I attended a community forum and heard four superintendents discuss the expected impact of the state’s school budget. I find it hard to accept underfunding public schools for the hollow promise of the toxic trifecta of vouchers, for-profit charters and educational savings accounts. The idea is that parents who believe private or exclusionary schools are superior must waive their rights to federally assured compliance with IDEA if the child is disabled and waive the federal guarantee of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Doing so allows for-profit schools to evade responsibility and use public funding as a private bank with interest-free money.

Public education has many compelling virtues. Foremost, it provides a common foundation that establish what it is to be an American, and for learning how to reason independently to draw valid conclusions in all domains of human activity. These virtues are essential to citizenship and represent the socializing power of school to cement an individual’s commitment to society.

Legislators are seeking to dismantle public education in the name of choice. I object! As a parent I want good neighborhood schools with competent professionals who are accorded the status of their commitment to our children and compensation equal to the importance of their task.

When private for-profit firms enter the discussion they promote an exploitive view of education based on satisfying investors. This leads to lower wages, lower teacher qualifications, and evasion of law under the guise of choice. We tried to run schools as businesses under HW Bush and it failed as will the current privatizing of K-12 education. Students are not fungible assets.

Having the illusion of many choices merely masks the destruction of a uniquely American institution. In the American psyche schools are hallowed ground. If you want great public education, like anything else in life, you have to commit time and energy as a parent and citizen. Writing a check is easy, simple and wrong.