolors. On Instagram : @rissi.cherie

### What positions or jobs have you held within the Club?

First I waved Biden signs on CR 24 in the scorching heat, then my arm was twisted - let me rephrase that - I was strongly encouraged to take the unfilled, but "easy job" of 1st VP by Fran Rosano. After that, I volunteered to learn VAN, to address cards, and to engage

in other simple tasks like the Social Media Team. After I realized I was deeply, and happily involved, I became the Legislative Liaison and also accepted the nomination for 1st VP. My DWCLA high was attending the DWCF 66th Annual Convention in '22 and then receiving a Rising Star award! What an honor. Winning such an honor means that I have to live up to that award!



**Why did you join the group?** To do everything I possibly could to fight off any chance of the most reprehensible (at the time) person in politics being re-elected. If he won, I promised myself I'd move to Paris and dust the gilt frames in Versailles.

**What keeps you here?** My husband whom I met at UNF while working on my BA. Besides my attachment to Michael, we have a nice home in a glorious Zen spot in the woods enhanced by a tiny lake that's a joy to watch every day. It has marvelous light every morning and evening, and lots of water birds and various critters traipsing around. You can be sure what's keeping me here isn't the culture! The other, and important motive that keeps me here, is all the fantastic friends I have made in DWCLA. I could hardly be more fortunate in finding such interesting, strong, and empowered women to talk to and share time with. I have deep gratitude for those friendships.

**What other groups, political or otherwise do you belong to?** I'm a non-attending member of Sierra Club, ACLU, NOW, and an attending JASNA member, as mentioned above. I'm an Associate Member of PCDWC, and a member of PC-DEC.

# DWCLA NEWSLETTER

## Got a gripe? Let your Rep know!

A hand written note gets noticed but emails and phone calls are tallied and tracked by staff. Notice that some counties have more than one representative — you will need to find who represents you, by your address.



### House District 20 (Putnam, Clay)

The Honorable Bobby Payne  
402 South Monroe Street  
400 House Office Building  
Tallahassee Florida 32399-1300  
850-717-5020

[Bobby.Payne@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Bobby.Payne@myfloridahouse.gov)

### Senate Dist. 6 (Bradford, Alachua, Clay)

The Honorable Jennifer Bradley  
210 Senate Building  
404 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee Florida 32399-1300  
850-487-5007

[Jennifer.Bradley@flsenate.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Bradley@flsenate.gov)

### Senate District 7 (Putnam)

The Honorable Travis Hutson  
420 Senate Building  
404 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee Florida 32399-1300  
850-487-5007

[Travis.hutson@flsenate.gov](mailto:Travis.hutson@flsenate.gov)

### House District 21 (Alachua)

The Honorable Yvonne Hayes Hinson  
1300 The Capitol  
402 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee Florida 32399-1300  
850-717-5021

[Yvonne.Hinson@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Yvonne.Hinson@myfloridahouse.gov)

### House District 10 (Bradford, Alachua)

The Honorable Charles Brannan III  
222 The Capitol  
402 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee Florida 32399-1300  
850-717-5010

[Charles.Brannan@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Charles.Brannan@myfloridahouse.gov)

### Senate District 9 (Alachua)

The Honorable Keith Perry  
406 Senate Building  
404 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee Florida 32399-1300  
850-487-5009

[Keith.perry@flsenate.gov](mailto:Keith.perry@flsenate.gov)



### Internet Presence

Take a look at our web site, [www.dwc-la.org](http://www.dwc-la.org). No password necessary. You can check the calendar for meeting and event dates, see photos and reporting of Club events, and be inspired.

### *School Vouchers, Continued from page 1*

smaller, more technology and books available, and less burn out of teachers.

What can you do? Kim suggested WRITE an actual letter to your legislator. They tally phone calls and emails but an actual letter delivered does make a difference. Keep your eyes on HB1 as it moves through committees and the new session that started on March 7.

## DONATE TODAY!

Your recurring donation of even \$5 or \$10 a month will help! In order to work in the community to energize democratic women, WE NEED YOU! Your donation will be used to help our grassroots outreach in the lake area counties. We write post cards, do door to door canvassing, phone bank, and more to reach voters in our counties. Go Online to the website or to [Act Blue](#), directly.

