

New Jersey Education Association

News Service

NJEA's support for urban schools is 'unimpeachable,' says Giordano

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Recently, NJEA Executive Director Vincent E. Giordano appeared on NJTV's "New Jersey Capitol Report" to discuss issues related to education in New Jersey.

On the topic of taxpayer-funded private school vouchers, the interviewer asked Giordano what options low-income urban families have.

His response was that for children and families in New Jersey's most economically challenged communities, life is not always fair. While Mr. Giordano acknowledges that his choice of words may be open to misinterpretation, his intent was to make the point that providing vouchers to a select few students is not the way to address the challenges faced by urban school districts.

"NJEAs record of support for urban education and disadvantaged children is unimpeachable," Giordano said. "For decades, we have supported better funding for urban schools to promote equal educational opportunity, and school improvement efforts like universal preschool and literacy programs. These have benefited hundreds of thousands of children in New Jersey's most disadvantaged communities. That commitment continues to this day, as we support urban education through our Priority Schools program.

"We oppose vouchers and other privatization programs because they will take resources from disadvantaged public schools and only exacerbate the challenges faced by students in those communities," Giordano said.

"That will create a world that is even less fair, and we will not stand for that."

"Unfortunately, the governor and many of our critics continue to support tax policies that favor the wealthy over the needs of students in our most disadvantaged districts," he added. "This criticism is coming from people who gave a billion dollars in tax breaks to millionaires while cutting at least that much from our public schools. I'm not going to take criticism from people who think that's the fair way to fund public schools."

Giordano noted that NJEA has partnered with individual urban schools to pilot innovative approaches to overcoming the challenges of poverty.

"We have worked to get families more involved in their children's education," he said. "We have advocated for fair funding for urban schools, which has helped spur improved outcomes in those districts. And we have been a partner in community projects to assist parents and educators improve their schools.

"NJEAs supports great public schools for every child, not schemes that scapegoat parents and teachers while ignoring the impact that poverty, reduced economic opportunities, and other factors have on students' opportunities to succeed," Giordano said.

"Life is not fair for far too many children in New Jersey, but we continue to fight for stronger schools and smart education reforms to help children overcome any disadvantages they face so that they can learn and grow to their full potential."

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