

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment, Select
For HB 1

Compiled on: Friday, November 10, 2023 10:12 AM

Note: Comments received by the committee reflect only the view of the individual(s) submitting the comment, who retain sole responsibility for the content of the comment. Neither the committee nor the Texas House of Representatives takes a position on the views expressed in any comment. The committee compiles the comments received for informational purposes only and does not exercise any editorial control over comments.

Hearing Date: November 10, 2023 9:00 AM - (continued from Thursday, November 9th)

Michelle Blount

Self/teachers

Seguin, TX

PLEASE SAY NO TO VOUCHERS!!!! Our students DESERVE better!!!

Kimberly Curda

Self

Richmond, TX

We need to fully fund public schools before we can even think about giving money to private schools. No to vouchers, no to ESAs, yes to fully funding public education. Yes to fully funding special education. Yes to teacher pay raises, yes to para pay raises. Yes to virtual education. Yes to CTE funding.

Lisa Chambers

Self- I am an educator!

Dublin, TX

Please please stand up for students, teachers, and public school!!!

Don't let any voucher legislation pass!!!!

We need your leadership!!!!

Angela Cardenas, Mrs

Self

Lubbock, TX

Absolutely no vouchers! Public tax dollars belong in public schools.

Jennifer Bassier

Self

Lewisville, TX

No to vouchers, Yes to Public Schools!! Yes to funding public school teachers, staff and retirees! NO to vouchers!!! Texas should not be known as one of the lowest paying teacher salaries in the US! Texas should not be known for taking taxpayer money to fund private schools that most people can't afford! NO to vouchers for private schools! Keep our taxpayer money where it is needed in public schools!!!

Ashley Hermann

Self

Anna, TX

Educational savings accounts do not and will not benefit the majority of Texas students. Public schools willingly teach every single student that enter its doors. Until private and religious institutions are willing to do the same it will never be a level playing field. Support public education and its teachers. Give teachers pay raises and fund schools that are already hurting and even more so since inflation. Do NOT tie teacher pay raises to ESA's hidden in legislation. It's so disrespectful to these professionals to have them choose between getting more money and their moral convictions regarding their jobs as public educators. Listen to all your constituents, not just the big donors. NO TO VOUCHERS AND ESAs

Ashley Bachmayer

Self - Public School Teacher

Temple, TX

Vouchers (under any name) are not good for public school students. Just say no.

Brenda Mendoza

Self

Houston, TX

I strongly oppose school vouchers and urge my state representative to vote "no" on their implementation in the upcoming special session. Our public education system should be adequately funded and teachers should receive raises with the surplus in budget.

Brenda Hagen

Fairfield ISD retired teachera

Teague, TX

Please say NO to vouchers if you love our public schools. This would destroy the chance for most kids to get an education Do not cave to this out of control governor.

Whiffen Danielle

Self

Rowlett, TX

I do not support vouchers, nor the politicians who vote for vouchers.

Sara Newton, Mrs

Self

Madisonville, TX

Do not tie ESAs to public school funding. ESAs are private school coupons for parents who already send their children there. Tell Abbott to visit public schools. Maybe he'd see that we are educating and not indoctrinating. Please fully fund Texas public schools. I'm looking forward to the rural reps standing strong for public schools. Fully fund Texas public schools. Thank you.

Ghazala Basharat, Mrs
Radiant STEM Academy
Irving, TX

We support this bill

Wenona Lewis
Self
TOMBALL, TX

Either private schools are subject to the same regulations as public schools or the public schools are not required to comply with the accountability regulations. We should not be discussing funding for private schools if public education is not fully funded

Amy Hood
Self
Blanco, TX

Vote NO to vouchers. Fully fund public schools and pay raises for teachers. Raise the \$\$ given to districts per student. Do these things WHILE voting NO TO VOUCHERS

Sheila Schatzke, Dr.
Self
Friendswood, TX

As a college professor and dedicated public school educator, I am deeply concerned about the current situation where it appears that the governor may not pass teacher raises unless vouchers are approved. This linkage raises significant ethical concerns and challenges the fundamental values of our educational system.

While I am a staunch advocate for enhancing primary and secondary education, including fair compensation for teachers, it is profoundly troubling that such vital improvements for our educators are being held hostage to the approval of vouchers. This practice is not only unethical but also jeopardizes the future of our public schools and the well-being of our students. Here's why:

1. Ethical Dilemma: Tying teacher raises to the approval of vouchers presents an ethical dilemma. It implies that the financial well-being of our educators is contingent on a policy that may divert resources away from our public schools.
2. Unfair Pressure: This approach exerts unfair pressure on teachers and their unions to accept a policy they may fundamentally disagree with, even if it could have negative consequences for public education.
3. Weakening Public Schools: The idea that teacher raises are dependent on voucher approval may weaken our public schools, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and instability in our educational system.
4. Diverse Needs of Educators: Our public school employees have diverse needs and circumstances. Linking their compensation to vouchers may not account for the unique financial situations of each teacher.

I firmly believe that improving teacher compensation and supporting public education should be independent endeavors, driven by our commitment to nurturing the next generation. It is crucial that our governor recognizes the ethical concerns associated with this linkage and considers alternative approaches to address teacher raises without compromising the integrity of our public education system.

Sincerely,
Sheila Schatzke, Ph. D.

Cheryl Mellinger
Self business owner
Galveston, TX

Stop wasting our money on all these special sessions. I do not support sending the 17k that I pay in property taxes to Ted Cruz, who is perfectly able to afford private school without taking my money. I support public education for the future of my state. The special sessions cost over a million dollars each time. Invest that money in our PUBLIC schools.

Consuelo Sanchez

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Good morning, I ask that you give teachers a raise, retired teachers a COLA and say no to vouchers.

Pamela Clark

Self/retired

Arlington, TX

Once again, taxpayers shouldn't be footing the bill for private education and PUBLIC education needs funding to continue to level the playing field. If a parent chooses to seek a private education for their child, they can pay for it themselves, this includes religious-based education. NO TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS! OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS deserve these funds and taxpayers shouldn't foot the bill for private entities in education.

Emily Rich

Self

Dallas, TX

If this hasn't passed in 3 tries, it is because the public doesn't want it. Stop it, please.

Ashley Plant

Myself

Dallas, TX

Vote NO on vouchers. We do NOT want vouchers. They will destroy public education. Vote No

Carrie Harper

Self

Austin, TX

Look no further than Louisiana and Florida. If you want to watch the complete downfall of education, just look at statistics since beginning vouchers in those states. Data does not lie. If you want to kill winning programs, like our beloved football and band programs, vouchers will also do that for you. If you want to be the enemy of all school professionals, and all parents of public school systems, such as Leander ISD, Eanes ISD, Lake Travis ISD, Conroe ISD, Lewisville ISD, and other very powerful parent organizations, vouchers will do that for you. If you support public schools, they will have your back.

John Skelton, Citizen

Self

Plano, TX

Public schools get public funding. Private schools get private funding. No public funding for private schools!

Allison Wells

Myself

Houston, TX

Vouchers will destroy our public schools and our public education deserves to be properly funded

Bryan Calvert, Dr

Self: school principal

Grapevine, TX

No one wants vouchers! Public Ed is 43rd in the nation in funding yet 5th in the nation in graduation rates! Our teachers are doing amazing things!!! PAY THEM!!! Many are quitting because they can no longer afford to teach! Public education is the foundation to a successful society! FUND PUBLIC ED!!! Fully-do it right!!

Sarika Maheshwari
Self - Director of Risk Management
Missouri City, TX

Taking money away from public schools is not a solution that will benefit the majority of the children in our state. The voucher system will weaken public education in Texas and make us fall even further behind in terms of quality education available to the student population. We are going to handicap our children by cutting funding for resources and diverting them to schools that are NOT NECESSARY. Focus on fixing what we already have in place and making it better for everyone - not leaving things as is and giving those that can afford/manage it, another option, so you don't have to make hard decisions. DO YOUR JOB and reject this bill.

Jenn BRANDENBURG
Myself
ARLINGTON, TX

Stop with Vouchers! Stop being anti-democracy by ignoring the will of the people to not have them! You all claim you support the constitution but when it comes to special interests, you ignore us.

Ralph Ramon
Self
Snyder, TX

School vouchers, while often touted as a means to promote choice and improve education, can harm underprivileged students and public education. Here are some reasons why school vouchers can be detrimental:

1. **Draining Resources from Public Schools:** When privileged students use vouchers to attend private or charter schools, it diverts funding from public schools. This reduction in funding can lead to larger class sizes, reduced extracurricular programs, and fewer resources for students who remain in public schools.
2. **Exacerbating Inequality:** School vouchers can reinforce educational inequality. Privileged students often have parents who can supplement the voucher with additional funds, creating a dual system where well-off students can access higher-quality education. At the same time, those without financial resources are left with struggling public schools.
3. **Reduced Accountability:** Private and charter schools that accept vouchers are often subject to less regulation and accountability than public schools. This lack of oversight can result in schools that do not meet educational standards or adequately serve their students.
4. **Cream-Skimming:** Some private schools may selectively admit students, leaving public schools to educate students with more significant needs or challenging behaviors. This can lead to a situation where public schools disproportionately shoulder the burden of educating the most disadvantaged students.
5. **Undermining Public Education:** The diversion of funds and students to private institutions weakens the public education system's ability to innovate and improve. Public schools are essential for fostering a sense of community and inclusivity and can serve as a bedrock for a democratic society.
6. **Threatening Equality of Opportunity:** School vouchers can lead to a system where access to quality education depends on one's ability to secure a voucher, which can be influenced by a parent's socioeconomic status, geography, or other factors. This undermines the principle of equal opportunity for all students to succeed.

In conclusion, while school vouchers may appear to offer parental choices for their children, they come at a significant cost to public education and society. Rather than adequately funding public education to address the root issues in public education to help most students in this great state, vouchers will only exacerbate educational inequalities.

Preston Tirey
Self
Canyon, TX

Thank you for supporting PUBLIC education and voting against the VOUCHER scams that are being shopped as "PSA" or "Parent Choice" when all they do is subsidize private education for 6% or less of our state and take money out of the public schools that serve 94% of our state.

PLEASE push for separate bills in the 4th session. If governor Abbott is going to keep wasting tax payer dollars trying to push his agenda (And wasting your time in doing so), please push to separate public education funding and teacher raises on a separate bill from Vouchers/ESAs. Then we can truly see where the support lies.

Keep holding the line for public education that serves 94% of our state and is written into our Texas Constitution!!!!

The result for the November 7th elections for the percentage of people who voted for the COLA for retired teachers should help everyone to understand that true Texas voters support public education and those who dedicate their lives to teaching our students.

Thank you,

Preston Tirey

Michael Olvera
self
DAllas, TX

Adamantly against vouchers. This is a terrible waste of time and an affront to our public schools and public school teachers.

Velma DeLeon, Mrs.
Los Fresnos CISD
San Benito, TX

If a family opts for an ESA and enrolls their child in a private school, do they forfeit their eligibility for FAPE? If the student requires an IEP and specialized services not offered by the private school, can they still access them through public schools?

Leah Ratliff
Self
McKinney, TX

Don't hold Texas Public School funding hostage with the ridiculous addition of vouchers. The only people who want vouchers are Greg Abbott and his wealthy donors. Parents have a choice in Texas, if they choose private school then they have to pay. That is their choice. Similarly, the police are funded by taxes, if someone chooses private security, they pay for it. The question to be asked is: what does Greg Abbott gain by so doggedly trying to get this to pass? What carrot has been dangled that he won't let this go? Perhaps we need to find a way to get this on a ballot so Abbott will finally understand, no means NO.

Rachel Lerberg
Self
Arlington, TX

I stand in strong opposition to any measure that transfers public school funding to parents or other institutions for use in private, charter, or any educational institution outside of the public school system. Children, families, and communities have the right to well-funded public schools. These schools are already underfunded. Removing additional funds for any purpose is a mistake whose negative implications would reverberate throughout communities and the state. I ask Texas representatives to stand squarely in support of public schools and squarely reject any efforts to transfer public school funds out of the public system.

Catherine Parsons

Self

Houston, TX

I am firmly opposed to any "school choice" or voucher program. Our public schools need to be fully funded. No way should public funds be funneled to religious schools. Thank you.

Christina Garcia

Self

League city, TX

Do NOT defund public education by approving vouchers. Vouchers are a scam used to creat an uneducated population. Public schools need more funding not less. Protect our children by voting no to vouchers.

Denise Kudva, Dr

Self

Spring, TX

As a native Texan, proud parent and a Republican, I am very concerned about the continued refusal to stop pushing for private school vouchers/ESAs by the Texas Legislature. Enough already. I do not want our public schools essentially defunded and public tax funds shifted to private schools. Private schools do not have the same level of accountability, regulation or outcomes analysis. While many do have good standards, private schools do not have to require their teaching staff have degrees or certifications to teach and materials used to teach in private schools are not required to be reviewed for accuracy. I am concerned that shifting public funds to private schools will also further isolate the impoverished rather than aiding areas that may need assistance. All Texas children deserve an education, not just the privileged that have parents that can afford the remaining balance for and provide transportation to ritzy private school options. Also as a parent of a gifted but special education child, I am appalled by the general lack of concern regarding these students. It is not acceptable for private schools to receive public tax money but be allowed to refuse admission or services to special needs students. As it stands today, private schools may deny admission for any reason, including but not limited to economics, religion, color of skin, medical/health needs, ancestry, family unit status, academic potential, etc. This type of segregation should not be supported with public tax funds. Fully fund Texas public education. Please support our beloved public schools, teachers and communities. Thank you.

Chris Kett

Self

Arlington, TX

I oppose any and all types of legislation that would divert funds from public schools in order to fun vouchers. Public money should be spent in public schools. NO VOUCHERS

Catherine Khudairi

Self - homemaker

Houston, TX

Texas would not be the state it is without public school education. Please say NO to vouchers that take away from public school funding and give priority to some students over others. Programs and even entire schools are being cut/closed in SBISD, and over half of our students are under the poverty line! We're counting on you to spend our tax dollars wisely. Please fund our public schools! Education for all should be the top priority!!!

DOUG HARPER

Doug Harper Web Consultant

ALLEN, TX

ALL Texas parents deserve to have meaningful school choice options. Not only ESAs but the ability to transfer into other districts.

School Choice voters overwhelmingly (89%) support Educational Freedom. In fact... more than 1.6 million Republican Primary voters made their statement 18 months ago.

David GUERRERO

Self

Brownsville, TX

Yes to teacher raises and public school funding. No to education savings accounts.

Weldon Avery

Self

Spring Branch, TX

I'm sick and tired of Abbott wasting our money just because he wants a bill passed that will help his rich supporters..... he needs to go

Treva LaJaunie

Self

Farmersville, TX

Let it be known that I am against providing funding for the voucher program. I am also in favor of ensuring that the public school system including teachers receive the adequate funding needed to provide a quality education to my children and the millions of children that rely on the public school system. I am not swayed by the efforts to illude Texans on how the voucher will not take away funding from the public school system. I know it will and most others know it will. Vote no to vouchers and vote yes for ALL kids in the state of Texas!

Debbie Brininstool, Mrs.

self

Flower Mound, TX

I am absolutely opposed to the voucher bill. I am equally opposed to my taxpayer money being spent to fund a 4th special session. This borders on bullying by the governor towards the House members who are opposed to vouchers. Come on. . .move on.

Christine Walton

Self, EVP

Arlington, TX

Texas is already behind in school funding and our public schools are stretching those dollars to provide services to all of our students. We should not reroute those funds to private organizations through the use of vouchers. It would be a disservice to our students and families and taxpayers' funds. Our representatives should listen to the overwhelming majority of constituents that do not support these programs.

Jodi Perez
Self and family
Bulverde, TX

Please say not to private school vouchers. Invest in public schools that serve ALL of our children. Our public schools deserve our tax dollar support. Our public school teachers deserve better compensation. Our kids deserve better public school programs and education.

Jennifer Saldivar
Self
Farmersville, TX

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Dean Holbein
Self
Prosper, TX

Support this as grandparents we need this!!!

Kimberly Brienzi
Brienzi Family
AUSTIN, TX

As the parent of three sons who had the privilege of going to private schools, I would love for all of our Texas children to have the option to attend the schools of their and their parents' choice. I appreciate your service and urge you to vote to unanimously pass the universal ESA. I am praying for you all.

nathaniel quinn
nav
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Robert Udman
self, Director of Development
Dallas, TX

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Becky Udman
self, Preschool Director
Dallas, TX

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Damon Brown
Self/Filmmaker
Austin, TX

Just stop. Stop immediately. Introduce a bill to take away the Governor's power to call special sessions. Tell the Governor that if the retirement age of judges is important enough to put to a ballot, the Voucher Scam he's peddling should be too. Call his bluff. Make him put it to a state-wide vote and watch it go down in flames yet again. This is beyond wasteful of your time and our money. If Abbott follows through with his petty man-baby revenge plot and supports candidates against you - turn around and support candidates against him. I would literally vote for a Pool Noodle before I'd vote for Greg Abbott but his insistence on running the governorship like his own personal fiefdom has made me into a Dade Phelan supporter. That's where we are. If you unite and censure the governor instead of debating this ridiculous bill that a majority of Texas don't want I might even consider voting for Republicans, just because you took a stand. Just fund our public school system, it's required by the Constitution.

SHMUEL KARP

self

Houston, TX

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Ryan Howard

Self, Educator

Schertz, TX

ESAs or vouchers are detrimental to the education of students in Texas. Texas currently and historically already fails to fully fund public education to where schools can function well and allow students to learn. Instead of actually holding up to their constitutional obligation, Abbott wants to defund public education and allow average Texans fund others ability to go to a private school, homeschool or whatever they so choose.

That choice is counteractive of what Texas stands for. Approving ESAs/ vouchers is giving money, with no accountability, to schools to CHOOSE which students can or cannot attend their schools. The state is lackluster at supporting students with special needs and this is adding to the problem. Teacher raises should NEVER be tied to or be a carrot for vouchers. I, as a teacher, am willing to forgo a raise as long as the state holds up their end to fully fund schools. Fully support public schools and teachers. Do not allow vouchers to pass ever.

Nicholas Erotas

Self

PLANO, TX

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alina averick
self
dallas, TX

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ohad naim
My Family
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, specially these days when we can find it frightening to have our children in schools where antisemitism is In rise at schools as well, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Judith Wyble, Teacher
Self retired educator
Spring, TX

No!!! Quit cramming this down our throats! Public education educates the majority of the kids in Texas! This decimated public education. You want private funding for private schools, pay for it yourself!!! No ! NO! nO!

Louis Diamond

Self

Houston, TX

It's important that the school choice bill is passed. I received an excellent education from public schools and used to be against public funding of any private schooling. What's changed is that the quality of many public schools has gotten much worse, especially in the poorer areas. Thus better quality education is limited to those who live zoned to a better school, which is usually correlated to higher property values or to those with enough wealth to pay for private schools. It's especially hypocritical for any who send their children to private schools to oppose letting less fortunate children from getting a decent education.

Horacio Salinas

Self

Houston, TX

I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston. We are a highly economically diverse niche school district in the big city. I, like many of my community members, moved here for the public education. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget.

This will include cuts to school choice (3 of our 5 kids are currently enrolled or graduated from choice programs including dual language) and teachers (our oldest is a high school teacher in the district). Our class sizes will balloon. Our district will be forced to close one or more Title 1 elementary schools. The lack of fully funding our public schools in Texas will impact our most vulnerable population.

The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. **FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!**

Amanda Candler

Self

Houston, TX

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Steven Rabinowitz, Dr.

Self

Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Thank you for time and effort to support our great state!

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

It is clearer than ever that parents must have active say in their children's education. In a time where we see teachers breaking from public institutions and propagating hate and antisemitism, we as parents should feel safe sending our children to the schools of our choice.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you again for dedication.

Steven Rabinowitz

Alona Pchima, Mrs.

Texas resident

Houston, TX

My child deserves a good edu

Daniel Ben-David

Self

Houston, TX

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Darbie Safford
St. Mary's Catholic School
Murphy, TX

Please support parental choice in education. We work under the paradigm that parents are the primary educators of their children; we are their partners in that education. Parents know best what they want with regard to the education of their children. Please allow them the freedom to choose the school environment which best serves the needs of their children.

Camille Simpkins
Concerned parent in Lovejoy ISD
Mckinney, TX

Please increase our per student allotment. It has not been increased since 2019 and Texas' per student allotment is currently among the lowest 10 states in the country. The amount needed to match the 2019 allotment is about \$1000/student, so we need to increase the support for each student. If we want Texas to continue to get our students educated, we need to increase this allotment. We are doing our school districts and students a true disservice in failing to increase the per student allotment by \$1000 to at least match the 2019 level. I appeal to the lawmakers to stand up for our students. None of these funds should be tied to vouchers because public funds should NOT fund private entities.

Ari Levi, MR
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

andrew kesler

Self / Real Estate Appraiser

houston, TX

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Thank you,

Andrew Kesler

Molly Kesler

self / homemaker

Houston, TX

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Molly Kesler

Marsha Floyd

Self, lawyer

Houston, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers.

Mark French

Self

Nacogdoches, TX

I'm a lifelong Texan, son of public educators, husband to a public educator. I'm the product of public schools as are my children. Our representatives have the opportunity to move our public education system forward and move it from near the bottom of the rankings. Take advantage of this opportunity and show your constituents you're there for them. Do not waste our resources on giving discounts to private school parents, they'll be fine as you know. Public schools are the center of many of the communities in our state. The communities you were sent to represent. Now is the time to show your commitment to them. They will forgive and forget a lot of things but selling out their schools to benefit a privileged few is not one of those things. Fund public schools and show them you care.

Walker Agnew
myself (parent)
HOUSTON, TX

Hello, please increase the basic allotment for students to \$7,000 total or near a \$1,000 increase. Spring Branch ISD is facing over \$35M of cuts. We're about to lay off hundreds of staff, close schools, and cut programs to stay afloat. Please place a priority on this instead of vouchers.

Julia Aronov
Self
Houston, TX
Na

Trona Jurden, Mrs.
Public school mom and teacher
Lavon, TX

Vouchers must contain same accountability!!! Otherwise it's public schools getting the Most needy student, having Hardest requirements, and getting Less money. Public schools are already doing miracles with what they have.

Sophia Gomez
self
Nolanville, TX

I sincerely would appreciate your support of this bill.

Portia Moore
Self
Arlington, TX

I am a lifetime Texan. I attended public schools from primary thru secondary school.. I attended public schools because based on the wages my parents and grandparents earned it was not enough to support sending 6 kids to private schools. I feel the same is happening in today's times also. A lot of parents cannot afford tuition for private schools. Even with the grants given to assist it wouldn't be enough to help in the current economy and inflation. People are struggling with high prices for food, gas, clothes, medical insurance ect. Why should public schools have to suffer the losses from losing valuable funds and teachers for our public schools? I pray we continue to fight for public schools. All students aren't private school material and wouldn't flourish in that kind of environment. Please leave our public schools alone and find another way to find or get funding for this.

Aviva Cobb, Mrs.
Self/ office manager
Houston, TX

Support the ability to choose which facility to use the financial help. Support the choice to use in a private school setting.

Becky Beaver
Self
Austin, TX

I grew up in a small West Texas town the daughter of a teacher and a school administrator. Public education is the backbone of a democracy and anything that dilutes funding for public education threatens our democracy and should not be considered.

Ronald Kotts
Alief TSTA , Self
Houston, TX

- Public schools, teachers and support staff need more state funding and higher pay, but not at the expense of taxpayer-funded vouchers and with no accountability/controls.
- House Bill 1 is a voucher bill that legislators are trying to make pretty with more school funding. We do not buy it. Why would the voucher be funded at a higher amount than the per pupil amount sent to public schools.
- A voucher plan may initially be limited, but within a few years it will expand and soon be sending billions of tax dollars to unregulated private schools that should be going to under-funded public schools. That has been the experience in states that have adopted vouchers.
- The governor and the Legislature have a responsibility under the Texas Constitution to adequately fund public schools that accept all students. They have no responsibility for private schools, and Texas taxpayers should not be forced to pay for private schools, which can pick and choose their students.
- Take vouchers out of House Bill 1, and then we can have a much-needed discussion about public school finance.

Ian King
Self, software engineer
Dallas, TX

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Akiva Diamond, Dr.
Aguda
Houston, TX

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Barbara Bennett

None

Spring, TX

Enough is enough. Texans have repeatedly said we want to fund public education and teacher raises. Nationally, the average spending per student is \$14,347 and you think \$6700 is going to be sufficient? That's ridiculous. Our Constitution guarantees the right to a public education, but that means we need to allocate enough funds to do so. Texas politicians are failing our children. Forget vouchers, we have said we don't want to fund wealthy parents. Instead, use that money to invest in all of our children and the public education system, including a living wage for teachers.

Ronald Golden, Me

Self

DeSoto, TX

Investing in public schools is an investment in Texas. The billionaire's should not be able to push their views onto the public!

Ariel Darrison, Rabbi

Self

Dallas, TX

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Bryan Armes

Self

LUBBOCK, TX

As an educator, I believe it is important that you do not advocate or vote to divert state tax dollars from public to private schools. I oppose all vouchers and related schemes — including education savings accounts, tax-credit scholarships and for-profit charter and virtual schools — that use tax dollars to pay private school tuition for selected students while undermining public schools where the vast majority of Texas students are educated.

We should be making a larger investment in our public schools, not diverting resources to private interests.

Vouchers will do nothing to address the teacher shortage and may very well worsen it, if districts losing tax dollars to private schools are forced to lay off teachers and other employees. And any voucher program in Texas will ultimately cause higher property taxes to pay for it.

Gov. Abbott claims that public schools will remain fully funded. That is not true because public schools are not fully funded now and never have been under his administration. Even after the extra school funding appropriated in 2019, Texas still spends more than \$4,600 less than the national average in per-student funding.

Your vote OPPOSING all vouchers and education savings accounts is a vote in support of Texas students, educators and public education.

Karen Conyngham, Mrs.

Self Employed

Austin, TX

I am TOTALLY OPPOSED to school vouchers. Fund our public schools adequately so that all children have an equal chance at a quality education. Many rural states have no access to private schools. Do not deprive them of a good public school education. This should not be a political issue; it is an ethical one.

NO VOUCHERS!

Holly Whitman

Self

Richardson, TX

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Jasmine Casanova, Mrs.

St Joseph's catholic school

Killeen, TX

We are in support of HB1

Carol Hagler

Self

Dallas, TX

No Vouchers

Louis Mascolo

Self

KINGWOOD, TX

I do not believe that public funds need to be spent on private school. Education savings account or vouchers Do not need them to be part of Texas, Public school legislation.

Jonah Nathan
self
HOUSTON, TX

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John Rieschick
Self- Educator
El Paso, TX

Dear Representative Escobar,

I live in your district in El Paso and receive your ongoing correspondence. I belong to the Cathedral Parish and I serve as Principal of St. Patrick Cathedral School. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Sincerely,

[Full Name]

Vanessa Lewin
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Menachem Ziemba

self

Dallas, TX

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MZ

Gilbert Garza, Voter/ Education Advocate

Students and Edicayors

Brownsville, TX

While the concept of school vouchers may seem appealing in theory, there are many compelling arguments against their implementation. They have the potential to undermine educational equity, weaken the public education system, lack accountability, and raise concerns about discrimination and constitutional issues. Instead of relying on vouchers, it may be more productive to focus on improving the existing public education system to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education, regardless of their background or economic status.

This is nothing more than a subsidy for the rich!!

This is camouflaged as a benefit for educators while actually undermining their profession! This in fact does nothing to protect students from inequalities and burdens already underfunded schools and underpaid educators! Shameful!!

Abraham Lieberman, Dr.

self, physical therapist

Houston, TX

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Richard Bonn
self, Mortgage Banker
Houston, TX

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Alan Kellerman, Dr
Self
Houston, TX

Please support education choice in Texas.

Karen Thompson
ATPE
Ballinger, TX

No to vouchers yes to raising teacher salaries.

Ayala Tarshish
Self
Houston, TX

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?

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MARIE RENE LOPEZ

ADAPT of TEXAS and The arc of Texas

Hutto, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and as a member of ADAPT of Texas, I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives.

Marilyn Cobb

Self -- Retired Texas Teacher

Lakeway, TX

I strongly urge the Committee to oppose HB 1 because of its inclusion of "the establishment of an education savings account program." Surrounding that statement with a variety of proposals that seem to support Texas public schools does not decrease the extremely harmful effects of any kind of voucher program! As I read the words in this bill, I can hear Mary Poppins singing, "Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down." Except, in this case, she is singing, "Just a spoonful of sugar helps the POISON go down!" Please protect our Texas public education system by refusing to support or accept this bill.

Eduardo Aleman

Self

San Antonio, TX

Spend school taxes on public schools. The vast majority of Texas students go to public schools. That is who we need to educate. Educated students find good jobs and will not need state support as adults

Camila Ramos-Pena

self

Canutillo, TX

Esteemed representatives, the reason for my message is to voice my opposition to any "voucher" type savings account for the purposes of diverting funding from public schools to private schools. In light of the passage of Prop. 4 increasing the homestead exemption on school taxes, school districts will be even more underfunded than they already are. Adding to insult to injury, Gov. Abbot want to divert monies from public education to the private sector. I see a several flaws in this logic. First of all, the amount being considered is more per student than the state is currently spending on public education. How is that fair to the vast, vast majority of children who attend public schools and will not benefit one iota from these diverted funds? Second of all, I foresee a grand bureaucracy being established to manage those so-called "education savings accounts," so a chunk of these diverted property tax dollars will end up as administrative salaries, and one can only imagine the amount of those salaries especially for the upper administrators. Third of all, I am a public school teacher. I already pay for most of my professional development out of pocket among other things such as copier paper, ink for my school printer, resources and materials for my class, etc. The voters in my district have not approved two bond referendums for new construction AND capital repairs and improvements to our aging facilities, so monies are being prioritized for those repairs. Health insurance is becoming unaffordable under the plan being proposed in my district, so teachers are considering leaving education, retiring, or getting a second job to help defray the increased premiums, and as we all know, health insurance is now required in our country. These are just a few of my concerns, and I implore you to carefully consider the impact of this pet project of our state legislators. I understand there are a minority of people that want the vouchers and have put their political careers on the line by promising vouchers, but what has happened to looking out for the majority of constituents, in this case our Texas children, instead of a special-interest group? Sanity must prevail. I am a Republican and have voted Republican since I turned 18, but I am seriously questioning my Republican leadership at this point. Please, think of the needs of the many and not the wants of a few special interests. Our public school, a Texas guarantee according to our state constitution, is under attack. First by discrediting public schools through a flawed accountability system, second, by our voters unknowingly defunding public schools through the homestead exemption that effectively takes money from public schools, and last of all, by diverting funds, through vouchers, from the education system guaranteed by our constitution to institutions that will educate only a very, very small fraction of Texas children. Respectfully submitted, Camila Ramos-Pena

KELLY WATERMAN

Self

Dallas, TX

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I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

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It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Kelly Waterman
4033 Amherst Ave.
Dallas, TX 75225

Mindl Weingarten

Self

Bellaire, TX

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Erik Fathy

self

Richardson, TX

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Karina Moreno

self

Houston, TX

I am a parent of 2 former, and 2 current students Spring Branch ISD in Houston. Due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers across the board. Our class sizes will balloon. This negatively affects the education of our future, and impacts the disadvantaged youth of our district the most. These cuts will close pre-k schools, and programs that most kids can't afford if not through public school.

The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. OR Seperate the bills to ensure that public schools are fully funded. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Our future, our childrens future rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers dollars should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. And more so because Private School is a luxury that most cannot afford anyway! And - MOST families with children in private school can actually afford it. Public school children are where they are for a reason and they NEED you to do your job and represent best interests of ALL students.

FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!

Menachem Blecher, Rabbi
Chabad of The Woodlands Inc.
SPRING, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Jonathan Jardine
Believe Dental + Special Needs Friends
San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

As somebody who works with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on individuals with IDD, as well as on the state budget.

Both anecdotal experiences and aggregated data tell a consistent story on SSLCs negatively impacting the physical and emotional health of individuals in SSLCs. Any effort to increase the number of institutionalized people with disabilities poses a health risk to these children and their families.

Furthermore, as a taxpayer in the State of Texas, I am appalled by the exorbitant cost of operating SSLCs, when there are options that can REDUCE costs by over 75% while IMPROVING the health and wellbeing of the individuals with disabilities. Data from HHSC indicates that each individual in an SSLC costs Texas taxpayers over \$300,000 per year.

Highlighting SSLCs risks unduly influencing families to choose this expensive option. It is inappropriate to provide parents information about SSLCs when vastly better options are available.

The sensible course of action is to conduct an orderly shutdown of the remaining SSLCs across the State. The resulting savings can be directed to expanding the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately 77% less per individual.

I urge you to remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Jardine
3110 Elkwater
San Antonio, TX 78258
jonathanbjardine@gmail.com

Evan Fletcher

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

We are watching your actions,

Evan Fletcher

Shelby Brooks

Self- teacher

Justin, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Shelby Brooks

David Pena, Principal

Father Yermo Elementary/Jr High School - El Paso, TX

El Paso, TX

Please allow parents to have a choice in what type of education their child may have. The opportunity to gain a religious education may have a profound impact on the life of the child. Gods message in the educational curriculum may open the eyes of the children that may want to seek a different type of education or future. I hope that you're a religious individual and may have an understanding why it is important for parents to have this choice.

Nicole Lanza
Heart and Harmony Music Therapy
Edgecliff Village, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Nikki Lanza
6112 Ed Coady Rd., Fort Worth TX 76134

Lene Bruheim

Self

Houston, TX

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas and an ally of all people with IDD, I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

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Lene Bruheim

Constituent

Madalyn Sarafzadeh

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Celeste Green Leinberger

Self. Home school parent and clinical psychologist. Social Emotional Learning instructor at Lufkin ISD

Lufkin, TX

Keep up the good work! Please continue to reach for a bill that includes an accessible ESA that gives opportunity to ALL Texas students, starting with the most disadvantaged.

Personally, my 17 yo son and I are paying out of pocket for required math and welding classes. We opted out of the public school system as he was an active duty military child and we moved frequently. There was no continuity of education and he didn't fit in. He wants to be a pipeline welder and later attend college to study physics and engineering. An ESA would benefit him and others like him greatly.

I have four other children and assistance would magnify their opportunities. I just graduated my nephew who is attending ship automation school in Norway. He would have benefitted as well.

Thank you for including more funding for public schooled student and teachers. We are all part of the same community and world and I want US ALL to succeed and make Texas even greater.

Celeste, Joey (17), Sean (12), Isaak (8), Heike (6), and Masha (3)

Melissa Hunter
Argyle ISD
Highland Village, TX
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

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#TogetherWeSoar,
Melissa Hunter

Alyssa Chavez
Self
BEAUMONT, TX

ESA's are needed in Texas, as a state that usually is first in everything we need to step it up and get onboard with it. 33 other states already have Universal ESA's and their students are benefiting a great deal, WE COULD TOO! Please support ESA's for students like my brothers, my little sister and all the other families who would benefit.

Lanny Hollis
Self
El Paso, TX

Please support this Choice bill and ESA for Catholic education that parents choose.

LKH

Laura Nash
My child
Roanoke, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Laura Nash
204 N Walnut St
Roanoke, Tx 76262

Cynthia Cooper

self

Houston, TX

Please release funding for public schools. Do not hold it up for Voucher program. All of that is a disservice to the majority of Texas students, who attend public school. These existing working schools will suffer and have to cut programs because you are not keeping up with money they need to run. It is shameful and political and not at all about the care and help of children. I am over and over amazed at how we as a society disregard then needs of children who have absolutely no control of what happens to them. Please maintain at least the basics of an education.

Ricky Griffin

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Your Name

Ricky Griffin

eve avivi
Self, Architect
Houston, TX

Please Support School Choice in Texas.

Lisa Stout
self Domestic Engineer
Spring, TX

Our school libraries are full of filth and the schools are trying to push the LGBTQ agenda on our students. Students are behind for their grade level and graduating not ready for college. Parents should be able to choose where their children are going to school if the school their children are attending is not meeting their educational needs. Just in the Spring ISD, most of our middle schools and high schools are D and F rated. Our kids are graduating and not even knowing our US Constitution. Parents need vouchers to send their kids to better schools where they have control.

EVE AVIVI
Self, Architect
HOUSTON, TX

Please support School Choice in Texas

Michael Ball

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Your Name

Michael Ball

Martha Murrell, Mrs

SELF: a Catholic, a retired special education teacher and retired TEA employee

Austin, TX

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1).

1. I do NOT want MY tax dollars used to support non-public entities that have no oversight, no accountability requirements, can cherry pick students, and may be founded on principals I am diametrically opposed to. This would be debatable, only if a non-public school can demonstrate that their student outcomes exceed those of the public school they are replacing---as documented with the STAAR test--including for the population of the student using the voucher, and only IF the school chooses student by lottery (as do Charter Schools) ensuring that no challenging student population is discriminated against. No Cherry Picking! Americans are guaranteed an education, but NOT in any school of their choice with tax-payer dollars.

2. I am angry that critically needed funding, teacher pay, and special programs are being held hostage in a bill that is clearly BAD for Texas students because of the voucher component!!

3. I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Please support the critical issues: funding, teacher pay, and special programs, but not at the expense of our PUBLIC education system. Stop this voucher insanity!!!!

Lucero Cazares

Self

Rowlett, TX

Vouchers are bad for Texas students, and no good will come from spending public tax money to enrich private school operators.

Roger Nash
My child
Roanoke, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Roger Nash
204 N Walnut St
Roanoke, Tx 76262

Cheryl Frink
self
AUSTIN, TX

I do not support using public money to pay tuition for Texas children to attend private schools. Many private schools are established to promote religious or cultural indoctrination. Why should I have to pay for a child to be indoctrinated into a belief system that I do not support or that might hurt my family or my country? Do you want to pay for children to go to schools set up by the Branch Davidians or the Ku Klux Klan? If you are Christian, do you want to pay tuition at a Muslim school? If you are Jewish, do you want to pay tuition for a child attending a Christian school? I can guarantee you there are many conservative Christians who will not be thrilled to pay tuition for children to attend Catholic schools. People definitely have the right to choose whatever school they want for their children, but they should pay for religious or cultural education. That's personal and I shouldn't be required to finance personal religious beliefs. Even if there is no social or religious indoctrination in a private school, there will be this: private schools are not required to accept all children or adhere to rules and requirements every public school must follow. So what we have is public money going to "acceptable" children to pay for schools with few if any state education requirements. That's why they are called "private." You are opening up a terrible can of worms if you provide public funds to finance religious or cultural education. Also, why is it fair that some families get \$10,000 per child and other families who use public schools don't get that \$10,000 pop per kid? I could help my kids' schools significantly with 10 grand every year. I really am tired of whatever is driving this voucher program. Please stop trying to destroy public schools. They aren't always perfect but they are often very good and could be even better if they weren't underfunded year after year. Plus, I get a say in how public education is handled -- another element missing from private schools. I get to vote on a school board and state education officials. I don't have that privilege at private schools, although you want to give them my money. Using public money for private schools is unfair, it will hurt our public schools (of course, that's the goal of many proponents of this scheme) and it is thoroughly un-American. Please reject the voucher menace and do something positive for our state.

Heather Kennedy

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

Heather Kennedy

Robert Bauer, FNP

Self

Dallas, TX

Please pass this bill

Kathryn Rossi, kgrossi777@gmail.com

Self

Richardson, TX

I live in Richardson Texas belong to All Saints Catholic Church and my daughter attends All Saints Catholic School. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Raymond Kurtz, Mr
Self, Psychotherapist
Temple, TX

Opposed. Vote "NO."

Elana Gersten, Mrs.
Self, Physician Assistant
Dallas, TX

Please help put our taxes to good use, and vote for this bill to pass

Sarah Gray
Self
Austin, TX

I am once again submitting comment regarding vouchers, or what you call "education savings accounts." As a Texan who supports public schools wholeheartedly, I am AGAINST vouchers in ANY form. I don't care what you call them. I am AGAINST vouchers, and so are a majority of Texans. It is shameful to me that a small handful of Texas Legislators would continually try to force vouchers upon our state when the majority of citizens DO NOT WANT VOUCHERS. I deeply believe that this proposed voucher plan poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement. Stop it with these vouchers. Instead, please fully fund our public schools and increase teacher pay. We can still do good things. We must not do vouchers.

Yehuda Eisenberger
YTE
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you!

Catherine Huvar, Ms.
Self
Katy, TX

I firmly and unequivocally believe that public money should go ONLY to public schools. I am against vouchers in any form. Vote NO on vouchers.

Casey Duck-Garcia

Self, Dyslexia Therapist at a non charter public school

Austin, TX

Having worked in both private and public schools, I can testify to the fact that non charter public schools are held accountable to much higher regulations and strict standards under the watch of state agencies such as the TEA. Tying funding of non charter public schools with vouchers for nonaccountable institutions like private and public charters is ignorant and dangerous. Public charters and private schools are businesses which can provide and deny services, while also choosing whom to admit without the same level of accountability. Having taught at religious private schools, it was not an uncommon practice to be asked by administrators to practice unethical behaviors, such as not providing guidance to families whose children may need further evaluation in order to best support their learning differences...all in vain of keeping enrollment numbers and thus tuition dollars up; while also not calling attention to the fact that we do not have specially trained staff who can meet the needs of differently abled learners. At the same time however, as a dyslexia therapist at a public school, HB3928 specifically places more responsibilities on our shoulders without compensation for our highly specialized training (2 years, 700 practicum hours and state/national certification tests) above and beyond the pay grade we are currently classified at, "teacher". Do not tie public school funding, equal rights to a fair and appropriate public education for all, to a voucher in the name of "choice" for the few. And, do not turn over public monies to vouchers ultimately going to unaccountable businesses.

Christine Arrington
self/Argyle ISD staff member
Flower Mound, TX
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly qualified teaching staff, managing fast growth, and the cost to fund award-winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to operate effectively.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs, which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely underfunded. Not only that, but the currently proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year, and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a significant funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget, and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. The FTG impacts less than 100 districts. However, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Sincerely,
Christine Arrington

Anita Williams, Ms
Self
San Marcos, TX

Both major elements of this bill are NOT good for the MAJORITY of Texas students, who are underfunded already. Public money is for PUBLIC education.

My 38-year-old son has several disabilities and has benefitted from his HCS funds to live in his community. State living centers are restrictive and expensive. A really bad choice for most with disabilities.

Thank you for listening!

Carmen Fernandez
Notre Dame of Dallas School
Balch Springs, TX

I want taxpayer money to be given to families who can't afford private schools.

I support prioritizing the poor and vulnerable in any parental choice program.

StudentsWhat would school choice mean to our students and community.

- o It would empower families with options-this is powerful for families that have told that options for their child are limited
- o Families can choose what program fits their child's educational needs and abilities
- o The financial burden for families with a child with disabilities is tremendous- it is a lifetime. School Choice would assist the family to have the opportunities afforded to affluent families.
- o Private schools traditionally have smaller classes
- o The freedom to choose a school that focuses on specific need-promotes student success and positive learning outcomes.

Heather Hofer
Argyle ISD
Roanoke, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,
Heather Hofer

Mikayla Stucki

self, private preschool teacher

Denton, TX

I am writing in to object to any advancement of legislation to establish taxpayer-funded education savings accounts (vouchers). Texas taxpayers' money should absolutely not be funneled to private schools over which the state has no oversight and which can reject students at their discretion. Additionally, the funding model for the vouchers is incredibly shortsighted, as we can see when we compare the typical annual school tax dollars for a median-valued home in TX (\$3000-\$4000) to the amount of money being proposed for the voucher system (\$8000). This means that a middle-class TX family with just two children participating in the voucher system would receive \$16,000 for educational expenses, or at least 4x the amount that they paid in school-related property taxes in the first place. This can only drain funds for public education disproportionate to the number of students taking part in the voucher program. We can see this in other states that have established voucher systems--afterward the ability to appropriately fund their public education system plummeted (Arizona is one example). And the supposed option to attend a private school if public schools are failing is really no option at all: I researched several private schools located within a reasonable distance of my home, and in every case, the \$8000/year voucher amount would only cover a fraction of tuition, meaning that this initiative is unlikely to bring private school within reach of the majority of Texas families.

Texas is already well below the national average for the per-student allotment of funds, and vouchers will only limit our government's ability to rectify this problem. If the Texas legislature wants to show Texas parents and families that they value a strong educational experience for our children, they can increase the per-student basic allotment so that we are top-ten in the nation instead of bottom-ten. Texas students will thrive when we invest in them, and when Texas students thrive, they will create a stronger workforce that can only bolster the Texas economy. Invest in Texas: Invest in public education!

Kenneth Harris

Self

Argyle, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Ken Harris

Harold Lee
Retired
Houston, TX

I support education savings accounts for parents to use for the most appropriate schools for their children - including private schools that are secular OR religiously affiliated.

Laura Drane
Our Lady of the Hills Catholic High School
Kerrville, TX

Dear

I live in Kerrville, Texas] and my child attends Our Lady of the Hills Catholic School. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Sincerely,

Laura Drane

Lilac Bashirj
Self
Houston, TX

Financial help with private school will be great for all different kinds of religion

Simon Nguyen
Self
Houston, TX

I support parent choice in education

Caylen Thompson
ESA
Port Arthur, TX

Hi , this will be a great opportunity for Homeschool parents that actually care and are a major part of their kid's education

John Campbell
Self. Retired
Farmers Branch, TX

The time has come for Texas to provide school choice for low income families.

Mary Helen Specht
Self, teacher
Austin, TX

I live in Austin now, but I grew up in Abilene. School vouchers will work against all public schools but especially in rural areas where they are needed the most. Please stand strong AGAINST voicers.

Caroline Deisze
self, sole care giver to my adult daughter
Sugar Land, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Caroline Deisze

2959 Jenny Dr.

Sugar Land, Texas 77479

[

Arnetta Murray
City of Iowa Colony
Rosharon, TX

HB1 looks good but we never know. I believe in Educational Enrichment. I don't know the specifics but as an Educator I support anything that would enhance public education. Since we have a Governor who insists of allowing the rich to get richer by creating this fake voucher program. This voucher program is an attempt to cripple public ed and that is what Abbott wants. How sad, and he's a spiritual man. That being said, please allow HB1 to go forth because Public Education should not be used as a bullying tactic. I support this bill and what I am reading now. If there are any hidden or negative addendums then it's a NO!. If it's here to help Public Education then YES!

Katherine Carpenter
Self / Contracts Director
ARGYLE, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,
Katherine Carpenter

Carolyn Kwapich
self
PLANO, TX

I support "school choice" to financially assist parents in choosing the best educational environment for their children by allowing their tax dollars to be used outside of the public school system. Every child has a right to the best education possible and every parent has an obligation to ensure their children receive the best.

Iris Cohen
Self
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.
Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.
Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Idan Cohen
Self
Houston, TX

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Lisa Bobo
Self
Lake Dallas, TX
November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Lisa Bobo
Eden Assayag
Self
Houston, TX

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Deborah Ware

Self

Tomball, TX

I do NOT support school vouchers. Fully fund public education now!

Any vouchers should come with full accountability to private schools including students being required to take and pass STAAR.

Tara Awezec

Self

Lucas, TX

I strongly support creating ESAs for every student in the state of Texas regardless of whether they're in public, private, homeschool or hybrid school and which may be used to pay for tuition, books, uniforms, tutoring and other educational expenses. For too long students have been required to attend the school closest to their home which in many cases condemns them to attend a failing school. Our public school system is a monopoly that is no longer working for the good of students. Even though Texas spends \$15,700 per student per year, 50% cannot read at grade level and 60% cannot perform math at grade level. This is disgraceful! Parents must have the opportunity to have their child educated as they choose and students in failing school districts must have the opportunity to succeed. There are 31 states that currently have school choice and student performance in every state has improved. Competition makes for a better product and we need to introduce competition into our school system now. Texas educates 10% of the entire student population in the United States and we must do a better job! This bill introducing ESAs for all students is imperative and must be passed by the legislature.

Jean Robinson

Myself

Fort Worth, TX

I am against establishing educational savings account programs. These programs divert public money away from public schools. Public education is a precious right that supports all children. Democracy depends on public dollars to educate all children.

Tabitha Lenox

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

As a mother of twins, i realize education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Richard Green
Clarion Project and myself
Richardson, TX

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Hearing Date: November 9, 2023 9:00 AM

Gregory T. Labus, Pastor
St Joseph Catholic Church and school
Edinburg, TX

I strongly urge the passage of this bill that will assist parents who do not have the financial means to choose where their children are educated.

Christina Cortez, Ms.
The Catholic Diocese of Brownsville
Edinburg, TX

I am strongly in support of HB 1 and the parents who cannot afford to choose where their children get an education.

Miriam Albaz
Yte Houston
Houston, TX

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Andrew Correa
Self
San Antonio, TX

I believe it is the parents right to educate their children not the states, with the agenda "Woke" in the public school system, it is imperative that these rights are left to the parents and not the state. We must put choice back to the parents and support ever Texan equally.

Rebecca Pitman

Argyle isd
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Rebecca Pitman

Ligia Castillo

Self
Humble, TX

I am full support of HB 1.

Abigail Laird

Self, Mother
Buda, TX

As a mother and former teacher, I strongly urge our representatives to vote in favor of school choice. All children deserve access to an education that meets their specific needs and parents deserve to have equal access to excellent school options for their children no matter their income level. Please be courageous in fighting for children's access to opportunity. Every child that is able to receive an education that is conducive to their flourishing not only benefits that child, but our whole society. Please vote in favor of school choice for the sake of our children and our future.

Christine Enslin

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

Public education has been severely underfunded and with the cost of everything going up we are starting to see it in our schools. My child is a special needs student. We are in public schools because private schools would have kicked us out and they do not offer services for kids needing extra help. Private schools do not offer some of the award winning extra curricular care. Many choose private for religious reasons. By funding private schools you will be funding religious organizations on our tax payer dollars. With the aftermath of Covid and in home learning special education services are at an all time high. Many children are needing extra support. We are in a growing community and are primarily funded by homeowner tax base... please keep funding our schools.

Erin Westrom

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Erin Westrom

Heather Behr, Mrs

Self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Shelley Farr

Self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Lisa Struthers

Self

Killeen, TX

Please help us provide support where it is needed in our schools for our workers and children.

Srikesavan Sermadurai

Self & IT Consultant

Argyle, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Srikesavan Sermadurai

William Cravens

Self - Non-Profit

Houston, TX

I work for a foundation that provides tuition assistance across the State of Texas. As such, I see the valuable impact of families having a choice in their education. Our State has an incredible chance to provide educational opportunities and enrichment to those in most need. These are life changing opportunities that can improve and stabilize multiple generations of a family. House Bill 1 positively addresses areas that are most important including eligibility, prioritization, testing, religious liberty and ESA amounts. In addition, it addresses the important concern of public school financing. I believe HB1 should garner the most serious consideration by our elected officials in Austin.

Nandhini Srikesavan

Self & Developer

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Nandhini Srikesavan

Matt Murray
Argyle ISD
Flower Mound, TX

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Written Testimony Script (copy and paste)
for the Texas Public Education Committee

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Matt Murray

Barbara Ellis, Mrs
Self
Waco, TX

Please support Hb 1 in support of parental choice in education to choose what is best for their children.

Daniel Kullman

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Megan Fanning

Self

Mansfield, TX

I am writing to tell you that I am strongly against HB 1, Abbott's "school choice," and public school voucher program initiative. It will without a doubt hurt public education and take much needed funding away from our Texas public schools. Teacher retention is at an all time high in Texas, and voting for this bill will be a direct message to Texans that you don't support Texas educators or our public schools.

My husband is a teacher who has had 2 lockdowns due to active shooter threats within a week at his high school. It has never been this bad in his 13 years of teaching. I worry about his safety every single day. My husband's district and surrounding districts in north Texas have only gotten worse when it comes to school safety. We want you to focus on school safety, instead of school voucher programs.

I urge you to vote no to HB 1, and I know that a lot of teachers like my husband would prefer no teacher raises over our tax dollars going to private school vouchers.

Tamra Butler, Mom
Southwest Airlines
Argyle, TX
November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Tamra & Chad Butler

Donna Lambeth
Self- school counselor
Rockwall, TX

So called ESAs will ruin public schools. Texas is in a race to the bottom in education. I've been in public ed in Texas for 24 years. It's gets worse every year. I thought our old slogan was bad: "Do more with less" now it's "Do the impossible with next to nothing." Republicans who support this bill are going to find themselves out of a job in the future. Not all Texans will blindly continue to vote Republican. Some are waking up to the hypocrisy and greed. Governor Abbott is by far the worst governor Texas has had in my lifetime.

Gene Lantz, President
Dallas AFL-CIO
Dallas, TX

Vouchers are another way to continue transferring wealth from those who need it to those who don't. Free public education was one of the greatest accomplishments of America. Those who oppose free public education oppose democracy.

Melanie Murray
Argyle ISD
Flower Mound, TX

NOVEMBER 8, 2023 UPDATE
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Written Testimony Script (copy and paste)
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#TogetherWeSoar,

Melanie Murray

Leslie DeHart

self

Hutto, TX

I am writing to express my strong concerns about Texas HB 1, the school voucher bill currently under consideration. While I understand the intention behind the bill is to provide parents with more choices regarding their children's education, I believe there are significant drawbacks and potential negative consequences that need to be carefully considered.

Firstly, school vouchers could exacerbate educational inequality. By diverting public funds to private schools, we risk underfunding already struggling public schools, leaving them with fewer resources to support the students who need it most. This could create a two-tiered system where wealthier families can afford quality education while lower-income families are left with fewer options and diminished resources.

Secondly, private schools receiving vouchers may not be held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Public schools are subject to rigorous oversight and accountability measures to ensure the quality of education they provide. If public funds are redirected to private institutions without similar accountability requirements, there is a risk of taxpayer money being wasted on subpar or unregulated educational experiences.

Additionally, the implementation of school vouchers might lead to increased segregation along socioeconomic and racial lines. Private schools, particularly those with high tuition fees, are often less diverse than public schools. If vouchers predominantly benefit families who can afford additional expenses associated with private education, it could lead to a lack of diversity and cultural exchange, limiting the overall educational experience for students.

Furthermore, the voucher system may not guarantee access to high-quality education for all students. Private schools can be selective in their admission processes, potentially excluding students with special needs or those who require additional educational support. This could leave vulnerable populations without suitable educational options, further deepening the educational divide.

Lastly, diverting public funds to private schools might hinder the overall improvement of the public education system. Instead of investing in innovative programs, teacher training, and infrastructure in public schools, resources would be redirected, hindering the ability of public schools to adapt and improve.

I urge you to consider these concerns carefully when evaluating Texas HB 1. It is crucial to prioritize the needs of all students and maintain the integrity and effectiveness of our public education system. I appreciate your attention to this matter and thank you for your service in making informed decisions that impact the future of our children's education.

Sincerely,
Leslie DeHart

Ravi PARIHAR

Self

ARGYLE, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Ravi Parihar

Janell Moyes

my students

Austin, TX

Charter schools do not equally serve all students. They counsel out and reject students who do not meet their standards or expectations and no one forces them to adhere to IDEA. They push expensive evaluations onto public education and refuse to hire adequate special education resources. Without hiring specialized teaching positions they are further able to declare they, "do not support," service XYZ and thereby cannot education all students. Charter schools deny equal access to education.

In Texas, all special education students receive the same amount of funding regardless of needs. A school serving a student requiring a paraprofessional nurse receives the same amount of money for that student as they do for a student who needs small group instruction with a dyslexia specialist. Schools are left to make up the difference for "expensive" and "inexpensive" disabilities. Charter schools do not equally serve "expensive" students. Schools must pad their budget with a high ratio of mainstream students in order to offset the funds not provided to pay for costly services mandated by IDEA.

The proposed voucher program does not promote equal access for all students. The proposed voucher program does not mandate and enforce IDEA. The proposed voucher program will fail to adequately educate all Texan students.

DO NOT HARM OUR STUDENTS. Do NOT pass a voucher program in Texas.

If you want to HELP students -- fully fund special education students based on their needed services.

If you want to HELP students -- increase teacher compensation packages to create competition for teaching in Texas.

If you want to HELP students -- raise the standard in Texas from providing an "adequate" education to providing a "sufficient" education.

VOUCHERS will NOT help our students.

Tricia Wahl, Mrs.

Self - retired

Schertz, TX

I am against a voucher program, no matter what you call it. Students should be required to take the STAAR test like students in public schools. What is to keep parents from taking the money and then withdrawing their students and putting them back in public schools. What is to keep this money from going to religious organizations who use the money for terrorism or bringing in immigrants (the Muslim and Catholic Private schools do this now, but as they are parent funded - they can do what they want.) The State should not be funding these things. They certainly shouldn't be providing more money than they would provide to a public school to educate the same kids. Also, once families are approved for this money private schools shouldn't be able to kick a kid out based on behavior, as public schools aren't allowed to do that.

Kyla Cousins
Self - Sales Analyst
Argyle, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Kyla Cousins

Laura Lafayette

Self

Argyle, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Laura Lafayette

Matthew Slaton
Self - Financial Advisor
Argyle, TX

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Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Matt Slaton - Argyle ISD Board of Trustees

Sue George
ARC of Texas & Parent of an IDD Child
North Richland Hills, TX

I am concerned this bill will divert crucial resources from public schools which will affect the education/training of Special Education students. There needs to be additional resources for these students...not less.

I am also against the State Supported Living Centers. It could increase the number of children institutionalized which is a cop out for some families. The living environment would be detrimental to their quality of life. The HCS Waiver Residential program is a much better format, however, it is far from perfect. HCS needs more money to hire & keep better quality staff. You can make more money working at Panda Express that you can for HCS Houses. These people deserve better care from people who actually want to help them. It's a stressful job at times.

I strongly urge you to oppose HB 1. Thank you.

William Troy Lafayette

Self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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Considering these needs, we hope you will recognize that these challenges affect all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Wm Troy Lafayette

Natalie Tolentino

Self

Wylie, TX

I absolutely do not want vouchers in the state of Texas. Public schools are already underfunded and private schools would not be held to any type of standard. You can't have it both ways. You can't ask public schools to do XYZ with a bogus rating system and then give "private" schools free money and choice with no accountability. Vouchers hurt the future of education and it's EXTREMELY and OBVIOUSLY apparent that the majority of the citizens of this state do not want them. Parents already have choice and freedom in the schools their children attend. The law dictates that funding goes to a public school education. Should a tax payer choose to not take that opportunity, that is their choice and their financial responsibility. That's how choices work. Please stop wasting Texas tax payer money (1.5 million a session) on an issue that has already been rejected multiple times.

Gregory Brown
Self / IT Specialist
Sugar Land, TX

We urgently need this bill passed. Please help all Texan children in need and better empower parents!!

Melissa Gaskill
Self, writer
Austin, TX

I oppose HB 1 because it includes an education savings account program, which gives public dollars to private schools. We need to keep the monty in our public schools and use it to make them better for all Texans. As a parent, I have always had a choice of where to send my kids to school. But tax dollars should only be used to fund public schools.

Emily Ward
Self
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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Thank you
Emily Ward

Jayne Adair, Dr.
Self
Huntsville, TX

Please consider this comment in opposition to HB1 or any bills approving or funding vouchers by any name or in any amount or any format. Public funds should adequately fund public schools they should not in any way. Find private schools.

Hunter Morris
Our Lady of the Hills Catholic HA
Kerrville, TX

to ensure success for all Texas students whether they be in public, private, or home school.

Maureen Saval, Ms
Self / Retired
Leander, TX

I'm writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session.

Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much-needed funds to go toward a voucher scheme.

Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept.

Let's work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement — NOT vouchers.

Christine Baleshta
Self (freelance writer)
Austin, TX

I am opposed to HB 1 and any voucher program in Texas. The proposed plan would divert much needed funds from our public schools which are already struggling to meet the needs of our children. Every child in Texas deserves a good education. Vouchers would only subsidize wealthy families who choose to send their children to private schools and rural communities where no private schools exist would suffer from this unfair program.

Jordan Hennington
Self
Mansfield, TX

Vouchers will ruin the Education system. They will raise tuition to stay "Elite" while providing poor education with uncertified teachers and no special education requirements. Students are not given transportation to get to the school. There would not be free and reduced lunch programs. And fees would be required for students to participate in extra curricular activities. Vouchers would lead to more separation between social classes while dumbing down our kids.

Vote against Vouchers

Heather Roell, Ms
self
Austin, TX

No on HB1. As a parent of a child with a disability, this bill does not help us. It hurts our schools and our education. While I agree the schools need to be properly funded, using children's disabilities as a scapegoat is not okay. No to vouchers, educational savings accounts, or whatever you want to call them, the answer is still NO. Also NO on state supported living centers for children with disabilities and pushing them on or "suggesting them" to families. This is harmful and a discriminatory practice. It's in no way appropriate for this to come up in ARDs for our children. This is an ugly, discriminating, and harmful bill. Please vote NO.

Anna Owen

Self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Anna Owen

Yazhini Peelamedu Nandakumar

Self and IT Engineer

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Yazhini Peelamedu Nandakumar

Mark Nightingale

self Principal Embedded Software Engineer

Rowlett, TX

Money for educating a child should follow the child and not be designated to a Public School system. The parents should determine where their children will go to school and then get help to make that choice a reality. I am for the bill.

Christopher Dickson
self, School Principal
Kingwood, TX

As an educator who has taught and been an administrator in both public and private schools, I believe competition in the form of School Choice will allow not only parents to have options to select schools for religious, academic or special needs reasons, but also push public schools to be more competitive and improve the quality of their instruction. For too long, public schools have had tons of funding for a poor product that is only judged by one test/one day (STAAR). Competition pushes all of us to develop high quality instruction.

Kyle Pagel
Argyle ISD
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Kyle Pagel

Nasanya Zakon, Rabbi

DATA of Plano

Plano, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you,

Nasanya Zakon

Jeannie Johnson

self

Argyle, TX

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Tasha Blagg

Self, School Counselor

Clarksville, TX

I counsel high school students toward developing post secondary plans after high school and rarely have students share a desire to pursue education as a profession. When asked why not, students always point to ridiculous salaries and lack of professional respect as leading reasons. This is an issue that our legislature can stop and even reverse with increased public education funding to include teacher pay raises. Our representatives must stand alongside our public schools and keep ESAs out of our state. Teacher pay raises and increased school funding must be our priority!

Michelle Dickens

Self

Austin, TX

HB 1 would divert taxpayer dollars from serving students in our public schools to benefit unregulated and religious private schools that are not required to serve every Texas child. Evidence in Arizona and Indiana show how much devastation vouchers does to children's education and thus futures. Wilks and Dunn's adherence to the mudsill theory and christian nationalism will also destroy this state. Vouchers will be a guy punch to small communities who depend on ISDs for so many things besides educating their kids.

Lastly, this special session is costing taxpayers \$9mm. Stop wasting our money on things that MOST TEXANS don't want.

Vansi Dokka

Self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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Israel Ackerman

Self

Dallas, TX

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Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Jean Robinson
Myself
Fort Worth, TX

I am against establishing of educational savings accounts. These accounts divert public money away from public schools. Public schools are for all and need to be fully funded.

Judy Viebig
personal - retired
BELLAIRE, TX

Please OPPOSE HB 1! I do not want my tax money -- or anyone's tax money -- going to support private schools - especially religious schools - and the beliefs they represent.

I support increasing funding for accountable public education and their dedicated teachers.

Rachel Gould

Self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

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Hersson Herrera

Self

Argyle, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,
Hersson Herrera

Sean Hunt, Mr.
self, urban designer/planner
Denton, TX

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Sean J Hunt

Andy Dao, D.R.E
Our Lady of Lourdes - Houston School
Houston, TX

Parents are the primary educators of their children. The Catholic Church teaches that parents have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options.

Carolyn Kwapich

self

PLANO, TX

I support "school choice" to financially assist parents in choosing the best educational environment for their children by allowing their tax dollars to be used outside of the public school system. Every child has a right to the best education possible and every parent has an obligation to ensure their children receive the best.

Robert Boggs

Self and Accountant

Argyle, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Robert Boggs

Darcy Walter, You

Self/ RN

Roanoke, TX

November 8, 2023

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Thank you,

Darcy Walter

Kevin Liedel, Dr.

Self

Colleyville, TX

Thank you to those who continue to stand up for public education against HB1. As we have already seen the attempted dismantling of this great American institution with politicized school boards, please continue to stay strong and keep the courage to do the right thing even in the face of political adversity. You have my vote, and more importantly, my respect.

Kaushik Kandaswamy

Self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Kaushik Kandaswamy

Holden Hose

Self Behavior Analyst Supervisor

San Antonio, TX

Good Morning,

I support HB1 in regards to both personally and professionally. As parents we are our kids first teachers through our actions, and in return we see their individual strengths and weaknesses. We see their learning styles, and how they will respond to specific situations. Behavior is learned, and we are the first encounter of modeling those for our children. Therefore I think Parental Choice makes the most sense in deciding where our Children attend school. Public Schools today are overcrowded and our children do become forgotten, and I know that if I was told that my daughter had to attend public school she would not be successful. She has thrived in smaller class sizes both academically and socially. Yes, she is one of many children that is struggling with literacy, but being in a Private School she shows more willingness to seek help and understanding and has flourished under those conditions. Yes, I work several jobs to pay my daughters tuition, but it is the best decision I have made knowing that my daughters learning needs are being met.

In regards to my professional career I work with several individuals diagnosed with ASD and other behaviors, and depending on the severity public schools may not have the resources to help these individuals succeed. Money is spent on athletics and fine arts, but rarely do we hear about paying for the resources in serving our students. We talk about inclusion and least restrictive, but many still feel unprepared and at the end of the day the students are the ones suffering from these decisions. We teach to a test, which really only serves one learning style when there are several ways to learn to take a test or any assessment to evaluate effective learning.

I ask you today that we take a change together, and allow parental choice as at the end of the day we all want for our children to learn and more than just the academics, but how to become leaders and contribute to society. Yes math, history, English's is critical, but so is learning how to serve our communities and share our knowledge with others who might not be able to access it. Thank you

David Klugman

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Maria Fishback

self

Cibolo, TX

My family and I wholeheartedly agree on parental choice for education. Please support and pass this bill. Thank you.

Nagamahesh Kancheti

Self, Database Analysis and development Manager

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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Charlotte McHale

Self / Educator

Houston, TX

I believe in funding current public education systems first and foremost before using tax payer \$ in private school settings.

Leslee Shannon, Mrs.

self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Leslee Shannon

Shelly Moses
Self / Public Educator
Argyle, TX

NOVEMBER 8, 2023 UPDATE
TAKE ACTION ARGYLE
Written Testimony Script (copy and paste)
for the Texas Public Education Committee

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Shelly Moses

Jeanette Burciaga, Mrs.
Self - Public School Teacher and Parent
San Antonio, TX

ESAs (i.e. vouchers) do not belong in our state. Parents already have a choice when it comes to their children's education - I'm one of them. And while our school district has fantastic choices, our district has found itself in a financial hole all because the state (the governor) won't properly fund schools. Proponents of vouchers want to point to something of a "failing system", but guess who's in charge of that system? Imagine how our system might fare better if we at least adequate funding AND the support of state leaders? Educators and their schools actually being supported instead of attacked or accused of indoctrination (which true education professionals know better than to participate in). We need the support of our state leaders! Financially and morally!

Kristin Steen
self
Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As an advocate of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. It is better for the students and better for the state. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives.

Sincerely,

Kristin Steen

Kristi Gregory
Self/Human Resources
Argyle, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Kristi Gregory

Mark Foust, Superintendent
Northwest Independent School District
Justin, TX

We would ask the committee and the house to not move HB 1 forward in the legislative process for consideration because it has several critical material weaknesses.

A \$4,000 one-time bonus for approximately 60% of school district employees causes more problems than it solves for staff morale and for school districts. Increasing the basic allotment to \$540 in year two of the biennium will provide almost enough revenue to sustain the one-time bonus that the legislature has proposed for 2023-24. This amount does not address inflation of other expenses in district budgets but more importantly it does not provide ample additional revenue to give meaningful raises to the remaining 40% of our non-teaching staff. Please do not offer only certain staff a one-time bonus. It puts a heavy burden on districts to maintain and go beyond the initial "bonus" without adequately funding it with a sustainable increase in the basic allotment.

The other unacceptable issue is the use of taxpayer dollars to fund private school tuition without adequate financial and academic accountability for the institutions receiving the state funding from the ESA's. As long as public schools and funds used for ESA's do not have the same academic accountability and financial transparency and accountability, the state should not use public funds to subsidize private school tuition.

Nathan Moses

Self / Public Educator and Coach

Argyle, TX

NOVEMBER 8, 2023 UPDATE

TAKE ACTION ARGYLE

Written Testimony Script (copy and paste)
for the Texas Public Education Committee

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Nathan Moses

L Z

N/A

San Antonio, TX

test

Amanda Shirley

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Amanda Shirley

Simon Nguyen

Self

Houston, TX

I support parent choice in education

Dana Gavin
Self - Grandmother
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Bryan Reising
Diocese of Beaumont
Beaumont, TX

I fully support HB 1 to allow more families to access to Catholic education. Thank you!

Rivki Shlyapobersky
Torah Day School
Houston, TX

This is such an important bill to sign as a Jewish religious person, my kids will always attend private Jewish day schools, and the price of tuition has become exorbitant for so many. We would greatly benefit from this bill to be signed.

Mary Beall
self/daughter/ARC
Garland, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a parent of an adult with IDD, I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students. I have personal experience. My adult daughter, who has special needs, was not allowed to apply to several private Montessori and Christian schools when she was school age.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Section 29.0056 of HB 1 is requiring members of the school to suggest placing their child in a State Supported Living Center. (an institution). Many states have actually closed all of their institutions like this, and the state of Texas should be discouraging, not encouraging, their growth.

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information. There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

Consider the cost. Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. That costs continues or increases not just for a year but for the life of the person with a disability.. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.
]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Graciela Fernandez
Self
El Paso, TX

An education saving account program is necessary and is vital so that parents can have the freedom to elect where they want their children to be educated.

Stanley Urbanek
self
Crowley, TX

All children deserve to obtain the best education possible. We know that all schools are not equal in providing the educational values that their parents want for them. Educational savings account give parents the choice needed. Please put this option into law.

Daniel Bejarano
Self/representing Catholic Schools of our diocese
El Paso, TX

Dear State Representatives,

I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families within our diocese in El Paso, TX to have more options. My child attended Catholic School and I have seen the benefit from those who have attended these schools. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Sincerely,

Daniel Bejarano

Glenda Dickinson, Mrs.
self; retired RN
Houston, TX

No matter if the terminology is "grant program" or "voucher" I would ask the House members not to pass HB 1. Please do not send my tax dollars to individual families for private education. Constitutionally, these funds could not exclude madrasas if parish schools are allowed. As for rural schools, where my children graduated, they would be negatively affected by being (likely) the only entities that could provide quality special education. Our child with autism benefited greatly from a public school education that observed all the requirements of IDEA.

Quite frankly, I resent the Governor calling session after special session to pass bills that are not wanted by the majority of Texans. These repeating sessions are also a waste of tax dollars.

Thank you for considering my request.

Glenda Dickinson

Caylen Thompson
Self Homeschool mom
Port Arthur, TX

This will be a great opportunity

Acela Spiegelberg
Self
Argyle, TX

Hello,
I am a resident of Argyle ISD with 3 children currently enrolled in the public schools. Our district is high achieving and currently receiving Formula Transition Grant money to get by. 2024 we will probably end the school year with a \$4M deficit, because those funds expire in June. Despite our exemplary management of funds by our CFO.

We are not the only Texas public school struggling with funding due to mandates by the state and inflation costs the amounts allotted in 2019 are no longer sufficient to fund public schools.

Please help the 5 Million public school students and their districts instead of using public money for private schools. Private schools are not subject to the same scrutiny as public and serve significantly fewer students of their choosing.

Public funds should serve the public.

Please fund our public schools.

Maria C
self
San Antonio, TX

I support parental choice in education. I support public policy that financially assists parents in choosing the best educational environment for their children by allowing their tax dollars to be used outside of the public school system. I believe us, parents are the primary educators for our children. The Catholic Church teaches that parents have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for our children and the government should cooperate with us in providing education, including funding non public options. I am disappointed that public schools feel they can indoctrinate our children with their personal beliefs such as instilling in our children that living a gay life should be accepted by all. However, I believe that living a gay life is a sin. Yes, we are all children of God and sinners, but we need to stop the public school system from teaching family values to our children. God created Adam and Eve so that we can be fruitful. Currently, families such as mine with limited financial resources do not have the choice in sending children to private schools. Please support our religious liberty and allow us to raise our children as God wants us to, with the Sacred Family as our best example.

Christopher Lovisone

self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Your Name

Christopher M. Lovisone

Rachel Davis

self

Houston, TX

Texas is known for individualism and pursuing the life you think is best for you. This bill gives parents the choice of the education they think is best for their child. Please consider supporting it....children are so different and each needs their own path.

Jeffery Hughen

self

argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Jeffery Hughen

Amanda Shriver
self
Argyle, TX
November 8, 2023

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This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD. Our children matter and their education needs to be a priority!

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not nearly enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Amanda Shriver

Elizabeth Posner
Self - homemaker
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

One of my children needed a special school. The school we are zoned to never returned my numerous calls & emails to get information regarding SPED services. I was trying to reach them when my child was diagnosed with disorder of written expression, dysgraphia, ADHD, autism, GAD & more. After 5 months of trying the local school & the main ISD SPED department and not getting any return calls or answers, we finally explored private schools. Because these types of schools don't give out scholarships (and if they do, not the 1st year), we did everything we could to afford this school. We ended up cashing in the \$\$ we had saved for college by the end of the 2 years our child was there. The child would have benefited from more time there, but our resources were exhausted. Having school choice would have allowed us to keep the child in this school for longer, getting more of the benefit that was needed.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Gillian Peters
St. Mary's Catholic School
Gilmer, TX

Dear Representative Cole Hefner,

I live in your district in Gilmer, Tx and belong to St. Mary's parish and my children attend St. Mary's Catholic School. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. Our school serves low-income families and offers need-based financial assistance, which takes funds out of our pockets to enhance our school programs and facilities. We have accepted students who have been turned away by public schools and given them a real chance at their education. We struggle to pay the bills, but we are doing the hard work of educating many who have no other options for schooling. In addition, some parents struggle to pay the tuition of private school but really need this service for their family. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Sincerely,
Gillian Peters

Harry Brown
self
Houston, TX

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Joan Strug
Self
Plano, TX

Vote no to school vouchers. Public money should only go to public schools.

Stop allowing these special sessions on vouchers that is wasting so much time and money. Perhaps we need some limits on special sessions.

Hannah Niman
Self
Houston, TX

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Thank you.

Revital Tessler
self
Houston, TX

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Thank you for your continued support!

Laurie Filipelli, Ms
Self, parent and educator
Austin, TX

As a college access counselor and parent of a public school child, I oppose vouchers that will further weaken our already suffering public school system. This inequitable approach will bolster private education and wealthy families while leaving behind families in rural areas and those with incomes too low to make up the cost of tuition. It will lower enrollment in public schools thus feeding into a downward cycle of attendance-based funding. Clearly, lawmakers know this and have a larger mission to dismantle public education entirely. Frankly, I'm appalled and, if this bill passes, will work even harder to unseat the undemocratic officials who are pushing it through

Christin Tatum, Mrs
Self
Argyle, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Christin Tatum and Family

Ronda Weatherford

self

Mt Vernon, TX

Hello members, my name is Ronda Weatherford. I have worked in public education for twenty seven years. I began as an aide who brought home a monthly paycheck of \$400 since the remainder of my pay went to cover insurance for my family. I was so excited when the TRS ActiveCare program began and I had some help with the cost. Now here we are twenty-one years later and the state has not increased the insurance contribution of \$225 in all that time. To be fair, I do see the money going to TRS to help reduce cost increases and I do appreciate that.

My main concern is the glaring differences between TRS and ERS benefits. I know the repeated response of “not being an actual state employee and you don’t hire and fire” blah blah blah. You do not hire and fire at my local community college or within TEA either. So why are all of those employees, who provide services to the state, any more important than school district employees, providing services for the state. We are completely directed by the YOU and TEA. I understand if you want to keep the plans separated but please explain how we as public school employees are not valued at the same rate.

	TRS-State Contribution	ERS-State Contribution
Health Insurance - Employee	\$225 for 21 years (50% of lowest plan currently)	Pays 100%
Health Insurance - Family	\$0	Pays 50%
State Retirement Contribution	8.25%	10%
	TRS	ERS
Employee Retirement Contribution	8.9%	9.5% previously and 6% now

Just my two cents. Thank you for listening (or reading)

Ronda Weatherford
Director of Finance

I will be sending other documents to Mr Buckley if you need examples

Jessica Bynum, Mrs.

Argyle ISD

Justin, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Jessica Bynum

Jeanette Slaughter

self

Huntsville, TX

please be for HB1 by Buckley

Deborah Ledyard, Educator

Self - retired educator

Austin, TX

As a professional educator, I absolutely reject any provision for educational vouchers or other legislation which shifts or reduces funding to public institutions. Any extra funding available to use as incentive for such measures should also automatically go to public schools. Taxpayers should not be funding private programs of any sort. Period. Any extra available government funds need to be used to increase public school funding to afford well paid public school teachers and support staffs and required programs for special needs and enrichment.

I do not support this bill: HB1 by Buckley

Yael Fish

Beren Academy

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Paula Everett

Self

Haskell, TX

You can remove the establishment of an educational saving account system. Who will this help? Fully fund public schools and support Texas teachers instead of giving money to private schools. Why would you want to give more money to private schools than what you give to public schools per child. Where will the accountability be measured and by who? Teachers are not political, they are busy teaching our Texas students while you in Austin are spending money for yet another special session. Support Public Schools and teacher by saying NO to vouchers.

Paula Everett

Retired Teacher

Former School Board President

Landowner

Savannah Nichols

Self

Houston, TX

I am a graduate from Spring Branch ISD in Houston. We are a highly economically diverse niche school district in the big city. I, like many of my community members, moved here for the public education. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget.

This will include cuts to school choice (3 of my family's 5 kids are currently enrolled or graduated from choice programs including dual language) and teachers my eldest being a teacher in the district and me being one in another). Our class sizes will balloon. Our district will be forced to close one or more Title 1 elementary schools. The lack of fully funding our public schools in Texas will impact our most vulnerable population.

The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. **FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!**

Nicole Bell

Argyle ISD

Texas, TX

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Nicole Bell

Chuck Kobdich, Dr.

Self - Chiropractor

Dallas, TX

Every parent, regardless of household income, should have the right, and the opportunity to send their child to the best school, that's right for them. HB 1 could provide that opportunity for tens of thousands of child Texans. An opportunity for a better education than what they may otherwise receive in their public schools. An opportunity to be surrounded by like-minded students and parents. An opportunity for a brighter future. And if it's a brighter future for them, it's a brighter future for us all. Thank you for your consideration.

Michael Waggoner

self

Clyde, TX

Dear Honorable Members of the Texas Legislature, as you consider the future of education in our state, I implore you to vote down any proposed legislation advocating for school vouchers. Our public school system serves as the bedrock of our communities, fostering inclusivity and ensuring every child, regardless of their background or financial status, has access to quality education. Introducing school vouchers would not only divert crucial funds away from public schools, but also exacerbate existing inequalities, leaving many vulnerable students and underserved communities at a disadvantage. It is imperative that we prioritize the strengthening and equitable funding of our public education system to provide all Texas children with the best opportunities for a brighter future.

Stacy Campos, Mrs.

self

Iowa Colony, TX

Please show your support for HB1 and parental choice in education and help pass a bill so families have more options, especially those who need it most.

Jonathan Yarimi

self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program. Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those who need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom to choose an alternative that better meets their needs. This bill will empower parents to make the best educational decisions for their children. Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever-expanding list or risk being left behind.

Magdalena Mata, National Board Certified Teacher

Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching and self

Boerne, TX

SAY NO TO VOUCHERS.

THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE 7. EDUCATION

Sec. 1. SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE OF SYSTEM OF PUBLIC FREE SCHOOLS. A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.

(Feb. 15, 1876.)

Victor Kuzmovich III

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Your Name

Victor Kuzmovich III

Daniel Horwitz, Rabbi

Beth Yeshurun

Houston, TX

I oppose HB 1, variations of which have continually failed in the House and for very good reasons. It's not about school choice; it would only gut public education. Let's put the money where it will benefit the most people all over Texas.

I say this as one who sent all of my children to private schools where they would be Jewishly educated. It wasn't easy and we did without some vacations to provide them with the education we wanted for them. But I didn't ask for the government to do it. We ALL have a responsibility to support the public school system, for the good of the entire community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Benjamin Sanchez

Self

San Antonio, TX

Please REJECT these vouchers for our state. Our students continually fall behind NOT because of failures on teachers, but because of a tremendous lack of resources, funding, and adequate facilities. We need to be funding public schools so we can keep education accessible to ALL Texans, not just some. This bill will exclude rural areas, as well as lower income individuals. Education should be a priority, and access to education needs to be protected, not stripped away. We want to keep Texas educated, right? Privatizing schools means we don't need certified teachers. It means we don't need to keep up with the rest of the nation concerning test scores, graduation rates... Public education has been the tool provided for generations. We need MORE funding for public education, not stripping of said funding. Care about our kids. Care about our teachers.

Lenae Hitt, Mrs.

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Lenae Hitt

ELLIE SUSSMAN

Yeshiva Torat Emet- Sphardic Gan

HOUSTON, TX

Dear Members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

June Splain

self

ARGYLE, TX

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Harold Lee, MR

Retired energy industry manager

Houston, TX

I wholeheartedly support this bill that established education savings accounts for parents to use on the most appropriate schooling for their children. I also support full transparency in the public schools of our state so that parents are fully advised of what their children are being taught.

Jose Ramiro Rodriguez Perazza

Self

Lantana, TX

I support the legislation.

Naomi Perles

Self

Houston, TX

HB1

Casey Duck-Garcia

Self, Dyslexia Therapist at a non charter public school

Austin, TX

Having worked in both private and public schools, I can testify to the fact that non charter public schools are held accountable to much higher regulations and strict standards under the watch of state agencies such as the TEA. Tying funding of non charter public schools with vouchers for nonaccountable institutions like private and public charters is ignorant and dangerous. Public charters and private schools are businesses which can provide and deny services, while also choosing whom to admit without the same level of accountability. Having taught at religious private schools, it was not an uncommon practice to be asked by administrators to practice unethical behaviors, such as not providing guidance to families whose children may need further evaluation in order to best support their learning differences...all in vain of keeping enrollment numbers and thus tuition dollars up; while also not calling attention to the fact that we do not have specially trained staff who can meet the needs of differently abled learners. At the same time however, as a dyslexia therapist at a public school, HB3928 specifically places more responsibilities on our shoulders without compensation for our highly specialized training (2 years, 700 practicum hours and state/national certification tests) above and beyond the pay grade we are currently classified at, "teacher". Do not tie public school funding, equal rights to a fair and appropriate public education for all, to a voucher in the name of "choice" for the few. And, do not turn over public monies to vouchers ultimately going to unaccountable businesses.

Avrohom Kravetz

self

HOUSTON, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their children.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever-expanding list or risk being left behind.

Aviva Eisenberger

Self, teacher

Houston, TX

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Thank you!.

Tom Ausley

Grandparents for Public Education

Austin, TX

I oppose HB1 because it would create an expansive voucher program, negatively impacting schools across Texas by draining money from neighborhood public schools that educate most Texas students, including my 10 grandchildren. I also have family in rural communities such as Idalou and Stamford who would be disadvantaged even more than my grandchildren. Please vote NO on HB1.

Percy Pool, Mr
Self - Retired
Carrollton, TX

I'm opposed to the establishment of education savings accounts for students. Public schools should be fully funded by the State of Texas. Private schools should fund themselves. Teachers should be better compensated.

Irit Busany
Self
Houston, TX

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Sincerely,
Irit Busany

MICHAEL KELLY
Self
Plano, TX

I definitely support parental choice when it comes to school choice. We need to quit paying for poor performing schools and subjecting children to low quality public schools.

Yocheved Gilad
Self
Houston, TX

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Scott Hoey

St. Boniface Catholic High School/ Parent

Nacogdoches, TX

Thank you all for your time and energy to work together to help promote this bill. I have been a resident of Texas for all of my life, but spent 3 years in Florida working with a Catholic School. I saw their Step up program, benefitted from it, and also saw how the public school system worked harder since they had to compete for students. On the private school side, they were able to pay their teachers a salary closer to what the public school teachers were receiving. I see it as a win win. But most of all the students and parents win. Thank you again.

Jerry Gabino, Mr

self

Missouri City, TX

Parents are the primary educators of their children. The Parents have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options.

Currently, only those able to afford to live in the best public-school districts or to pay private school tuition enjoy a full range of educational options. However, through a well-designed parental choice program, families with fewer financial resources will no longer be limited to their local public school and will be able to consider additional educational opportunities.

Legislation should ensure that it can be implemented in a manner that leads to increased access to educational opportunities to maximize student success. It must include:

Robust safeguards for the autonomy and religious liberty of private schools

Accreditation of participating private schools

Prioritization of low-income families for participation in an ESA program

Administration of norm-referenced assessments

Please provide a bill that we can all benefit from.

John Windlinger

Self

Kerrville, TX

I fully support HB 1 and will hope this passes soon. Education is the foundation of our economy and that foundation is shaking especially with the problems our families face today . Vote for freedom of education through any and all ways possible. Thank you.

Judith Stuartcoale Bonner

Kennedy2024 Independents

Dallas, TX

Opposed!

Also opposed to HB4 anti-immigration bill

Barbara Mason, Retired

Myself

Austin, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. Any program that diverts taxpayer money to unaccountable private schools is unacceptable. The long-term effects will be to harm public schools and lower the educational attainment of Texas students, as well as to harm the TRS pension system as fewer teachers pay into it.

Barbara L. Mason, Ph.D.

Mark Baker

Self

Magnolia, TX

Please pass this Bill.

Catherine Huvar, Ms.

Self

Katy, TX

I firmly and unequivocally believe that public money should go ONLY to public schools. I am against vouchers in any form. Vote NO on vouchers.

Sara Rosenwaser

Starr family jewish day school

San Antonio, TX

This would highly benefit us and our community

Sigal Melnik

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Thank you,
Sigal Melnik

Ben Epstein, Rabbi

Self, rabbi

Dallas, TX

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Thank you for your efforts. We are a lower middle class family, and this would be life changing for us.

HILLARY LAIRD

Argyle ISD/ Teacher

Northlake, TX

URGENT! OUR STUDENTS NEED YOU TO ACT. OUR TEACHERS NEED YOU TO ACT. As a devoted member of Argyle ISD, this is my plea regarding HB1 and its impact on public schools and Argyle ISD.

In your imminent deliberations, it is imperative that you urgently address the following pressing issues concerning public school finance:

Firstly, we implore you to boost the basic allotment to keep pace with inflation. While \$6,700 is a commendable start, it falls woefully short in mitigating the escalating costs we face. Soaring fuel and utility expenses, the imperative to competitively compensate our exceptional teaching staff, the challenges of rapid growth, and the financial strain of sustaining award-winning programs for our students demand immediate attention.

Secondly, reconsider the ESA program. As a staunch advocate for public schools, I cannot endorse a program with exorbitant administrative costs siphoning taxpayer dollars away from our already under-funded public schools. In addition, the proposed \$10,400 in ESAs dwarfs the proposed \$6,700 increase in the basic allotment, creating a fundamentally inequitable situation.

Furthermore, urgent solutions are needed for districts grappling with the impending expiration of the Formula Transition Grant. While it served as a lifeline for some districts in 2019, the FTG is set to expire this year, leaving several districts, including Argyle ISD, teetering on the edge of a funding abyss. For Argyle ISD, this translates to a staggering 6% cut from our operating budget, and as it stands, there is no viable solution for extending or replacing the FTG. Though the number of impacted districts is less than 100, the significance of this issue cannot be overstated—it demands your immediate attention!

Last but certainly not least, we urgently need to rectify the disparity in teacher compensation. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay, and we implore you to allocate additional funding for well-deserved raises. When contemplating teacher stipends, ensure these provisions are permanent rather than one-time payments, as sustained support is imperative for our schools to maintain equitable compensation for our invaluable teachers.

Without immediate action, we are on a perilous path of losing seasoned, invaluable educators. And who bears the brunt of this loss? The ones who suffer most are the children. Our students deserve more, and so do our teachers.

The time for action is now!

Jan Anderson

Myself

Austin, TX

As a tax payer, I do not want any money going to private schools. As Admiral McRaven stated our most serious national Security issue is PUBLIC EDUCATION. Parents have options. There are charters and magnet schools. Please fund our public schools and only public schools with public tax money.

Ana Rodriguez

Self

Houston, TX

As the parent of a child who will soon begin public school, I urge legislators to vote against this unpopular and terrible voucher scheme bill. I join the thousands of Texans who are urging you to keep our tax dollars at our local public schools which are accountable to us as voters. The voucher scheme will further defund public schools when they need the funding most, and it leaves Texas children vulnerable to being left behind by private schools who can exclude them because of what they look like, their abilities, and who they are. Vote no on this bill and fully fund public education instead!

edwin lalone

self

lakeway, TX

I am strongly opposed to any form of school vouchers. I am also extremely disappointed that the legislature keeps pounding on this topic instead of addressing the permanent, adequate funding of our public schools in Texas.

Atara Goodman, Mrs

Myself

Houston, TX

To whom it may concern,

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

My baby doesn't go to school yet but she will give to private school, which is a decision that will be made easier by this bill

Celeste Branom

Self, accountant, parent, taxpayer

Houston, TX

First of all, the damage is done. The cuts are already being made in my school district. Thanks, Greg Abbott.

Now to my point. Basic allotment for public school funding should be increased by \$1000 to make public schools whole. That is due to the combination of inflation and the legislature's failure to increase basic allotment since 2019. Anything less than \$1000 per student results in a reduction of services. I have scrutinized my school district budget over and over again and would argue those numbers against anyone who says otherwise. A \$1000 increase to basic allotment is an absolute necessity to catch school districts up to where they were 4 years ago. Anything more than \$1000 per student might actually allow for improved educational benefits! Gasp!

Second, public schools should be fully funded before handing money to private schools with no accountability. Is there money for education or not? If the money is there, why can't Greg Abbott find it in his cold cruel heart to fund public schools? Once public schools are funded, and you still have money left over, then have the separate discussion of whether or not your excess funds should be given to private schools with no strings attached. My community places a high value on its public schools. My property value is high because of the schools we are zoned to. Sadly, the budget cuts are devastating and I'm pissed. Greg Abbott says "no" to my community who values its schools, but he fights tooth and nail for religious groups to be able to fund their schools. Greg Abbott says "no" to communities and "yes" to churches. Texas is better than Greg Abbott.

The voucher argument is a separate discussion from the legislature's duty to properly fund public schools.

Laura Pink, ESL Specialist

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

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Laura Pink

Megan Gonzalez

Self

Mcallen, TX

In favor

Matthew Augustyn

Self

San Antonio, TX

I support HB 1.

Kate Sanchez

Self, Volunteers Manager

San Antonio, TX

Please REJECT these vouchers for our state. Our students continually fall behind NOT because of failures on teachers, but because of a tremendous lack of resources, funding, and adequate facilities. We need to be funding public schools so we can keep education accessible to ALL Texans, not just some. This bill will exclude rural areas, as well as lower income individuals. Education should be a priority, and access to education needs to be protected, not stripped away. We want to keep Texas educated, right? Privatizing schools means we don't need certified teachers. It means we don't need to keep up with the rest of the nation concerning test scores, graduation rates... Public education has been the tool provided for generations. We need MORE funding for public education, not stripping of said funding. Care about our kids. Care about our teachers.

Kelly Montan

Self

Flower Mound, TX

I support HB1

Avrohom Zuckerman

Self/Teacher

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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As a teacher, I see firsthand that education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those who need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Jesus Carrillo

Self

El Paso, TX

Full Support of HB1

Marcy Gilbert

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Marcy Gilbert

Jacqueline Lambiase, Ms.

Self, researcher and program director

Arlington, TX

The Texas legislature and state government were created, in part, to support public education benefiting all students attending public schools. Therefore, state funds should not be given to families who are selecting private schools.

Michelle Clark, Mrs.

Self

Dallas, TX

I am a mother of two school age children who attend Catholic school and would like to have support by the state of Texas.

Katie Cox
Argyle ISD
Fort Worth, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,
Katie Cox

Aaron Fowler

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

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Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Aaron Fowler

Linda Guy

self

Austin, TX

Please continue to stand firm against any form of vouchers, ESA's or whatever you choose to call them. Public money is for public schools! Public schools are the backbone of our communities & need to be fully funded & supported! I DO NOT want my tax dollars going to any private, but especially any church-related, schools!! I and my adults daughters are all successful grads of Texas public schools & we continue to be a part of the community formed around our kids' school (friends, teachers, etc) & support the businesses that supported our schools' activities, events, etc.

Gary Katz
self
Houston, TX

Please support parental and educational rights and free choice by allowing parents to pick the best education possible for their children.

Shlomo Silverstone
My Family
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.
Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.
Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those who need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.
This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their children.
Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.
Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever-expanding list or risk being left behind.

Linda Post
Self / Teacher
Cameron, TX

Although Representative Buckley's HB1 is a better-crafted piece of legislation than Senator Creighton's SB1, I OPPOSE any legislation that includes the creation of an education savings account program (vouchers). According to Article 7 of the Texas Constitution, the State of Texas has a duty to create and maintain a system of free public education. The Texas legislature has failed miserably in the performance of its duty. At present, Texas is more than \$40 billion below the national average for school funding. Texas ranks in the bottom 10 states for spending-per-pupil. Let. That. Sink. In.

I urge you to carry out your Constitutional duty to adequately fund Texas public schools. We must invest in ALL the children of Texas--not in just the privileged few. Public money must remain in public schools.

NO VOUCHERS. NO COMPROMISE.

Angelica Golden-Park, Ms.
Self
Carrollton, TX

I am in favor for HB1

Laura Marder, Mrs

Myself

ALBA, TX

Dear House Committee Members,

I'd like to begin by thanking you for allowing the public an opportunity to put forth comment to this bill. I understand that you all are under an immense pressure to make a decision regarding ESA's as well as finding a way to fund public education. The simple matter of fact is that combining the two topics is going to get you nowhere. How many more special sessions and taxpayer dollars will be lost to stalemates over these topics? Let ESA's stand in their own bill. The people have made it very clear that not only will ESA's cater to a small few--(yes all could apply but this "lottery" system will not be available to the vast majority of Texas kids), ESA's are also not financially responsible for our state. Look at your projected numbers for this program alone over the next 5 years or compare to other states who have had this in place. The snowball of financial instability is out of control and that money could be much better invested elsewhere. As a parent, I already have a choice on which schools I want to send my kids to attend. This narrative is a losing battle, and our hard earned tax dollars need to remain in public schools. It is your constitutional duty to adhere to ensuring our free and open public schools are fully funded to serve all of Gods children.

Texas is in an ongoing crisis regarding school staffing and teacher retention. You cannot continue to dismiss the facts that over 50,000 teachers left the profession alone last year and with the ones remaining almost 80 percent are actively looking for other employment. Let that sink in for a minute. Would you not agree with me that the future of our state and our world as a whole rests on the shoulders of our kids? Our public schools are not only the heartbeat of our communities but they also provide critical wrap around services to our students that extend far beyond what any private school setting could ever dream of offering.

Public school staff work tirelessly long hours all year long to ensure our students needs are met and that they are performing at high levels, preparing them for an ever changing world in the workforce and beyond after graduation. Our teachers deserve living wages that allow them to be able to put food on the table, keep the lights on, pay medical bills and not have to worry about how to make ends meet. After all, these are college educated professionals who take hundreds of hours of unpaid training every single year just to better themselves and invest back into their students. They are hero's of our community, they mold young hearts and minds and are literally expected to take up arms or stand in front of bullets for their students. And yet, as a state, you are treating them like peasants and offering trivial 1 time "bonuses" or raises.

Now is the time to raise the basic allotment to meet national average and pay our teachers respectable wages.

Respectfully,

Laura Marder
Golden, Texas

Elizabeth Irwin
Self, Respite and Resource Coordinator for a disability ministry
Garland, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1) as it currently stands. As an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Irwin
2422 Creekdale Dr.
Garland, TX 75044

Emily Creech
Self, public school parent
Benbrook, TX

Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much needed funds to go towards a voucher scheme. Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept. Let's work together to strengthen and fund our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement- not vouchers. Thank you.

Sara ptomey
Retired educator
Bryan, TX

ESAs (vouchers) will do nothing to improve education and will take even moreoney away from school districts already trying to work with severe budget constraints because of the lack of support from the legislature. Please just let this die.

Robbie Ausley, Grandparent
Grandparents for Public Education
Austin, TX

I OPPOSE HB1. I have ten grandchildren who either have graduated from or are currently attending Texas public schools, receiving an excellent education. My concern is that HB1 poses a serious threat to our public schools because vouchers will divert essential funds from public education and deplete the resources of schools used by kids of the working class.

Yosef Levenstein
Robert M. Beren Academy
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you for your support.

Yosef

Shani Gonik
Self
Houston, TX

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Juan Bustos
Self
Edinburg, TX

Please pass as I believe we as parents should have a choice

Nancy Foreman, Dr.
Texas Freedom Network
Dallas, TX

I oppose this bill.

Paige Bontrager
All Texans
Bushland, TX

Bullying and manipulation are not the correct way to govern the wonderful state of Texas. Provision of public schools is in the constitution. Vouchers are an underhanded way to derail the public school system. Shame on you for your selfishness.

Carol Montgomery
Self
GARLAND, TX

This effort is not helpful to continuing public education in Texas. The Governor has sold his soul to the rich private school supporters. When rural Republicans don't support this, that should be a sign that this is not good for public education in Texas. I urge you to not pass any legislation that would setup education savings accounts (vouchers).

Darren Bates

SELF

Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1) as a member of The Arc of Texas and a passionate advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). I have serious concerns about how this bill could negatively impact students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts may divert essential resources away from public schools, significantly affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, often lacking proper accountability and specialized programs, could deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of these already marginalized students.

My concerns also extend to the provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) related to state supported living centers (SSLCs). This provision may increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, which would have detrimental effects on both these children and their families.

It is crucial to remember that both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize SSLCs as the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions cannot replace family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is upheld by the federal government, as evidenced by the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC*, and our state, as indicated in Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

Furthermore, it is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities with information about SSLCs when discussing potential residential options. Local IDD Authorities are better equipped to offer such information.

Additionally, it is essential to consider the significant financial burden that even a small increase in the number of students with disabilities residing in an SSLC could represent. The cost of SSLCs to Texas is approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, which is significantly more than alternative options like the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers roughly \$6,600 per month per individual. By singling out SSLCs as an option, there's a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

I would also like to highlight the existence of a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure unnecessary. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 to protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is crucial to the preservation and improvement of our public education system. At the very least, I implore you to remove the SSLC provision from HB 1

Nachman Rosenberg, Mr

Self

Dallas, TX

This bill will really help us especially in the economy. Private schools are just so expensive and with this bill it will help us tremendously!

Karen Van Creveld

Self

Dallas, TX

Please approve HB1

Stephen Kiser

Argyle

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

Thank you so much for your consideration,

Stephen Dustin Kiser

Ana Ruiz

Self

Edinburg, TX

Parents should have the choice to choose their child's education route and preference. It is a God-given right, not governments.

Naama Weingarden

Self

Dallas, TX

Please vote in favor of this bill

Heather Williams
self/ self-employed
SAN ANTONIO, TX

Draft public comment and testimony language for your use:

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Roger Nash
My child
Roanoke, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

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Sincerely,
Roger Nash
204 N Walnut St
Roanoke, Tx 76262

Eileen Elfezouaty, Ms.

Self
Houston, TX
Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Manuel Garcia
self
Austin, TX

I have been educated in private as well as public schools. Well-funded public schools provide for an educated electorate and strong STEM education. Steering public funds to private schools will weaken our nation. Many, many private schools bias curriculum towards religious education at the expense of STEM, history, civics and the humanities; in short they do not properly support the curriculum for a strong America and a Texas on the cutting edge of technology and well versed in the topics that help forge a solid and united citizenship corps. Those interested in religion can easily attend Sunday School, Bible classes during the week, and similar venues. Keep and increase public funding of schools— NO VOUCHERS, please.

Jack Polatsek, Chairman of Board
Yeshiva Torat Emet, Board Chairman
Houston, TX

To the distinguished members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
I kindly urge your support for HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

It is our shared belief that every child should have access to the highest quality educational opportunities, including the young learners in our great state of Texas. We recognize that education is not a one-size-fits-all proposition; not every school can fully cater to the diverse needs of each student. Those students and parents who seek an educational environment different from their assigned district school should have the liberty and opportunity to select an alternative that aligns more closely with their individual requirements.

This proposed legislation will empower parents to make educational choices that are in the best interests of their children. Placing parents in the primary decision-making role for their children's education benefits not only Texas parents and students but also educators and taxpayers alike.

It is important to note that nearly half of the states across the nation have already implemented some form of a school choice program, making it vital for Texas to join this ever-expanding list to avoid falling behind in providing educational options for its residents.

Eva Guzman
Eva Guzman/self!
San Antonio, TX

Vote No! Vouchers will only Hurt The Majority of Texas Children. Vouchers will also hurt the Texas Economy in the long run. The Majority of Texas children go to public schools. Their lives collectively matter! Just end this madness, now! Do what is right for our children and our Great State of Texas.
Texas Native since 1961!

Jordan Rich, Rabbi
Self
Dallas, TX

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Francisco Chavez
Self
Beaumont, TX

I support ESA's because as a parent I should be able to decide how my child is educated and where they should attend. ESA's would give opportunities for School Choice and education is a right not a luxury. Currently we have our children in public schools and we feel that it is a great place for them to be educated but many other parents do not feel the same and would like a choice in the matter. We are comfortable with public schools because years ago we made a decision to relocate and it was very beneficial, however had we not moved our children's education would have suffered. Other families do not have the opportunity to relocate very easily and even if they could, should we have to move to receive quality education. If we had access to ESAs we would be allowed to choose where and how are children are educated and many families would benefit from the opportunity to choose. Please vote to pass this Bill so our children have a shot at a quality education!

Maricela Hernandez Vazquez
Self/Construction Office Manager
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Thank you

Sincerely,

Maricela Hernandez Vazquez

Sarah Chapman, Mrs.

Self

Round Rock, TX

I support this bill my son has never went to public school yet wr still pay taxes for it, it should be pur choice! If you keep letting public schools go inthe direction they are not no one will want to put there kids there!

Michael Ball

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Michael Ball

James Hirsch

Self, Disabled American Veteran

League City, TX

Dear committee person,

Please support the mission to educate Texas youth through greater choice. Parents need to customize and match programs with students. Just as the energy sector was opened for people to have the power to choose and aid is available to college students. Please make every effort to expand access for middle and lower income families to the kind of privileged, experiential educational services the private sector and not for profit institutions provide the upper income brackets. I urge you to consider the bil as a step in the direction of the expansion of innovation and positive disruption. Employment is changing and students need the incubators of a diverse eclectic mix of custom programs that will eventually grow out of the newly funded student base. Seed the Renaissance in Texans learning.

yisroel katz
EOM Roofing
Dallas, TX

Really need this for the future of Texas education!

DAVID KAMKHAGI
D CAMAGI LLC
houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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DeLauren Tullos, Mrs.

Argyle ISD

Corinth, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

DeLauren Tullos

Kimberly Gutierrez, Mrs

St. Thomas More Catholic School

San Antonio, TX

Hello, my name is Kimberly Gutierrez. I live and work in Ms. Barbara Girvan-Hawkins district in San Antonio, TX and belong to St. Thomas More parish and my children attend St. Thomas More Catholic School. I am also the Principal of St. Thomas More Catholic School! I would like to show my support for parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line. Thank you so much for all you do to for the children and parents in the great state of Texas!

Marisa Gomez
St Mary's Catholic School
Taylor, TX

Please support this bill which would allow all families, regardless of financial background, access to the quality education of their choice for their children.

Amanda Garcia
Argyle ISD
Lewisville, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Amanda Garcia

Lucero Cazares
Self
Rowlett, TX

Vouchers are bad for Texas students, and that no good will come from spending public tax money to enrich private school operators.

Phyliss Coleman, Principal
St. Helen Catholic School
League City, TX

Please consider passing this bill to provide school choice options for the numerous people who would like more freedom in where there children attend school. This has nothing to do with politics, but everything to do with our children's future.

Sarah Fried
Self
Houston, TX

Please pass the school choice bill. We pay a lot in taxes but don't benefit from public school, as we send our children to private religious school.

Jeremy Connell
Jeremy Connell
Kyle, TX

I support HB 1!!!

Britney Reese, Mrs.
Argyle ISD Teacher
Northlake, TX
November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,
Britney Reese

Sherwin Field, Mr
self
Austin, TX

I am strongly opposed to this bill as it will significantly reduce the amount of money going to our public schools, and as a result our children. If people want a choice, they have it today, I just don't believe our tax dollars should be diverted to help these people.

They might be choosing an alternative for their child because, YOU, our representatives, don't have the guts to properly find our school system. MAN UP, and find our public education system.

Jennifer McClure
Argyle ISD
Fort Worth, TX
November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Your Name
Jennifer McClure

Marsha Patterson
self, retired State employee
Austin, TX

I am a retired State employee and an informed voter and steadfastly oppose school vouchers, which will do irreparable harm to our public schools. Vouchers are not the will of your constituency.

Laura Nash
My child
Roanoke, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Laura Nash
204 N Walnut St
Roanoke, Tx. 76262

Barry Diner
Self
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those who need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever-expanding list or risk being left behind.

Jean Chauvel Jr

Our Lady Queen of Peace School/Self

Lake Jackson, TX

It is astonishing that Texas is not a leader in the use of Educational Savings Accounts to give parents more control of their child's education. More than 10 other states have these today. The inject competition into the system - because parents and students are ultimately customers for the educational system. The lobbies for public education portray draconian changes such as unaccredited teachers teaching subjects that they do not understand to students; parents being too ignorant to know that this is the case; and public education falling apart due to lack of funding.

My comment is based on my experience in Brazoria County. I have a PhD in physical chemistry and worked for Dow Chemical for 35 years. I retired as an R&D fellow and an M&E director (both are senior leader positions). After about a year volunteering at our local scout camp I was asked to become the Jr High math teacher at Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic School. It turns out there is a shortage of qualified people to teach math in Texas. My previous teaching experiences were at the University, at Dow where I taught new PhD Chemists and Chemical Engineers, and in scouts.

My students families span the socio - economic spectrum from very well of to working poor. They are of all races and ethnic backgrounds. At my school we focus on core academics (Reading, English, Math, Science, Social Studies). We have student discipline and accountability. In my Jr High the median NWEA percentiles for every subject exceed the 75th percentile. In math for 2022-2023 my 8th grade was in the 96th percentile as a class; my 7th grade was in the 87th. For comparison the local ISD's scores were <50% (our students get high school credit for Geometry and Algebra 1 - we are audited periodically by the local ISD - the data comes from the audit which was last year).

Why is there a difference? Parental involvement. The students get individual attention based on their individual needs. We have discipline.

If the educational savings accounts bill passes at a level of \$8000/yr my belief is that our enrollment would double. The impact on the local ISD's would be small ... our ability to take in new students would reduce their enrollment by a few percent.

Every year I get new kids who enroll in my classes direct from the local ISD. I ask - why are you changing? The main reasons are we offer discipline in the classroom and educational excellence. In my instance I know exactly how mathematics is used in science, engineering, business and programming because I had those roles at Dow. I know how the TEKS can be taught for maximum effect.

To the legislators who represent rural districts ... I suggest that you do not penalize students in the inner city who seek to escape failing schools. Look at other states - the impact on their rural areas has been minimal.

Respectfully,

Dr Jean P Chauvel Jr

Joanne Richards

self

Austin, TX

HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This occurs because our current public school funding is based on attendance. For every student who leaves a public school, the school district loses that student's allotment from the state. Additionally vouchers are a way for private schools and religious schools to infiltrate rural Texas reducing public school attendance, reducing funding so that its public schools may not be able to stay open. A better alternative is to adequately fund public schools and increase teacher pay so teachers are rewarded according to the value they provide society - educating the citizens of tomorrow, our future voters.

Roberto Oliva

Self retired

El paso, TX

Texas does not support vouchers. We don't want them nor have we ever wanted them. Only the private school community wants them. Please do your job and support public educators, not private.

Lucy Gibbs

Self

Austin, TX

Education savings accounts will siphon money away from public schools, especially in rural areas of Texas. Please vote against HB 1. Instead increase teacher pay and per student spending

Kristina Robles

Self

Harlingen, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

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Sincerely,

Kristina M Robles

4822 Heather Lynn Ct

Harlingen, TX 78552

Kristinarobles@aol.com

Syed Rizvi
Argyle ISD
Flower Mound, TX
November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Syed Abdullah Rizvi
Parent of 3 Argyle ISD Student

Melissa Hunter
Argyle ISD
Highland Village, TX
November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,
Melissa Hunter

Kassie Loe
2-LO Beef Cattle
DeKalb, TX

I THINK THAT OUR UNIVERSITIES SHOULD TEACH FUTURE TEACHERS HOW TO PROPERLY ACT WITH STUDENTS AND TEACH A HIGH MORAL COMPASS, TEACH THEM HOW TO BE PROFESSIONAL AND TEACH THEM TO QUIT BEING CRY BABIES AND TEACH THEM WORK ETHIC

I BELIEVE THE STATE SHOULD STAND UP AGAINST BULLY PARENTS AND STOP THIS HOME SCHOOL BULL CRAP

TR Hearn

None

Colleyville, TX

No vouchers, no ESA, no DeVos, Dunn or Wilkes. Keep public dollars in public schools. Fund PUBLIC schools and pay our teachers. Uphold the Texas Constitution

Erin Davis, Mrs.

Argyle ISD

Fort Worth, TX

November 8, 2023

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Yisrayl Martin

Self

Dallas, TX

Dear Members of the Texas House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 1 (HB 1), which aims to provide parents with greater educational choice and empower them to make the best decisions for their children's education. As a hardworking, honest taxpayer in the state of Texas, I believe that my tax dollars should be directed towards my child's education in a way that best meets their unique needs and aspirations. I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of HB 1 for the following reasons:

Empowering Parents: HB 1 empowers parents like me to take an active role in shaping our children's education. It recognizes that parents are in the best position to understand our children's individual learning styles and needs, and we should have the freedom to choose the educational environment that aligns with those needs.

Increased Accountability: School choice programs introduce healthy competition into the education system, which in turn encourages schools to improve their performance. When parents have options, schools are motivated to excel and provide the highest quality education to attract and retain students.

Tailored Education: Every child is unique, and what works for one may not work for another. HB 1 allows us to explore educational options beyond the traditional public school system, ensuring that our children receive a tailored education that nurtures their strengths and addresses their weaknesses.

Optimizing Tax Dollars: As a responsible taxpayer, I want to see my hard-earned money put to the best use. School choice enables tax dollars to follow the student, ensuring that funding supports the education they receive, rather than being allocated to a one-size-fits-all system that may not meet their needs effectively.

Expanded Opportunities: By supporting HB 1, you will help provide opportunities for families who may not have the financial means to access alternative educational options. School choice can bridge the gap, offering greater equity in education.

In the face of the challenges our public education system faces, it is imperative that we adapt and innovate to meet the diverse needs of our children. I firmly believe that HB 1 is a step in the right direction, and I ask you to please vote in favor of this crucial legislation. It is an investment in the future of our children and our state's educational system.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my views. I trust that you will make the decision that best serves the interests of Texas students and their families. Your support for HB 1 will help ensure that the dreams and aspirations of our children are not bound by the limitations of a one-size-fits-all system.

Beverly Roland

Self - Retired

Austin, TX

HB 1 creates a very expansive voucher program that includes a token of additional funding for our public schools as a carrot for our rural Republican friends who have continually opposed vouchers along with the Democratic Caucus, the rural areas of TX and even the organization of priests in TX who are afraid that children in the public school system will be put at a greater disadvantage! This small amount of additional money is not nearly what will be taken away and does NOT change the scary ramifications of this Bill!

We are paying out taxes to the State of TEXAS, for Texas government related issues, and not to private enterprises! We do NOT want our money going to INDIVIDUALS' pockets in the form of money or vouchers so their children can go to private, and I might add, some profit making entities! We, as seniors with no school age children, pay our taxes to support TX PUBLIC Schools for the future of ALL TX children, not just a few!

We firmly believe that the proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child, including those with disabilities! This could lead to reduced number of teachers, reduced retirement funding for teachers, fewer resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement. .

Not only are our students at risk of losing resources needed for their education, but our teachers' jobs and retirement are also at risk. The plan, as written, would allow for 1% of current students to switch from public to private school at taxpayer cost. So, even if just 1% of students switched, that could mean a decrease of over 30 teaching positions in AISD. It's the students who will suffer the most, and our State will suffer as well as our students will not be as prepared for college and beyond as they could and should be.

This very expensive voucher plan is just a scheme to further an agenda of a small groups of self-serving leaders as evidenced by how hard the Governor and Lt. Governor are pressuring legislators to pass this scam. Again, it only supports one (1) percent of current students, and will be extremely detrimental to the other 99% of students in public schools, along with their teachers, which will have a terrible affect on TX's rural communities!

Stop the attempt to undermine our neighborhood schools! There have been many success stories coming from our public schools. Should a parent want to send their child to a private school, then so be it. Let them pay for it. Private schools do offer stipends and scholarships for those who qualify and want to go to a private school.

ENSURE that we are guaranteeing that each and every TX child can receive a free and quality education at our public schools! PLEASE VOTE NO! ON HB 1! It's NOT good for our children, it's NOT good for taxpayers, it's NOT good for teachers and it's not good for TEXAS!

Joanna May

Self - Email Marketing Manager

Rosenberg, TX

Strong public schools build strong Texas communities. Vouchers and ESAs hurt Texas students and public schools that benefit all Texas students. Many House legislators have done their jobs and voted "no" to ESAs. It's time to let them finish their jobs and fund Texas public schools!

Francisco Chavez

Self

Beaumont, TX

As a student currently and someone who could have benefitted from an ESA years ago. It is important for this to become a reality, so other students can reap the benefits of school choice! My parents picked up and moved from our home in one district to reside in another district to ensure I got the education needed. In doing so they gave up our home and settled for a tiny house that barely fits our family but meets our needs for a better district. I have been in my current district since 5th grade and am now a Senior in high school and about to be 19 years old. The choices my parents made benefitted me tremendously and I have succeeded in ways I never would have had I stayed at my previous district. However the reality is most people cant just pick up and relocate to meet their child's educational needs and homeschool isn't an option with the need for a two income family. ESA's will give parents the opportunity to put their child in private school, homeschool or even change districts to serve their child's needs. We want to see this happen so kids can be successful like myself!

Danny Fishman

Torah Day School of Houston

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you for your consideration.

Beverly Duke, Hope for the Future & Grants Manager

Hope for the Future, an Agency of the Archdiocese of San Antonio

San Antonio, TX

I believe that parents have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options. As a Catholic parent I personally invested in Catholic school education for my children because passing on a strong and active faith in God and his goodness, and the moral values our faith represent, while receiving an excellent academic preparation was extremely important to me. I made this investment even for a time as a single parent. I spent every dollar of the child support I received to pay for Catholic schools for my sons.

Today I work for the Archdiocese of San Antonio and my primary job is to raise money to help provide tuition assistance to struggling families. We do this based on economic need. Last year, we funded \$2 Million in tuition assistance, helping 1,700 children. These students are 80% Hispanic or Latino, more than half come from single parent homes, and 50% would qualify for federal free and reduced lunch programs. Thirty percent of the families have adjusted household incomes of less than \$30,000 and YET they choose to pay between \$4,000 and \$10,000 PER CHILD, per year because a Catholic school education is that important to them as parents. They know the benefits of choosing a Catholic education.

In the Archdiocese of San Antonio in 2022, 99.6% of graduating high school seniors went on to post-secondary education; average SAT scores were 1,074; graduating seniors accepted \$85 million in scholarships; had already earned 4,000 hours of college dual credit; and had provided 60,000 hours of community service. If the State of Texas would provide funding for students to attend these schools and alleviate the financial burden these families are carrying, you will certainly be building generations of future leaders with faith and integrity, fully equipped to accomplish all that God has planned for them.

Caroline Edwards
Self: Teacher
NORTHLAKE, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Caroline Edwards

Joshua Goldstein
self, Director, Software Engineering
Dallas, TX

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This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever-expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you in advance for making the right choice for Texas, our children, and our future.

Erin Trantham, Dr.

Argyle ISD

Justin, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Dr. Erin Trantham

Donna Mancuso

Self

Bryan, TX

As a product of public schooling, and as a parent of two who were in private school for their first 3 years and then public school, I feel that public tax dollars should never be used to fund private school education. This is not for the betterment of the children but for the choice of the parent(s). There are many choices for childrens' different learning neefs within the public school system, from special education programs, allied health programs, magnet school programs, early collegiate programs, tecnical programs, etc. With proper public school funding, our public schools can once again become the shining examples of the leaders of education among developed countries. Proper funding includes infrastructure, updated programs, well-paid teachers, etc. No public funds to private education!

Troy Mooney, Dr.
self-Chief Academic Officer
Midlothian, TX

In regards to the proposed Education Savings Accounts. There are a variety of ways to improve these bills if the stated goal is to actually empower families with options. As written, the bills guarantee choice only for the school and not with the parent by allowing recipient schools to retain all their current rights of selection and exclusion. Some easy fixes would be to: First, require recipient schools to accept all applicants up to a self-designated cap (using a lottery for oversubscription), Second, require recipient schools to not charge additional tuition above the ESA amount for those students using ESAs, Third, require recipient schools to provide services to students with disabilities. Fourth, require the recipient schools to report annually how many students using the ESA that they forcibly removed during the year, which would be evaluated annually to determine if the school was a suitable educational environment for students using ESAs. Any of these fixes would help to ensure that families could have access to the options they choose rather than only being at the mercy of the school admissions counselor. As written, these bills create School's choice, not school choice. Finally consider if any of the current mandates that encumber Isd and Charter schools can be removed in light of the fact that they will not be required of private schools.

Stephanie Swanson

Self

Spicewood, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Stephanie Swanson

Kimberly Winkelmayr
Self and The Arc of Texas
Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong OPPOSITION to House Bill (HB 1). As a sister of a person with IDD and as a member of The Arc of Texas, I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

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Sincerely,
Kimberly Winkelmayr
650-823-0029

Judith Kanzic, Dr.

self

HOUSTON, TX

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Sincerely,

Dr. J.Kanzic

Rashid Rahman, Mr
Argyle High School
Argyle, TX
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

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Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Rashid Rahman

Evan Fletcher

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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We are watching your actions,

Evan Fletcher

Monica Rodriguez

Saint Mary cathedral Catholic Church

Elgin, TX

HB 1

Daniel Gross, Dr.

Self

Houston, TX

Thank you for support!

Angelina King
Self, customer service specialist
Petersburg, TX

NO! Raise teachers pay without holding it hostage for a bill! Tax payers money should not go towards PRIVATE SCHOOL OR RELIGIOUS SCHOOLING. FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

Hanna Cotlar
Self
Houston, TX

I am in support of the bill to help myself and many other families have freedom in choice for education

MARY MONZON
Self
Pasadena, TX

Please vote to protect public schools.

Taylor Kimbrell
Argyle Independent School District
Northlake, TX

November 8, 2023

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Lisa Loewenthal
Yeshiva Torat Emet
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Carol Williams
Self, development coach
Austin, TX

Why fires there need to be any diversion of funds? Why can't we do both? We have a surplus in the budget....fund both! And give the teachers a raise. Anything short of that undermines our future....Republicans especially please save our future children as leaders and voters. Wouldn't you like to take credit for that?

Cherie Cobb
St. Mary's Catholic School
Longview, TX

Dear Representatives,

I live in Longview, TX and my children attend St. Mary's Catholic School. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Sincerely,
Cherie Cobb

Daniel Bitran
Self - CEO
Houston, TX

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Millions of children statewide would benefit from this program and I beg of you to support this for my children as my wife and I want to be the ones to choose what we believe is in our children's best interests as far as their education is concerned.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Daniel Bitran

John King, Mr.

Self - Educator

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

John King

Mary Tran
Self Supported Employment Specialist
Bryan, TX

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I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

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It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Mary Tran
1809 Gray Stone Dr
Bryan, Tx 77807
tranmary28@gmail.com

Theresa Mazuca-Garcia, Ms.
Self
San Antonio, TX

Vote no to using my taxes to fund private schools. No vouchers!!! Parents already have a choice. Texas should be funding public schools only.

Angela Cowan, Ph.D.

Self

Belton, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state-supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Angela Cowan
angela.cowan92@gmail.com
(254) 933-2801

Yitzchak Sprung, Rabbi
SELF, RABBI
houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Terisa Bostic

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Terisa Bostic

Kassie Loe

Hughes Springs FFA & 2-LO Beef Cattle

DeKalb, TX

I BELIEVE THAT THE TEACHERS THAT HAVE PASSED THE PPR AND ARE CERTIFIED SHOULD HAVE BETTER INSURANCE LIKE WE HAD BEFORE OBAMA MESSED UP THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY.

Loraleigha Glassburner
Self, Licensed Veterinary Technician
San Antonio, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Yocheved Schlachter
Texas Wanderers
Houston, TX

Please support this bill!

Mary Baker, Mrs.
self
Austin, TX

I adamitly opposed any bill that would create a voucher program or educational savings account program here in Texas. Our public schools are the hearts of many of our communities and are the best way to educate the majority of our students. Both of my sons were educated in public schools, both had special needs, and both graduated from a top ranked high school and went on to be accepted in multiple selective universities. We did try a private religious school with one child, but after one year, went back to public school because of the better quality of education.

The only way I could support a voucher program is if the private schools had to meet the same standards as public schools including state testing and grading/ranking by the TEA. They also must meet the same standards of accountability for audited finances. In addition, they need to take all students of every race, religion, ability, etc. just as public schools do. Otherwise, there is no accountability for how our taxpayer dollars are used.

My sister is a CPA and spent the majority of her career in schools. She worked for a CPA firm which audited public schools, worked as the accountant for a Texas school district, and worked as the accountant for a charter school. She will tell you that money that goes outside the public school system often is not used for the education of students, but for the lifestyle of the owners of the private or charter school with very little accountability. I expect more from my tax dollars.

Jay Gersten

Self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

Today, finding a home where you want to live can be near impossible. Many like myself might be priced out for the market, such that the school we want to send our children too won't be in the district we live in.

I myself want my kids to go to a more rigorous school- where kids spend more time in school. Most public schools where I live are not able to teach or challenge my kids how I want them to be challenged. They also may teach ideas and principles I don't want them to be exposed to through school or in the manner in which they are exposed to those ideas.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. It will increase competition and force schools to evaluate their teachers to make sure that teachers and schools are challenging students.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Elizabeth Bingham

Argyle ISD

Denton, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

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Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Elizabeth Bingham

Beth Summers, Dr.

Parents of School Age Kids

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Laura Rizvi
Argyle ISD
Flower Mound, TX
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Laura Rizvi
Argyle South Elementary ESL Specialist
Parent of 3 Argyle ISD Students

levi marinovsky
self
cypress, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in my home state of Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those who need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their children.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for our great state of Texas to join the ever-expanding list.

Please help make our great state even better!

Thank you!

Martha Kubala, Dr.
Self/retired teacher
Austin, TX

I believe that this school voucher bill will not make school choice available to all children & families and will destroy our public school system. I am very much opposed to having my tax dollars go to help families choose religious and other private schools. It is their choice right now; let them pay for it.

Elliot Azoulay
Texas Health resources
PLANO, TX

Please support this bill.

Yolanda Gonzalez
Texas State Teachers Association
MISSION, TX

I am not opposed to private schools or charters! But I certainly don't believe that as a taxpayer I should be paying even partially for private or charter education. These entities are not held to the same standards and requirements as public schools and due to that they should not receive my tax dollars. These are corporations that only want to eventually diminish our public school system to get their hands on our tax dollars allocated to educate all children no matter what their needs are.

Elida and Jimmy Moore
Parent of IDD Person
Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong OPPOSITION to House Bill (HB 1). As the parents of a person with IDD and as a member of The Arc of Texas, I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

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It is INAPPROPRIATE for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to OPPOSE HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (AT MINIMUM, PLEASE REMOVE THE SSLC PROVISION FROM HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Elida Teresa Moore and Jimmy Moore Jr.
713-854-5914

Manyah Dubrawsky
Self, chabad
Dallas, TX

SCHOOL CHOICE!

Rachel Kriheli

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list. Please give us parents the school choice option for our precious kids.

Thank you!

Rachel Kriheli

Haley Martinez
2918 S Creekwood Drive
Grapevine, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,
Haley Martinez

Tammy Cunningham, Mrs.
Self
Haskell, TX

Take care of our public schools educators. Say no to vouchers!

Deborah Pankow
El Paso ISD - Clerk for 29 years
El Paso, TX

Vouchers are bad for Texas students, and that no good will come from spending public tax money to enrich private school operators.

Douglas Catoe
Self
Cleburne, TX
No to vouchers!

Stacey Ward
Humble ISD/ Timbers Elementary
Houston, TX

Dear Rep. Buckley and House Education Committee Members,

I'm writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session.

Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much-needed funds to go toward a voucher scheme.

Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept.

Let's work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement — not vouchers.

Thank you for your time and doing what is right for Texas Public Education students.

Brocha Werner
Torah day school
Dallas, TX

This would definitely improve our quality of life

Leah Ratliff
Self
McKinney, TX

The gov now suggests a voucher of \$10500 per child. Let's say someone with 4 kids in private school paid \$13,000 in property taxes. They will get \$42,000 in vouchers. Where is the additional \$29,000 coming from?

It's moving my money, that I paid in taxes for my kids to go to public school, to give to ANOTHER FAMILY because they made a choice to send their kids to private school.

A more accurate reimbursement for people who send their kids to private school would be a tax deduction for whatever percentage of their taxes goes toward education (about 54% according to the TX State Comptroller) so private school users should get a \$7000 tax deduction. Which is still more than the \$6700 per student the state will provide to each school district.

Donna Good
Argyle West Elementary
Argyle, TX
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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Best Regards,
Donna Good

Kaitlyn McGuire
Self/Argyle ISD
Argyle, TX

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Your Name

Tova Nissel
Self- SLP
PLANO, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you for your support.

Darryl Vaughn

Self / Self

Bryan, TX

Public schools have failed Texas for decades why is a failing corrupt system rewarded constantly. This is a monopoly on education and a lot of money is made by big-timers in public education. The money spent on public education has increased so much but the quality of education has decreased. Why don't we have competition? Many of our elected officials don't send their children to public school.

Candice Richards

Clear Brook

Friendswood, TX

Vouchers would be bad for Texas. Public schools do amazing work with our students, despite being underfunded and underappreciated. The majority of Texans are not in favor of vouchers, and the repeated attempts by our governor to push through vouchers is obvious pandering to his donors. We need to fully fund public schools and stop talking about vouchers.

Melinda Slaughter

Holy Trinity Catholic High school

Killeen, TX

Please support this bill. It allows students the opportunity to not only gain a private school education but offers opportunities for families in need whose needs may not be met by the public school system. Every child is entitled to receive an adequate education, and the public school system is sometimes not the best option for this children.

David Goldstein, Rabbi
Chabad of West Houston
Houston, TX

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Our Family!

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

Tomorrow morning HB1 will be heard in front of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment.

This is the best school choice proposal to come out of the Texas House of Representatives.

THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS PER CHILD FOR TUITION ARE ON THE LINE!

We are urging all Texas residents to submit a comment urging committee members to support the bill.

Many Legislators are supportive of school choice but are scared to vote for it because their offices are being swamped with messages from those that oppose!

They need to hear messages of support.

Please click on the link below to submit a comment.

<https://comments.house.texas.gov/home?c=c232>

Select HB1 (there are two HB1's listed, you can select either).

This is a sample letter for you to submit in the comments section. You can copy and paste it.

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Liz Cashman
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Fully fund Spring Branch ISD. We continue to get less and less funding from our state. Now we are facing an unprecedented \$35M budget shortfall.

Nichole Beaver Perez
self - Educator
McAllen, TX

I am for HB 1 and the establishment of an education savings account program. Parents should be allowed the choice to pick the best school for their child, no matter their economic status.

Joe Hopson, Former Director of Special Education
Self
Anna, TX

As a retired educator I have seen the trauma inflicted on students forced to attend private schools and been rejected. Public schools serve all students and work with each student to meet their unique needs. The public schools need full funding and not to have public monies given to private schools who don't have to follow the same standards as public schools.

Kelly Ceder
Na
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

It's Texas's turn:!) Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Brian Gavin, Mt
Self
Houston, TX

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Carole Stockton

retired, self

Austin, TX

I firmly believe that the proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education. I do not want my tax money to be used for private schools. Parents always have always had school choice; they have paid for their child's private school education without complaint.

Camila Ramos-Pena

self

Canutillo, TX

Esteemed representatives, the reason for my message is to voice my opposition to any "voucher" type savings account for the purposes of diverting funding from public schools to private schools. In light of the passage of Prop. 4 increasing the homestead exemption on school taxes, school districts will be even more underfunded than they already are. Adding to insult to injury, Gov. Abbot want to divert monies from public education to the private sector. I see a several flaws in this logic. First of all, the amount being considered is more per student than the state is currently spending on public education. How is that fair to the vast, vast majority of children who attend public schools and will not benefit one iota from these diverted funds? Second of all, I foresee a grand bureaucracy being established to manage those so-called "education savings accounts," so a chunk of these diverted property tax dollars will end up as administrative salaries, and one can only imagine the amount of those salaries especially for the upper administrators. Third of all, I am a public school teacher. I already pay for most of my professional development out of pocket among other things such as copier paper, ink for my school printer, resources and materials for my class, etc. The voters in my district have not approved two bond referendums for new construction AND capital repairs and improvements to our aging facilities, so monies are being prioritized for those repairs. Health insurance is becoming unaffordable under the plan being proposed in my district, so teachers are considering leaving education, retiring, or getting a second job to help defray the increased premiums, and as we all know, health insurance is now required in our country. These are just a few of my concerns, and I implore you to carefully consider the impact of this pet project of our state legislators. I understand there are a minority of people that want the vouchers and have put their political careers on the line by promising vouchers, but what has happened to looking out for the majority of constituents, in this case our Texas children, instead of a special-interest group? Sanity must prevail. I am a Republican and have voted Republican since I turned 18, but I am seriously questioning my Republican leadership at this point. Please, think of the needs of the many and not the wants of a few special interests. Our public school, a Texas guarantee according to our state constitution, is under attack. First by discrediting public schools through a flawed accountability system, second, by our voters unknowingly defunding public schools through the homestead exemption that effectively takes money from public schools, and last of all, by diverting funds, through vouchers, from the education system guaranteed by our constitution to institutions that will educate only a very, very small fraction of Texas children. Respectfully submitted, Camila Ramos-Pena

Pam Hartt
Self
Evadale, TX

Please consider this bill from a former educator now homeschool parent of a special needs child. This will allow my child to receive the needed therapy and lessons for her learning disability.

Thank you

Linda Jurica
self
BRYAN, TX

Parents have the responsibility to raise and educate their children. I support this bill to make educational options other than public school more affordable and thus available to all students. I also support additional funding to strengthen public education in this state. In the private sector, people "vote" for the companies they wish to do business with by choosing how they spend their money. Education can only be made stronger by instituting similar competition. Let's allow parents to "vote" for schools they trust by determining where state funding is applied.

Mary Swenson
Self development consultant
Arlington, TX

Please allow Texas property owners to decide for themselves where their children are edo

Aaron Sarfati
self
Dallas, TX

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Nathan Yanowitz
Self
Houston, TX

I am writing my support for the voucher proposal called HB1. Looking at how many schools are utter failures "including our own HISD" we need to go back to local oversight system that will allow parents to choose schools and more importantly, the administrations of those schools held accountable. This bill should have been passed 20 years ago when the first signs of indifference started to show up in our inner city public schools. While I would have liked a more comprehensive bill allowing full vouchers to all, regardless of income, at least this is a start. We need a revolution in how our schools are run with accountability on a local level with true choice, instead of the lie called "Public" school when in reality it is association school. You can only attend a school associated with your zip code and zoning.

Toni Wing-Jenkins
Self - retired educator
Burleson, TX

Very simply, any problems in public education are the direct result of forces outside the control of teachers and school districts (economic statuses, changing families, societal forces) and the policies of TEA and the legislature for the past 20 years. High stakes standardized testing has destroyed the ability for teachers to teach effectively. Politicians running on “fixing” the Texas educational system have promoted an anti-education attitude that has now permeated our society, placing an unfair weight on the backs of educators throughout Texas. School choice, aka vouchers, just reinforce those negative attitudes. In effect, you have placed a thumb on the scales against hard-working teachers, and now you’re punishing them because the scale is inaccurate.

For the love of children, for the love of education, for the love of freedom, get your thumb off the scale. Let teachers teach. Give them raises. Fund schools better. Don’t pass a voucher plan.

Parthiv Parikh
Self
Argyle, TX
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Parthiv Parikh

Sarah Levithan Daniels

Self

Austin, TX

Texans do NOT want vouchers. We want our public schools fully funded. Increase the student allotment, fund by enrollment, and start respecting our teachers and educators by compensating them appropriately. Over 91% of our students are in public education, which is guaranteed by our Constitution. Fund existing schools. Don't use public tax payer money for private institutions who can refuse students based on religion, race, learning difficulties, income level and so much more. All kids deserve fully funded public educations. Don't abandon them. Say no to vouchers.

Hageesh Geetha

Self

Argyle, TX

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

Thanks,
Hageesh

Maureen Driscoll

self; retired public school teacher

Fredericksburg, TX

I strongly support the educational savings account program part of this bill. Public schools, which are not meeting the needs of their students, will get a wake-up call that improvements are needed, if parents have an option to seek a better school for their children. Please pass this bill for the good of education in Texas.

Karen Currie

Self- School Librarian

Austin, TX

I firmly believe that the proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement.

Mary Betzhold, teacher

Argyle High School

Argyle, TX

As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Mary Betzhold

Peter Gruning
Self--retired attorney
San Marcos, TX

Thank you for kindly considering my comment. No education bill can equally provide benefits for every student, but HB 1 gives broad and important benefits to a great number of Texas families and school employees. Each step that the legislature takes to provide sound educations for students is a step toward the time when each student will reach her/his potential as a student and later as a citizen. I'm grateful to the legislature for considering HB 1 and hope that it will pass and give Texas students the opportunities to excel in their educations.

Dona Lumsden
Argyle ISD
Argyle, TX

NOVEMBER 8, 2023 UPDATE
TAKE ACTION ARGYLE
Written Testimony Script
for the Texas Public Education Committee

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Dona Lumsden

Kevin Bryan, Mr.
Lubbock Cooper ISD
Lubbock, TX

Vouchers likely fail not just because of their racist origins but also because researchers have found that voucher programs lead to significant negative achievement outcomes for students who use vouchers. Vouchers also take money out of public schools and even the state's general fund. Most private schools are religious and the majority of school vouchers go to religious schools, therefore, government funding to religious schools violates the 1st Amendment. Also, that allows ANYONE to open a private school...Satanic, Muslim, etc... Not something I want my tax dollars going towards.

Jennifer Coulombe
Self
Rockwall, TX

Enough with the vouchers

Susan Kemmerer
Self
Austin, TX

I am against hospital wine and would like to support the existing public school program. I feel vouchers will deplete the public school system, which reaches the most Texan children.

Cynthia Candanoza
Self
Ennis, TX

I believe this bill will benefit not only children but families. I am in support of HB 1

Corina Schaeffer
Myself
Allen, TX

Fund public schools and keep your church out of our school system

Ashley Perraud
Murchison PTA
Austin, TX

Our public schools are the bedrock of our communities and the stepping stones for our children's futures. Any sort of voucher program will destroy public education as we know it. Our state needs to provide more public school funding not vouchers that hurt the majority of Texans.

Ervin Howell
Howell Drilling
Sweetwater, TX

Texas needs this passed.

Shea Roberson
Self parent
Abilene, TX

As a parent to 4 in the public school system I am adamantly opposed to vouchers. I've lived in Alabama where the private and charter schools have destroyed public school education because of vouchers. Vouchers are the death of healthy thriving public schools. Please DO NOT vote for vouchers. They will diminish our children's education!!!

Elise Kovar

Self - Lean Six Sigma Black Belt (not that my occupation should matter)

Amarillo, TX

I am adamantly opposed to any distribution of public education funds to private or charter schools.

The lack of accountability and lack of legal expectations for students with disabilities or special needs at these private and charter schools only hurts our public education institutions.

Parental choice already exists so that argument is null and void.

Our teachers deserve to be paid at the appropriate level for their education, experience, and duties without it being tied to vouchers.

Vouchers will only harm our public education system and students.

If public funds are to be used for private entities, then they should no longer be private.

Vote NO on vouchers. This is a money grab for someone and it's not worth the future of our children.

Consider removing STAAR testing if you want to do something worthwhile and increase our children's ability to problem solve and think instead of regurgitate information they can look up on the internet.

There are so many other things our tax dollars should be spent on and vouchers is not one of them.

Leslie Berry

Kelton ISD, Superintendent

Wheeler, TX

Vouchers should not be passed. Most public schools are underfunded. Teachers deserve a state funded and supported raise and state insurance. Please consider the hardworking Texas public school systems as a priority. Public money should stay in the public schools. Do not cave to political pressures.

Michael Daniels

Self; Lawyer, Construction Executive

Austin, TX

I am a Texas dad, have two sons in public schools, and am myself a graduate of Texas K-12 and university public schools. I am also a lawyer and strict constitutionalist. I would remind Texas legislators that Art. 7 of the Texas Constitution enshrines both the right to a public education and appropriate funding thereof. I strongly oppose vouchers or any effort to misappropriate public education funds and divert them to private schools, which also violates fundamental tenants of Art. I separation of church and state. Furthermore, efforts by the Governor to hold public schools hostage unless the Legislature approves vouchers is disgusting, reprehensible and arguably impeachable. I urge Legislators to reject vouchers and any efforts to divert public funds to private schools and to fund Texas public schools as the Constitution requires. Do you duty and stop holding our children and our future competitiveness as a state hostage over some giveaway to private schools and the institutions that fund them.

Aron Troppe
Self
Houston, TX

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Milana Noueilaty
Self
Austin, TX

I am completely opposed to this bill. It would devastate public schools and drastically underserve the less privileged kids. I have a 6th grader in public school, until we can properly fund our public schools, we should not even be discussing funding education in any other way. Please listen to parents and teachers and focus on teacher raises and funding our public school. Focus on raising the basic allotment and give public schools a fighting chance.

Faustina Ohakwe
Self
Sunnyvale, TX

I support this bill. It gives parents choice and supports them in making the best school choice for their children

Tricia Chalaire
Self
Paris, TX

Please vote no for vouchers and ESAs. Support public schools.

Anna Bright
Self
Wimberley, TX

I strongly oppose vouchers. Public funds belong in PUBLIC schools.

Emily Lee, Parent
Self
New Boston, TX

I believe it is our responsibility to educate all children. Private schools do not accept ALL children and they are not held to the high academic standard and level of transparency of that is required of a public school. The vouchers wouldn't even cover the cost of a child's full private school tuition. It will be a form of economic segregation for student at the expense of tax payers. As a tax payer, I respectfully ask you to continue to oppose ESAs/vouchers. They are bad for Texas.

Thank you for your service to Texas.

Emily Lee

Matthew Schwed, Dr.

Self, dentist

Dallas, TX

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Lisa Serna

Self, Retired higher Ed empliyee

San Antonio, TX

Please listen to reason. We cannot continue this madness. I do not believe the majority of Texas citizens support utilizing tax payer dollars to support private schools. The roots appear to me to be bowing to those who are proponents of gutting public education for financial and religious motivations. I consider this a gross misuse of my tax dollars. Gov. Abbott is not our king. Please remember that the political power must remain in the people's hands, not his. Please continue to fight this!

Nicole Stone

Self - Controller

Houston, TX

I am a parent of two children in Spring Branch ISD. Our district is currently facing budget cuts of \$35 million dollars because the legislation is refusing to fully fund our public schools. Tax payer dollars should not be funding ESA's when highly rated public school districts are facing school closures! **FULLY FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS!**

Stella Tupinamba

parent

KATY, TX

School Voucher. Texas parents with students that receive special education do not want vouchers to private schools that are not going to accept our students. we want and need a well funded and strong Public Education in Texas.

George Kobdish

self / retired

Dallas, TX

HB 1 is an opportunity to level the playing field for all Texas school children. Give them all a choice in schools so they can attend schools that best match their goals and needs. Too many lack any real choice in the schools they attend. Too many public schools have failed the kids that walk through their doors because the school is holds a monopoly and the kids have no alternative. Giving these children an alternative would almost certainly motivate the public schools to change in a way that improves the product they deliver. Competition is good for everyone. Monopoly only benefits the one that has the monopoly.

I urge you to pass HB 1 in a way that delivers true, universal school choice to Texas children.

Jo Ann Weckman
self/retired
Frisco, TX

School choice legislation:

As a former educator in the state of Texas, I come to you most humbly asking for your support for school choice legislation in this 2023 legislative session.

Surely the powers that be in the Texas Legislature can unlock the barriers that have, thus far, prevented school choice initiatives from coming to fruition in our great state. Obviously, what has not worked in the Marlin, Texas ISD shows that something must be done to address this issue. And, contrary to the "talking heads mantra" about school choice benefitting only the wealthy, I beg to differ. It seems that the students from lower socio-economic situations are, in many cases, the ones being left behind.

Please do not let school choice fall through the cracks during this session. Parents should have better choices in the education of their children. Let Texas be a leader for the entire nation.

Do not abandon our children for want of better opportunities in education. Please find a way!

Sincerely,

Jo Ann Weckman

Moshe Segelman
Yeshiva Torat Emet, self and I am a Principal
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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?

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Desiree Thomas
Mansfield ISD
Mansfield, TX

Our concern with vouchers is that the same rapid and uncontrolled expansion that has accompanied charters will come with vouchers. The furthest physical charter campus that serves MISD students sits 23 miles from our administration building at 605 E. Broad St. MISD zoned students attend 11 physical charter campuses and two online charters. A quick search on Niche.com turned up 62 private schools within this same radius not including PK-Kinder schools. Fifteen private schools are within 10 miles, 29 within 15 miles, and 52 within 20 miles.

If 13 charter campuses cost MISD 2,015 students and \$19.5 million, what kind of destruction can 62 private schools, before expansion, do to our budget and student offerings? If you wish for MISD to continue to be the heartbeat of the community, if you want more weeks like last week, if you want Mansfield to continue to be great place to Live, Learn, Teach, Work, & Play then we ask you to stand strong and vote NO on any voucher bill that comes before you in this Special Session and in the future.

Devorah Lowy
Self, teacher
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Eugene Meysenburg
N/A
Dallas, TX

Our public schools are not serving our children as they should. This is because they have a monopoly for middle and lower economic parents. The wealthy have always had choice. Their children go to private schools. It is time we provide the private school option to all our citizens. The reduced number of children in the public school will save them money in the long run. Thus, the argument that this bill takes money from the public schools is not valid.

I urge you to support HB1.

Ken Madsen
Self
Round Rock, TX

Freedom of choice is a value treasured by all Texans. Recently, many Americans are choosing to leave their states to come to Texas for a better quality of life, which includes great schools. Currently, Texans are forced into a public school system that is declining. Their only choice is homeschooling. As property taxes skyrocket to support an unaccountable monopoly - the public school system - Texans should have an economic way of choosing where they want their kids to be educated. Competition will force public schools to be accountable for providing a great education or lose students to charter schools, parochial schools or homeschooling. Please give Texans a choice on education. Thank you.

Kelly Day
self & child
Houston, TX

As the mother of a child with learning disabilities (severe ADHD), the school voucher/educational savings account program will allow us to choose a private school that meets his learning needs without the enormous financial burden that most private schools require. In Houston, a private school for him can range from \$20K-\$30K a year, just for elementary school. That is more than some college programs. Private schools have smaller class sizes than most public schools & some even have specialized programs for his learning disabilities, but they are virtually unaffordable for even 2 income families. I am a huge proponent of the school choice programs & would love to see some sort of voucher or savings program made available.

Yair Alan Griver
Self, ceo
San Antonio, TX

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AUDREY WATTERS
SELF, FINANCE
WACO, TX

I OPPOSE THE EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNT PROGRAM AND DO NOT WANT ANY TAX FUNDS USED TO
SUBSIDIZE PRIVATE SCHOOLS OR ANY FOR-PROFIT SCHOOL.

UNDER HB 1, A PRIVATE SCHOOL RECEIVING SUBSIDIES WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW HOW TAX FUNDS
ARE SPENT, GIVING OPPORTUNITY FOR MISUSED FUNDING OR FRAUD.

ANY PRIVATE SCHOOL THAT POTENTIALLY RECEIVES TAX FUNDS WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO TEACH
DISABLED OR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN, AND WILL NOT HAVE TO MEET TEXAS MINIMUM EDUCATION
GUIDELINES, I DO NOT WANT ANY TAXES GOING TO THEM.

DO YOUR JOB AND PROPERLY FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS INSTEAD OF SUBSIDIZING PRIVATE COMPANIES.

Leslie Bonneville
Self
Holly Lake Ranch, TX
Please support HB1

Michael Carroll

Self

Graham, TX

If the legislature wants to pass vouchers (which they should not) it should be a stand alone bill. It is insulting to tie the voucher bill to much needed increases in school funding and teacher raises.

Vouchers are bad for Texas and bad for Texas taxpayers. Sending money to schools with no accountability is not a conservative strategy. Vouchers have failed for four sessions already this year. They should never pass. Do not let our bully of a Governor have his way as he is doing the bidding of billionaires with no skin in the game.

Give teachers raises. Increase school funding. No to vouchers.

Stephanie Langner

Self - Educational Diagnostician

Klein, TX

Please do not allow public school funding to be held hostage by vouchers. Vouchers will hurt public education and will not help ALL and EVERY student who is served by public education. Please fund public education by increasing the per student allotment and increasing teacher pay so we can keep HIGHLY QUALIFIED teachers. We need to improve public education, not hinder it by diverting tax payer dollars to fund vouchers.

Griselda Blanco

Immaculate Conception School

Rio Grande City, TX

I am a parent of 3 children attending a Catholic School. I have chosen to place my children in a private school not because I can afford it but because I am making a sacrifice for their future by making sure that God is part of their everyday environment. I believe all contributing Texans as we pay taxes should have the right to decide where our children can attend school. I look forward in seeing the state making decisions that would benefit the families by having a right to receive such funding.

Laura Jones, Public school district trustee

Gordon ISD

Gordon, TX

I serve as a trustee for a low socioeconomic rural school district. The nearest private school for my students is close to an hour away. FIX public ed funding before added another revenue stream and governmental oversight for ESAs! \$10.5k for a voucher is laughable when the basic school allotment is less than \$7k.

Rishi Jain
Self
Argyle, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,
This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,
Rishi Jain

Kenneth Camp, Mr.
Self
Garland, TX

I wish to state my opposition to the portion of HB1 that would establish Education Savings Accounts, while I would like to voice support for increased pay and benefits for public schoolteachers. The two issues should not be joined at the hip. ESAs are essentially vouchers that will benefit private schools and those associated with them while drawing much-needed funds away from public education. Since religious parochial schools are included, this represents a blatant violation of church and state. Private religious schools should be supported by individuals and institutions that share their beliefs. Public funds should not be used to prop up religious teaching in religious schools.

Ann Thompson, Mrs.
Retired Public School Educator
Hurst, TX

I'm writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session.

Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much-needed funds to go toward a voucher scheme.

Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept.

Let's work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement — not vouchers.

Edith Gonzalez
Self
Baytown, TX

As a parent I choose for my daughter to be in a Christian school where she will have the right to pray and be taught what aligns to our values. A private school also provides her smaller teacher student ratio; where she will be able to receive focus attention. Additionally having the opportunity to stay in a school setting from elementary to jr high has the possibility of fostering familiarity and structure which allows a child to feel safe and gain confidence to succeed in an educational setting

Ronald West
Self
Terrell, TX

Greetings Esteemed members of the House - I urge you to pass this bill in order to let parents have the say on where their child/children are educated. Just as a former president stated - "If our congress is ignorant, wreckless and corrupt it is because the people tolerate ignorance, wrecklessness and corruption. If it is intelligent brave and pure it is because the people demand these high qualities in those that represent them in their legislature." Please act as the latter for the sake of our children, grandchildren, great grandchildren. These just mentioned do not need to be shackled by "ignorance, wrecklessness and corruption", first in their schooling and finally in the governmental process that should uphold and represent them. Thank you and may God Bless Texas!

Jessica Schmidt

Swlf

Argyle, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Jessica Schmidt

Gabriela Prats

Self/Retired

Anthony, TX

I support parents' choice when it comes to sending their kids to the school they so choose. Regardless of their choice - private, public, charter - parents should have the support of the State to educate their children. After all, they pay taxes as well as those parents who choose to send their children to public schools.

Thank for considering school choice for Texas children.

Gabriela Prats

Victoria Powers, Rev.
Royal Lane Baptist Church
Dallas, TX

The education community in Texas has remained patient and courteous throughout the spring general session of the Legislature despite the record \$32.7 billion surplus. They have upheld the values of kindness and respect that society expects. However, there comes a point when patience wears thin, and the truth must be spoken: it is time to allocate the necessary resources to educators and school districts.

Simply put, it's time to provide the funding our educators and school districts need. This funding is not a luxury; it is a necessity. It is essential for Texas teachers to keep pace with the rising cost of living. School districts must fulfill their role in shaping the future workforce of Texas, which boasts the ninth-largest economy in the world. It is imperative to honor the trust placed in you by Texas taxpayers, who expect their hard-earned money to be invested wisely.

The time for political games and holding funds hostage for private schools must end. Public schools are the heart of our educational system and need their fair share of resources. Even after passing tax relief measures earlier this summer, there remains a surplus of \$14 billion, not to mention the over \$21 billion in the state's rainy day fund. Moreover, inflation ensures that surplus funds will continue to accumulate in the foreseeable future. This is not the government's money to wield for hardline negotiations; it belongs to the people of Texas.

Over 90% of Texas students attend public schools, yet the state has not increased funding to school districts since 2019. Operating costs have significantly risen during this period. Additionally, our teachers, who demonstrated unwavering dedication during the global pandemic, have yet to receive sufficient salary increases to keep pace with inflation.

It is high time to allocate the necessary resources to public schools to address these issues.

Due to legislative inaction during the spring, school boards across Texas were forced to approve deficit budgets merely to survive this academic year. For example, Dallas ISD approved a \$186 million deficit budget, Garland ISD faced a \$69 million deficit, and Plano ISD had to manage a \$24 million shortfall. This approach is akin to depleting one's savings to pay the electric bill — it is unsustainable and morally unacceptable.

What is most disheartening is the lack of significant funding for schools this year and the mounting frustration within the education community: educators, administrators and parents alike. It should not have come to this point.

Instead of prioritizing public schools, Gov. Greg Abbott has traversed the state promoting a program that redirects tax dollars to private schools, masquerading under the banner of "education freedom." Comparable programs in other states have proven to be financially burdensome. Arizona's private school subsidy program, initially allocated at \$65 million, is estimated to cost \$900 million next year. In Florida, a sim

Todd Seifert, Mr
Self - Data Analyst
Houston, TX

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Jonathon Marcelino, Mr
JLM, Inc
Dallas, TX

I see that not having school choice is one of the worst things that a state could not offer its population.

Mark Mecum
Self
Plano, TX

Support HB1 ! It is high time to have school choice to help motivate school districts to become competitive as opposed to a monopoly mindset they currently have. Spending 100's of millions on stadiums? When basic education lags the nation? I think not.

Gracie Niver
Teacher
Waller, TX

I am writing to you today to employ you to do the right thing and fund public schools completely. Passing the school vouchers will kill public education in the state of Texas. A state that already ranks to be one of the lowest in the United States.

Melissa Hawkes
self
Argyle, TX
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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#TogetherWeSoar,
Melissa Hawkes

PHILIP ZACHARIAS
Self
Grand Prairie, TX

I support this bill because it would empower parents and teachers to provide a better education to Texas students.

Laurence DeBerry, Owner
Self Real Estate
Plano, TX

Although my children are grown, I now have grandchildren and great grandchildren that this bill will support. Please pass this bill HB1 on behalf of them and for all the parents of children in Texas.

Joyce Jones

Self/ School district Admin Asst

Dallas, TX

I am a republican voter and want to thank you for your service in the Texas House. I'm writing today to express my strong support for universal school choice with private options, which is before you during this Special Session. Please continue to strive to make certain we have universal school choice with private options for all Texas kids, so their parents have freedom of choice in their children's education.

I vote in Republican primary elections because I believe government should protect the rights and well-being of every citizen. This is why I support universal school choice with private options, a system that—unlike our current government-controlled system—focuses on children and has built-in accountability via competition.

Our present system is failing. According to Texas' own educational testing results from the most recent STAAR testing for grades 3-8, the average percentage of students performing at grade level in the following subjects is only: Reading: 39.5%; Writing: 29%; Math: 33.2%; Science: 35.5%; and Social Studies: 27%. This is unacceptable.

It is time for Texas to join the more than half the states that have enacted school choice. Ten states have already enacted Universal School Choice! Remarkably, a full 77% of Texans support school choice, thus transcending political affiliation, race, ethnicity, and geography. While there certainly are many good schools and educators, competition will force underperforming schools to improve, because parents will choose well-performing schools. Parents and children will no longer be stuck in failing schools in a broken system and the best teachers will be rewarded.

Of 73 studies conducted to evaluate states with school choice, 93% found that these states produced higher academic outcomes while resulting in taxpayer savings. This is no surprise—choice and competition in any area improve the quality of the product and reduce its price. School choice benefits children! Voters like me are tired of electing Representatives who end up acquiescing to liberal unions that continue to hurt our children. I urge you to vote for choice, competition, and the well-being of each child. I will do everything I can to support and stand with Representatives who stand with our kids by voting for school choice!

I look forward to hearing from you soon at my email and address below to let me know how you intend to vote on this issue. I will be sharing your response with my friends, neighbors, church members, and as many others who vote.

Respectfully,

Joyce Jones

Jerry Hawkes

self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Jerry Hawkes

Brenda Howard

Self

Belton, TX

I have seen School Choice work in Arizona and it saved my son. He was able to leave a failing school and attend a school that allowed him to graduate as a junior.

Once I moved to Texas and realized that there are students here, that would benefit from the choice available through ESA's, I began advocating for them. Even though I don't have a student in public school, I was shocked by my neighbor's children that graduated from 5th grade without being able to read. The school was overcrowded and both of these students did not receive their dyslexia services.

I also worked with the school board trustees to remove sexually explicit books. I worked with a group to review a social emotional learning program called, Character Strong, that was teaching an ideology counter to parent and student interests.

We also discovered that the public schools were using the Lucy Caulkins method of teaching reading, instead of phonics and students were graduating without being able to read.

Another problem is having a student who was sexually assaulted by another student, to continue to attend classes together. The schools use a no contact agreement instead of criminally prosecuting the student.

There are many other stories but the commonality between them all, is the option of removing their child and allowing them to go to a different school. If ESA's existed, these students could be removed from an environment where they are failing, to an environment where they have the potential to succeed.

I believe in public schools and I believe that we should continue to work to improve outcomes. I also believe that ESA's are the way to do that. Competition is the answer to improving public schools and offering options to students who are not being served well in a public school environment.

It is past time for Texas to offer parental empowerment to the parents of this great State. Thank you for working so hard on improving education for all of our students.

Jana Hall
Argyle ISD
Northlake, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Jana Hall

Jeremy Pam, Rabbi

Self / Teacher

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs. As a teacher, I firmly support the need of parents to choose the best setting for their children.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Nancy Eddy

Self

Katy, TX

My boy's cannot afford to put their children through private school, and the public schools are spending \$15K per child and the results have been dismal. Taxpayers should not be forced to pay for education the way the government dictates is best. Give back the people the power to choose.

Baby Julie Villasenor

self

houston, TX

opposing anti immigration HB4

Holly Lyon, Superintendent

Goliad ISD

Goliad, TX

Providing a \$4000 bonus to full-time teachers, nurses, counselors, and librarians during the current school year, and pay increases to continue as salary in the following years is a necessity for our District. We already have a shortage of teachers and we need this to ensure we can even retain the staff we have in place. Currently, 60% of our teachers are in their last five years of service, if we do not do something NOW to attract new educators and keep mid career teachers, we will be in an unrecoverable bind in the next 5- 10 years.

Increasing the Basic Allotment to \$6700 in the 24-25 school year and increase various weights and allotments is critical!

Robyn Cantara

Myself

Houston, TX

Vote no on any and all bills that include vouchers since these will defund public schools.

Thomas Beaman, Mr

Self

Fort Worth, TX

While I don't have any children that are in schools, I do however, agree that parents should have to option to choose an alternative option for their children's education. As it is now, the public education system has become an indoctrination system which adversely influences children with their Uber liberal causes. It has become a disgrace. Children in public schools are being held in ideological slavery. They no longer learn history, geography, civics, or any other courses which can help to prepare them for society as adults. They are being stunted in their academic growth. They are being co-opted into gender, CRT, and myriad other indoctrinations. They are being subjected to LGBTQ+ brainwashing and being subjected to Drag Queen shows without their parent's consent. It is past time to put a stop to the dangerous environments and pedophilia that is being pushed by people who seek to destroy the fabric of our society.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak out against the vileness that is being perpetrated on our children.

Tom Beaman

Willy Hughes

a a upholstery

Corpus Christi, TX

please pass this bill to let our kids go where the best is. quit messing around with this. do the right thing-PASS THE BILL

Shannon Odom
Self/Argyle ISD
Bartonville, TX

NOVEMBER 8, 2023 UPDATE
TAKE ACTION ARGYLE

Written Testimony Script (copy and paste)
for the Texas Public Education Committee
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,
This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

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Carolina Gilbreath
SACRED HEART SCHOOL
LA GRANGE, TX

I AM IN FAVOR OF THIS BILL

Paula Woodbury
Self
Dallas, TX

Please stand firm AGAINST a voucher program. Invest in Public Schools. There is NO REASON for a FOURTH special session when the state of Texas has already spoken on this issue! We need MORE money in public schools, not LESS.

David Stephenson
Principal Financial
Richardson, TX

I am disgusted by the activities and teachings that since COVID we've learned are occurring in our schools. 95% of all of it would stop if parents had the option to yank their children from these failing public schools and send them to a school which truly is teaching and not indoctrinating. I don't want to hear this BS about public funds should only go to public schools. First, I don't have any children, yet I pay well over \$3,000 a year to support a public school. So just because a public school system has got away forever confiscating my money, they get to say it HAS to go to them? That's a massive conflict of interest. And the students who probably need to escape the failing public schools the worse are those whose parents can afford it the least; those in poor neighborhoods. Our legislature should be repentant of allowing them to become mouthpieces for the Teacher's Unions who have destroyed our school system and who threaten and silence the rare teacher that tries to speak out against what has been done. The Teacher's Union has shown their actions, despite what they say that their interest is NOT in caring for and educating our children but in using them as a weapon to get more money, more perks and more power while indoctrinating our kids with harmful philosophies. PLEASE DON'T LET US DOWN AGAIN!

Elana Baum Ackerman
Self, rn
Dallas, TX

Please help us support this bill! Thank you for your efforts!

Pam Stephenson
self
Richardson, TX

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James Miller
Self/banker
Garland, TX

Please don't support a voucher bill. Tax dollars should not be used for any private, charter or home schooling without making them subject to the same transparency, controls, rules and procedures that public schools are subjected to. Just properly fund our schools and pay our teachers.

Ramsey Bissex
self
austin, TX

No one who values schools in texas should ever accept voucher. Shut this down. Fund schools fully and forget vouchers.

Kelly Morrison

Self, Educator

Amarillo, TX

Public funds should come with public expectations, transparency and laws designed to protect children regardless of the recipient. We have a host of laws in this state that were enacted to provide for those things, and anyone accepting public funds should abide by those laws. Education savings account will only give a financial break to the wealthy who send their children to private schools. People in poverty will still not have a choice, as the choice is really the private schools' and not the parents'. Parents of children with disabilities will forfeit all of their rights and protections under federal and state law, and public schools will continue to provide funding for the small amount of services the private school students may receive with federal funding. The private school will have no obligation to even acknowledge the students' individual needs. For all of these reasons and so many more including the eventual racial and economic segregation, I strongly oppose any voucher, education savings account or anything that doesn't carry equal responsibilities to the party who accepts public funds. I hope you will join me in this opposition.

Darlene Childs

Argyle ISD, Argyle Texas

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Darlene Childs

Molleigh Flores

Immaculate conception school Rio grande city self

Rio grande city, TX

parental school choice empowers parents, promotes education, and a custom plan for each child just like a school IEP would. It deserves our attention and consideration as we work towards creating a brighter future for our children. This is one important way to do it. I take my daughter to a private school, but what about those that don't have the financial means to do so, every child deserves equal opportunity to go to any school.

School choice is important for those that don't have access to private school, homeschooling, but want to. We can make schooling a whole community together instead of being divided.

David Stephenson

self

Richardson, TX

I'm fearful that my first attempt at submitting this may not have gone through. This is so important to me that I wanted to be 100% sure that my commits were logged so I'm potentially resubmitting it to make sure I voice my **STRONG** support of HB 1. I am disgusted by the activities and teachings that since COVID we've learned are occurring in our schools. 95% of all of it would stop if parents had the option to yank their children from these failing public schools and send them to a school which truly is teaching and not indoctrinating. I don't want to hear this BS about public funds should only go to public schools. First, I don't have any children yet I pay well over \$3,000 a year to support a public school. So just because a public school system has got away forever confiscating my money, they get to say it HAS to go to them? That's a massive conflict of interest. And the students who probably need to escape the failing public schools the worse are those whose parents can afford it the least; those in poor neighborhoods. Our legislature should be repentant of allowing them to become mouthpieces for the Teacher's Unions who have destroyed our school system and who threaten and silence the rare teacher that tries to speak out against what has been done. The Teacher's Union has shown their actions, despite what they say that their interest is **NOT** in caring for and educating our children but in using them as a weapon to get more money, more perks and more power while indoctrinating our kids with harmful philosophies. **PLEASE DON'T LET US DOWN AGAIN!**

Tonya McLouth
Self
McKinney, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and a parent of a child with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Tonya R McLouth
1008 Saffold Tr
McKinney, TX 75071

Janet Bond, Retired public school teacher

Self - retired public school teacher

Cross Plains, TX

Please listen to educators and parents. Stop pushing for education vouchers. Students & parents already have choices. Just because a school is private and charges tuition DOES NOT mean it is better. They do not have the oversight nor resources (ie special Ed, gifted) that public schools have. They aren't required to provide transportation. Teachers do not have to be certified. And private schools do not have to accept students just because they have a voucher. As you obviously know, many people don't realize this. So please stop this nonsense.

Amanda Hepburn

Self

Selma, TX

I am opposed to the establishment of education savings accounts for those who wish to send their children to private schools and am also opposed to attaching this egregious bill to certification, compensation, and health coverage of certain public school employees. This takes away needed funds from our public schools, and ties the financial compensation of public school employees to private school vouchers--that makes absolutely no sense. It is simply a gift to wealthy people, as the vouchers would not cover all the costs associated with attending private schools, thus still restricting the ability of many low-income individuals to attend private schools. Private schools are not required to accept every student who applies, unlike public schools, which must educate ALL children--this means that private schools can be discriminatory against students based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, and any other criteria the private school stipulates. There are many areas in the state where there are no private schools within reasonable driving distance, so this program would discriminate against those areas. This is a bill designed to help the elite, not the average person. I, for one, do not want my tax dollars to support the voucher program, which has a clear agenda to destroy our public schools. Please give proper compensation, without restrictions or any provisions, to the individuals who are responsible for the education of future generations.

Robert Norris

Grandparents for Public Schools

Austin, TX

I am Robert Norris, Founder and Co-lead for Grandparents for Public Schools. We strongly oppose House Bill 1. The real intent of this bill is to underfund and undermine our local public schools. Giving affluent families a \$10,500 voucher to subsidize unaccountable private schools is a violation of the Texas constitution, and the bill's overall impact will decrease much needed funding for currently cash-strapped public schools. As those of us grandparents do, most Texans oppose voucher scams such as House Bill 1. Our grandchildren, and all children, deserve to be taught by well paid educators in well funded public schools. Even with its state money sweeteners, House Bill will strip funding from public schools. We grandparents will not stand for that ! We want this bill to be voted down in this committee !

Mary Alicia Thompson

self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Alicia Thompson

Luis Reyes

Self, Educator

Channelview, TX

Put education decision making back where it belongs, in the hands of dedicated responsible parents.

Alex Kotara, Mr
Karnes City ISD
Karnes City, TX

This bill should be stripped of the clauses relating to ESAs as they would gut funding for most rural schools, and provide nothing for students across the geographical majority of the state. Students who don't have options or additional schools available to them regardless of funding. As such it comes across as a welfare bill for those who are already privileged to have those options, it just helps parents to pay for it.

The bill should languish in committee unless it can be absolutely certain that it will fail on the floor.

Linda Courtney
Self. Retired Architect
Austin, TX

I am not in favor of Education Savings Accounts or Vouchers that will diminish enrollment and drain money from our Public Schools. The Public School System serves all types of children from many backgrounds, and has many checkpoints for evaluating how each child can learn best. If parents want their child to attend a Private/Parochial School, they should pay for it themselves. I think public tax dollars and religious education should be kept separate.

Larry Thompson
self
Argyle, TX
November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Larry Thompson

Dhirendra Singh

Self

Argyle, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Dhirendra Pratap Singh

Wayne Walther

self / Retired Lutheran pastor

Lockhart, TX

I urge you to avoid funding private schools by any means or measures. Such support of Private Schools will focus on enhancing the opportunities for the most advantaged children in our state and detract from our public schools which proudly serve ALL the children in our state. I attended a very small public school in West Texas, and valued highly the education and experience of attending school with others from my community. Our sons attended public schools in Lockhart and also received the benefit of learning with all the children in our community.

Please do what you can to strengthen our public schools and supporting their teachers. Those with means may choose to attend private schools which is their right, but it should be on their own dime, not the taxpayers. Thank you.

Cynthia Montoya

Self

San Antonio, TX

I fully support HB1. Please support it. I am educator and school choice is detrimental to a students success in school.

Kelley Nance, Mrs.

Self

McKinney, TX

Allowing vouchers will be the death of public schools in Texas. The only ones who would benefit from this legislation are the wealthy who can make up the difference to pay private school tuition and the private companies that funds private schools and charter schools. Students with special needs are typically rejected from private schools. This leads to unequitable education opportunities for students in TX. The learning disabled and socioeconomically challenged students will not be given the sane learning opportunities as other students. This is unacceptable. Texas kids deserve more.

Penny Appleby

Self, retired

AUSTIN, TX

School vouchers ("education savings account") are a real threat to our public education system. They are rooted in racism and will only benefit those parents who are already sending their children to a private school. Please make sure they are never approved.

Johnny Skelton Jr, OSC USN RET

Self

Wichita Falls, TX

I wholeheartedly support this Bill. Texas has trailed the rest of the nation in education spending and that to a Texan is unacceptable. Please pass this Bill for the future of our children.

Richard Mitchell, mr

self/retired

Aransas Pass, TX

please support hb1.

thank you

Elizabeth Elliott, Self

Self

Princeton, TX

Any bill that has inclusion of passing vouchers is not in the best interest of Texas Public schools and oppose that bill.

Nancy Balfour, Mrs.

myself

San Antonio, TX

I am in favor of HB 1.

Analisa Roche, Mrs

Self - Math Tutor

Fort Worth, TX

Please vote in favor of HB 1. Disadvantaged Texans need access to better schools, and schools need competition and accountability.

Levi Wilschanski

Self - parent

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Jose Jesus Nieto, Mr.

Self

El Paso, TX

I support parental choice. Which I understand as a public policy that financially assists parents in choosing the best educational environment for their children. That allows their tax dollars to be used outside of the public school system for the benefit of all parents and children.

Elizabeth Kelton
Argyle Independent School District
Argyle, TX

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Elizabeth Kelton

John DeGennaro
Self
San Antonio, TX

I'm in favor of SB1. I believe that parents should be able to choose what's best for their children when it comes to education. I don't believe that this will hurt public schools, except for the ones that are poor performers. Most students will continue to benefit from a public-school education, because the many advantages offered by public schools, such as sports and other extra-curricular activities, are attractive to families. This is not a zero-sum game where private schools win, and public schools lose. It is a win-win for communities when all kids can flourish in the educational setting best suited for them.

MICHAEL SCHWEERS

SELF

irving, TX

THE underserved and underprivileged children of this state need an educational option: ESA's and HB 1 can provide that. I have been in private education for 46 years, and I can say that with ESA funding, we could help SO many more children in our schools. Please consider passing HB !

Sean Scott, Dr.

Mansfield ISD

Mansfield, TX

The Mansfield ISD community is opposed to any diversion of public funds away from public education to private, unregulated entities. The Board of Trustees has repeatedly reiterated this stance via interactions with our state representatives, passage of resolutions, and an October 27, 2023 letter to Representative Cook. Our Mayor, Reverend Dr. Michael Evans was a principal author of an editorial published in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram on November 1, 2023, entitled, "Texas schools don't need vouchers. They need more money, focus on education that works." 85 other local pastors cosigned this letter. We urge Chairman Buckley and the Texas House Public Education Committee to separate funding increases from vouchers. If there is data sufficient to warrant the expenditure Chairman Buckley will have no issues convincing his colleagues that vouchers are right for Texas. I have provided further context for this stance in a letter emailed to each member of the committee. Thank you all for your time and efforts in taking on the incredibly important issue of educating our students.

Rhiannon Jones

Self

Burleson, TX

I strongly oppose the use of public funds for private school tuition! Parents who choose private schools for their children should be the ones responsible for paying their tuition. They should not be entitled to public money. This provision in HB 1 undermines public schools and public school funding!

Patt Gibbs
Self
Keller, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

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It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Moishe Traxler
Chabad Outreach of Houston INC
Houston, TX

This is a MOST IMPORTANT piece of legislation, assisting families with school choice.
Please support this legislation.
It's time for Texas to step up to the plate.
Thank you so much!!!

Megan Vosters
Self, Kindergarten Teacher
Lumberton, TX

I am not in favor of vouchers under any circumstances. Tying school funding and teacher raises to it does not change my mind. Public funds belong in public schools. The end.

Sarah Leggio
Self employed
Coppell, TX

We are in favor of HB 1. We pay a crazy amount of money to fund public schools that we do not choose for our own 3 children (local elementary school rated a 4 out of 10). We cannot afford to pay those taxes AND pay for private school tuition. So we homeschool. We would like to have the option to allocate a portion of our school taxes toward educating our own children.

John Keeney
Self. Retired airline pilot.
Marquez, TX

Choice is Good! Please, let's get HB 1 done. ESA accounts are proven to work. We need to teach our future leaders usable information, not Marxism or CRT. Please, let us start preparing our children for the future, with the truth! Thank you.

Dawn White
Self
Lumberton, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Dawn White
7635 Sir Kevin
Lumberton, TX 77657
Tracestroops@gmail.com

Abe Polatsek

Self

Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Esmeralda Soto

Self teacher

Fort Worth, TX

Dear David Cook,

I live in your district in Tarrant county and belong to a Catholic parish and I have a niece and a nephew that in a few years will attend a Catholic School. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Sincerely,

Esmeralda Soto

Robert Turner

Self

WEATHERFORD, TX

I was involved in some very competitive markets before my retirement. Some folks envision companies firing actual shots across the street at each other—and I think it has happened in our state of Texas. But throughout my career, I never thought of competition in a negative way. A company without competition is not only one disturbing the antitrust laws—but one who has taken their hands from the pulse of their end-clients.

This has been a factor in American innovation—and what has made the difference between us and failed nations. Texas has an opportunity to revolutionize education—without spending another few billion. HB-1 is a commonsense answer to both parents who should be free to choose, as well as public schools, desiring to focus on different things than private schools. This “competition” is healthy and has had public schools and private ones historically understanding each other better; resulting in a better, more rounded education. The state's involvement in taking the financial edge off of some who want the best for their children but cannot afford to pay-up twice could be the catalyst for returning to the “good-old days” of reading, writing and career choices.

I urge you to take the time to consider all aspects of what HB-1 , and consider those who matter the most—those who represent our future.

Thank You.

Jackalyn Rainosek, PHD
DTP Leadership Group, LLC
Houston, TX

This is a hateful bill that Abbott keeps pushing to take money away from public schools. I DO NOT SUPPORT THIS ACTION! I AM AGAINST THE VOUCHER SYSTEM AND SUPPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS. DEFEAT ANY ACTIONS THAT TAKE MONEY AWAY FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

JUAN MARULANDA

Self
Killeen, TX

Hi Mr. Buckley,

My name is Juan Marulanda and I am a US Army veteran. I served in the military for over 9 years with 2 tours to Afghanistan while I was stationed in the 82nd Airborne Division.

I wanted to let you know that I fully support HB 1. I strongly believe in parental choice in education.

The system might think they know what's best for our children, but at the end of the day, it is us looking after the safety of our kids at all times. It is us the parents that hold their hands when they are sick in a hospital or in a clinic when they're getting their shots and our little ones are crying. It is us, the parents who are always supporting them in every single need that they have.

We are the ones that had them in our wives belly. We watched them grow. We stayed up every night making sure that they were well, breathing, making sure that they were clean and fed. The parents play the most vital role in these children. It isn't the teachers so they don't know what's best for our kids.

My wife and I have very strong believes and we raise them in such way. In a moral, and ethical life.

Please let me know how else I can help.

Thank you.

Sincere,

Juan Marulanda

Jessica Scott
Self
Houston, TX

Hello, I am a parent of a child in Spring Branch ISD and a supporter of public education. It is the duty of our elected officials to fully fund the Texas public school system. All children in Texas deserve access to a free and appropriate education. I am asking you fully fund public schools first before considering vouchers to subsidize private education with public funds. Cutting funds not only affects the students but it affects the access to school choice programs.

Susan Scott
Self. Retired educator
Snyder, TX

I am against any form of educational funding to private individuals for private/charter school education. This is public tax money that our public schools desperately need. I believe it is unconstitutional. I believe as Texas legislators you should be doing everything possible to promote our public schools and make them better. Instead you are trying to tear them down if you are FOR any form of funding for private schools. And there is NO accountability for the people that might receive these funds. There is NO plan for families who might receive these funds and then decide to change schools or be removed from them. What happens to the money? This idea is so wrong in so many ways I cannot imagine any competent legislator voting for it.

April Hughes

Self / teacher

Moran, TX

I am a public school teacher. By allowing this bill to pass out even entertaining the idea of paying the bill, you are proving that public school teachers ma'am nothing to you. This will only cause the teacher shortage to become worse. I, personally, will reevaluate my position as a teacher if this passes. Public tax dollars belong in public schools!

Ross Caraway

Self/educator

Waco, TX

I sent my child to a private school for two years. He received an outstanding education. I moved him to a public school this year, since I have the choice to already do so. He is once again receiving an outstanding education. I do know that there are issues with both public and private schools that we will continue to work to correct. But I am strongly opposed to any education savings account program. I am also strongly in favor of increasing funding for our public schools. I will continue to support both private and public schools, but please do not allow any kind of voucher system in Texas.

Kathryn Bandas

Self—teacher & parent

Corpus Christi, TX

Just stop already! It doesn't matter how many times you call a special session, the majority of citizens will not support school vouchers (or whatever you are currently calling it). Our tax dollars are intended for our public schools; please fully fund them! Parents who can afford private schools are already attending, as is their choice.

Angela Walden-Hulme

Self/ school counselor

Sweetwater, TX

Please vote against this bill. The ESA proposed is going to benefit mostly high socio-economic students while taking money from public schools. 2A school who lose 1% of their population due to vouchers, would loose approximately \$900,000. In other states where vouchers are allowed, the data is showing that students return to public schools in 1-2 years. If they come back in the middle of the year, the public school would receive no funding for that child. Another concern that I have, is that the \$1000 set aside for homeschool students alone would use up the entire budgeted amount for the ESAs. I did like the accountability piece in this bill, but it needs some changes. Education service centers need to over see the testing to ensure there is no cheating. Homeschool students receiving public funds should also be held to the same standards as public school students. I am also concerned about the \$10,500 this bill is giving. It is over 3 times the amount that the average household pays in school taxes. This is not fiscally responsible. What I fear is that most of this money will go to economically advantaged students while the economically disadvantaged students will suffer. Class sizes will grow. Programs will be cut. If college and career ready is truly a goal of Texans, then do not vote for vouchers. Vouchers need to be on a ballot for the voters to decide. They do not need to be decided by politicians that are funded by corporations and people who are not even Texans. Ask yourself, what is really the goal. ESA/Voucher programs are NOT in the best interest of Texas Children.

The proposed allotment is not enough to even give schools the same buying power they had in 2019 due to inflation. The "retention bonuses" for teachers sound nice. However, they are not funded after the first year, burdening schools to continue providing it. Bonuses cannot be paid out of public funds, so there is that too. It is not a true raise. If you want to give teachers, counselor, and librarians the raise they so badly need, change the minimum salary schedule and then fund it.

Thank you for your time,

A Texas Educator and Mother

Raven Johnson, Mrs

ESA

BEAUMONT, TX

Im a mother of 2 and I want my kids to have an opportunity at a better education and also get the help they need to achieve a better understanding of the work that is being taught my daughter is a 7th Grader and struggling in school I've reached out to her teachers and haven't received a response and I don't have no other choice for my daughter to actually go somewhere to get the education needed for her level Please Pass for ESA

Cecilia Rain

Self

Irving, TX

Parents should be able to choose

Patrick Heyl

St. Mary's Catholic High School

TAYLOR, TX

Please pass HB1!

Leigh Ann Artho

Self, mother

Argyle, TX

Hello,

I am writing to request that the state seriously consider the cost of vouchers, both to tax payers and public education. The \$500M earmarked for ESAs would be more adequately spent investing in our public schools and tailoring them to mirror private schools. If we know what education should look like, let's invest to get there. Using taxpayer dollars to pay oversight agencies is a huge waste of potential education funding.

There must be a significant increase in the basic allotment to better reflect real inflation. We are operating on a dwindling budget in the face of fast growth, competitive hiring practices, and teacher shortages. If the ESA is \$10,400, then the basic allotment must increase by more than hundreds. It is a struggle to pay for the growing list of mandates while still providing the quality programs and extracurriculars that benefit our students. Recapture takes from districts where the cost of living is high and burdens the district with paying teachers and staff in our area on a lesser budget. The highest performing districts in the state are some of the lower funded. Parents and sponsors step up to fill the gaps created by lack of funding at the state level. Yet, the state doesn't look to replicate what we are doing in underperforming districts. Instead, we get less funding and are now being overlooked in favor of vouchers, to once again address problems in other districts.

Finally, about 100 districts will be left in the cold if the formula transition grant is not renewed at or above its current amount. For Argyle ISD, it provides approximately 6% of our overall budget and we will lose \$2.4M even with the new allotments offered in this bill if it expires. Our current expenditures per student are less than the state average, and we are asking to be funded in a way that enables us to keep our award winning programs and still adequately care for our diversifying student body.

Thank you for your consideration,

Leigh Ann Artho

patricia mussey

Self

Buda, TX

As a Catholic school recipient and grandmother of 3 currently enrolled in Catholic schools, I 100% support and beseech you to support school choice. The high standard of education and character building received in Catholic schools is neither met or even pursued in parochial schools. Allowing the \$ to follow the child gives each parent the opportunity to select the best for their child. It also forces public schools to raise their standards through natural competition to provide better educators, be fiscally responsible, and deliver a high standard of education so that each child has the opportunity to achieve their highest potential!

Les Record

Self, retired

Groesbeck, TX

This bill will be vital to ensuring Texans have equitable access to quality education without government propaganda being forced on them. I strongly encourage passage.

Romina Pierce

Self

Coppell, TX

School choice will give my children the opportunity to a better education without tying us down to specific school districts, neighborhoods, property taxes.

Kurt Bilafer

self

Plano, TX

We need this, we can't be in the bottom half of a list like this - https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/education?region=TX&mc_cid=efa270a7f3&mc_eid=b91d1687f0

Deona Carmack, Mrs.

self, retired

Dallas, TX

Vouchers are a typical Republican scheme to take from the poor and give to the rich. The main beneficiaries are rich white Christians.

An Alabama judge said vouchers are “nothing more than a sham established for the purpose of financing with state funds a white school system.”

"School choice" sounds like a good deal, but even with a voucher, most Texas parents still won't be able to afford to send their child to a decent private school. Many third-rate private schools will suddenly pop up to get that voucher money, and they will not be good schools.

“With over 5.5 million students in public schools in Texas, the voucher system proposed by lawmakers would be utilized by only thousands, while causing detrimental harm to the students left in continually underfunded public schools.”-Chris Wallace

“Any voucher program will not make top-tier private schools available to a student of lower income, but rather primarily serve as a tax-funded subsidy to wealthier families who already have their children enrolled in private schools.” -Chris Wallace

“Pro-voucher political action committees spent over \$4 million in 2021-22 supporting pro-voucher Texas state legislators, and the top spender, the Texas Federation for Children PAC, is funded by former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and San Francisco billionaire Bill Oberndorf.” -Monique Black

Taking money away from public schools, many of them cash-strapped already, and funneling it to rich white people so they can send their kids to private schools is not a policy anyone should endorse.

I don't want to pay for your kid to go to a private school any more than I want to pay for my rich neighbor to join a country club. Simple as that.

Both oil tycoons Farris Wilks and Tim Dunn have previously stated they want to “tear up, tear down public education to nothing” and replace the current system with private Christian schools. Betsy DeVos has stated that vouchers will “build God’s Kingdom.” -The Texas Observer

“Data shows that vouchers benefit the wealthy who need it the least, hurt the disadvantaged the most, abuse taxpayer dollars, and erase the separation between church and state. Vouchers act like a discount for wealthy students already in private schools.” - West Texas teacher Cecily Riesenberg

So vouchers have: No financial accountability, no parent rights protections, no parent choice, no protections for students with disabilities, no testing requirements or curriculum oversight? Tell me again how this is improving failing schools and empowering parents? -@CowboySupt

"In Arizona, vouchers didn't help poor families at all. They helped families who already could afford private education." -San Antonio school superintendent Brian Woods

Arizona's voucher plan was supposed to cost \$33 million. As of now, it has ballooned up to almost a trillion, while public schools go begging. An Iowa State Auditor describes Iowa's voucher scheme as a black hole for public money with no fiscal accountability.

Paula Miller, Ms

Self. Retired educator

Lubbock, TX

No vouchers. They do not create parental choice. We all know it will defund public schools. ESA's will resegregate our society. Shame on us. Educate every child in this state. They are our future. Texas has the funds to have the excellent schools EVERY child deserves. Please let educators not educrats lead the way.

Susan Banta

Self- education, teacher retired

Austin, TX

Money for education in the state of Texas needs to be used to improve public schools which afford free public education for the majority of students in Texas. The money that Abbott is proposing for parents to use for students to attend private schools is not adequate, number one, and it has been my , vast experience doesn't draw the same quality of teachers as public schools! Our daughter received a fabulous education in a public school in San Antonio. Come on Texas, spend money on things that will support the most students !!! If Abbott has extra money to spend, how about increasing pay for teachers in public schools!

Gary Balch, School Board Member

EVERMAN ISD

Burleson, TX

Not good to give \$10,500 to vouchers & give Public School kids just a little more than they are getting now.

Shouldn't get all the extras either. We are

mandated to keep our schools safe, but NO FUNDING!!

And lastly, voucher schools are not even held accountable. So wrong.

NO TO VOUCHERS!!! TAKE CARE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS WHERE 90% OF OUR KIDS GO TO SCHOOL. YOU PEOPLE IN AUSTIN ARE JUST WRONG!! HOW ABOUT DOING THE RIGHT THING FOR ONCE!!!

Anita Woods

Self/Retired Professor in Medicine

Houston, TX

I and my family have devoted our community service to the public school system. Vouchers for private schools, regardless of the stated benefits to be given to public schools, will undermine what has been a foundation of American society for centuries. Free public school -- FOR ALL. Yes, the system is broken in many ways. Vouchers will not fix that. We as citizens are concerned that Gov. Abbott is being guided, not by reason and support for all Texans, but by the big money of Texas billionaires who are pouring money into his coffers. Enough is enough. Concentrate on our power grid. LISTEN to the people.

Nelda Bruggeman, Ms

self, RN, parent

Austin, TX

I am opposed to the school voucher program. I think it will erode the funding of public schools as well as serve only a small population of people, namely, more wealthy people. Public schools have much to offer and so many teachers I've met put their heart and soul into their jobs. They deserve more compensation. I also don't believe in "one belief fits all". We are all made beautifully and individually and we should be able to live our lives as that. Please add my support to keeping public schools funded and fully supported by our state leaders.

Cletis "Dale" Thompson

Self, self employed

SHERMAN, TX

I am very supportive of this bill. I am a grandfather with 8 grandchildren, all living in North Texas. My grandchildren attend a private school because of the education they receive there is better than the public schools offer, in my opinion. We struggle to afford the tuition but feel this investment is what is best for our kids. I feel this education savings account is what's best for the children in this great state of Texas. Our family tree is rooted here in Texas going back over 80 years and we will always be Texans.

Thank you

Dale Thompson

Christi Caulfield
Self
Friendswood, TX

The talk of vouchers **MUST STOP**. It is clear this is not the direction Texans want to go. Address the real issues facing our public schools and **VOTE NO** on any bill that includes vouchers.

Alan Kellerman, Dr
Self
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Eric Perraud

Self

Austin, TX

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Eric Perraud

Francisco Vizcarra, Me

Self

Edinburg, TX

School choice must be an option for each parent and be able to decide for the future of our kids.

Mary James

Self/teacher

Wylie, TX

As a public educator and special education teacher, I am appalled that the state is continuing to try to push their voucher legislation instead of going ahead and funding the public education that the people of Texas want. I work with students and families of special education students every day and the best place for our special education. Students to receive their education is through public education with public education dollars. Do not give our tax dollars to a voucher program, fund our schools and our students now. Holding our education dollars hostage for a program that is wanted by a hand view of people in the state of Texas is completely ridiculous. it is unconstitutional to continue to try and not fund public education, as well as not funding our special education programs The fact that it is taking 4 legislative sessions in order to even try to get this. Build a pass, after multiple times it has not passed and it's not what the people want, it's time to do away. With this bill. the hardship that teachers and students are going through due to government lack of funding is completely ridiculous. with company's moving from all over the country to Texas. It is a embarrassment that our education system isn't stronger and that our public education system continues to be. Underfunded, compared to other states across the nation..

Kody Carlton, Mr.

Self / carpenter

Amarillo, TX

I am opposed to the establishment of education savings accounts for those who wish to send their children to private schools (vouchers) and am also opposed to attaching this egregious bill to certification, compensation, and health coverage of certain public school employees. This takes away needed funds from our public schools, and ties the financial compensation of public school employees to private school vouchers--that makes absolutely no sense. It is simply a gift to wealthy people, as the vouchers would not cover all the costs associated with attending private schools, thus still restricting the ability of many low-income individuals to attend private schools. Private schools are not required to accept every student who applies, unlike public schools, which must educate ALL children--this means that private schools can be discriminatory against students based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, and any other criteria the private school stipulates. There are many areas in the state where there are no private schools within reasonable driving distance, so this program would discriminate against those areas. This is a bill designed to help the elite, not the average person. I, for one, do not want my tax dollars to support the voucher program, which has a clear agenda to destroy our public schools. Please give proper compensation, without restrictions or any provisions, to the individuals who are responsible for the education of future generations. Public education is at the heart of any society and in essential for our great state.

Jennifer Roberts

Self teacher

Longview, TX

I do not support the education savings program. Please understand how this will create problems in public schools including some socio-economic and racial boundaries. Our students and teachers in public schools deserve your attention. You are only creating problems for public schools with vouchers, not helping.

Linda Lorenzo

self

McKinney, TX

Public dollars need to be kept in public schools. Why should my tax payer dollars fund private schools? If parents choose to put their child in a private school then it is their responsibility to pay for that. No vouchers.

Michael Bolesta, Dr

self, retired

Addison, TX

I would voice my support for HB1. For the future of our communities and state, empowering parents to provide the best education of their children. Please pass this bill.

Casey Hubbard

Self

Coppell, TX

Hello, my name is Casey Hubbard and I am a proud second-generation special education teacher and advocate for students with disabilities. I am extremely concerned about the school voucher or education savings account program and the impact that it will have on students with disabilities. This bill discriminates against students with disabilities as private schools do not have to follow IDEA. Currently, charter and private schools have the same accountability in place to offer a FAPE. There is no accountability for teachers to be certified to teach disabilities. This especially discriminates against students with more significant disabilities. In the Dallas area there are only 2-3 private schools that support students with significant cognitive disabilities. These schools do not have to follow the law, they do not have the same resources, they can deny entry and remove students with disabilities. This voucher bill takes away funding to students with disabilities who desperately need the support. I am a product of a private school K-12 education but my parents paid the tuition and taxes to the school district. As a public school special education teacher, they never complained about paying for taxes when I was not enrolled in public school. We must build great schools that support all students and taking away funding will be a detriment to the students who need it the most.

Trina Weaver

Self Teacher

Magnolia, TX

My comments are that Teachers need better pay, Students need to not be tested as much as they currently are tested, 16 or more major test a year, and finally Vouchers will destroy the public school system and put thousands of educators out of work.

Stephen Butler

self

Trophy Club, TX

Inner city, low income and special needs children deserve the right to choose the best educational environment to meet their needs. It is time for Texas to move forward and provide school choice. Thirty one other states have already made school choice available, and there is substantial evidence showing the positive benefits to students of all incomes, races, ethnicities and academic abilities.

Joel Moore, Mr

Self

Savoy, TX

This is a rare opportunity to support the children of Texas and shut out the big money of unions and organizations that have no interest in our schools! Please pass HB1 and allow the parents to choose the system that best serves their children before they're forced to shutdown the poor current system!

Jay Hiller

self, yoga instructor

Austin, TX

I've been told this is a voucher bill. I am unequivocally opposed to weakening public schools with vouchers. Defunding public schools is a great disservice to students and their families.

wendy polo

Argyle isd

argyle, TX

NOVEMBER 8, 2023 UPDATE

TAKE ACTION ARGYLE

Written Testimony Script (copy and paste)
for the Texas Public Education Committee

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Wendy Polo

Amy Martin

Self

Dallas, TX

Dear Members of the Texas House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 1 (HB 1), which aims to provide parents with greater educational choice and empower them to make the best decisions for their children's education. As a hardworking, honest taxpayer in the state of Texas, I believe that my tax dollars should be directed towards my child's education in a way that best meets their unique needs and aspirations. I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of HB 1 for the following reasons:

Empowering Parents: HB 1 empowers parents like me to take an active role in shaping our children's education. It recognizes that parents are in the best position to understand our children's individual learning styles and needs, and we should have the freedom to choose the educational environment that aligns with those needs.

Increased Accountability: School choice programs introduce healthy competition into the education system, which in turn encourages schools to improve their performance. When parents have options, schools are motivated to excel and provide the highest quality education to attract and retain students.

Tailored Education: Every child is unique, and what works for one may not work for another. HB 1 allows us to explore educational options beyond the traditional public school system, ensuring that our children receive a tailored education that nurtures their strengths and addresses their weaknesses.

Optimizing Tax Dollars: As a responsible taxpayer, I want to see my hard-earned money put to the best use. School choice enables tax dollars to follow the student, ensuring that funding supports the education they receive, rather than being allocated to a one-size-fits-all system that may not meet their needs effectively.

Expanded Opportunities: By supporting HB 1, you will help provide opportunities for families who may not have the financial means to access alternative educational options. School choice can bridge the gap, offering greater equity in education.

In the face of the challenges our public education system faces, it is imperative that we adapt and innovate to meet the diverse needs of our children. I firmly believe that HB 1 is a step in the right direction, and I ask you to please vote in favor of this crucial legislation. It is an investment in the future of our children and our state's educational system.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my views. I trust that you will make the decision that best serves the interests of Texas students and their families. Your support for HB 1 will help ensure that the dreams and aspirations of our children are not bound by the limitations of a one-size-fits-all system.

David Wright, Mr

Self

Mansfield, TX

I am voucher's. It with will take money away from the local public school. The Texas is already an embarrassment at close to the bottom of funding of the 50 states and you are want to make harder.

Some of these measures are just enticements to get vouchers .

Emilie Allen

Self

Dallas, TX

Based on the need for an additional special session, perhaps the decision related to educational savings accounts/vouchers should be put on the ballot for the people of Texas to decide. Don't be afraid. You all say that "the people" of Texas want this or that. Let's find out!

Jennifer Smart

Self / teacher

Hearne, TX

I oppose vouchers/education savings accounts. For years, Texas legislators have refused things like teacher raises and affordable public school employee health coverage with the excuse of having no long term funding. Now there will be enough funding to give away \$8k per student who chooses private schooling? Every year? Parents will have no accountability on how that money is spent? Private schools will have no accountability on how that student is educated? As a public school teacher my district is accountable for every dollar and every student.

I also am against the strong-arm tactics that Governor Abbott is using to force these bills. Where is democracy? Please do not let his threats and autocratic behavior force this bill into law.

Meghan Dougherty

self, educator

Austin, TX

Please, no vouchers!

These will only benefit already well-off families who can afford to pay for private school (as the vouchers can't possibly cover all the costs of tuition), and further deplete resources for public education. It would be better to focus on better work conditions for teachers, to stem the tide of qualified, experienced teachers leaving the profession. Better pay, reduce class sizes, reduce number of classes taught (many schools require teachers to teach 6 out of 8, with only 2 planning periods. More planning time would go a lonnnnggg way to making the job more manageable). Also, more mental health supports for students - every school should have a mental health professional, given the increasing rates of mental illness among our students.

Make education a public good again! I am willing to pay taxes for schools, even though I don't have children, because I know an educated society will benefit my community. I will pay for a fire department, even though my house has never caught fire, I will pay for road improvements, even if I never drive those roads, because what helps part of the community helps us all. Why are we trying to privatize a system that has such dire consequences for our society as a whole? Our children's employment prospects, health, future earnings, stability, and our society's safety, economic growth, and productivity all hinge on a strong education system. A well educated society creates less crime, less unemployment, less homelessness, more adaptability to changes, more entrepreneurship, a stronger workforce.

Vouchers will benefit a small minority of students, while hurting public education overall, which will ultimately hurt our whole society in the long run.

Anita Gumbert

self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Anita Gumbert

Sandra Woods, MS

Self - Texas Teacher 33 Years

Darrouzett, TX

PLEASE stop penalizing long-time, highly qualified and fully certified Texas teachers with proven track records that retired due to a family emergency. Schools won't hire us full-time because of the TRS penalty and instead are using The District of Innovation opt to pull anyone in with little or no college, no training, no experience to our classrooms while there are highly qualified teachers desiring to work full time and use their abilities to strengthen the learning and lives of Texas public school children. This system is counter-productive. PLEASE, do something about this...let us (the teachers pay the penalty) or put something in place where schools can recover this penalty. Certification means NOTHING for schools that implement the District of Innovation option...they don't even attempt to find certified and seasoned, experienced teachers for their vacancies.

Tina Lacey
Educators
Clarendon, TX

NO VOUCHERS of any kind!!!!!!!

Ezzard Castillo, Mr.
River City Christian School (RCCS)
Floresville, TX

I Ezzard Castillo am in favor of HB1 and respectfully ask the members of this body to vote in favor of passing HB 1. This bill will provide all families of Texas an equitable opportunity to educate their child especially those who are desperately in need of a different alternative then the traditional schools settings. The majority of the students attending and succeeding at the school I oversee have failed miserably at nearly every avenue that's Texas education has to offer. During my tenure I regularly receive inquiries from other states because they have run out of option in their state and are desperately seeking a solution. Several have actually moved to Texas so their child can attend RCCS. With the 28 yrs of gain knowledge and experience, RCCS is producing graduates who are college bound and providing career opportunities for others, The majority of graduates who achieve this type of success are students of color, low income and/or LD. Just this week two of our seniors of color were accepted at Oral Roberts University (took dual credit course) were each awarded a \$19,000 scholarship. Last year one student a senior who had a severe speech challenge went through a rigorous interview process and out of 200 applicants was one of 20 students accepted into the Texas A&M program. Several of our current high school students are on a path to receive Program management Certification , kitchen managers certification, and food handlers license to name a few. It is my contention that every student can learn. The key is having the "right" environment for them. For the majority of students the main traditional settings work and most parents are satisfied however, for that group that needs a different approach parents need choice. Every parent and child should receive an equitable opportunity to receive the education that works for them. Texas is great because Texas allows for difference,. Texas is great because Texas thrives on healthy competition, Texas is great because Texas empowers family! Empowering the parents to have a choice will ensure the ingredients to make Texas education the envy of the nation. I urge and prayerfully ask every member of the Texas House to do what's best for all the children of Texas and vote yes to HB1. God Bless Texas and each member of the Texas legislature. Respectfully Ezzard Castillo father of Tiffany Castillo, RCCS Class of 2008

Brenda Powers, Mrs.
Self
Grand Prairie, TX

Please allow parents to choose the best educational environment for our children. Those of us who want a Catholic/private environment for our children are paying for their education twice. Please allow our tax money to actually help our children. My parents made huge sacrifices to send me and my siblings to Catholic schools, and my husband and I have done the same for our children, because it is that important to us. But it doesn't seem right that our tax money can't be used for the schools our children attend. Thank you for your consideration!

Lisa Chambers
Self- I am an educator
Dublin, TX

This has got to stop!
Protect public education!
Protect the future of tomorrow!
Say NO to vouchers and/or ESA'S!!!!

Adrienne Sullivan

Self / Parent / Engineer

Hurst, TX

I am opposed to HB1. I have 3 children in the public education system in Texas. One currently receives Special Education services as part of IDEA. I am worried this change would weaken public schools and services for those with disabilities would suffer worse than they already are since private schools would not be required to provide services under IDEA. Public schools need support, and Special Education and those with disabilities should be considered.

Joey Hughes

Self, technician

Dallas, TX

I am dropping this card to state my opposition of this bill.

Tara Langley

Self--educator and parent

VILLAGE MILLS, TX

Allowing education savings accounts in any form will cripple rural Texas schools. It will hurt more children than it benefits. Texas public schools have a responsibility to educate every child who walks in the door without the option of denial if they live inside the district. This is not the case with private schools. The lack of curriculum requirements and state testing are another factor that make it unfair for tax money to go to private institutions. There is not a way to level the playing field for Texas public schools and the students will be the ones to pay the price. This is a horrendous example of sacrificing the majority to benefit the few. The wealthy families who can afford private schools do not need the vouchers. Our teachers will leave at even higher rates if this passes. It will create an enormous problem for our future. As an educator, I am already underpaid and underworked. Vouchers will run the few good teachers left completely into the ground. Please support the small, rural ,economically disadvantaged schools and leave the small amount of funding we do receive from tax revenue alone!

Paula Hanna

Self-homemaker

Belton, TX

I support this bill. Parents are a child's first educator and they have a right to choose the best education for their child. The money should follow the child. The fact that rural schools fear losing their "captive audience" makes me believe their "product" is not competitive. They can say private schools don't have to meet same standards, but those standards are controlled by educational administrators and teachers have long been known to "teach to the test" and kids are still failing! A true evaluation of private schools is to look at results - how many of their graduates are accepted to college or have careers in the military, etc?? And it is not true that all private schools serve only the brightest and best and leave the less capable to public schools. Catholic schools in particular have a great track record of educating the impoverished, minorities, etc. So return control to the parents- where it rightly belongs. Thank you.

Thomas Meeker

Self

Cibolo, TX

I strongly support this bill and want it passed. It will improve Texas' citizens educational options.

Amy Carlson
Self
San Antonio, TX

Thank you for your consideration. My 12 year old son developed a chronic health condition 2 years ago. It has left him unable to walk at times or in so much pain he has been unable to attend school. He has a brilliant mind and always loved school, his body will just not cooperate.

We contacted several private schools and charter schools and neither would accommodate him.

A bill like this does not take into account everyone, my child would never be able to use vouchers. It takes money away from the public school that is able to help my son get an education.

Laura Riddle
Self
Kountze, TX

Teachers need a raise! We cannot support our families on what we are getting paid. Please help!

Amanda Mullens
Self
Graham, TX

As a public school teacher, a vote for HB 1 is a vote against Texas School Children. These students are counting on you to make the best decision for them. Don't fail the students by supporting a bill that includes ANY form of voucher.

Rachel Minchen, Mrs.
self, educator
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Alison Henochowicz, Mrs.

Self

Plano, TX

WDear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Alison Henochowicz

Suzanne Bazarian

Self

Austin, TX

the proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement.

Eloisa Moreno

Self

El Paso, TX

I support this bill

Cynthia Sandusky

Self

Flower Mound, TX

Private schools do not have to admit children with special needs, nor have they typically provided money and resources to do so. Public schools do.

Richard Bauer

NA

San Antonio, TX

The quality of our education for our young can never be compromised – – this bill represents an effort to support this focus!!

Todd Buckingham, Mr

self

San Antonio, TX

Please support HB 1.

Kristen Bell, Educator, parent

Self

Argyle, TX

I am an educator with 14 years of experience who was recognized as a teacher of the year by both my district and region. I left the classroom last year due to the untenable workload and the amount of expectations that are continually placed on teachers, especially increased testing requirements, without adequate pay. I appreciate many provisions in this bill, especially those that pay teachers more and allow shifts in workflow so that teachers can complete their work during the day. These must be funded, though, and this bill does not do enough to provide the necessary funding. In addition, there is incredible irony in creating a bill to support public school teachers, but also taking away money that could support them through allotments. While I understand this is a separate pot of money, the separate pot could have been used for public education. I will never support allotments for schools that do not have to provide the same services, abide by the same measures of accountability, and do not have to identify solutions for all students. I would guess private and parochial schools likewise do not want these restrictions placed on them. In addition, the amount for the allotment will not allow low-income families to take advantage of quality educational alternatives if those are needed, as it is not enough to pay for most private institutions. There is a reason that many citizens and legislators in rural and lower income urban areas do not support the allotment provisions — in practice, it will help families in suburban and higher-income areas who are choosing alternative education for their children, often when there is a high-performing school nearby. Our public education system and neighborhood schools are the bedrock of our societal progress and democracy — kids learn so many things about how to work with others, work within appropriate boundaries, respect authority, and love and respect all humans, especially those with disabilities, which is beautiful growth I have seen in this generation of students. I have many friends who are Republicans, and I generally lean Republican, and this is the one provision I have ever seen where they are willing to go against the Republican grain not to support. This is a huge moment that could change the trajectory for public education, and I hope you will stand up to do what is right for all Texans. Vote no for the allotment, or require that any allotment holds public schools to the same standard as private schools — because, as written, there is very little choice for many Texas students, and there is real risk for our public school system which continues to be asked to do more with less, to the detriment of all Texas children.

Hershel Gross

self

Houston, TX

am writing to express my wholehearted support for the proposed adoption of education savings accounts, commonly known as school vouchers, in Texas. As a parent, I firmly believe that empowering families with the ability to choose the most suitable educational options for their children is crucial in fostering a robust and diverse learning environment.

The introduction of education savings accounts in our state not only signifies a crucial step towards educational equity but also provides families with the freedom to access a wide array of educational choices that best align with their children's needs. This empowerment is central to ensuring that every student receives a quality education tailored to their individual learning requirements.

The implementation of school voucher programs will allow us to harness the benefits observed in various educational systems, offering increased access and diversity in educational opportunities while remaining true to the values and principles of our state.

It's crucial to acknowledge that school vouchers have the potential to promote healthy competition, innovation, and efficiency in our educational system. This, in turn, can enhance the quality of education for all students, irrespective of their background or socio-economic status.

I strongly urge you to consider and support the implementation of education savings accounts in Texas, recognizing the significant positive impact it could have on our educational landscape.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I remain eager and committed to supporting initiatives that prioritize the educational well-being of our students.

Kristi Lindemann, Reading Specialist

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Kristi Lindemann

Cynthia Roberts

Self, accounting mgr and former finance mgr and procurement officer

Duncanville, TX

I am a 1995 graduate of Duncanville high school. I was homeschooled as a sophomore and went to the religious based "School of Tommorrow" I didn't learn squat that year. I returned to DHS the next year and my full set of AP classes. I went on to work in education and government. I was secretary to the vo-tech counselor at DHS as a Senior and worked as a mentor/Finance Manager at Guthrie Job Corps Center. The deregulation of education and lack of standards for "charter" schools affect the next generation. I want the next generation learning Blooms Taxonomy, critical thinking and civics. "Charter" or "private" schools don't have to accept anyone with disabilities. They shouldnt get educational funds if they don't educate all. This fact is heartbreaking as my little brother had early speech issues, but later went on to graduate Magna cum laude at UT Law with an 800 math SAT. We have seen the results of vouchers in other states. Private schools raise their tuition to match the cost of the voucher, because they can. Private schools pay less and often have less qualified "teachers." They cater to donors and clientele and not their average students. I don't want a more uneducated populus. My elected officials shouldn't want this either. No way, no how. I do have several asks. Increase funding to the schools we have. Send districts the state money they are owed timely when you raise taxes. Be fiscally responsible with taxpayer funds instead of holding these bogus and wasteful special sessions. Respectfully, a pissed off Duncanville High School Alum and Texan

Allan Mercado, Dr.

Self

Edinburg, TX

This will help countless families in our practice who need choices for school for their children due to their conditions. I believe that competition for who delivers good education proven by results with move Texas forward in the future. Giving parents a big part of where to educate their children will empower them to be proactive in their children's educational needs.

Erica Knight

Myself

Duncanville, TX

I am in hopes that this is to talk about how we are going to close the funding gap for funding public schools. School vouchers leave poor children left behind and will destroy the number of schools that we have in the state. There are children who are in lower income areas are already being harmed in their education since they don't have funding for teachers and supplies. Please actually help our children in this state and don't pass a voucher system that has no proof to work anywhere else. It is your duty as a the government to ensure our children are educated about the world around them.

Rebecca Canfield

Self

Nacogdoches, TX

Do not approve vouchers. This will not benefit the state of Texas as we fight to prepare our future citizens. Instead of giving money to other schools, let's find and support the schools we do have. Public schools are the backbone of rural Texas communities and should be the pride of Texas. Support public schools (and the students and educators of Texas) instead of funneling money out.

The 1836 Texas Declaration of Independence's 4th grievance: It has failed to establish any public system of education"... Those great men knew the value of a public system of education - not a private corporation controlled by wealthy CEOs that doesn't have to follow the same standards of public schools.

Jacquelyn Rosales

Self

San Antonio, TX

Vouchers are not be the optimal solution for improving student performance in education. Instead, they will inadvertently harm the very individuals they aim to assist by enabling for-profit schools to proliferate, leading to tuition hikes in private schools, reduced funding for public schools, and imposing substantial tax increases on taxpayers. No to vouchers is a NO to tax gouging the middle class.

Deborah Watson

Myself

Aransas Pass, TX

Vouchers are terrible for Texas public schools, and I am beyond tired of a handful of billionaires setting the legislative agenda for the entire state. Gov. Abbott needs to get a backbone and do what is right, not what he is bullied into pushing on those of us who know there are other, MUCH more important priorities than turning Texas into a christofascist state. NO VOUCHERS. ENOUGH ALREADY.

Wayne Gross

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Joseph Wachsman

Self

Dallas, TX

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Please please support this bill!! We really need it

Mara LaViola, Mrs.

Self

Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As parent of a student with numerous disabilities and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned with this bill and its negative impact on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts would divert crucial public funds and resources away from public schools, and negatively impact the provision of an appropriate education to students with disabilities. Private schools, not only lack accountability because they do not have to adhere to any of the protections afforded parents and students under federal educational statutes, they also fail to have specialized programs that meet the diverse learning needs of disabled students, they deny admission or fail to provide adequate supports to disabled students, and have no demonstrated positive effect on the academic and social growth. Currently, there are only 62 private schools in the entire state, their tuitions are far greater than the amount of any voucher proposed, and will only benefit the families who already can afford to utilize them.

IDEA already has a mechanism for private placement. In fact, my son is placed in a private school in Massachusetts because there was no private or public school in the entire state that could meet his needs.

I am also gravely concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)). It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Placing students away from their families and in SSLC's that have no history of appropriately educating students is alarming; especially when these institutions have been under federal investigation by the US Department of Justice for unthinkable harms to disabled residents.

Furthermore, this is not fiscally sound policy. This would lead to a significant financial burden to the state. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program. If this is perceived as a viable option, then perhaps the \$28,000 per month allotted to residents of SSLC's should be given to school district's to help prevent such institutionalization by revising our current public school funding by needed supports and services rather than by setting.

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Mara LaViola
2723 Trail of the Madrones
Austin, Texas 78746
972-358-8230

Mindel Wachsman

Self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

LeighAnn Tamplen, Dr.

Mansfield ISD

Midlothian, TX

Please consider separating the ESA from the school funding bill. School funding needs to be based on average enrollment instead of average daily attendance.

Katherine Kendrick

Self

Pasadena, TX

I want the legislature to vote no on any bill relating to school vouchers. Please vote yes to teacher pay raises, proper funding of our schools, and less testing. Thank you.

Tammy Villasenor

Self-retired

San Antonio, TX

As a dedicated Texas mother, I support parental choice! Parental choice, also known as "school choice," is a public policy that financially assists parents in choosing the best educational environment for their children by allowing their tax dollars to be used outside of the public school system.

Robert Byrd

self, musician, teacher, ATPE

Fort Worth, TX

Public money belongs in public schools! Vote NO on any "education savings account" or voucher-like program.

Jessica Higgins

Self. PE teacher

Clyde, TX

I am AGAINST. The voucher only helps the wealthy. We need public schools to be well funded and teacher raises.

Mika Damron

Self

Baird, TX

Texas public schools are the fabric of our beautiful state. Children in Texas deserve for their public schools to be fully funded. Educators and Teachers in Texas public schools deserve higher pay and to work in fully funded schools without strings tied to education savings accounts or school vouchers that would be damaging to our beloved Texas public schools. Vouchers are inequitable and would take away from the educational environment that ALL CHILDREN in Texas public schools deserve.

Craig Smith

Self

Round Rock, TX

Honorable Members of the Education Committee,

Again, another session has been called & I find myself prevailing upon you to say “NO” to vouchers, ESAs or anything disguised as such AND absolutely no deals. My reasons to say “NO” are to protect all public school students.

1. This week Texas is listed in the top 5 states for graduation rates!! This should be a testament that public schools are doing something correctly. 2. Vouchers do not help our students academically: <https://news.stanford.edu/2017/02/28/vouchers-not-improve-student-achievement-stanford-researcher-finds/> 3. Vouchers do more harm than good: <https://time.com/6272666/school-voucher-programs-hurt-students/> 4. While Texas is not Arizona, it was found that, instead of the \$60 million quoted to taxpayers in Arizona, it has been found that the cost exceeds the projected amount. Vouchers could cost \$1 billion a year | Arizona Capitol Times (azcapitoltimes.com) 5. In my opinion, vouchers/ESAs are a type of reverse segregation because private schools and some charter schools SELECT their student body. When you select only the brightest and those without behavior problems it seems as if private schools do a better job. The hard job is done by public school teachers that teach a multitude of abilities, while addressing any behavioral problems that arise in a classroom that is at its maximum number of students. 6. I have not seen any accountability measures addressed. Parents that have students in the public school system can address concerns to the teacher, principal, superintendent, or the school board. The school board is composed of elected people within the school district and is a reflection of the school populace that are taxpayers.

Lindsey Oconnor

Self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Lindsey oconnor

Jessica Higgins

Self.

Clyde, TX

For clarification I am against the vouchers but FOR Hb1!

Bonnie Law

Self

Austin, TX

I'm a mom of four kids who are in public school. We have had great teachers and opportunities through our school system. I am confused why vouchers are once again being discussed in another special session. Please hold strong to the already established results that vouchers (education savings accounts) are not good for our children and the public schools they attend. This Money comes from taxpayers and there should be accountability with that money to ensure children are getting a fair and proper education. I haven't seen any proof of that in previous discussions. Next, I hear the term parent choice coined but I haven't seen proof that children are ensured entrance into the private schools parents choose. Private schools are private and not accountable to meet education standards and provide proper support for students with disabilities. Voucher type programs are not what we should focus our efforts on. Let's instead support and build up our public schools with the much needed increase in funding per student and increase in teacher pay. Also please don't have any more special sessions that cost more taxpayer money. Please use that in a productive way to support our public schools instead. Thank you for your time.

Jesus Perez
ATPE
Mission, TX

TEACHERS NEED A SUBSTANTIAL PAY RAISE!!! WE CAN ABD READY TO WALK OUT IF NEED BE!! NO VOUCHERS!!

Lauren Ehrlich
Self, teacher
1109 W Lake Dr, TX

The fact speak for themselves. Public schools welcome every child, create communities, provide educational programming and services for students with disabilities, are held accountable, to comply with the state and federal laws. Private/parochial schools pick & choose their students, are ill-equipped to serve students with diverse learning needs and disabilities, are not governed by representatives elected by the public and are not hold accountable for student academic outcomes or responsible spending. Therefore, diverting funds from public schools and giving that money to a private schools, is irresponsible, inequitable way to spend taxpayers' money and is an invitation for corruption, misuse, and fraud. No vouchers/educational savings accounts in any form in Texas. Keep public funds in our communities' public schools and help ensure a quality education for all Texas children.

Jacqueline Lousier Austin
Teacher
San Antonio, TX

I am strongly opposed to vouchers in any form. It is not only unnecessary, but it goes against the fabric of our constitution by weakening our public schools. As a lifelong educator I can tell you I am watching and will vote accordingly. It is clear the people of texas do not want this. Stop cow-towing to radical billionaires and do your sworn duty to represent our best interests.

Sharon Tuttle
Self
Montgomery, TX

Parents who are trying to ensure that children with special needs like ADHD need vouchers to help them afford private schools which have smaller class sizes and more individualized attention. Parents shouldn't have to go broke trying to provide for their children. Even dual working parents are stretched to the limit and beyond.

Philip Sanders
Katy ISD
Katy, TX

No ESAs or vouchers in Texas. Private schools can select their students. Public schools take all students. Private schools discriminate against poor and economic disadvantaged students. ESAs will subsidize the rich that already send their kids to private schools. Texas public schools are drastically underfunded and this bill will do little to alleviate the lack of funding.

The governor is withholding public education funding and teacher raises until the legislature passes school choice. This extortion and is illegal. He has overstepped the boundaries of his role and should be held accountable.

Russell Phillips, Dr.
Self/ Family Practice Physician
Keller, TX

Please move this bill forward From committee to the full house for a vote. While public education serves many students well, there should be options for those who do not thrive in the public school arena to get an education the better fits their special needs or learning style.

Leslie Harvin

Self

Austin, TX

OPPOSE. please do not support this bill.

Dorothy Remmers

Self, Retired

Three Rivers, TX

Parents should have the right to send their kids to whatever school they choose! Vote "YES" for school vouchers to send Texas children to whatever school their parent wants including the choice to send them to Private Christian school education.

david kaminski

self retired

Hockley, TX

I am asking that the committee revise the language regarding a student who does not pass the STAAR or norm referenced test for 2 years in a row. Current language says the student returns to public education. Why should public education be forced to pick up the pieces after a student does not perform at a private or homeschool. I recommend revising the language to state that the Texas Legislature will take ownership of the student if they do not perform for 2 years in a row.

Paul Uttley

Self

Stratford, TX

Much needed funding for public schools needs to be separated from vouchers. YOU have a constitutional requirement to adequately fund public schools. Vouchers are not conservative (I am an educator who is a conservative). The lack of accountability and oversight related to vouchers is not understandable and will result in frivolous spending.

Bobby Torres, Mr

Self

San Antonio, TX

We fully support school choice! Thank you.

Kristina Del Pino

Self, Senior Client Success Manager

Austin, TX

As a parent and PTA member of an AISD student at Hill Elementary School, I oppose the passing of HB 1. Thank you.

Nina Lawson

self/broker

Windcrest, TX

I am in support of HB 1. I have two daughters that I would like to continue to see them be able to attend a good school. Times are tough and not all can afford to live in great school districts for one reason or another. I believe I should be able to use my tax money on my child for their private school education.

Halley Smith
Self
Round Rock, TX

- 1) Vouchers do not cover the full cost of private schools
- 2) Areas with the poorer schools (inner city & rural) don't have private school options
- 3) Private schools do not have to accept students with disabilities (even common conditions like asthma, allergies & diabetes) or provide accommodations for those students with special education needs
- 4) Private schools are not required to provide transportation
- 5) Private schools do not provide free or reduced lunch (60% of public school students receive free/reduced meals)
- 6) Private schools do not have same level of accountability or consequences

Rachel Burgess
Self
Weatherford, TX

Education is the transmission of civilization- Will Durant. Fully funded public education is imperative to our future. As such, it should be treated with the utmost respect. Teachers deserve respect in the form of a pay raise and a voice in decisions. Students deserve a future unburdened with meaningless tests. Students deserve fully funded schools that have the ability to meet their differences.

No vouchers.
Pay raise for teachers.

Rebecca Hughes
Self
FORT WORTH, TX

The Texas Constitution in Article 7, Section 1 states "It shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provisions for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of Public Free Schools." The Texas Constitution is clear the State must provide funding for Public Free Schools. There is no mention of providing funding for Private schools or Private Religious Schools or homeschools. Yet for decades the Texas Legislature has been bleeding our Public Free Schools dry. There are billions of dollars available to give Texas the best Public Free Schools in the Country but the guardians of the funds refuse to adequately provide for our Texas Public Schools. Texas is one of the richest States but is in the bottom of providing funding for our Public Free School system. Why does the Texas legislators continue to support a poorly educated population due to inadequate funding? There are 5.4 million public schoolchildren in Texas who depend on their legislators to care about their educational needs.

Yet their voices are not heard because those with the wealth in Texas demand Public Education be defunded and destroyed. Those with the money have stated that the vouchers are intended to end Public Education and only teach the donor's religious ideology. Those with the wealth have bought enough elected officials to accomplish their mission perhaps in this 4th Session.

The question is how can legislators and the governor subsidize private schools while undermining Public Schools. Vouchers undermine the trust in Public Education. Vouchers destroy the investment we should be making in Public Education. Vouchers have no strings. The taxpayers' money has no accountable in the pockets of private and religious schools. Vouchers are a scam just another way to take from ordinary Texans and give to the wealthy class. Public taxpayers should "own" whatever the public give to Private and Religious schools. It is our money they are using to educate a select group of Texas children.

In the conclusion HB1 School Choice Vouchers are wrong for Texas. Vouchers will segregate Texas children according to race, class, and physical ability. There should be NO deals with Public School funding and vouchers. School vouchers undermine the foundation of Texas Public Schools and will have detrimental effects on our students future in the workforce.

shterna Dubrawsky, Ms.
Chabad of Dallas
Dallas, TX

We Support School Choice! it would benefit us tremendously.

Teresa Lopez
Cornerstone Church School Choice
San Antonio, TX

Requesting your support for school choice. I cannot afford to send my children to a private school without the financial support this bill would provide.

Karen Carroll, Ms.
Self, educator
Stratford, TX

Thank you for considering pay increases but please separate vouchers from public school funding.

Michael Mosesson
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on
Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings
Account program. Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Joseph Falsone
Self
MdGregor, TX

Parents are the ones responsible for ensure the best possible education for their children. Those who live in impoverished areas are not able to afford the cost of private schools. By establishing ESA with preference for lower income families, these parents gain access to a better life for the children and their posterity.

Roberta Tidwell
Special education
Bedford, TX

I am a Special Education teacher and my pay increase this year was \$56 per month - I have been teaching for 16 years...The expectations and limited funding for me staff to effectively education ALL students creating teacher burn out like I have never seen in my career. I am a seasoned teacher holding three awards from two districts. My students are my client and I am not only a teacher, but I listen, I deal with behaviors, I provide food, supplies and clothing at tunes. I invite people openly to walk in my shoes. The STAAR test is way out of line and creates undo stress on students, teachers, parents. I would bet private school students would not pass STAAR...and our creativity to teach is gone to passing tests. PLEASE change what we are doing and provide us with a living and students with education that expands their minds.

Cynthia Vasquez
self
SAN ANTONIO, TX

I support this bill.

Patricia Cecconi, Md
Self
San antonio, TX

To whom it may concern,

I would like to voice our family's support for HB1. My children have nearly aged out of the private schools system so we have nothing personally to gain from this. After experiencing some challenges at our local public schools, both of my boys have greatly benefited from going to small Catholic schools. Over the past 18 years of going to different parishes for sporting events and cyo games, I have seen how much young families living in poor areas have had to sacrifice to send their kids to parochial schools in the hopes of getting them a better education. These parents are barely making ends meet (especially nowadays) as it is. These little Catholic schools which have added stability and a moral base to their neighborhoods are also struggling. Schools like St. James, St John Bosco, etc are barely holding on. Do you think these neighborhoods will be improved when these schools have to close?

Also it seems unfair that these poor families especially get no benefit from their own tax dollars to educate their kids when they choose a parochial education. Did you know that in Canada, Parochial schools are just another school the parents can choose? What would be wrong with allowing families (especially struggling families) the option of using part of the money allotted to educate their children at a school of their choice.

When we bought our first home, we started paying property taxes which went in part to support the schools when we had not children. For the past 21 years, we have been paying private school tuition while the money allotted to educate our children has been going to schools that we do not attend. This seems unfair

Also it is worth noting that private and particularly Catholic schools are not educating children in ideology. They mostly just teach the basics.

Thank you for your time

Alessandra Tooley

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

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Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

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Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,
Alessandra Tooley

Jimmy Gomez, Mr.
Self/ Retired
San Antonio, TX

Please support this bill. Thank you

Kathleen Penak
Catholic parishioner
Grapevine, TX

We need competition. The schools need to stay out of parental values for their children and teach math, English and science.

Marie Rosenberg, Dr.

Self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Tracey Schlake

My child

Bedford, TX

Please do not pass this bill. Public schools need to be fully funded, not decimated by sending funds to private schools.

Dawn Sand

Self, teacher

Bryan, TX

Do NOT support vouchers in any form. DO support public education and teachers. These measures should not be tied together.

Bonnie Anderson, Ms.

Public School Teachers

San Antonio, TX

I've been a teacher for 32 years. We are going through way more stress, violence and degradation than we ever have before Covid. Yet our pay hasn't even begun to catch up with all those years my salary was frozen. Public school teachers have to teach everybody. If other schools are going to take our students, keep the best and kick back the students with behavior issues, special needs and autistic children, then at least pay us more. These populations need good teachers too but it is more work. A lot more work. Please pay us for this. I was a finalist for the Texas State Elementary Teacher of the Year 2022. The person who won that year quit teaching a year later. She is young. I'm still here. I go home crying too many days to have to work side jobs to make ends meet like i do. Thank you for your time!

Bonnie Anderson

Aleisha Fuller Moore

Self

Lantana, TX

I am opposed to using public dollars to fund private school vouchers. Our public schools deserve to be funded at an increased rate. I DO NOT support the establishment of an education savings account plan! Do NOT use public dollars to provide wealthy families with funds to send their children to private/religious schools. Our country has had a stained history with withdrawing students from public schools as a way to avoid having certain children (typically affluent) to attend school with more diverse populations in public schools. When segregation was no longer legal and public schools became integrated, a large number of prejudiced/racist families removed their children from public schools. They sent their children to existing religious schools or created "Christian" academies to ensure that their children would not attend school with diverse children. Fast forward to our current situation. There is a heavily funded movement to cater to those who would prefer to see public schools privatized. It all comes down to money. If we follow the money trail then we really will see why our governor would be so insistent on vouchers. Families who choose to send their children to private/religious schools, have every right to do so. They SHOULD NOT be given access to an educational savings plan. I DO NOT support educational savings plans/VOUCHERS! I am a proud public school educator who believes that ALL children should have access to a quality, well-balanced public education.

Wendy Kirkpatrick

ATPE

Spring, TX

It is time to respect educators and give them a raise. Our students need less testing, not more. Students have test anxiety. Stop trying to push for vouchers. Private schools are allowed to say no to students that are in special education, have behavior issues, and just don't meet the requirements to pass STAAR. There is no accountability, therefore there should be no funding. You need to fund public schools completely.

Rhoda Mohr

Retired public educator

Pearland, TX

AGAINST SCHOOL VOUCHERS.

Let's be honest here: vouchers are a political ideal and NOT about 'parent choice'. Vouchers have NOT been successful anywhere to date. The implementation of a voucher system in Texas will only serve to undermine and erode educational equity for the children in Texas.

The proposal will weaken public education with inequity of funding distribution. It also lacks equal accountability, raising genuine concerns about discrimination and constitutional issues.

Focus on improving the existing public educational system to ensure access to high quality education regardless of social economic status. Our Texas children deserve proper funding in a level arena.

Erica Wisinsmi

Self

Kingwood, TX

Please support this bill! We will directly affected and work so hard to send our kids to a school they love and thrive in! This would help us families out immensely and many more who can not afford to budget for school choice

Kimberli Cuba, Mrs.

self - teacher

Megargel, TX

I have concerns with school vouchers. We already have a teacher shortage. I feel that passing this bill is a slap in the face of the teachers who work hard and spend all their time trying to better their students and their school district.

We in the trenches work our tails off to push these kids to succeed not only in our classrooms and their everyday lives - but also on the STAAR test. Our goal is to show you guys that our kids CAN achieve, and that we have high expectations of our students. If the voucher system is passed, the private school sector is not required to administer the STAAR test to their students. How are they supposed to prove that they have high expectations and are proving the same quality of teaching as a public school? What form of accountability would you make them provide? How would they prove that they are providing a 'better' education that public schools if they don't follow the same rules and requirements??

Also, private schools are not required to accept all students into their programs. Public schools are required to provide all students a 'free and appropriate' education. That means we teach (and have high expectations) of students who are nowhere near grade level academically, students with behavior issues, students with intellectual disabilities, and even violent students. Private schools would not accept these students!

Another reason I oppose vouchers is that these students that the Texas Legislature keeps saying they are targeting for vouchers would not be able to afford the cost of full tuition at a private school - even with the help of the vouchers. You guys are proposing \$10,000 for students to use to go to a private school. Public schools don't even get that amount for a student's education! Public schools receive about \$6,100 per student, and that is if they have perfect attendance.

I pay taxes. I don't feel that my tax money should help pay for rich students to supplement their tuition to private schools!

Kevin Robinson, Mr.

Self, Secondary Teacher

San Antonio, TX

The Texas Legislature has a historic opportunity to empower parents and improve the quality of education for students by supporting Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). ESAs would allow all parents to customize their child's education for their unique needs.

Some legislators are so opposed to empowering parents that they are even blocking billions of dollars in new education funding, including teacher raises.

It's time for Texas to put parents and students first. Education savings accounts and teacher funding are a win-win! I urge you to empower parents with ESAs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Radhika Iyer

None

Sugar Land, TX

Please do not include vouchers for private schools if you are serious about educating ALL children in the state. Now more than ever, we need equitable public education. Private school vouchers will only add to inequities while weakening our public school system.

Mark Harless

Self diagnostic electronics technician

Watauga, TX

The future belongs to the youth of today and they deserve every opportunity at their disposal to get the best education available. They shouldn't be shackled to only one option and that's why I support HB1 and I urge you to do the same.

Thank you for your hard work towards achieving this goal.

Regards,

Mark Harless

Ann Cashiola, Miss

Self, retired

Houston, TX

I thoroughly support this bill. Please pass.

Brian Hang

Self, retired

Porter, TX

Help support this bill, my granddaughters love their school and this would help my daughter be able to work hard to save towards her goal of continuing my granddaughters education at a school they love and thrive in!

Sam Slaton, Mr.
Argyle ISD Board Trustee
Argyle, TX
November 8, 2023

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Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Sam Slaton
Board President Argyle ISD

Brad Wallace
Retired Military
Boerne, TX

Every child should have an opportunity to attend a school that will provide them the best opportunity to critically think, learn how to convey their ideas, and flourish in their chosen course work. It is clear the traditional public-school model in Texas is failing our children. We are obligated to educate the next generation for their benefit and ours. These are the citizens who will be responsible for our state after we pass on the responsibility.

Jane Comer
Grandparents for Public Schools
Waco, TX

As a retired public school teacher of 40 years , I am against both private schools and home schooled students receiving state money . Public schools are the bedrock of our democracy as all students are accepted and educated equally there. I believe in the separation of church and state, and many private schools are religious. Also any school that receives tax money should be held accountable for educating students. For all these reasons I am opposed to HB1. Teacher pay and public school funding should NOT be linked these educational savings accounts.

Bracha Strassman, Mrs.
Torah Day School
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.
Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.
Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.
This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.
Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.
Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Nathaniel Holt
Self
Royse City, TX

In the heart of Texas, where dreams take flight and aspirations soar, lies a system of public education that has long been yearning for the support it deserves. Our public schools, the cornerstone of our state's future, have been grappling with the weight of inadequate funding, a burden that threatens to dim the lights of learning and hinder the progress of our youth.

The consequences of underfunding our public schools are far-reaching and detrimental. Overburdened teachers struggle to cater to the needs of every student, classrooms overflow with eager minds yearning for personalized attention, and essential resources remain scarce, leaving a void in the educational landscape.

Education savings accounts (ESAs), often presented as a panacea for our school funding woes, fail to address the root of the problem. Diverting funds away from our public schools only exacerbates the existing disparities, creating a two-tiered education system that benefits a privileged few while leaving the majority behind.

The true solution lies not in fragmenting our educational system but in strengthening its foundation. We must make a resolute commitment to fully funding our public schools, ensuring that every child has access to a quality education that nurtures their potential and empowers them to shape the future.

A fully funded public education system is not merely a policy choice; it is an investment in our state's future. It is the bedrock upon which innovation thrives, entrepreneurship blossoms, and economic prosperity flourishes. When we invest in the minds of our children, we are investing in the very fabric of our society, paving the way for a brighter and more prosperous tomorrow.

Let us not shortchange our children's dreams. Let us make the bold decision to fully fund our public schools, unleashing the boundless potential of Texas's future leaders. Together, we can transform our education system into a beacon of excellence, propelling our state to even greater heights and ensuring that the Texas spirit of innovation and resilience continues to illuminate the world.

Elisha Seybold
Self/graphic designer
Austin, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. These vouchers negatively impact the public school system. I am against diverting funds from public education. This undermines the ability of schools to serve every child and I urge you not to pass it.

Darrell Bercher
Parents
Bulverde, TX

Please pass school choice.

Stacy Smith
Self
Nacogdoches, TX

Say no to any vouchers Money given to any private school parent is waste of taxpayer money !

Tesslyn Mustain, Library media specialist
Self- education
Houston, TX

Respected legislators- this 30 + year educator requests you do not support vouchers in any form or name. It makes no sense to offer full funding of public education (something Texas has never done in my long career) then take away funding with a voucher scheme. NO TO VOUCHERS.

Michelle Thiel
Self - educator
Austin, TX

As an educator of 25 years, I believe that creating a voucher bill will only supply funds for a small percentage of Texas families who can afford the additional expenses of private education. It takes much needed money away from the already underfunded public schools. More importantly, I understand that the private schools of Texas are not required to follow the same educational guidelines that are required by public schools. These schools should be held to the same state required standards as public schools are. I implore the lawmakers of Texas to not act on this bill.

Lisa Carrillo
Self/Physical Therapist
Austin, TX

I am opposed to HB1

Renetta Verette, Mrs.

Self-teacher

Abilene, TX

You talk about accountability for teachers, what about being drunk on the house floor and still keeping your job. I have a CDL and get tested by the school. A lot of us do and if we were to fail a test or come to work drunk, they would have our jobs no questions asked. Why aren't our representatives help accountable for their actions. That not the only thing, you bicker and argue and shit don't get done because No one is willing to compromise. The hell with vouchers, parents can still send their kids to private school. Just let them pay for it. I pay a butt load of taxes and I don't want that tax money going to private schools. How about holding the parents accountable for doing some kind of teaching at home instead of piling it all on the teachers. Why is health care for only certain employees They can pay for the their help care just like the teachers. Your teachers are leaving because of all the shit they put up with from students and parents without anything being done by administration. Then there's you guys that jack around and can't get shit done. Again I probably wasting my time and breathe on people that don't care about hearing the truth. Please stop wasting our tax payers money and time.

Edy Lou Mayfield

Self/retired teacher

Fort Worth, TX

In my 35 years as a public school teacher, I have looked into the eyes of students who understood the importance of their education and into the eyes of their parents who did all they could to encourage their children. The majority of those families could not afford nor wanted private education or home school education. Even today as I substitute in public schools I see students who continue to trust and depend on public schools. Well-funded public education provides opportunities for families and their communities. I am a taxpayer who never had children of my own, believes in the concept of "common good," and wants my taxes to remain firmly in a system of public education. If you feel Texas public schools should be achieving more, then focus on providing those schools with abundant resources. Resist vouchers now and remove the education savings account program from HB1. Fully support public education.

Thank you

Jessica Dvorscak

Self

Austin, TX

The voucher plan outlined in HB1 is a threat to public schools. Vouchers divert funds from public schools which are already seriously lacking funds! This plan will lead to diminished resources and a reduction in the quality of education offered in public school.

Nandhini Anand
Self / IT professional
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,
Nandhini Anand

Sophie Chen
Self, retired
Porter, TX

Help support this bill, my granddaughters love their school and this would help my daughter be able to work hard to save towards her goal of continuing my granddaughters education at a school they love and thrive in!

Kaitlin Jeffery
Chisum High School
Paris, TX

Say no to vouchers! Our kids and students deserve better!!!!

Jana Stagner
Self
Helotes, TX

I am a mom of 5 children and I want hb 1 passed! Please let me make the educational choice for my children!

Neeti Singh
Argyle ISD
Northlake, TX

Our schools need funding for providing better education.

Venkata Potturi
Self
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar

Venkata Potturi

Barbara Looney
self
Cedar Park, TX

I am a special educator. My passion is serving the most fragile humans in the Texas education system and supporting their families. My students have behavioral differences and are not accepted into private schools, who consider them to be "problem" students.

I am a special educator. My passion is teaching other teachers how to serve ALL of the students in their classrooms. My fellow teachers are certified professionals who are required to attend professional development and maintain continuing education credits. Private schools do not require this.

I am a special educator. My workplace has a monitored, single entrance access point, bullet proof film on the windows, and panic buttons. No matter how much this weighs on me, I show up, every single day. No matter how dedicated I am, I can't pay for my groceries on my current salary. I am a member of a food bank.

Please fund Texas Public Schools. Please do not strip any more funding from Special Education programming by funding vouchers for private schools who don't have (or desire to have) the capacity to serve students with differences.

I am a special educator. I would love to remain a special educator, here in the Great State of Texas. Please fund Texas PUBLIC schools, and support Texas PUBLIC school TEACHERS, by providing adequate funding and a livable wage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kaitlin Jeffery
Chisum High School
Paris, TX

Vote NO to vouchers. Education should be equal opportunity. Giving vouchers takes away the opportunities for a large chunk of children. Private schools should not be funded with money from the government if they are not held to the same standards as Public schools. This will divide our state and reinstate many issues such as those seen in the case of Brown vs Board of Education.

Suzanne Mihaloglou, Ms.

Self/Retired Educator and Mother of an adult daughter with IDD

Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD. I am also a former school principal.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Suzanne Mihaloglou

Cheryl Dentler, Mrs

Teachers

Conroe, TX

Vouchers are not good for public education students. Private, charter and religious schools are not held to the same TEA requirements and testing. They do not have to accept ALL students the same way that public school does. We should not fund these private schools with our tax dollars when our public schools are under funded. Holding teacher raises for ransom in order to pass vouchers is wrong. Abbott spent money to study why teachers are leaving the profession for nothing when he doesn't pay attention to the results.

Julia Kovach

Self, Professional Trainer

Austin, TX

As a parent and a taxpayer, I am simply disgusted by the ongoing efforts to suffocate our public education system. The "education savings account" scam is yet another attempt to destroy our public schools. If you actually cared about educators and students, you would walk away from the blatant power grab that these "school choice" advocates are pushing for and would instead **FUND OUR SCHOOLS**. It is deplorable that the state rainy day fund sits on billions of dollars while our teachers are forced to visit food pantries just to get by. Fund our schools properly, and leave the education savings account con where it belongs: out of Texas education.

Patience Knotts

Argyle ISD

Denton, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Patience Knotts

STEM Teacher at Argyle South Elementary

Matthew Panzera

Self - commercial insurance

Plano, TX

I vociferously oppose school vouchers, charters, ESAs, online-only curricula and any such efforts to defund and undermine public education in TX. Public education is the bedrock of our great state. Our future depends on a robust, excellent, well-funded public education system which has the full support of the legislature.

We must invest the state surplus into public education. COLA & cash infusion into TRS was a great start! The prop passed 86-14. Public education has *overwhelming* bipartisan support.

Increase teacher wages. Starting salaries are decent in many ISDs, but there needs to be salary progression for experience. A 10 or 20-year outstanding educator makes virtually the same as a brand new teacher. That should change. Many teachers moonlight as bartenders etc working second jobs late into the night, because they are not making a livable wage in 2023. That's a stain on our state. It is a real shame and something within our power to remedy. Let's get to work.

Empower educators and give them agency to manage their classrooms.

Teach children empathy. I've seen viewpoints which oppose "social emotional learning" as a boogeyman. SEL just means teaching kids empathy and how to appreciate and be nice to one another. Isn't that what we need in today's world?

Increase the per student funding allocation significantly.

We made huge cuts to education in the economic recession of 2007-08. Those severe austerity cuts were never restored even though we now have enormous budget surpluses. It's time to fix this!

No to vouchers!

No to education savings accounts.

Fund universal pre-K.

Expand funding for special education and credentialed school counselors.

Quite frankly, I am appalled by the governor's tactics. Texans don't want vouchers. We vote against them again, and again, and again. The governor's actions suggest he harbors little respect for the will of the people. I urge you to stand firm and reject this voucher plan for a fifth time.

While we are at it, let's support public librarians, school librarians, classroom libraries and school libraries. Book bans are abhorrent.

Leslie Yarmush
self, physician
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Eric Sebesta
Self
Austin, TX

AGAINST. I am completely against this bill, it robs our public schools of critical funds, but is selling itself as supporting schools. This is awful and you should be ashamed.

Melissa Silerio
Self
Grand Prairie, TX

Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much-needed funds to go toward a voucher scheme.

Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept.

Let's work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement — not vouchers.

Eric Holguin

UnidosUS (formerly National Council of La Raza)

Mission, TX

To the honorable members of the Texas House Select Committee on Education Opportunity & Enrichment:

My name is Eric Holguin, representing UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza). The mission of UnidosUS is to uplift Hispanic/Latino communities. We do that by ensuring that legislation being considered and passed works in the best interest of Hispanics – regardless of what side of the aisle it is coming from. We stand in opposition to House Bill 1 (HB 1), which threatens to undermine the public education system that serves over 2.7 million Hispanic students in Texas—half of the student population and integral to the fabric of our state and its future prosperity.

UnidosUS is committed to the advancement and fair treatment of Hispanic communities, especially in education. HB 1, with its proposal to establish an education savings account program and divert public funds to private entities, risks deepening the educational inequities that our Hispanic students disproportionately face. Many Hispanic students attend underfunded schools. A substantial 77% (2.2 million) of Texas Hispanic students face economic challenges, and 62.9% attend “Title I schools,” – systemically under-resourced schools that serve students from low-income families.

Disconcertingly, several aspects of HB1, in its present form, stand to harm our community. The bill fails to ensure equitable access to high-quality education for all students and, in critical provisions, lacks safeguards against discrimination and does not guarantee educational quality or equal access for students with disabilities and multilingual learners. The proposal continues lack transparency and accountability on how our tax dollars are spent and doesn’t ensure students are learning the necessary skills and knowledge to grow to be successful in their lives.

It's evident that there has been little to no effort by proponents of the bill to consider the interests of Latino families and students—a glaring oversight given our significant presence in Texas. This is particularly egregious as we grapple with the pandemic’s lasting impacts on learning. For example, Hispanic fourth graders saw a significant decrease in math proficiency and a slight decrease in reading proficiency compared to their non-Hispanic white peers who saw minimal decreases. In addition, Texas ranks 41st out of the 50 states for investments in mental health programs for schools. Texas schools have one school psychologist for every 1,390 students. The recommendation is one for every 500 students.

We urge the committee to reject this bill and instead focus on investing in public schools, addressing educational funding gaps, and upholding the promise of equal opportunity for every student.

Sincerely,

Eric Holguin
Texas State Director
UnidosUS

Jan Ashcraft, Ms.

Self
Cibolo, TX

Yet another special session does not change the fact that the majority of Texans do not want school vouchers!

You are trying to destroy our public schools.

With our 33B surplus we could make our TX public schools the envy of the rest of the nation.

We could attract the best teachers if we paid them decent salaries.

You are wanting to provide less money for each public school student than what you are proposing to give to each private school student. How is that even okay?

NO. TO. VOUCHERS.

Karen Ritter, Ms.

Self — information technology managing consultant

Lake Kiowa, TX

NO to the education savings accounts that are just another means to make Texas taxpayers fund private schools. NO to vouchers for private schools. NO to any funding for private education in any way, shape, or form. Stop cheating Texas children! You may not use Texas public funds for private education in any way. November 2024 is coming, and we will remember every vote. Missing is legislation to limit the number of special sessions that the governor is allowed to call. Missing is legislation to protect Texans from long-standing outrageous energy issues. Missing is legislation to protect women's choices for their own health care. Missing is legislation to protect Texans from reckless sales and use of automatic weapons and accessories. Missing most of all? Legislators that truly represent the views of all their constituents. Missing is the opportunity for Texans to vote on these concerns. Put them on the general election ballot, and stand back. We are not your minions to be ordered about by wealthy cronies of government officials. Missing is the opportunity to protect Texas from corruption in public office. Missing are increased standards for protection of children and elders. Will we see yet another special session where legislators fail to govern to benefit Texans? And the wall is stupid.

Cassandra Hulsey

Self

Round Rock, TX

Chairman Buckley and Committee Members,

I have served public education for 15 years, working with special education students and programs, and I've seen first hand all of the incredible things public education does for students, families, and communities. I have previously submitted comment on why education savings accounts (vouchers) are not good for children or families and undermine the sustainability of public schools; and I've previously submitted comments on the debilitating underfunding of public schools. I would like to use this opportunity for public comment to affirm and applaud your actions in previous sessions to withstand the significant pressure and bullying from Governor Abbott to pass a school voucher bill. Your resistance is exactly what the people of Texas want and need and I implore you to continue your stance to support our public schools. Yes, we desperately need more money for our public schools but we do not want it at the cost of vouchers. Make no mistake, passing vouchers as a way to get additional public school funding is NOT compromise, it is giving in to bullies. You have been threatened with political revenge, held hostage in special session after special session, and denied the ability to take meaningful action for the students of Texas. Our Governor has blatantly disrespected the basic tenets of our democracy in his words and actions to push his voucher agenda. Your constituents see you. We stand with you. We NEED you to keep fighting against vouchers and fighting to fund our public schools. Constituents are waiting to see if our Representatives will honor their promise to truly represent the will of the people who elected them. WE DO NOT WANT VOUCHERS.

Thank you,

Cassandra Hulsey

Cynthia Dominguez

Bryan ISD

Bryan, TX

Please save public schools and vote NOT to vouchers. I am a public educator in Texas. I have been for 19 years. Please don't destroy us or our schools. Vote NOT for vouchers and help me keep my job that I love so much.

Wayne Sozansky, Mr

self

Blanco, TX

YES to ESAs:

Families should have choices for education, especially if their ISD is not performing well. Allowing students to choose their school provides competition which improves the overall system. I support measures that provide funding that follows the student for ALL students. I am opposed to any systems that only provide benefits to specific groups of students. Some schools excel athletics, some in music or band, some in theater. School choices allows families to choose a curriculum that supports a student's interest.

Stacy Smith

Self

Nacogdoches, TX

Just say no to vouchers

Kim Smith

Self - retired

North Zulch, TX

Dear Members of the Education Opportunity and Enrichment Committee,

Please say "No" to vouchers/ESAs and "NO" to any deals. Instead, please fully fund our public schools to a level it was in the past.

Vouchers for private schools are the equivalent of me saying that, even though there is a free public park for me to use, I'd rather utilize my country club; therefore, I want my tax dollars to be spent on my private country club. it's the same principle.

Vouchers/ESAs do not help our students academically. My children attended a public school and were able to get into one of the top Tx universities while several I know that attended private schools could not. Also, I taught at a rural public school where one of my students won the prestigious Bill Gates award his senior year. I had students that were accepted into and graduated from Harvard, Princeton, Yale, MIT and the University of Pennsylvania.

Milwaukee utilizes vouchers but it does not have the highest NAEP scores - only 20% attend public schools, therefore if vouchers worked their scores should be among the best. In fact, black students make up 70% of the voucher programs in Milwaukee and their NAEP scores placed them last in reading and second-to-last in math. (from Stanford research and Time magazine)

Private schools do not have to adhere to the same accountability that public schools have to abide. While many pro-voucher proponents say that private schools are accountable to parents, so are public schools. As a former teacher, parents could email or call me. If they didn't agree with me, they could call the principal, the superintendent and/or if they didn't get any satisfaction, they could go to the school board. The school board members are elected by citizens within the district to be their voice.

Please say NO to vouchers and the money that is funding the effort behind voting them in.

Thank you!

Respectfully,

Kim Smith

Leslie Acosta
Self
Argyle, TX
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Leslie Acosta
Susan Kaminski
Self
San Anntonio, TX

We support your new bill hands down. We are behind 31 other states for school choice. We fully support the new bill for saving accounts for all Texas students.

Katherine Walker-Rodriguez

self, nurse

San Antonio, TX

I am a supporter of parental choice or "school choice". As a healthcare worker and homeowner, the amount of taxes I pay should allow me the opportunity to choose the best education environment. I have a hearing impaired child and the public school district we resided in did not provide the services my child needed. With the option to find outside schools for my child, we would have been solely dependent on what the district provided. My child is thriving because she got to go to a hearing impaired school and now a private Catholic school who has gone above and beyond to accommodate her needs as she is the only hearing impaired child in their school. All parents should have a choice in the best educational opportunities for their child and should also have assistance for that choice, no matter what the income bracket.

Jeff Watson

Self

Killeen, TX

I am a teacher for Killeen ISD. I want to express that I fully support parents having the right to choose their students education. We should develop some kind of voucher program that allows parents choose the best educational opportunity for their students. The teacher unions and teachers groups, fear vouchers, because they are afraid by of losing influence over the students. The number of students that take this opportunity will not cause a major loss of funding for most districts. School districts should be asking themselves. Why do students not want to go to our campuses? Why do parents want to remove their students from our schools and place them into a different setting? You're probably here for mini teachers, who are anti-voucher, but most of them are uninformed, and do not realize that this is not about taking money away from public education. This is about giving parents a choice to choose what's best for their family and their children. so please just know that there are teachers who fully support this initiative.

venkatesh yalavarthi

self

argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Venkatesh Yalavarthi

Judy Malandrucolo, Retired Texas Public School Teacher

Retired Teachers

Plano, TX

I attended and graduated from Texas Public Schools. After getting my teaching degree from Southwest Texas State University, now Texas State, I taught in many different public schools across South and East Texas, most were small-town rural schools. Freer, Tilden, Port Lavaca, Skidmore-Tynan, Danbury, West Hardin ISD, Hemphill, and Newton. These schools are the heart of their communities, often the centers of activity for residents and students. We taught Texas standards (TEKS, as later known), with no time for "indoctrination". As a coach, I often spent more time with students than I did my own two children. They tagged along to games and we attended their events. My two sons graduated at the tops of their class and attended UT and graduated starting their own careers. One is in Public Education in Hays Co. ISD, married to another educator. My grand daughter attends Ann Richards Public School in Austin, a STEM school. I have researched Charter Schools, Private Religious Schools. These have been choices for Texas parents. But they are only available in a very few counties in Texas - mostly large urban areas. Public schools are vastly underfunded as it is, especially rural schools. We should not be taking funds from them and handing it over to exclusive schools that pick and choose their students! What about Recapture? How does that figure in to this plan? States that have adopted Voucher (or ESAs) programs have seen that more and more more money is drained from the Public Ed fund each year they stay in place! 90% of Texas kids attend public schools. Don't deprive the many to benefit the few who can already afford their education choice. Thank you.

David Smith

Self - retired

North Zulch, TX

Dear Members of the Education Opportunity and Enrichment Committee,

Please say "No" to vouchers/ESAs and "NO" to any deals. Instead, please fully fund our public schools to a level it was in the past.

Vouchers for private schools are the equivalent of me saying that, even though there is a free public park for me to use, I'd rather utilize my country club; therefore, I want my tax dollars to be spent on my private country club. it's the same principle.

Vouchers/ESAs do not help our students academically. My children attended a public school and were able to get into one of the top Tx universities while several I know that attended private schools could not. Also, my wife taught at a rural public school where one of the students won the prestigious Bill Gates award his senior year. She had students that were accepted into and graduated from Harvard, Princeton, Yale, MIT and the University of Pennsylvania.

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Please say NO to vouchers and the money that is funding the effort behind voting them in.

Thank you!

Respectfully,

David Smith

Priscilla Benavides
self- legal manager
San Antonio, TX

We greatly this Bill passed and supported by our government to help our education system and students! Please pass this bill!

Melissa Potter
Self
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Melissa Potter

Kathy Noack

self

Austin, TX

I am strongly against this bill!

Tax payer funds should never go to private institutions. EVER. Vouchers have no accountability for measuring school success, students do not have to take STAAR to demonstrate what they are learning, and schools do not face sanctions if it is not successful. There is no transparency on who is accepted into the school, who is denied access to the school, and who it told to leave. There is no process to appeal a denial of entrance. There is no accountability for how the voucher funds are spent in the school and no transparency of spending those funds. There is no place or method for parents to express concerns without fear of retribution.

Public schools do have school choice through charter schools and in district magnets, CCMR options, etc. Vouchers are a scam and a method to pay back parents that are already paying for this private school. Why do they need more money when they already have it?

VOTE this DOWN!

Chana Raskin

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Ariane Beck

Self, parent, researcher

Austin, TX

HB1 threatens the quality of education in Texas. These voucher programs have no standards and no accountability. Texas children deserve better.

Ashley Storrie

Self - Wellness Manager

Helotes, TX

The Texas Legislature has a historic opportunity to empower parents and improve the quality of education for students by supporting Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). ESAs would allow all parents to customize their child's education for their unique needs.

Some legislators are so opposed to empowering parents that they are even blocking billions of dollars in new education funding, including teacher raises.

It's time for Texas to put parents and students first. Education savings accounts and teacher funding are a win-win! I urge you to empower parents with ESAs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Emilie Clement

self

Austin, TX

Keep our tax money in public schools, where teachers have certifications from the state of Texas. Teachers in public schools do continuing education, 504s, ARDs, IEPs, while continuing to do professional development. Private schools do NOT have the rigorous criteria that public school teachers continue to demonstrate. This will be the collapse of public education, if passed. Please save our tax dollars for public schools which need the money desperately.

Mary Kay Tiernan

Parent of two public school students

AUSTIN, TX

I am opposed to this bill because it funds vouchers for private schools and homeschooling. There is no private school within 50 miles of my home that will educate my child (who received special education supports in his local, public school) for \$8,000. Even charter schools say that he is better served in public schools. I implore you to pour every available dollar into our public schools, because ultimately those are the ones that serve our students with special needs.

Marjorie Gonzalez

self

Houston, TX

I am a parent of a Spring Branch ISD student. Every child should have the opportunity to a good education. It is the government's responsibility to ensure every child in his/her state gets that opportunity. I am actually a product of a Catholic school education, but I believe in public school education. I know for a fact that a voucher program will not benefit all children - only a select few. And it will only take away much needed funding towards the public school system. Due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education, the SBISD district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. Our class sizes will balloon. The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. **FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!**

Reuben Leslie, Mr.

Travis County Precinct 264 (Milwood) Democrats (elected precinct chair)

Austin, TX

I am very proud to be a product of Texas public schools, having attended them since 1957 in Cherokee, Shelby, Jefferson and Midland counties. I am a lifelong supporter of local public schools and their dedicated staff and boards. I strongly oppose HB 1 and any other attempt at the establishment of an education savings account program which I believe will endanger the quality and equity of public school educations for all Texas children. Parents who wish to forego public education for their children should have the right to that choice, but they, not taxpayers, need to bear all the costs of that choice. No public funds should ever be diverted from public schools, the economy and effectiveness of which are evident throughout Texas communities of all sizes. Sincerely, Reuben Leslie, BA Rice University and MPAff, University of Texas at Austin

Joan Kling

Self -- Retired

Austin, TX

I urge the state legislators to vote against HB 1. The establishment of an 'education savings account program', sometimes called 'school choice' and more appropriately called school vouchers for private schools, will take badly needed funds from the public school system in Texas. Governor Abbott claims this would help low-income or special needs children who are in failing public schools. Students are struggling in public schools because the State of Texas legislators have not made public education a priority--minimal per student funding and low teacher salaries. Parents already have school choice with the charter school option, which also takes away funds for our public schools. The legislators represent their constituents. I'm not sure who Governor Abbott represents. I again urge our legislators to vote against HB 1.

Patty Goldschmiedt, Mrs

Self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Miky Goldschmiedt, Dr

Self

Dallas, TX

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Felicia Nash, Dr.

Self, physician

Austin, TX

I am adamantly opposed to this bill and the negative repercussions it will have on our public school system. The public school system ensures that the future of our state - the children - are educated. In diverting money for private school use, we are shooting ourselves in the foot by crippling our current system even further. The public school systems in Texas are already at a disadvantage and this will create even more problems. While I understand that some will choose private school, it makes no sense for money that our system desperately needs is spent elsewhere. I suggest fixing what we have and then we can consider vouchers and their utilization.

Jennifer Jarl-McCombs
self / Commercial Interior Designer
Austin, TX

Dear Texas Legislator,

As a proud 6th-generation Texan, I value the role public schools play in shaping our future. I oppose private school subsidies, also known as vouchers or education savings accounts. I believe private school subsidies are wasteful, deceitful, inefficient, and unfair.

Public school dollars should go only to public schools. Public schools in Texas are underfunded by billions of dollars every year. The Comptroller is projecting a large increase in state revenue over the next two years compared to the past two years, and that money should go to fully funding public education.

Private schools pick and choose which students to admit, and this disproportionately negatively effects and excludes students with disabilities. Vouchers force taxpayers to subsidize private schools' preferences. And without elected boards or state oversight, vouchers give away tax dollars with no financial or academic accountability.

Public schools educate more than 90 percent of Texas students, serving all the students in their boundaries. They build the workforce that powers the Texas economy. We can't afford to underwrite a few special choices at the expense of our collective future.

We elect legislators to represent the interests of their communities. Responding to their communities, Texas legislators have rejected private school subsidies time after time.

In the face of increasing pressure from special interests, I pledge that I will stand with my legislators in opposing vouchers. When they vote against private school subsidies, I will make sure all their constituents know they did the right thing.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Jarl McCombs

Tamsen Barrett
Self, attorney
Austin, TX

The diversion of taxpayer funds to the private sector is an embarrassment for the state of Texas. It allows those with the resource of time to self select their children's education while the children of those without that resource are left with less than they deserve. The willful disregard for the education of that less fortunate is unacceptable to anyone of a Christian background.

Anna Weiler
Self
Pflugerville, TX

I am a voting constituent of Travis county. I oppose this bill. I request more time and clarification. I would like to see the constituents have more time to understand and discuss this bill.

I oppose school vouchers and believe tax payer's money set for education should go directly to public schools.

Kathy Slayton
Self Teacher
Grand Prairie, TX

It's time to put the vouchers debate to rest. Texans don't want vouchers.

Brittany Casteel
Self, public educator
Benbrook, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and opinions regarding HB1. I am a proud public educator of 22 years. I have worked in urban districts for those last 22 years and I have watched public education grow, change, struggle, and adapt. Do we have struggles? Yes, very much so. However we are made of hard-working teachers who care for students and work hard to meet the diverse needs and populations we serve. The public education system is simply in need of support of our noble calling. When I think about the core of public education, it is to serve ALL students. We support our state by helping educate our future teachers, doctors, lawyers, and governors. We help support the future of our state. We need the state to support us by providing financial backing and simply showing support by not pulling money and spreading it out to private school by way of vouchers. Private education is a choice, but public education is a right for all. By supporting us financially, others see that Texas believes in our school system. A house divided will fall. We can't let the school system that provides for all Texas students to fall. Please say no to vouchers and yes to more funds coming into our schools for our students. Educators are watching and hoping that Texas will show how much you care about the education of our children. Thank you for listening.

Perry Daniell
Self
Fort Worth, TX

HB1 is another attempt to undermine public schools. Public schools are suffering due to policies made by governing officials that are not educators and lack of funding. For example, how can standardized tests measure success for all when differentiated instruction is required? Legislation continues to impose costly programs that are not funded. Where is the logic in giving a full \$8000 per student to an ESA (code for voucher) when public schools only get \$6160 and then just the "average daily attendance rate" (96%) of that? Private school teachers are not more qualified than public school teachers, usually less. When is the state going to recognize that COVID caused a 20+% inflation rate and public schools have not had an allotment increase since 2019? Public schools have to prepare to provide an education for all students in the district every day. Public school teachers work hours and hours to ensure success for every student. How does underfunding public schools benefit our state, our economy, our children, and our future? Where would you be today without a free public education?

Susan Nerenberg
Davis Elementary
Austin, TX

Vouchers are a scam, not "school choice". The wealthy don't need a discounted rate for private school, the middle and lower class need well funded public schools with adequate staff and supplies to serve their communities. **NO TO VOUCHERS!**

Jessica Martinez
Self
Austin, TX

I oppose vouchers!!

Catherine Casavant
Self-CPA
Plano, TX

I am against school vouchers. I am against defunding our public schools. I am against taking funds from public education and any attempt to move funding to private schools that can decide which students they will or won't accept.

John Morris, Mr.

Self / educator

Fort Worth, TX

It is unfortunate that Governor Abbot thinks he is a member of the legislative branch of government. He has continued to hold children and educators hostage while he uses them as pawns in his quest to appease large political donors by demanding vouchers be passed and threatening members of his own party who do not support his agenda.

Let me be clear, vouchers will only hurt public education, and every teacher who currently believes that this outcome is the ultimate goal of the Republican Party in Texas will see the passage of any voucher bill as an open attack on public education. Further, vouchers have been shown to have a negative impact on private school costs as they have consistently increased the cost of tuition in the amount of the vouchers further hindering access for families who might want or need a private school option. It creates an elitist system.

Additionally, allowing private schools access to public education funds without requiring private schools to show the same measures of growth with the same public ratings as public schools creates two systems of public education in Texas. One which is held accountable to educational, funding, communication, and student support standards, and one that is not.

I beseech you to send a clear message to the governor that he is not a legislator and should be choose to be he should leave the governor's mansion and do the real work of legislating if he can get elected. I further beseech you to protect public education and refuse to hand public dollars over to private schools.

Access to public education was one of the foundational grievances that lead our forefathers to fight for independence from Mexico. How any governor or legislator would dare to even consider turning our back on this simply reinforces that those who agree with and vote with Abbot on this care more about politics than people and elitism than education.

Fight for public education. Fight for the schools in your districts and show us that when you say education is important to you it isn't just election year pandering.

Finally, if I can be so bold as to paraphrase the words of Lt. Col. William B. Travis, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism, and everything dear to the character of Texas, to come to the aid of public education, with all dispatch. If this call is neglected, we will sustain ourselves as long as possible but children will suffer and that which made Texas great will be lost and Texans will suffer for generations.

Thank you,

John R. Morris

Barbara Newell, Dr. Newell

Self teaching

Hutchins, TX

You have got to be kidding right omg you think we're stupid!!! You just keep doing this because you MUST have it your way!! Well stupid m —— F —— you are supposed to be a public servant ha ha ha ha one?????????but you think the office is to get what you want not those you supposedly serve!!! How stupid do you think we are!! Do what you will it just shows who you are!! Self serving insane like all the rest omg

Sujatha Srikanth

Self

Sugar Land, TX

No money should be removed from public education to fund private institutions, especially those that are for profit or for religious education (regardless of religion). Texas is the 10th least educated state. Removing funds from public schools will only make schools worse. Moreover private schools cost a lot more than the money allotted, and so this will serve only those people that can already afford private education. This money is also being awarded to private schools without regulation on inclusivity equality. If this needs to be a bill, follow the democratic process, and bring it to the people to a vote.

Adi Kompel
Self
San Antonio, TX

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Sincerely, Adi Kompel

Deron Robinson
Denton ISD
Lantana, TX

Tying funding to inflation is a good start, but starting with a number 7-10% below current inflationary levels simply insures Texas public schools will continue to trail inflation and be funded at a per pupil level among the worst in the nation. In addition, making kids ineligible for vouchers when they aren't successful would seem to insure public schools will underperform. Finally, creating a welfare entitlement with no oversight and no accountability is not a conservative approach to governance and when the numbers are added up the state cannot afford to subsidize all the current homeschool and private school students with a separate program.

Karina Donaldson

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Karina Donaldson

Kami Orr
Self
Argyle, TX

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Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Kami Orr

Brandi Fry
Self Special Education Teacher
Wylie, TX

Educators are drowning and leaving the field in high numbers. The State of Texas has got TO DO BETTER. We want higher pay. Teachers have never made enough, and many tutor on the side or have a second job to supplement their income. Many have gone through schooling to get Masters and even Doctorates, and they are not compensated!

The state testing needs to be revamped or removed all together. Last year was the first year these kids took the STAAR test online. The stress leading up to testing day and the day of , was heartbreaking. Assessments need to be done, but at what expense? Elementary kids should not be in tears taking a test or having anxiety issues. We have got to DO BETTER!

We do not want school vouchers. I am praying hard that the right decisions will be made for OUR kids. We have got to do better for them.

Kevin Leyden
Self, software engineer
Edgecliff Village, TX

I support making it easier for parents to have options of where to enroll their children in school.

Charles Donaldson
Argyle ISD
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,

Charlie Donaldson

Paula Clay
self
HOUSTON, TX

I strongly support this. Let the money follow the student.

Gina Chambers, Principal
Stratford ISD
Stratford, TX

I fully support the increase in funding for teachers, who are overworked, underpaid, and desperately need to be paid what they are worth. However, this needs to be done separate from vouchers.

Emily Dieringer
Self / Parent and Homemaker
AUSTIN, TX

Public education is a cornerstone of American society. Vouchers divert money from our (already grossly underfunded) public schools. Public funds have no business funding private schools.

Valerie Ritchey
self
Lubbock, TX

I am 100% against any kind of voucher, regardless what name it is being called. Public money belongs in public education.

Tiffany Gygi
Self, Teacher ATPE
Saginaw, TX

Vote no on any Voucher bill and fully fund public education and raises for us teachers as the health care costs and costs to live keeps going up. Please stop holding our teachers and students hostage to pass something that we in public education, our parents, and students don't want.

Meghan Shaw
Self
Austin, TX

As a constituent of yours, I would like to express my opposition to vouchers (education savings accounts).

Vouchers have passed in other states and have not been successful. They tend to help only students whose parents can already afford private schools. Students who use vouchers do not see better educational outcomes. Also, they take much-needed money from local neighborhood schools.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept students with a voucher and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools.

I do not agree with taxpayer dollars going to private institutions that don't have to play by the same rules as public schools.

I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher bills. Please focus on supporting our public schools with increased funding to address issues like rising costs, teacher shortages, and school safety.

sara ines calderon
Self, Business Owner
Buda, TX

I demand my representatives fully fund public education in this state and under no circumstances vote or pursue voucher schemes, which is a blatant funneling of public money into private schools.

Sarah Jenkins

Self - mom

Tyler, TX

In favor

Donna Cote

self / home manager

College Station, TX

I support HB1 because it has solid prioritization of the poor and vulnerable children in public, private, home school and those entering pre-K or Kindergarten. It is a positive that there is accountability through accreditation and norm-referenced testing.

Joanna Sixsmith

Cornerstone Christian school

San Antonio, TX

I am the sole provider for my family and have one child in private school and two others in daycare and the expense is astronomical- this bill would help families who desire quality, Christian education for their children without the financial strain.

Whitney Pomrenke

Davis Elementary

Austin, TX

I oppose this bill!

Sanobar Chagani

self

The Colony, TX

School vouchers drain money from neighborhood public schools that educate most Texas students. Politicians should be fully funding our local neighborhood schools instead of diverting that money away from our communities. Texans do not want any voucher schemes disguised as attempts to take money away from our public education system; we want fully funded schools without negotiations. Neighborhood public schools accept all students, regardless of who they are or their background. But voucher schemes in all forms would divert public tax dollars to private and religious schools that can deny admission or educational services to any student, including students with disabilities, students from different religious faiths, or students from other diverse backgrounds, including students or parents who are LGBTQIA+. Legislators must not allow private and religious schools to discriminate while taking our tax dollars.

Venu Gopal Puvvada

Self

AUSTIN, TX

I disagree to voucher, instead strengthen public schools by reviewing the curriculum, amenities

Nechemia Golfeiz
self/Opinion Writer for national Jewish newspaper
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

As a father of three, I look forward to raising and educating them in accordance with my faith and values. And I will pay out of pocket if necessary, but if legislatures in the great state of Texas can recognize that this is a necessity for our children, I will support them and promote them in my community. And I will thank God for their kindness.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Susanna Anderson
Self
Austin, TX

The proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement.

Naomi Masri
Self
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

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Danielle Basset
Self, elementary teacher
Lavon, TX

Please do NOT allow vouchers to be passed. They would be detrimental to the public school system in many ways. Public school educators around the state do NOT support this bill.

Mary Kay Dixon

Self/principal

Irving, TX

I have been a public educator for 38 years. It is tough seeing teachers struggle to make ends meet. Many hold extra jobs. It is a shame that Texas is not supporting teachers with the compensation they deserve. You know that teaching is a calling that they pour into the lives of others. Teaching is the profession that impacts everyone! I urge you to take care of our teachers because they take care of kids. Our kids are our future!

Kurtis Welch

Self

Cedar Park, TX

Austin ISD failed my special needs child. When they failed to live up to what was required in his IEP, we hired a parent advocate to help us fight. We thought public schools would provide us with the resources needed to help our child succeed. But instead, with his "special needs" status, the teachers don't have time to give him the attention he needs.

This year, we moved him to a private school for special needs children. He is flourishing. They have the resources, expertise, and empathy needed to help children like Mikey. I'm lucky enough to be able to afford a private school for my child who very much was struggling in a public school setting. Most people aren't that lucky. They are stuck with public schools.

The only way to fix schools is to give people a way to afford alternatives.

erica mattera

Self

San Antonio, TX

I'm in support of school choice!

Jillian Palomino

Self- 3rd Grade Teacher- Wylie ISD

Wylie, TX

As a teacher, this bill is an absolute insult and I am personally offended by our governor and other members in the senate and congress, who drafted this atrocity. This bill encourages a narrative of victim shaming and abuse. If your sister was being assaulted daily by an abusive spouse, are you also going to tell her “just stay for the sake of the kids”. That is exactly what lawmakers and entrepreneurs have been telling teachers for decades. “You get paid with intrinsic motivation.” “You are the only positive thing in that child’s life” “You have the best retirement available, you don’t need social security.” We are holding the future of the world together with scotch tape and paper clips and it is FAILING miserably. Districts are paid by attendance. They are held to extremely strict standards of how every bit of that money can be spent. Yet, you are willing to give private schools vouchers, without an attendance contingency, and zero means of accountability on how to spend that money. I can tell you exactly what private schools are going to do... they are going to raise their tuition by \$8k a year and pocket the rest. It will not go toward raising private school teacher salaries (which is already extensively worse than public school salaries). It will not go toward additional resources. People willing and able to send their children to private schools DO NOT NEED YOUR MEASLY \$8k.

Public school teachers, that carry the load of 90% of the students in the state of Texas need the following: 1) Salaries that match the value of their work. 2) Affordable health insurance that will not cut their (already unsustainable) salaries by a third each month. 3) Additional staffing that supports the current student behavioral and mental health crisis 4) Student accountability measures that developmentally appropriate and differentiated for ALL learners based on their individual needs. 5) Developmentally appropriate learning standards that align with the American Academy of Pediatrics.

None of the above listed items should ever be tied down or held hostage for political gains. Public school policy should not be tied to private school vouchers, which will only benefit 5% of the children who attend school in the state of Texas. Private schools can take a lesson from Ron Clark and get sponsorships from people like Oprah.

We, the teachers in not only Texas, but America, have been asking fish to climb trees for too long. We are tired. We are done being abused and guilted into accepting the undervalued illustration you have painted us to be. We demand more.

Angela Bissett
Argyle ISD parent
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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#TogetherWeSoar,
Angela Bissett

Sam Routh
Self, teacher
Houston, TX

As a Texan and a teacher, I ask that you support the education of our most vulnerable students. Those who vouchers would not benefit. If I were making this into a history/government lesson, I might consider the fact that we are on the fourth special session. There are inferences to be made (an important TEKS for most high school classrooms).

Anne Warner
Self
Houston, TX

Vote NO for vouchers. Please stop wasting public dollars and legislators' time with all of these special sessions. Clearly the people have spoken, and we do not want vouchers. Put money into Texas public schools. Increase per pupil allowances and teacher salaries. You should be ashamed that Texas is 36th in the nation for PPA. Put public funds in public schools.

jana fried, Mrs

Self

Plano, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Deanne Vance, Mrs.

Self Retired educator

Wimberley, TX

I am a lifelong Republican, but I do not support vouchers and will not vote for any Republican who does. I find it repugnant to tie teacher salary "raises" to approval of vouchers. Texas public schools continue to provide solid education despite having one of the lowest per student stipends in the U.S., one of the lowest pay scales, unfunded mandates, and a testing and rating system that is broken. I also believe in separation of church and state; vouchers seem to violate our Constitution. No Vouchers!

Craig Campbell

ARTA

AUSTIN, TX

PLEASE SAY NO TO VOUCHERS. IT IS AN ATTEMPT TO SUBVERT AMERICA. WE NEED TO BE ONE NATION UNDERGOD NOT SELFISH INDIVIDUALS.

James Finnegan, COL USAF Retired

Self

Garland, TX

Vote yes. The reason we pay education taxes is to educate our children - not to fund other people's political agenda. The child's parents are best qualified to judge the results which a school is delivering.

I graduated from a public high school and believe most parents will choose public schools. But let the parents decide.

Tima Brown
Self - teacher
AUSTIN, TX

Dear Texas Legislator,

As a proud third generation Texan, I value the role public schools play in shaping our future. I oppose private school subsidies, also known as vouchers or education savings accounts. I believe private school subsidies are wasteful, deceitful, inefficient, and unfair.

Public school dollars should go only to public schools. Public schools in Texas are underfunded by billions of dollars every year. The Comptroller is projecting a large increase in state revenue over the next two years compared to the past two years, and that money should go to fully funding public education.

Private schools pick and choose which students to admit. Vouchers force taxpayers to subsidize private schools' preferences. And without elected boards or state oversight, vouchers give away tax dollars with no financial or academic accountability.

Public schools educate more than 90 percent of Texas students, serving all the students in their boundaries. They build the workforce that powers the Texas economy. We can't afford to underwrite a few special choices at the expense of our collective future.

We elect legislators to represent the interests of their communities. Responding to their communities, Texas legislators have rejected private school subsidies time after time.

In the face of increasing pressure from special interests, I pledge that I will stand with my legislators in opposing vouchers. When they vote against private school subsidies, I will make sure all their constituents know they did the right thing.

Sincerely, Tima Brown

Laura Halvorson
ARC of Texas
San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, a former special education teacher, and person with a developmental disability myself, I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Laura Halvorson

Lezlie Sirianni
Self; educational Diagnostician
Kerrville, TX

I am in favor of this bill. Families need choices for their children. We paid for our children to have a religious based education because it was important for us to have Jesus in their whole life. What about those families who can't afford it. I'm a public school employee and I still made that decision for my children

Patti Schwartz
self / Physical Therapist
Plano, TX

It is imperative that we pass legislation to afford families options in seeking the best educational opportunities for their children...ESA's can help accomplish this. Other states have tried this and found it has not harmed the public school system...public schools need to be held to excellence by the need to compete. Statistics have shown that home schooled children perform well above average. Charter schools, private schools also offer choices for quality education. Parents (taxpayers) should have the freedom to use their hard earned money to provide the education they feel best suits the needs of their children. I have heard the argument that "parents aren't qualified"...that is demeaning, and simply not true! I am a professional Physical Therapist and helped homeschool my grandchildren in science...truthfully, I provided a better science experience than my own kids received in public school...and my grandchildren LOVE science now...we made it fun. I have many friends and family that are teachers...I know the challenges they face...they want to provide the best they can for the kids, but the big beauracracy sometimes gets in the way of their ability to do so. The basic question should be: is the structure of our educational system sound? When the structure is sound, the results flow out naturally. ESA's offer a path to improve the basic structure of how we address education for our kids....choice incentivizes competition, which in turn incentivizes excellence. It's time to make some common sense changes.

Darrell Dunn
Self
Hurst, TX

Texans have repeatedly rejected Abbott's voucher scam intended to pad the wallets of the governor's rich donors at the expense of public education.
No means no.
Stop the steal.

Naomi Bier, Dr
Self
Houston, TX

Please vote in favor of this bill. We want school choice.

Thomas Garza, Mrs
Self - former high school teacher
La Porte, TX

I am a former public school employee. After teaching at a well respected school for a year, I came to the realization that our public school system is broken. We are failing our children, and ultimately robbing them of reaching their full potential.

This cannot be tolerated.

Public schools have no incentive to improve because the vast majority of their students have no choice in the school they attend. The public school system operates as a legal monopoly, with a guaranteed funding source which is collected with the full force of our government.

This is a broken model.

By adopting a voucher based system, you enable many of these families to pursue a quality education for their children, whether that is found at the local public school or not. This is a common sense reform that there is no good excuse for delaying.

Julie Dittman

Self

Houston, TX

As a retired teacher and citizen who fully supports public education, I do not want education savings accounts or vouchers. It would have a negative impact on education and would only benefit the privileged students. Please do not go through with this bill!

Richard Cook, Mr

Self retired former teacher

Dallas, TX

As a product of public schools and former teacher this bill is an abomination and slap at all American schools. Vote No

nicole mansurov

self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Nicole Mansurov

Karin Saylor
Self
San Antonio, TX

I have always wanted our kids to go to a private Christian school but have been unable to afford it. The bill that would make this possible along with increasing wages of teachers that truly deserve makes it a no brainer to pass.

Karla Canada
Self/retired teacher
Abilene, TX

Public funds should not be given to private schools. It is time to drop this issue. I do not understand why Gov Abbott and others such as Buckley keep wasting taxpayer money on special sessions seeking any form of vouchers. Quit threatening those representatives who have a backbone to say no. Listen to Texans and put this matter to rest permanently. No vouchers regardless what name twist they are given. Fully fund Texas public schools! NO vouchers! NO vouchers! NO vouchers!

Kelly Miller
Self teacher
Amarillo, TX

No to any vouchers! Higher teacher pay and less testing.

Kim Hare, Mrs
Self
Dublin, TX

I'm a special education life skills teacher in a small rural school. I am in the middle of my 30th year of teaching. I'm watching teachers leave the classroom in droves. Some are just leaving the rural school that can't pay competitive salaries. Many are leaving education. Vouchers will not make public schools better. They'll make public schools weaker and some private schools and churches will receive public tax dollars. I've looked and I cannot find a successful example of vouchers or education savings accounts improving the education of all children. There are a handful that reap these benefits but it doesn't have the advertised impact of improving schools through competition. I ask that teachers get raises to keep them in the classroom and that the impact of standardized testing on schools and students be analyzed compared to the money that could be added back to the education budget if the state wasn't spending so much on helping fund the multi billion dollar school testing industry. Please give teachers raises, examine the real outcomes/benefits of high stakes testing, and don't let vouchers become a reality. I am a conservative evangelical Christian and I don't approve of the constitutional violation of church and state that vouchers would be. If it is ok to give tax money to a local Christian school, then radical homeschool/antigovernment groups may be funded by tax dollars as well as the radical factions of other faiths leading to our tax dollars funding terrorism. It is wrong!

Paula Priour, Ms
Self, teacher
Austin, TX

HB 1 and its voucher system poses a serious threat to our public schools, which deserve much MORE funding and support, not LESS.

We need to do everything we can to get

Back on track to separate church and state, not pave the way for religious special interests to run roughshod over our policy-making.

Dorothy Mallona
self- educator at Founders of Lewisville
Lewisville, TX

Please support school choice. It is vital for our future. Education is only as valuable as the parents who invest in it.
Thank You

Jennifer Pederson
Self
Sulphur Springs, TX

Vote no on any and all bills that would take public funds and give them to private schools or for homeschool use. Vote no to vouchers. Put Texas teachers and students first. Increase teacher pay and fund public schools.

Brian Pounds
Self
Hutto, TX

This bill is garbage. Its religious zealotry disguised as an economic concern. It's a way for adults...actual ADULTS...to teach children that Moses road dinosaurs, or whatever nonsense, and pay for it with money that should be used to ensure quality education for all Texas children...not just the rich white ones. Your motives are transparent, and if there is a God, I look forward to the day you have to explain this shameful, shameful disaster of a racist, sexist, anti-education, anti-progress bill. I guarantee he will not be as forgiving as the good people of Texas you continue to defraud and take advantage of.

mike bullard
Self/Self
zephyr, TX

No vouchers- FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Audrey Mayo
Self, Teacher
Harker Heights, TX

I implore you to say NO to all vouchers. They will only take money from our public education system. I urge you to prioritize teacher pay. Stop holding teacher pay hostage! Our students deserve better!

Christopher Douglas, Teacher/Professor
Self and Teacher/College Professor
Gause, TX

As an educator, parent, and college professor I hope that the legislature continues to say "No" to vouchers. Until public education is fully funded and funding is changed to enrollment based, I do not think is financially responsible for our state to support any kind of education savings account or voucher program. In the event education was fully funded, then I think there would be opportunities to consider a system for those with needs as long as they are held accountable to the same testing and rigor public schools are. I ask my representatives and senators from my district to say "No" to vouchers at this time.

John Mitchell
Self
Cypress, TX

Vote no in school vouchers. Fully fund public education!

Elizabeth Johnston, Mrs.
Elementary Educator/ self
Greenville, TX

I support help care coverage for all employees and grant programs for more reading instruction. I also support increases in teacher salaries.

Anne Russey

Self

Katy, TX

As a voter and taxpayer in Katy, Texas, and a mother to two Katy ISD students, I would like to register my opposition to any and all attempts to legislate subsidizing private school tuition for any family. Texans have always had, and continue to have, the choice to select the schooling option that is the best fit for their family. However attempting to funnel taxpayer dollars into any kind of private school funding through vouchers, ESAs, etc is a disservice to our state, our kids and our public education system. I oppose HB1 and ask you to do the same. Thank you.

Elisabeth Hunter
Self, office worker
MANOR, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication.
[Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Elisabeth Hunter
13505 William McKinley Way
Manor, tx 78653

Kimberly Keller
Self public school teacher
Georgetown, TX

Stop the non sense w Abbott's pompous agenda for school vouchers. Ridiculously spending tax dollars on another session to get his way. Stand up to him. Vouchers are a way to harm public schools and children who need education the most! Supporting vouchers will drive away outstanding teachers. Get some spines and stop this useless proposal.

Abby Batlle
Teachers
Waco, TX

There is no way anyone INSIDE and WORKING in public schools wrote this and thinks it's good for kids. This proves the people above who make the laws for the people actually doing the work have NO IDEA!!!!

Derek Nerenberg
Self
Austin, TX

Quit dividing our public school system. If people want to send their kids to private schools, then they should pay for it like we are a capitalist society.

Michael Owens
Self oilfield tanker truck driver
Mt enterprise, TX

Please vote no to House Bill 1

Linda Wilson
Self
Arlington, TX

I am 100% AGAINST any type of school vouchers or "educational savings accounts." We need to fully fund public education, support school employees and stop wasting time trying to pass unpopular voucher bills.

Patricia Sutkin, Mrs.
self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Jennifer Despins

Myself

Austin, TX

Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability to serve every child. I am opposed to this bill.

Shmuel Levertov, Rabbi

Chabad of Leander

Leander, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Charlene Gregus Turner

Self Founding Director non-profit special needs school

Sugar Land, TX

That's a 30 year career in sales and marketing. I've moved to Texas where I have subbed every grade in the public school system in special education. I have taught high school at a charter school here in Texas but more importantly, I came from Florida where special education was a voucher program. Had I known what I was walking into a decade ago, with my special needs son, I would've not come here. But then True Knight Academy would not have happened. I felt like I walked into the dark ages in special education. Nice people, horrible support system, terrible resources, low expectations. Having come from a system that had to transition to vouchers in special education I witnessed a change in innovation and services. I believe the competition will induce some competition that is near severely needed. It will give families choices and students better opportunities. I Support vouchers for education.

Linda Garrett

Teachers

Seagoville, TX

I oppose the voucher program!!

M Camilla Bolch

Self/ Therapist

Austin, TX

I opposed school vouchers

Farha Ahmed
Self
Sugar land, TX

I am against this programs that takes away funds from public schools

Molly Purpura
Self
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,
Molly Purpura

Brittany Thomas
Self _ public educator
Lewisville, TX

Please fully fund public schools. It's sad to know that the government of our state is prioritizing private schools over public schools where we serve ALL students regardless of background and socioeconomic status. We find ways to educate them all based on the standards provided by our state appointed by our governor. If you're going to provide private schools a certain amount, then public schools deserve the same if not more! And if you don't know what public school teachers do day in and day out- I invite you to one of my 6 class periods where I have 31 desks of 8th grade students who I love and care about so much and am struggling with resources because my online textbook was taken away- but yet I'm finding a way to still pour into them every day and every second of every period they are in my room. You are personally invited into what that looks and feels and sounds like. Because it will change your life I guarantee it.

Jacqueline Chaka

Self, mother

Round Rock, TX

To the members of the committee:

I am quite alarmed at some of the facets of HB1, especially as it applies to children with disabilities. As a mother of a child on the Autism Spectrum, the safeguards of IDEA were essential for my child to receive a free and appropriate public education. We tried to enroll him in a private school, but they are not required to provide the services he needs and were very frank in saying they would not. Though I was devastated, I was grateful for their honesty. It would have been traumatic for him to go to the school and then fall behind because they wouldn't provide the modifications he needed.

The public schools in Texas are DREADFULLY underfunded as it is. It is embarrassing that our great State won't provide the money for every student to receive the best public education possible.

If funding is taken away from public schools by the voucher program, that will be devastating to the children who need help the most. Please don't pass this bill. Think of those kids who need the guarantees and assurances that the law places on public schools that are not required in private schools. Thank you.

Sarah Gregory

Self (educator and parent)

Round Rock, TX

I am a product of Texas public schools, a public school educator, and parent of public school students. I do not support any bill that includes funding for vouchers or ESAs. Private schools are not held accountable to the high standards that public schools are held. Further, private schools are not compelled to provide special education services, nor are they required to accept all students. Private schools are expensive and do not provide transportation and after school programs that may be necessary for working parents. While private schools may be a good option for some families, I do not believe that providing public funds for private school tuition is appropriate or necessary. Many of the families that choose private schools have the disposable income to afford them. Why should we dole out tax dollars to the wealthy? Further, I have concerns about the costs of administering the ESA funds by third party contractors. Public schools are strapped for funds, as inflation has eroded the value of our per pupil funding. The legislature and governor need to step up and fund our public schools. All the rhetoric about "failing public schools" is meant to distract from the fact that our government is failing to provide adequate funding for our public schools, including those that are most excellent. Staff have been cut, programs have been axed, teachers and guest teachers are harder to recruit and retain. Children are still behind after missing so much school during the pandemic. We need all hands on deck: teachers, parents, community members, and our governor and legislators. Our children deserve world class educations. We need to invest in our schools by paying our teachers and support staff adequately, investing in technology, libraries, and special programs. Kids have greater mental health needs, and we are educating larger numbers of students with special needs or who are learning English for the first time. Class sizes are large in our secondary schools, and the behaviors can be challenging. Teachers have fewer planning periods and larger classes due to our leaders' inaction on school funding. The lack of respect is truly appalling. The governor asked for a task force on teacher retention, but has not acted on the committee's recommendations. Now is the time to give up the idea of vouchers and fully fund our public schools. The future health and strength of our state's future depends on investing in our children. Our governor's leadership has led to contempt and neglect of public schools. Sadly, more Texas teachers leave the profession than ever before, in large part because of negligence of our state leadership. Texans deserve better, and our children deserve better. No courses should have to be taught by a series of substitute teachers because a teaching position is unfilled. I implore our leaders to do what is right for children and invest in ALL our children's futures. Thank you.

Thomas Purpura

Self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

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Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Thomas Purpura

Megan Barnard

Self

Austin, TX

I unilaterally oppose the siphoning away of funding for public education through voucher programs, and I strongly oppose this bill. There is no greater investment the state can make than a sizable investment in public education. The vast majority of children in Texas are and will continue to be educated through local public schools, and I am appalled that the state's elected officials are not funding schools adequately and are thus undermining and harming our schools, children, and families. I refuse to ever vote again or make financial contributions to an official who supports vouchers or does support significantly increasing funding for the state's public schools.

Christine Finnie

Self

Shavano Park, TX

I support parental choice in education.

Krista Ratcliff, Dr.

Self, tech operations exec

Austin, TX

As a mom with two kids in Austin ISD, I have been so incredibly grateful to the schools, the teachers, the administrators, and the staff who have equipped my children to become kind, smart, educated citizens. The learning experiences they have had in Austin ISD have been wonderful, and my family owes so much to the public school system here.

I am an educator by training, though I work in tech now, and have taught in public schools in another state. It's such a challenging job, and we already expect so much of our teachers while not providing the funding they need to be successful. We in Texas are so fortunate to have excellent schools, and this bad-faith effort to undermine, underfund, and attack those schools is bad for our kids and bad for the future of Texas. We need strong, well-funded public schools so that we can raise the next generation of thoughtful leaders and workers and parents.

Vouchers are absolutely not the way to support the future of Texas and Texas schools. We want our state funds to go toward our public schools. Public schools are the foundation of democracy and the only way to ensure a bright future. Calling this special session at the last minute. Demonstrates bad faith and bad intentions and it is a shameful effort to hurt our kids. School choice is divisive and fuels a polarization that our society cannot afford.

The citizens of Texas have made it very clear that we do not support vouchers and we do not want them in our state. I want our representatives to represent us and not to move forward with what is an obviously negative bill. NO VOUCHERS!

Jean Izuora

Self

Richmond, TX

I am in favor of education savings accounts. As long as you can keep corruption out, in theory this sounds good. I homeschooled two of my three children thirty years ago because the garbage we see today was marching in, even way back then. You have to go in this direction because it's what the people want, but the effort is defeated if it is accompanied with burdensome regulations. It sounds already like there are too many irons in the fire...it really ought to be an amazingly simple program, with the maximum amount of freedom for the parents. The people are tired of jumping through hoops for what is already theirs and government takes every good idea and mucks it up. Set up the educational savings accounts and give MINIMAL guidelines and regulations! Two areas of guidance 1) what's required to teach; and 2) guidelines for parents. THAT'S IT! Oh! And another thing, homeschoolers should get EXACTLY what every other child should get. Every family should receive for each child in that family, the same. There needs to be order and freedom restored to the people. This is a huge task and at some point government MUST TRUST the people. We desire to govern ourselves and with the help of G-d ALMIGHTY we will be a success. Government needs to step aside and get out of the way. Texas has an amazing future if we support programs that heal the families. That's where it begins. Please support this and handle it with the motto: SIMPLIFY. G~d Bless you all and G~d Bless Texas!

Sarah Turner
Self - Music Therapist
Addison, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

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It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Sarah Turner

4815 Westgrove Dr Apt 702

Addison, TX 75001

Mary DeWalt, Mrs.

Self

Waco, TX

Every parent should have the ability to choose the best educational environment and instruction for their child. We pay our taxes and should be able to direct the educational dollars where we deem to be the best school to support our children.

Cathey Weaks

Self

Silverton, TX

House Bill 1 , authored by Buckley is a thinly disguised attempt to destroy the Public Education System! The voucher system proposed by this bill would cause chaos that would spiral out of control. Funds moved from public schools to private schools would put a financial chokehold on the education of Texas students. Private schools should remain PRIVATE. State funds should NEVER be given to any form of "educational entity " that is not answerable to the state. Standards for teacher certification, student performance, funding accountability, and school performance must be maintained. As a retired teacher, mother of teachers, and grandmother of two grandchildren that are students in Texas Public Schools, I must demand that House Bill 1 be destroyed, NOT the Texas Education System. Do not allow greed to dictate the future of our children!

Maria Trevino

self

MCALLEN, TX

Education is going through a crisis. There are too many teachers retiring or changing careers due to the lack of support, low pay, excessive workload, and stressful environment. Teachers must earn HIGHER PAY and equitable benefits to balance their economy. Let's put the money where it belongs: in the public school system. WE SAY NO TO VOUCHERS. NO MORE TESTING, and let's focus on teaching and learning.

Elizabeth Morse

Self - self employed

Dallas, TX

CONSIDER:

- o Do we set up another education system in Texas with its own bureaucracy?
Or do we improve our already existing public education system that serves more than 5 million students?
- o Do we spend billions on a voucher system that will have no accountability to the taxpayers funding it?
Or do we invest in our already existing public education system that has academic and financial accountability standards that must be met?
- o Do we risk the possibility of for-profit private schools or private schools being established that do not have democratic principles or curriculum approved by elected leaders?
Or do we follow state curriculum and standards determined by our elected officials?
- o Do we satisfy the desires of the few who say they disagree with public schools and sacrifice the needs of the many?
Or do we provide the millions of students in our public education system with the best education possible?
- o Do we just hope a voucher/education savings account system works?
Or do we invest to improve our public education system?

PROVIDE FUNDS FOR SCHOOL SAFETY

PROVIDE FUNDS FOR TEACHER SALARIES

INVEST IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ALWAYS OPPOSE VOUCHERS

Madison Parker

Self-teacher

Austin, TX

As a public school teacher I am strongly opposed to any bill which includes education savings account programs or any form of school vouchers. These are extremely detrimental to our already poorly funded public schools. Private schools should NOT be allowed to reap the benefits of tax payer funds. Public schools are currently subjected to unreasonable levels of testing for "accountability" purposes. Private schools are not required to admit all students nor are they required to take any standardized tests. Private schools can pick and choose who they would like to admit and expel students for any reason. This is not school "choice" for parents so much as it is choice for the private schools to do whatever they want. Private schools do not provide the same transportation supports, meal services or special education and dysgraphia services as public schools, further narrowing the pool of students who can attend. Students and families who utilize voucher programs are choosing to leave public schools behind instead of fight for education access for ALL students. This program takes money from the public to give to the already wealthy. It is unfair and unjust and should not be allowed to pass in Texas. Please, think of our future. Kids of today are the future of tomorrow and should be given equal access to high quality education.

Angela Hardin

Self/ Texas Teacher

Sachse, TX

I would like to encourage legislators to stop pushing the governor's voucher schemes so that they can legitimately address the issues Texans care about such as proper funding for our schools, teacher pay raises, and lower testing and accountability burdens!

Jacqueline John, Mrs.

Self homemaker

Universal City, TX

Please help us parents provide quality education for our children. School choice will help us afford a private education for our children. Texas public schools are far beyond the educational curb. School choice will help parents do their part to build a strong future for Texans.

Eric Harris

Self. Engineer.

Austin, TX

This bill is the wrong solution for Texas. Supporting private schools may be a noble endeavor but it does the state no good to reduce public school funding to pay for the education saving account programs. If this were a business making an investment decision this bill is the wrong choice for the short term and the long term. Please don't let it out of committee

Teresa Phillips, Ms

Self

Cleveland, TX

I am a certified teacher in the state of Texas, and I do not believe that my salary should be a bargaining chip for giving people our tax dollars to choose the schools that they wish to attend. If they don't like a district they need to move to a district they like. Y'all keep taking away from teachers you're not gonna have anybody to educate the kids because we are sick of it.

Raul Salinas, Mr
Self
San Antonio, TX

Fully support school choice. We as parents must have the ability to take our tax money to support the school our child is attending when our children do not attend the public school system because public school has failed to provide the education and values we as parents want our children to receive. It is unfair for us to be paying taxes to a district our children do not attend and support a school system that fails our children.it's like giving you free money because that money is not being invested in my children's education because my children do not attend public school. .I should have a choice to take my hard earn tax money and support the school my children get their education from. I should have a choice and a say in the type of education my children are getting. I work hard and make a lots of sacrifices to send my children to a school that shares the values and quality of instruction we want for our children. The tax vouches will provide that aid to support my children get the best education they can possibly get. And bottom line that is what the common goal should be. Getting children educated and having parents involved in their child's education.

WILLIAM DEWALT

Self
Waco, TX

I support quality schools. Waco ISD high schools were unacceptable for years and will get no better without competition.

steven grace
Self
Leander, TX

Vouchers will hurt public schools especially our rural ones. Public school solutions need to be discussed like funding, paying our teachers appropriately, and fixing accountability. Public tax dollars should be spent on those subjects and not for private school vouchers where there will be even less oversight.

Jimmy Lee
Self
Paris, TX

I strongly oppose vouchers. Funding removed from public schools is not going to end well for the future of Texas! Please vote NO!

Chaya Yurowitz, Mrs.

Self
Houston, TX
Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

?

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Martha Eberle
self -- R.N., retired
Dripping Springs, TX

I am very much against using my tax dollars for vouchers for private/religious schools (education savings account program). Public education is important, and if parents want their children to attend private schools, they may pay for them, themselves. Separation of church and state is very important to me, a cornerstone of our U.S. Constitution. There is a reason why this measure keeps failing -- because thinking adults are not fooled by what abbott, et al, is doing.

Gregg Scott
Self - Software architect
Midlothian, TX

Please do not pass any bill that contains education savings accounts or vouchers. ESAs/vouchers send public money to institutions that have the ability to choose who they teach and what they teach. Even if the "what" is contrary to the beliefs of most taxpayers. Public funds should in no way be used to further ANY religious ideology. If parents want their children educated in a certain religion, that's their prerogative, but it's not the responsibility of the State. Please fully fund and support public education and leave ESAs/vouchers out of it.

Heather Huffaker
Self school counselor
Weatherford, TX
Vote no to vouchers

Kelly Trout
Self/Registered Nurse, Retired
San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Kelly Trout
1218 Wooded Knoll
San Antonio, Texas

Nancy Cline
self / parent
Carrollton, TX

Public funding should support Public schools adequately. Currently, Texas ranks at the bottom of our great country. Any available funding should support Public schools.

I wholeheartedly agree with Ulysses S. Grant - "Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church and the private school, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the church and state forever separate."

Stephanie Franklin
Self- Proud Texas CTE Teacher
Centerville, TX

WE WILL NOT BE BEATEN INTO SUBMISSION. RESPECT YOUR TEXAS TEACHERS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION.

I am opposed to the establishment of education savings accounts for those who wish to send their children to private schools and am also opposed to attaching this egregious bill to certification, compensation, and health coverage of certain public school employees. This takes away needed funds from our public schools, and ties the financial compensation of public school employees to private school vouchers--that makes absolutely no sense. It is simply a gift to wealthy people, as the vouchers would not cover all the costs associated with attending private schools, thus still restricting the ability of many low-income individuals to attend private schools. Private schools are not required to accept every student who applies, unlike public schools, which must educate ALL children--this means that private schools can be discriminatory against students based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, and any other criteria the private school stipulates. There are many areas in the state where there are no private schools within reasonable driving distance, so this program would discriminate against those areas. This is a bill designed to help the elite, not the average person. I, for one, do not want my tax dollars to support the voucher program, which has a clear agenda to destroy our public schools. Please give proper compensation, without restrictions or any provisions, to the individuals who are responsible for the education of future generations.

Kris Hawes
My family - IT administrator
Georgetown, TX

Please support HB1 , parents deserve a right to have a say in the education of their children. Our tax dollars fund the school systems and their teachers. Leaving us with no voice is taxation without representation. The TEA has turned into a machine solely focused on themselves ...not the students.

We need this bill passed so we can choose the best place for our kids to learn, it should be a parent's choice , not a state choice.

Rashmi Vasappa, Dr.

Argyle ISD

Northlake, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

We hope you will consider the above to provide the best for our children, who are our future!

Thank you.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Dr. Rashmi Vasappa

Regan Mangiameli

self-teacher

The Colony, TX

All children deserve an education that is more than the bare minimum. "Education savings accounts" take that opportunity away from so many of our students. Public schools need to be appropriately funded by our public dollars. Public educators need to be sufficiently compensated. Texas needs to do what is best for all students by refusing an education savings account program.

Samara Reddy

Self

Austin, TX

Private schools have private agendas. Public schools should not need defending, especially when they are already facing budget cuts. Public money belongs in public agencies- not private.

Roger Hall

Self

Abilene, TX

I am a Cybersecurity and STEM teacher for Abilene ISD in my 10th year of education after retiring from the U.S. Air Force. Public schools, teachers and support staff need more state funding and higher pay, but not at the expense of taxpayer-funded vouchers. Fully fund Public Education, not private profiteers!

House Bill 1 is a voucher bill that legislators are trying to make pretty with more school funding. I dont by it.

A voucher plan may initially be limited, but within a few years it will expand and soon be sending billions of tax dollars to unregulated private schools that should be going to under-funded public schools. That has been the experience in states that have adopted vouchers.

The governor and the Legislature have a responsibility under the Texas Constitution to adequately fund public schools that accept all students. They have no responsibility for private schools, and Texas taxpayers should not be forced to pay for private schools, which can pick and choose their students.

Take vouchers out of House Bill 1, and then we can have a much-needed discussion about public school finance.

Roger Hall

Gary Weeks

Self

Silverton, TX

This vailed bill leads to the crippling our public education system. There will be lax if any oversight of faculty certification, curriculum or expenditures. The for profit schools will become a burden the financial structure of our education system thus reversing the tax relief strived for in the past general session of the legislature. From PreK thru to the Education Service Center this bill will drive the whole system over the precipice into unrecognizable chaos.

Mark Davis

Self

Austin, TX

As a Texas Resident planning a family I vehemently oppose HB1 and any attempt at school vouchers. These will directly negatively impact public schools and hurt the upbringing of our most vulnerable groups. Public schools have the potential to provide excellent education for all Texas children and this proposal serves to undermine that potential to put more money into the pockets of private companies and investors. The only reason to support this at the legislative level is greed and cronyism, and I'm truly disgusted by those attempting to push it through. I attended a lower income area public school and was able to grow into a productive member of the community, and this bill will only make that story more and more rare.

Saba June

Self

Richmond, TX

As a mother of a special needs student, his protection under IDEA for special accommodations is in danger at voucher schools as they fall under no such obligations. Secondly, when you pull money away from public schools, it cuts funds for special needs students. This is nothing but putting us special families between a rock and hard place.

John Pinto
--None--
Houston, TX

Public education created the engineers of America that built our Military Railroads Computers Healthcare etc...this is why NO vouchers.

Helen Panzera
Self
Plano, TX

I strongly oppose this and any voucher bill. Please restore education funding after the severe cuts in the late 2000s.

Elliot Oshman
Self - Sr Director
Austin, TX

As a parent of children in Texas schools, I am against HB1. Vouchers take money from school districts and in doing so, harm all Texas children. We will not be bullied by the Governor and his lackeys into allowing this. This bill should not pass.

Vouchers funnel public funds into unaccountable private schools without oversight.

Kristen Williams
Self / mom
Austin, TX

I vehemently oppose HB 1. This is a disgrace to our state. Our children deserve better, our teachers deserve better. The public education system is falling apart as it is and this will not help in any way. My son started kindergarten this year and it has been one of the best years of his life. He attends Blazier and I can't imagine him going anywhere else. Please, I beg of you, do not pass this bill. Find funds for our public schools. Signed, a concerned mom and proud texas resident

Rupali Deshpande
Argyle ISD
Northlake, TX
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

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Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Rupali Deshpande

Chaya Miriam Ehrenkranz
self- teacher
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

John Bishop

Self, Coach & Teacher, Lubbock ISD

Lubbock, TX

As an educator, I believe it is important that you do not advocate or vote to divert state tax dollars from public to private schools. I oppose all vouchers and related schemes — including education savings accounts, tax-credit scholarships and for-profit charter and virtual schools — that use tax dollars to pay private school tuition for selected students while undermining public schools where the vast majority of Texas students are educated.

We should be making a larger investment in our public schools, not diverting resources to private interests.

Vouchers will do nothing to address the teacher shortage and may very well worsen it, if districts losing tax dollars to private schools are forced to lay off teachers and other employees. And any voucher program in Texas will ultimately cause higher property taxes to pay for it.

Gov. Abbott claims that public schools will remain fully funded. That is not true because public schools are not fully funded now and never have been under his administration. Even after the extra school funding appropriated in 2019, Texas still spends \$4,600 less than the national average in per-student funding.

Your vote OPPOSING all vouchers and education savings accounts is a vote in support of Texas students, educators and public education.

Amanda Cox

Self - stay at home mom

Tuscola, TX

The people of Texas and the parents of schoolchildren do not want vouchers. We do not want ESA's. We want you to fully fund public schools. If you're so confident in vouchers, put them (and abortion) on the ballot in 2024 and let the voters decide. Greg Abbott and his wealthy donors don't get to decide for the Texas residents. No to vouchers, not to ESA's.

Yochanan Scheff

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

I urge you to back HB1 and the Education Savings Account program. Every child in Texas deserves access to the best educational opportunities tailored to their needs. Education is not one-size-fits-all, and parents should have the freedom to choose alternatives that better suit their child's requirements.

Empowering parents to make educational decisions is a win for Texas families, students, educators, and taxpayers. With nearly half the states in the country implementing school choice programs, it's crucial for Texas to join this growing movement.

Thank you for your attention and support in advancing educational opportunities for all children in Texas.

Sincerely and may God bless you,

Yochanan Scheff

A father of 4 kids in our great state of Texas.

Judith Burns

Self. Retired social worker

Buda, TX

HB1 will take funds from our already underfunded public schools on the pretext of giving parents more choices in planning their children's educations. I say pretext because the \$8000 voucher will not begin to pay private school tuition. Further, many rural areas and small towns do not have a private school option. How does the \$8000 help parents in these areas? The Texas legislature should move toward adequate school funding. Instead, they are working on a system that will further deprive public schools of the funding they need and deserve.

Antoinette Ramirez

Self

San Antonio, TX

This bill is a win win for everyone! What a wonderful educational opportunity to offer struggling families for their children. This is a shot in the arm for Texas education! Many many of my friends and family members are in favor of this!!! Please take a look at all the people supporting this and listen to our voices.

B MCF

Self

MOULTON, TX

School vouchers are bad for rural Texans, bad for Special Ed students, and bad for any taxpayers who want accountability in our schools! They are bad for anyone except wealthy parents who were going to send their kids to private schools anyway.

Jean Long

Self

Centerville, TX

I am opposed to the establishment of education savings accounts for those who wish to send their children to private schools and am also opposed to attaching this egregious bill to certification, compensation, and health coverage of certain public school employees. This takes away needed funds from our public schools, and ties the financial compensation of public school employees to private school vouchers--that makes absolutely no sense. It is simply a gift to wealthy people, as the vouchers would not cover all the costs associated with attending private schools, thus still restricting the ability of many low-income individuals to attend private schools. Private schools are not required to accept every student who applies, unlike public schools, which must educate ALL children--this means that private schools can be discriminatory against students based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, and any other criteria the private school stipulates. There are many areas in the state where there are no private schools within reasonable driving distance, so this program would discriminate against those areas. This is a bill designed to help the elite, not the average person. I, for one, do not want my tax dollars to support the voucher program, which has a clear agenda to destroy our public schools. Please give proper compensation, without restrictions or any provisions, to the individuals who are responsible for the education of future generations.

Paul Carangelo

self

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

Support HB1's education savings account program and public school accountability.

John Kummer

Self

Corpus Christi, TX

Please pass HB1.

Mike Akers
self
Argyle, TX
November 8, 2023

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This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Mike Akers

Karen Polanco
Self
Alton, TX

It should be approved since children are no longer allowed to pray in campus. It should be allowed for parents to send the kids where they want.

Christina Edwards
Self - marketing
AUSTIN, TX

As a parent of kids in Texas schools I oppose private school vouchers and H1B

Leslee Weaks

Self

Amarillo, TX

Stop playing with our children and communities' future. Vouchers are not the answer to making our educational system stronger. All they will do is cause chaos with students and their families that need Special Education services. As in other states that have implemented a voucher system, empty promises will be made and students will be the ones that suffer. Texas has a great educational system for the wide variety of students it serves. Find it properly so it can really flourish and be leader in the nation it can and should be.

Sharon Barnes

Self

San Antonio, TX

I am a 60 year old Grandma that has my grandson living with me I send him to a private school because I want him to learn not only Godly principles but I don't want to worry about him being taught things that are not Godly This would truly give me the opportunity to help him in his schooling as it is a financial difficulty at times to send him to private school but it is absolutely need it and worth it.

lisa bridgford

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

Please help fund our schools!! Teachers spend hundreds of dollars supplementing their classrooms as it is. Let's help educators, help the children and in turn help society.

Mysha vanderlinden

Self

San Antonio, TX

We vote for it for Texas residents.

Katy Chrzanowski

Self teacher

Austin, TX

I am opposed to this bill. Save our public schools and don't allow public money to go to private schools. Pay teachers what they deserve with our ample rainy day fund. No private school vouchers ever!

Melissa Quintana

Self, Teacher

Katy, TX

Vouchers are not what's best for students. If you have the money, spend it improving public education across the state. Stop bargaining with our kids!

Audrey Persch

Self

Houston, TX

Fund public schools in Texas! ESAs do not belong here and will do more harm than add value. School districts in the state are facing incredibly difficult decisions due to your INACTION! It is an embarrassment that this great state is ranked so low in public education funding = low ranking in quality too! Stop holding funding the public schools for the absolute worst idea being ESAs.

Mark Spoon

Self/State Coalition Director Convention of States

Conroe, TX

I fully and totally support HB1 and the establishment of an education savings account program. There is absolutely nothing so important as the education of our children and I urge Texas legislators to pass this HB 1 so Texas can once again lead the nation in providing the best opportunities for our youth and our future.

Matthew Zarder

Self

Mason, TX

Vote NO for school vouchers! This will disproportionately affect rural counties negatively! This will funnel public money to private entities with agendas other than educating children! Vote NO.

John Mottram

Holy Trinity Catholic High School

Temple, TX

I am John Rolfe Mottram, a student at Holy Trinity Catholic High School in Temple, Texas, and I am contacting you to request your support for the passage of legislation HB-1 in the Texas House of Representatives. I have attended private school for my entire school career, so this legislation is close to my heart and integral to my school community. I am the son of two veterans who both firmly believe in the value of a quality education in a healthy environment and that such an education should be available for all children, and that is exactly what the passage of this legislation will do for the citizens of Texas. My brother and other members of my close family have struggled their entire lives with learning disabilities, and so, this legislation is all the more pressing and important to me personally. Its passage would mean a brighter future for the education of children everywhere, especially those who need it most. For that purpose, I strongly support the passage of legislation HB-1.

HB-1 could be game changing when it comes to education. Many children around the state of Texas struggle with poverty and learning disabilities leading to their education taking a severe blow. They might need to attend a school with smaller class sizes or one with additional programs and specialized teaching staff, but they are sadly unable to do so due to financial reasons. With the passage of this legislation those children can be given the help they need to have a brighter and more successful future regardless of what their financial situation may be. I firmly believe that every individual should receive a quality education as education is the backbone of a successful and fulfilling life. It is their right to pursue their happiness in life and this legislation helps to solidify that right. Also, as a proponent of private education, I believe that the legislation will expand the horizons of our Texan private school system. One of the biggest barriers between a child and the benefits of private education is, of course, the cost. However, given the passage of HB-1, children across the state of Texas can benefit from private education regardless of finances. This, in turn, will bolster the private school system and increase its accessibility and benefits even further.

This bill is the first step of many in bolstering the Texas education system to promote the growth of the leaders of tomorrow. Let's take that step toward a brighter future for all by passing HB-1.

Lisa Glenn

Self

Austin, TX

I am against hb 1. Underfunding public schools and underpaying teachers is not what Texas stands for. Allowing elite students and parents to have private schools subsidized while not providing sufficient funding for set asides and priority for those who need the help is a poor example of your supposed Christianity.

Lena Angel
Self/Teacher
Katy, TX

Dear House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

I've worked in education for twenty-three years now. I've served as a teacher, instructional coach, and an administrator. I work at the same high school where my children attend, which is right down the street from where I live. I was a product of public schools, and my children will be products of public schools.

My mother had me when she was seventeen years old and my brother when she was eighteen in Conroe, Texas. "Stay in school. Go to college" and "Don't get pregnant" were mantras around my house. I saw my education as an opportunity to escape poverty and provide a different life for my children. Becoming a teacher was a natural fit as I genuinely want to help students find school relevant. I want them to see it the way I do, as an opportunity, and a path to a better life. My children have never known what it feels like to have no hot water or to be hungry. Teaching has provided a stable income for my family. It also used to provide a deep sense of contentment. I was doing something that benefitted society. I felt driven by my purpose.

But the last few years, teaching during a pandemic and the aftermath have been grueling. We have been called time and time again to go above and beyond. We've always worked over our contract hours, but now we were working even more hours over them. We were called back to the classroom before anyone even knew if it was safe. We spent hours learning new technologies. Hours calling parents on the weekend to ask if their children needed additional support. We watched kids checkout. We watched co-workers burnout. Then, when the pandemic finally lifted, we returned to what we thought would be a "normal" year to find children with mental health and behavior problems the likes of which we've never seen before. Fighting, vaping, and vandalism became the new norm. Still, we persisted.

We covered classes during our conference periods (due to teacher shortages). We comforted each other and tried to support new teachers who seemed shell-shocked and who began quitting. Then, experienced teachers started quitting. It's now normal for teachers to quit anytime of the year, including after the first week of school. And though it creates more work for the teachers who have to plan lessons and grade paper in their absence, I'm honestly not mad at them. The demands of the job have become unrealistic. The pay too paltry.

Sprinkle in skyrocketing inflation, and most teachers I know now work two jobs. We talk about where to find the cheapest gas and groceries. How is it that I'm 23-years into my career and feel poorer now than when I started? Please do the right thing and give teachers a raise that is completely SEPARATE from vouchers. I will never forgive Greg Abbott for playing with the lives of teachers. We are people, not pawns. We deserve better. We demand it. And we won't forget your response to this moment.

Sincerely,
Lena Angel

Nicolas Rangel, Dr
Self
Houston, TX

This is stupid. Allowing the Governor to so openly promote the interests of the voucher lobby brazenly screams graft. And the Governor's disciples and sycophants will feign concern for the state of public education knowing full well this will not help. Grifter extraordinaire Dan Patrick benefits from the ignorant electorate that he wishes to expand. He should be ashamed but is incapable of it.

Jackie Molsbee

Self

Alpine, TX

I am a teacher in rural West Texas, Brewster county, Alpine. Alpine has one of the lowest teacher salary's in the state. Every year it's a challenge to hire qualified teachers to come to Alpine. There is NO incentive for people to move here. Our school system is struggling. And despite these things, we are against HB 1 due to vouchers being tied to additional teacher funding and school funding. Vouchers will sink the rural schools taking away funding(not adding). Vouchers will not benefit far west Texas and our kids matter, just as much as those who attend private schools in the cities... govt taxes do not belong in private schools that aren't held accountable.

Nathan Melson

Self

Dodd City, TX

No way should Texas even consider school vouchers (Educational Savings Accounts as they are referred to in this bill.), until school districts are fully funded in this state and classroom teachers, support personnel, and administrators get a mandatory \$10000 annual pay increase, not stipend, to the state minimum pay with a yearly COLA adjustment built in!! If y'all are so confident that ESAs are desired by the average Texan, then you should put it on the next ballot for a statewide vote just like all the Propositions that were voted on on 11/7/23. Let the people/voters of Texas make this decision. Then you'll have your answers. Thank you for your time

Nathan Harvey

self / educator

Hickory Creek, TX

Hi. As an educator, principal, and Texan, I am without words how this issue is still being considered after failing so many times before. The root of the issue is very simple; we cannot, ever, divert public funds, meant for public schools, to private entities with no accountability. It's unjust, probably illegal, and against the very nature of what public schools stand for.

As an Assistant Principal dedicated to nurturing the minds and futures of our next generation, I implore your support for fully funding public education in our state. We have never really funded public education, but what has been so disheartening is the amount of money that is being willingly thrown around towards ESAs and vouchers, but yet our public schools are given over 30% less than the previously released number of more than \$10,000.

Our public schools serve as the bedrock of equal opportunity, providing every child with access to quality education, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds. However, the continual threat of diverting public funds through education savings accounts, vouchers, or similar means to private or religious institutions endangers this fundamental equality. Redirecting funds away from public schools diminishes the resources available to support diverse student needs, limits educational programs, and weakens the foundation upon which our communities thrive.

Fully funding public education is an investment in the potential of our youth, ensuring a level playing field for all students and fostering a society where every child's success is nurtured and valued.

I urge you to champion the cause of public education, safeguard its funding, and reject any initiatives that could undermine this essential right. Let's unite to empower our public schools, empowering our children and securing a prosperous future for our state.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to our children's education.

Alexis Derrow

Self

Dallas, TX

Texas should have educational grants to be used at a parent's school of choice that most appropriate reflects that child's values. Education is the great equalizer and rich parents always have school choice. We are condemning poor children to failing schools funded by inadequate property taxes. By providing educational grants, we can enable schools to compete for the best students and dollars, forcing failing schools to improve. Texas is losing potential residents to places like Florida that already have school choice programs.

Molly Barloco

Self

San Antonio, TX

Please vote in favor of this bill. Thanks!

Emilie Davis

Self - OT

Austin, TX

This is crazy. I can't believe this is on the table again. How unfair this is to the majority of children in our state. This is a terrible idea to take money away from public schools.

Jessie Hockett, Dr.

Davis Elementary

Austin, TX

Oppose

Sandra Nagy, Retired

self

Belton, TX

Public dollars should NOT be used for private schools. Our dollars should only go to public schools to allow our children an education. If private school is wanted that is a parent's prerogative- however they should pay for that choice. State education policies and practices are not all required to be followed at a private school. If schools take public funds they should be twitted to follow every regulation and policy. Thank you

Donna Pacheco

Self

Mason, TX

Vote no for school vouchers! Rural Texans do not want school vouchers to pass. Mason, Texas resident

Vanessa Holdway

Self

Austin, TX

I am a voting constituent of Travis county. I oppose this bill. I request more time and clarification. I would like to see the constituents have more time to understand and discuss this bill.

I oppose school vouchers and believe the tax payer's money set for education should go directly to public schools.

Christina Bartram

Self, homemaker

Argyle, TX

NOVEMBER 8, 2023 UPDATE

TAKE ACTION ARGYLE

Written Testimony Script (copy and paste)

for the Texas Public Education Committee

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Tina Bartram

Ronald Cunningham, Mr.

self/retired

Willis, TX

I support these bills

Sheryl Yarbrough

Self--Social Education Teacher

MESQUITE, TX

If you want to improve public schools you need to fund public schools equally. Taking money away from public schools to fund private schools is not going to help our schools become better. We need to put more money towards reading, writing, math and science education in order to get our students where they can compete on a global level. If you are going to give standardized tests, then you should make sure that each child is given the same instructional materials and resources to learn the material on those tests, and quit raising the bar every year. Teachers should not be held accountable for their students test scores when the subject material they are tested on is based on the previous years' instruction. STAAR ALT 2 test qualifications should not include functional abilities, because that has nothing to do with what the students know.

Joe Bartram

Self, mortgage broker

Argyle, TX

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Joe Bartram

Kay Duc

self (teacher's aide)

Cibolo, TX

I am in full support of bill # HB1 This is an important bill protecting the rights of children to receive the best possible education despite their family's income.

Jan Austin

Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry

Austin, TX

Please stop wasting taxpayers' money on special sessions and turn your support to our public school systems. The education savings account is simply a way to drain money from Texas public schools and funnel it to private and parochial schools over which taxpayers have no control. As a retired public school educator I stand firmly on the side of our public schools and demand that money not be siphoned off from their support. Please stand up to Governor Abbot and his cohorts and prohibit the use of taxpayers' money to support private schools.

Andrew Birdsell

Parent

Houston, TX

Vouchers are a farce. I pay greater than 20k a year in property taxes. I pay for my local public school. Anyone who thinks a private school won't INCREASE THEIR TUITION BY THE AMOUNT OF THE VOUCHER, is not thinking clearly. All the politicians know this. Let the pta/pto of the local places of us parents paying a fortune take over. Not morons

Abby Scoresby

Self, teacher

Bryan, TX

We cannot risk the future of our country by defunding public education. Every child has the right to learn, and the voucher system will take away money from our public schools. The reality is school choice benefits wealthy families, but it hurts those struggling financially. But doesn't every child deserve the right to learn in a well funded school? Please vote not to school vouchers.

Jill Castloo, Mrs.

Self. Retired Medical Technologist

Dallas, TX

I strongly support school choice.

Darell Hortman

Self

Palestine, TX

I oppose vouchers because I oppose subsidizing religion. History teaches us that when religion and politics become co-dependents - they become co-conspirators.

I oppose vouchers because they smack of state-sponsored discrimination. Private schools decide who should/should not attend their school.

I oppose vouchers because they create two inequitable systems of education - one that is woefully over-regulated and underfunded and another that is woefully unaccountable for taxpayer's dollars.

David Varner, Mr.

Self - Federal Analyst

Bulverde, TX

School Choice must remain with Parents, Families and or legal Guardians. Current public school systems are plagued with defunded educational programs, leadership inadequacies and malfeasance at all levels. Moreover current teachers Unions, Superintendents and other 3rd party organizations have prioritized negative ideological/political agendas within our school systems which must end. The use of taxpayer funded monies must return back to the rightful owners, i.e. parents, so that we can ensure our children have the opportunity to learn in an unbiased environment, free from indoctrination, enriched under critical thinking skills sets and ultimately freedom of thought and speech.

HB 1 must eliminate current financial eligibility restrictions and allows any student who is eligible to enroll in K-12 to participate in available school choice options.

It must be clear that the money follows the child, and parents have a right to guide their child's education as we see fit!

Britney Nichols

self, Texas Public School Teacher

Newark, TX

Our public school teachers deserve higher pay. This is a contributing factor to the decrease in highly qualified teachers applying for positions and also the reason many experienced teachers leave the profession. We do not feel valued. The students need less mandated testing. The testing is constantly changing and are not age appropriate. We **ABSOLUTELY DO NOT SUPPORT** vouchers! It's time to make Texas public education a priority.

Carol Field

Retired

Austin, TX

As a grandparent, I am a firm believer in the value of public schools. I do not want there to be vouchers or savings account programs. I support public education for all Texans.

Phyllis Cox
The Arc of Smith County
Tyler, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I strongly oppose House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas and parent and ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

The federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

An additional 3 students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, if HB 1 is passed, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication.
Brochure:

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Phyllis Cox

8550 Carli Circle

Rebecca Feronti

Self, Teacher

Austin, TX

I'm concerned the Legislature will do permanent damage to the Texas public education system by passing HB1, the school voucher bill.

As a teacher, I see daily that our schools are already severely underfunded. There is a staffing shortage because we cannot pay teachers and staff enough. We don't have money for new books in our classroom libraries. There are holes in my school's gym ceiling causing huge leaks and our A/C is broken in the gym. Our schools are falling apart, and this voucher scheme will take more money away from our children, who are the future of Texas.

Voucher programs in other states have mostly benefited wealthy families that could already afford to send their kids to private school. It is unethical to allow Texans' hard-earned tax dollars to go to unaccountable private schools, which don't have to follow state teaching standards or provide special education. That's why I'm asking you to vote against HB1, and any other attempt to defund public schools through vouchers or education savings accounts.

Greg Abbot is using teacher pay and school funding as a political bargaining chip, saying that he'll only increase school funding with the passage of HB1. Don't take the deal! Say no to vouchers, no matter what they offer. It may look good in the short term, but the long term damage they will cause our communities is irreparable.

In Arizona, Arkansas, and Indiana, voucher programs at first intended for low income students ballooned to universal voucher schemes. This diverted large amounts of money away from public schools and led to crumbling school infrastructure, bigger class sizes, teacher shortages, and loss of electives. Abbott intends to have a universal voucher system, which will similarly affect our already underfunded Texas schools.

Please support teachers and public education funding through the special session, and vote down HB1 or any deal that includes vouchers!

Brad Failor

Self

San Antonio, TX

Please help us pass this bill as it will empower the next generation of Texans and increase the value of our teachers.

Katherine Dombrowski

Self

Austin, TX

Please vote against HB1. No public money should go to private schools. Please focus instead on fully funding our public education system. The economic future of Texas depends on a strong, well-funded public education system.

Keith Jeffcoat, Mr.

Teacher

Boerne, TX

Please stop vouchers. My paycheck should not ever be held hostage by a governor in order to push his agenda. Teachers need pay raises. We are the only government agencies in Texas that did not get them this year. There is about to be a major educational crisis. We have to support our teachers in the public education realm.

Tami/Anna Griffith, Ms
Texas Advocates
Friendswood, TX

I want to voice my concern for the school vouchers and the wording regarding information to be given to individuals with an IDD. School vouchers are likely to cause our special needs education to suffer. Special Ed is an area in the Texas School system that already struggles the most. Please stand up for the rights of these individuals. Many can not speak for themselves but you can speak for them and help them get the best education possible. As a mom of a daughter that has gone through the public school system, there is so much more that can be done to help improve the lives of children with special needs. Another thing to please consider is please font limit what housing options the school district tells them are available for them. State homes are not always the best option and there are so many other options they should hear about from their school district. Please think of the best interests of all our special needs individuals. Think of them as your child. Would you want to put your child in a state run facility? Thank you. Tami Griffith

Patricia Hackman
Self, teacher
Kirbyville, TX

As both a parent of two elementary age children who attend a Texas public school and as a teacher in a public school, I am committed to seeing our public schools flourish. This decision is about the future of Texas children, and they deserve the best education we can offer. As such, I am strongly opposed to any type of voucher program and strongly urge our state legislators to oppose vouchers as well.

David Clark
self
Keller, TX

Let's pass HB 1 !!!

Denise Sample
Self
Austin, TX

This bill is a continued attempt to gut public schools in Texas. Public schools that my children go to and that my husband and I attended. We are native Texans who can't imagine living anywhere else in the US. That is why our kids attend public school and we are engaged and do what we can to support our schools, their faculty and staff. It's not right to have parents foot the bill when we see teachers and campuses struggling to provide resources and materials to their students out of their own pockets while charter schools and private schools spend enormous amounts of money to siphon funding from public schools to pad their accounts. It's despicable, actually. This bill will put Texas children's education at risk. Listen to the citizens. Not the lobbyists. Please put Texas children and the public school system first.

Sasha Mail
self / Paralegal
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind

Thank you.

Dini Druk
self
Richardson, TX

Dear members of the House Committee,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

As a parent of six children, I am well aware that not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those who require a setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs. This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child, and as parents, this is our number one priority.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind. Thank you.

Katherine Hopper
Self/Parent/Guardian
San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill 1 (HB1). As a member of the ARC of Texas and a parent/guardian of a Special Needs son, I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools which lack accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the State Supported Living Centers (SSLC's) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families

Both the Federal Government and the State of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principal is acknowledged by the Federal Government through the Supreme Courts decision in Olmsted v. OC and by our state through Texas Government Code section 531.0245(SB 368,77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would include significant financial burden to the State, costing over a million dollars each year. SLCs cost Texans approximately \$28,300 per month, per resident, significantly more than alternative options, such as the Home and Community -based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month, per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and RESTRICTIVE setting.

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At a minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1).

Sincerely,
Katherine Hopper
13821 Coyote Hollow
San Antonio, Texas
78253
210-480-5347

Billie Jean Norton Buss
Self
North Richland Hills, TX

Stop trying to make vouchers happen. If you're so sure the majority of Texans want this and it is just the legislature keeping it from happening, then put it to a state wide vote and stop this special session nonsense. It is a waste of taxpayer money.

Lauren Kittelson
Self
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar

Lubna Abraham
ACPTA
AUSTIN, TX

No to school vouchers!! So it's ok to spend money calling so many ludicrous special sessions instead of properly funding Texas public schools...shame on you!!

Kyle Kittelson

Self

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar

Janice Sturrock

self, retired educator

Austin, TX

I strongly urge you to support public schools in Texas. I urge you to not support vouchers for private schools which will divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement. Public schools provide educational opportunities for all children. In rural areas in Texas-schools are often the hub of the community, a place where people meet and visit with each other, support our children, cheer on the local team and so much more. Please support public schools and strive to more funding for them. Do not divert already scant budgets for public schools to other education institutions.

Jennie Birkholz

Self

Round Rock, TX

I oppose the establishment of an "education savings account". I am a taxpayer, mother of two public school attending children and my husband is a public school employee. Fully fund our Texas public schools and do not give funds for private schools.

Sheetal Moyya

Self

Argyle, TX

September 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

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#TogetherWeSoar,
Sheetal

Jamie Rosler, Rev.

self (business owner/minister)

austin, TX

As a Texas resident and an American, I am strongly against the use of public funds to support private, charter, and/or religious schools. Our communities are strongest when public education is well and fairly funded.

Kristen Haynes, Principal

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

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Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Kristen Haynes

Claudia Ullrich

Self

Austin, TX

I oppose private school vouchers and HB1. HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. The state should not establish an education savings account, and instead invest those funds in public schools that desperately need it.

Laura Dowdy
Self OT
Houston, TX

As a parent and a school employee, I am strongly opposed to establishing education savings accounts BEFORE fully funding public schools and special education. A vote in favor of ESAs will demonstrate the values and priorities of legislators that vote to pass them. The greater good of all kids should be considered BEFORE the financial benefit of a few. Unlike public schools, private schools are not held to the standards of IDEA, 504, nor state mandated testing. They are not inundated with unfunded mandates that require more paperwork and less time actually teaching children. All of which contribute to the quality of a public school.

I am offended by the stance that ESAs will serve ALL kids and offer “choice”. It does not. It serves those that can afford private schools. ESAs in no way “offer choice” to our lower SES or our non English speaking communities. ESAs take away public funds from all students for the financial benefit of a limited few. The fact that the ESA account will provide \$10,500/yr is reprehensible when the basic allotment has been \$6160 for 4 years despite COVID and inflation. That is a + \$4340 difference. In 2010, the basic allotment was \$4765, it has only been raised by \$1395- in THIRTEEN years! I hope the committee understands this is a slap in the face to the dedicated educators that worked through the COVID epidemic going back to school to care for and educate ALL children well before many Texans returned to work. As is the suggested one time \$4000 bonus for teachers, which is not even equivalent to the \$4765 each ESA account will receive above the basic allotment. Again, legislator priorities are at play here and teachers are not at the top of the list.

Even more indefensible is this bill would allow ESA students to take “a” standardized test. Because they are using public funds and will receive 171% of the basic allotment, their educational growth should be monitored and reported via the same testing system as public school students (STAAR/EOC). And these results should be reported alongside the ambiguous “accountability” ratings that public schools are subjected to, which changes so often you cannot statistically compare apples to apples to measure the quality of a school with any reliability or validity.

I implore you to get your priorities straight for the benefit of ALL Texas children and their parents. First fully fund public schools and special education. Second give teachers the pay raise they deserve as essential infrastructure workers. Teachers work every day to support basic physiological/safety needs of ALL their students, yet the quality of the education they provide them is evaluated by the state on the upper levels of Blooms taxonomy. Students who need food, shelter, or physical safety are not physiologically able to learn at a typical rate. Know the science, Maslow before Bloom. Third any ESA program should be funded no more than the basic allotment & take the STAAR/EOCs.

Adam Ullrich
self
Austin, TX

I oppose private school vouchers and HB1. HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. The state should not establish an education savings account, and instead should invest those funds in public schools that desperately need it.

Chris Kovatch
Self
Orange, TX

I am adamantly against setting up any sort of educational savings account or vouchers. State funds should not be spent on religious organizations/private schools. I believe there are constitutional concerns about this as well that will need to be addressed. The governor needs to understand that public schools needs to be adequately funded first and foremost.

Rayola Wilson, Ms.
ATSTA
Houston, TX

No, no, no to vouchers.

Lindee Dorsey
Self SAHM
League City, TX

Texas Dems and Republicans both agree....we do NOT want vouchers! Taking money from our public schools is a detriment to our entire society. Our state funding is already lower than many other states. Our kids deserve more. They deserve the best! They say everything's bigger (and better) in Texas...let's prove it! We can't do that by removing funding from our schools, where the majority of the children in our state receive their education. Thank you for your consideration.

Ann Roberts
self
Irving, TX

I urge you to vote in favor of HB 1. Currently, only those able to afford to live in the best public-school districts or to pay private-school tuition enjoy a full range of educational options. However, through a well-designed parental choice program, families with fewer financial resources will no longer be limited to their local public school and will be able to consider additional educational opportunities. Thirty-three states have some form of educational choice. No state has ever repealed a program once they are established, because they are so effective and popular.

Tashuna Drake
Texas Parent 2 Parent
Houston, TX

I am a mother of a child served by IDEA. My child is in the fourth grade and has been in both general education and self education classrooms in three different schools already. We have tried every combination possible to create the least restrictive learning environment to no avail. Every where we have been the administrations mentions lack of funds for the reason they cannot find the right place for my child. Creating these vouchers would take even more money from the already depleted school districts. Parents of special needs children cannot support this bill knowing private schools are exempt from having to offer special education. This bill was not written with us in mind. Please vote NO, because vouchers weaken public schools including special education.

Heidi Langan
Self - Retired Teacher
Austin, TX

I am a tax payer, a recently retired educator, an ATPE member and a voter. I oppose any vouchers. Giving public money to private schools that do have to not meet the same requirements that public schools must meet is wrong. It will help the few (rich campaign donors) and hurt public education - especially the poor and minority students. Public schools take and educate all students. Private schools pick and choose the students they will take. They can take only gifted, well behaved students and turn away any students who would be more difficult to teach.

Public schools deserve to be fully funded. Schools need more money to keep up with inflation. All state mandates should be fully funded - or not mandated.

All school employees deserve a raise. More teachers (and other employees) will be leaving the profession if they cannot afford to live on their current salaries.

No vouchers, fully fund public schools and give teachers a raise!

Jody Johnson

Self

Argyle, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Jody Johnson

Terry Kosobud

Retired

Austin, TX

Texas is the 9th largest economy in the world, yet it underfunds each student by \$4,000 annually and each teacher by \$7,000 annually. Vouchers are yet another distraction from the fundamental issue that Texas should properly fund all its students. 45 other states do a better job of funding their students, why can't Texas?

When it comes to state spending on education, Texas trails the national average by over \$4,000 per student, earning our state an F-rating and ranking 42nd in the nation in per-student spending. The impact of underfunding our public schools is long-lasting. What are the negative effects of school vouchers? No matter how you look at it, vouchers undermine strong public education and student opportunity. They take scarce funding from public schools—which serve 90 percent of students—and give it to private schools—institutions that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Cindy Dixon
Self, retired educator
Huntsville, TX

I would like to add my name as a taxpayer in Texas AGAINST school vouchers in any form or by any name.

Patrick Talley
Self - Program/Project Manager
San Antonio, TX

I am writing in support of HB1 by Buckley.

As a veteran parent of the Catholic school system, I have witnessed the powerful positive effects our education system can have on children, families, and communities. Children in Catholic schools are blessed with talented and caring teachers, proven academic programs, robust student diversity, inspiring service opportunities, and a loving, faith-filled community of support. Our students grow in the grace of those God-given blessings to become conscientious, productive, and caring adults, parents, and community leaders.

Yet many economically distressed families are kept by circumstances from participating in these unique educational blessings. Despite the relatively modest cost of tuition at Catholic schools and the many needs-based scholarship and tuition assistance programs offered to more than 30% of our students, there are still thousands more who sit on waiting lists.

But thanks to HB1, the prayers of those families can be answered, and the blessings of Catholic education can be available to everyone who desires them.

Thank you.

Colleen Jackson
Self - retired paralegal
Dripping Springs, TX

While HB1 would provide a critical increase in funding for Texas public schools, it also creates a voucher system or Educational Spending Account that would take millions of taxpayer money and spend that money on private school tuition and homeschool expenses. I am adamantly opposed to using taxpayer funds to support private schools and homeschool expenses.

Sean Fanning
N/A
Mansfield, TX

I am a Texas Teacher opposed to the privatization of our public school system. I've worked as a public educator since 2009 and have served the families of Texas since 2015. Through experience, I have a first hand understanding of what our public schools provide our children and our communities. A healthy and thriving Texas needs a healthy and supportive public school system. The proposed school voucher program, now being marketed as educational savings accounts, will directly reduce the financial health and proportional community support our public schools can offer, particularly in communities that need more support instead of less. The lack of public support for these "ESAs" should demonstrate Texas citizens' understanding of that statement. I implore you fine people to truly consider how your decision on this matter will directly impact all your constituents and to rise to the call of your community. I hope that you do that by rejecting ESAs and supporting our kids in public schools.

Jonathon Clark
Self attorney
Round Rock, TX

Please stop. The people do not want this. We want to fully fund public education. If you truly believe in the merits of vouchers let them stand or fall on their own. Stop waisting our taxes on special sessions.

Reese Armstrong
self, Student at LASA High School
Austin, TX

Representatives,

I fully reject this legislation and any other measures to create school vouchers or education savings accounts, even if raises for teachers are included. School Vouchers would do lasting damage on our public education system and divert taxpayer funds to private and religious institutions. Education when funded by taxpayers should be under democratic control to ensure that everyone in the community gets a say in their school system. This legislation would additionally starve rural schools of the funding they need to stay open, which those communities rely upon for education, as the market is too small for profitable private schools. People who can't afford private school even with the voucher would be impacted as well, because they now have to go to a much less funded public school that doesn't deliver the education they need.

All in all, this bill would do immense damage to our public education system and it needs to be voted down.

Thank you,

Reese Armstrong

Mary Masters, Ms.

Self. Retired.

Pipe Creek, TX

Please NO vouchers of any kind ever.

Please pay a living wage to the teachers we have, and the ones we hope to attract.

Do away with the testing that takes up so much time. Let the teachers actually TEACH instead of prepping students to take the tests.

Eliahou Kriheli

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their children.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to support families in this respect.

Thank you.

Eliahou Kriheli

Kami Finger, Asst. Superintendent of School Support

Lubbock ISD

Lubbock, TX

As the Asst. Superintendent of School Support and Special Services, I represent 25,500 students enrolled in Lubbock ISD. Of those students close to 40% are in need of additional services. The diversity and intensity of services necessary to support this student population requires innovation and strategic spending. Under the IDEA students requiring adult transition services (up to age 22) cost the school district up to \$22,000 per student per fiscal year. In LISD that impacts close to 85 students. For students who are not successful in a traditional school setting needing therapeutic social and emotional services the cost per student is \$45,000 per student per year, that impacts up to 25 students. For students needing access to alternative education the cost is easily \$15,000 per year, that impacts 150 students per year. For students with Dyslexia needing access to research based intervention 5x a week for 45 minutes, LISD spends \$500,000 from the general fund in addition to the \$585,000 given through the Dyslexia Allotment to serve over 1500 students. The students accessing the Dyslexia program, MASTER the STAAR test. Over 4,000 students in Lubbock ISD are served in specialized programs where they are not only accessing instruction, but are accessing instructional support from an adult during the day, they are accessing Occupational Therapy, Assistive Technology, Physical Therapy, Music Therapy, Adapted PE and so much more. Currently, there is a significant staffing shortage in these areas, how will we divvy up the staff to continue to provide these services when as students exit public education there will not be enough funding to pay for them all? When a parent is issued \$10,500 dollars for the education of their child, who will provide all of these services? As it relates to the global impact on students with physical disabilities, cognitive disabilities, behavioral disabilities, disciplinary complications, drug addiction, speech disabilities, Limited English proficient, Homeless, and/or Foster, etc., has Texas researched the implications on these subgroups? Many other states are running voucher models, and several have enough years to statistically analyze the social, economic, and educational impact on all students. In some of these states trends include increases in crime rates in certain communities, more children being placed in Residential Facilities, an increase in child abuse, an increase in segregation, an increase in the number of students mistreated in special education speciality schools and a lack of education. Texas needs to conduct sound research, based on the impact of specific rural and urban communities inside of Texas, first. School choice does not have to include educational savings accounts, school choice can be designed and innovated within the current structure of public education if given the legislative flexibility, reduction of duplicative accountability systems, and the freedom to think outside of the box. TY

Hannah Robinson

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Hannah Robinson

Alexander Mathew

self

Austin, TX

Restricting immigration

Greg Sells, Mr.

self, federal government

Austin, TX

I am writing in opposition to HB 1. It would shortchange the public schools the majority of Texans rely on for the education of their children by diverting money to private schools which are not held to the standard of accountability that public schools are held to. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement.

Melanie Jackson

Self

Richardson, TX

I am a Texas public school parent. I do not want any type of educational savings accounts passed. I feel it will only serve to divert public dollars to private institutions. I don't trust the Texas government to adequately oversee a savings account program. I feel Texas needs to fully fund the public school system we currently have. The only way all Texas school children will have access to a decent education is through our public system. Allowing people to divert funds to private entities will only serve to aid those already in private schools. Private schools do not have to allow entry and they can raise rates as they see fit. This will give those who can already afford this education a chance at a discount. It does not serve all Texans. I feel it is a grave mistake to allow any type of educational savings account pass. Texas needs to do better. Better is funding public Ed, not dismantling it.

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a, TX

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Lisa Eager

Our Lady of Fatima

Texas City, TX

This concept means a significant amount to our family and specifically for the future of our children. I think it's important to remember that public schooling is most times the only option for the majority of families in every community and, therefore, we are at the mercy of complying with every principle bestowed upon our children.

We came to Our Lady of Fatima for the mission, morals, and goals they stand for that align better with our family's expectations. It's a financial hardship for us and it's uncertain how long we will be able to sustain this level of education due to rising costs without support elsewhere. Our children are our future and it's crucial now more than ever that we raise dutiful upstanding citizens that may lead our communities someday.

Tracy Stidham
Self/ Childcare Industry
Waxahachie, TX

I come before you to address an issue of great concern not just to myself, but to thousands of families and childcare professionals across our state. As Texans, we pride ourselves on providing opportunities and nurturing environments for our youngest minds to flourish. Yet, the current trajectory of funding distribution threatens the very fabric of early childhood education within our state.

The redirection of funds to public and charter schools for the inclusion of three and four-year-olds directly undermines licensed childcare centers. These establishments are more than mere facilities; they are the breeding grounds of early literacy and personal development for our children, many of whom begin their educational journeys with the ability to read before stepping foot into kindergarten. Unfortunately, we observe that the progress we instill often stagnates upon their transition into the public education system, statistics show this.

Our economy faces severe challenges, and instead of fortifying the childcare sector, which upholds stringent state and Texas Rising Star standards, there appears to be an orchestrated effort to diminish it. The projections from State Licensing are alarming, estimating a potential closure of 40% of Texas childcare centers within the next year. This is not merely a forecast; it is a dire warning. Many families don't have the financial resources to put their children in an environment they choose, one that provides a smaller, early learning environment, based directly on learning environments for 3 and 4 year olds, when there is a "free or almost free" option.

The consequences of such closures are far-reaching: a surge in unlicensed and potentially unsafe childcare as rates soar beyond the reach of average families, the decimation of jobs within our sector and allied industries, and the neglect of the diversity in teaching and learning styles that our current system supports.

I implore you to consider the long-term ramifications. When schools are incentivized to fill quotas rather than nurture intellect by picking up children solely for headcounts, we have strayed from our mission. The reduction in teacher diversity for core subjects such as mathematics due to the reallocation of teachers to pre-K programs is a silent crisis in the making.

The fear harbored by our legislature toward the influence of school districts must be addressed with courage and foresight. We need a "school choice" policy that encompasses pre-K, mirroring the successful models in other states. Our children's future and the stability of their education should be paramount, not political leverage or district-level agendas.

My petition, which grows daily, is a testament to the collective voice of concern and the desire for change from Texas parents. We are not just petitioners; we are voters, educators, and, most importantly, guardians of the next generation's potential.

Phoi Nguyen, Sr.
self, teacher, religious sister
Houston, TX

Greetings,

I live in Houston and belong to the Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate Province and I work at St. Edward Catholic School. I am writing to ask you to SUPPORT PARENTAL CHOICE in EDUCATION and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line. Thank you for your time and dedication.

God bless,
Sr. Marie Frassati N., OP

Hugh Grubbs
Self/Educator
Graham, TX

I believe that any House Bill that includes vouchers or ESA's is a severe detriment to Texas Public Schools. I am curious why the state can come up with the funding for vouchers (\$10K) but not for public schools. Why is that? I mean, it is taxpayer money. Why is it that any bill that comes up saying that school funding will increase and teachers will receive pay raises also has vouchers attached to it? It looks to me like the fine folks in Austin are holding Texas Public Schools hostage! That is not acceptable! If the fine folks in Austin made more of an effort to help Texas Public Schools instead of buddying up with their compadres who run private/charter schools, things would be so much better. If you look at other states that have voucher programs, those schools are failing their customers. Are these schools going to be held to the same stringent requirements that public schools are? They aren't now. Why would that change? This is an unpopular bill with educators and politicians alike. Let's support Texas Public Schools and educators instead of villanizing. I hope you will change your mind about this bill, but I'm not holding my breath. I will just continue to find and vote for politicians who support public schools instead of trying to destroy them. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.

Herb Ox, Dr.
Public Schools
Waco, TX

No vouchers in any shape, form or fashion are acceptable.
Fully fund Texas public schools.
Give teachers a pay raise.
We are NOT willing to compromise on ESAs or vouchers under any other name in order to get our public schools funded.
Do not attach a funding "carrot" for our public schools to any form of a voucher bill.
There are 5.5 million kids in Texas public schools.
We are funded at 43rd in th nation and teacher's salaries are at 47th in the nation.
This is embarrassing and shameful behavior towards our teachers and our kids.
Teaching is the profession that makes all other professions possible.
And our kids are our most precious natural resources.
Fully fund our public schools.
Pay our teachers a livable wage.
Never vouchers!
Sincerely,
Dr. Herb Cox

Kim Martínez
Self
Arlington, TX

Public school needs to be FULLY funded- including funding for new school security measures, pay raises for ALL school employees, compensation for required prof development like reading academies and ZERO u funded mandates! Do NOT destroy public Ed by subsidizing private Ed for a few who can afford it or invest in sub-standard private schools. It is the states DUTY to educate ALL children and it is a child's RIGHT to be educated. If you properly fund schools and create good teacher retention, development AND retirement, the system can and WILL improve. FUND BETTER INSURANCE for teachers! Add us into the state employee insurance. We will remember and we VOTE.

Amy Whiteaker
AISD
Austin, TX

I oppose HB 1 and school vouchers. It takes resources away from public schools and is not a fair system.

Jennifer Darnell, Mrs

Self

Arlington, TX

The focus of Texas should be on providing robust fully funded public education to all students. We are \$4000 per student below the national average and until we at least catch up to the average, we should not be considering funding private schools that can deny Texas children access to, and that will not have any accountability to Texas taxpayers.

Ruth Rosas

Self

Austin, TX

I do not support this as this puts our public schools in jeopardy of losing funding

Pamela Kosobud

retired teacher

Austin, TX

Multiple times bills have been proposed this year attempting to create a system of school vouchers and/or educational savings accounts. These bills repeatedly miss the mark. Texas has underfunded its schools for years. Teachers are woefully underpaid and dollars per student are considerably below the national average. Teachers and school staff have repeatedly said "no" to vouchers. As a retired teacher, I appreciate their concern with vouchers because vouchers don't solve today's problems. Therefore please vote "no" on vouchers and instead give the teachers a raise and provide more money for students.

Carmen Bessire

Self - Certified public school teacher

Austin, TX

The Governor continues to push for an unpopular voucher system that will hurt, rather than help students. I urge lawmakers to listen to their constituents and not put unwanted vouchers in place. Instead, raise the basic allotment by \$1000 per student so that we can return to pre-pandemic and pre-record inflation levels, and continue doing good work in public schools. Texas students deserve the best education, not one of the most poorly funded in the nation. Vouchers would siphon off funds that all students deserve. Uphold the Texas constitutional right to a free and robust public education. Do your duty as lawmakers to act in the interest of the whole wide great public of Texas, and not 1 Governor and his private school lobbyists.

Chris Stuart

Self

Round Rock, TX

I oppose educational savings accounts. Fully fund our public schools.

Donna Ellis, MPA

Self, Organization Development Consultant and grandparent

Sugar Land, TX

The great State of Texas must provide publically supported public school education to all of our children. It must include excellent and well developed public school curriculum for early childhood education and for all of our primary, middle and high school age children. It's important that we support our students' personal growth while encouraging and enabling them to reach their full human potential. It should include a broad stellar curriculum using state of the art methods. This is the responsibility of our State of Texas school administrators, teachers and support personnel. Allowing public school resources to be siphoned off and put into non-public schools simply does not serve the greater public interest or good. Thank you for your attention. Donna Ellis

Rebecca Morrow

Self / teacher

Mineola, TX

I am a voting constituent of Wood county. I oppose this bill. I request more time and clarification. I would like to see the constituents have more time to understand and discuss this bill.

I vehemently oppose school vouchers and believe the tax payer's money set for education should go directly to public schools. I will oppose any bill that includes vouchers. Every. Time.

Jim Vaszauskas

Personal

Mansfield, TX

My family is adamantly opposed to the use of tax dollars for private and or religious schools. Please opposed this bill.

Zach Freeman

self - stay at home dad

Grapevine, TX

Please stop holding public school funding hostage and drop the push for taxpayer-funded private schools. We already have school choice in Texas, we do not need to give taxpayer money to private schools that are not held to the same standards of accountability as our underfunded public schools. Vote no for HB1 and tell Abbott to stop calling special sessions.

Misty Green

Self

Ben Wheeler, TX

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

I stand before you to advocate for the comprehensive bill under discussion, which promises to bring pivotal advancements to our education system. It is with utmost sincerity that I endorse the measures proposed, for they represent a significant step forward in enhancing the quality and accessibility of primary and secondary education within our state.

Firstly, the stipulations for the certification and compensation of public school employees serve as the cornerstone for attracting and retaining quality educators. By setting robust standards for certification, we ensure that our students are instructed by individuals who are not only qualified but also passionate and well-prepared for the challenges of modern education. Equally critical is the proposal to improve compensation and health coverage for these educators. A fair and comprehensive compensation package is essential for acknowledging the value of educators' work and for fostering an environment where teaching is a viable and attractive career choice.

Secondly, the reforms to the public school finance system outlined in this bill are a bold step toward rectifying disparities and ensuring equitable funding across all public schools. By reevaluating and reforming the funding mechanisms, we can close the fiscal gaps that currently leave many schools—and thus many students—without the resources they need to thrive.

The emphasis on special education is another commendable aspect of this bill. It acknowledges the varied needs of our student population and ensures that those with different abilities are provided with tailored support. This inclusive approach guarantees that no student is left behind, aligning with our commitment to educational equity.

Furthermore, the establishment of an education savings account program is a visionary initiative that empowers parents by giving them a stake in their children's educational journey. It facilitates a more personalized education experience, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to pursue a learning path that best suits their individual needs.

The bill's focus on reading instruction and early childhood education tackles the issue of educational foundations with the seriousness it deserves. By prioritizing these early stages of learning, we are setting our children on a path to lifelong academic and personal success.

The expansion of virtual education is another critical measure that aligns with the digital transformation of society. By integrating technology into our education system, we prepare our students for the digital economy and provide flexible learning options that can be tailored to individual circumstances.

Lastly, the public school accountability measures included in this bill will establish a framework for transparency and continuous improvement. By holding schools accountable, we drive them toward excellence and ensure that our educational system remains responsive to our needs.

matt armstrong

Self

AUSTIN, TX

I oppose any proposed voucher system that will force my children to compete in the marketplace and open themselves to unfair and damaging indoctrination by private education organizations.

siva alapati
Argyle ISD
NORTHLAKE, TX
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,
Siva

Danielle Erotas
Self
Plano, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program. It is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Melissa Waelchli, Mrs.

self

Austin, TX

The will of the Texas people has been made abundantly clear several times already and a fourth special session doesn't change anything. For hopefully the last time, NO VOUCHERS IN TEXAS. Our public dollars belong in public schools, not private institutions that can turn away whatever students they wish. Our Texas public schools deserve our support and to be fully funded, not degraded and defunded to the point of dire straits. If any of our schools are failing it is due to the failure of our legislature to pass meaningful funding increases over the last several years. It's long past time to fully fund our public schools.

Mike Richter

Convention of States

MESQUITE, TX

I support this Bill.

Norman Hoppenstein, Mr.

self, attorney

Plano, TX

Parents should have financial help in providing educational choices for their children. Providing such financial assistance is constitutional and has been enacted by many other states. It is time for Texas to help provide a choice for parents to provide what they feel is best for their children.

Radhika Balasubramanian

TX parent to parent

Roundrock, TX

Voicing my opposition to this. I am also a special needs mother

B Greenblatt

My Child's School

houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program. I have lived in various states and have seen how different states are concerned for varying factors within the educational system. I truly believe that my children, and every parents' children, should have access to the best educational opportunities. Why should the children in Texas be left out? This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child ensuring that each child can be in the school setting with the educational needs that best suit that child.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, Let Texas join!

Thank you for your hard work on behalf of your fellow Texans!

Laurel Martin

Self - a concerned Travis County retired citizen

Austin, TX

My eldest son's life was literally saved by transferring him from the public school system (where he severely struggled as a special education student) to an effective private school that teaches kids who learn differently. Thanks to that private school, he graduated timely from high school, went directly to a Texas public university, earned a B.S. degree, and is now employed by the state of Texas. We had to borrow funds to cover the expensive annual tuition and fees of the private school. AND YET, my husband and I are both AGAINST HB 1 as it will further harm our public education system by diverting much-needed funds. Perhaps, with better funding, our public high schools could better and more effectively serve the special needs student population. Please vote AGAINST this bill.

Amy Messick

Self

Sachse, TX

I live in Sachse and belong to St. Mark parish and my children attend St. Mark Catholic School. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line. Please support an education savings account program.

Sincerely,

Amy Messick

Garth Erickson

Myself

San Antonio, TX

I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Susan Peters

Self, retired Texas public school teacher

McKinney, TX

School vouchers are school vouchers- it doesn't matter what you call them. They take funds from public schools and give them to parents and private schools. History has shown that they don't improve education, but instead provide an opportunity for parents of children who are already in private school to get paid for the child's private education. It doesn't reduce the number of children in public Ed- just reduces the funding to public education. Private schools and homeschools in Texas have no educational requirements- no standards. Parents who are homeschooling can literally create a high school transcript for their child on their home computer and say their child "met" graduation requirements. No oversight. Parents have already posted on social media that they plan to use the voucher funds for family vacations. Since there's no oversight, nothing can be done to avoid this. Private schools have the luxury of choosing their students. Most private schools do not accept students with special education needs. My granddaughter receives a wonderful education in Plano ISD in their special education program. If funding is cut, she will likely lose services, but wealthy parents of regular ed kids in private schools can take a nicer vacation. Who need the \$? The special education student or the private school parents?

I taught in TX public schools for over 30 years. I always had to fund my classroom with personal \$ because the state and my district didn't provide all of the materials I needed. I also paid for my own training to become a better teacher. I used to be a high school testing coordinator and administered the STAAR testing to thousand of kids. I watched students in high school work hard to master the skills to pass. What do private school or homeschool kids have to do to graduate? That's up to the individual school or in the case of homeschool, they have to do nothing. Who monitors this? No one from the state of Texas. The state has done a horrible job monitoring private charter schools in the state. In this case, they won't have to monitor this give away- they will just send checks to parents. What could go wrong?

Say no to vouchers- stealing from public schools to help the wealthy has no place in Texas. Governor Abbott doesn't understand the word no- much like a toddler having a tantrum. Public school funds belong in public schools. It's not about school choice- it's a school voucher scam.

Donna Bueche

Self

AUSTIN, TX

Vouchers will not help address the massive, long-term issues that State legislators, led by the current Governor, have put into place by deeply reducing funding for public schools. We know that the current power holders want to dismantle public education piece by piece and this is just another way to destabilize the public school system. Gov Abbot and the money bags who are desperate to get hand outs from the government to pay for private-school education are stealing from the hard-working citizens who collectively put their tax dollars and children into a public ally funded institution. That's the role of the governor, not to booster privately funded schools! Invest in public education and invest in the future of texas. Full stop.

Tianne Moon

Self/pastor

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar, Tianne Moon

Aaron Wealcatch

Self, Teacher

Dallas, TX

I am a teacher at Torah Day School of Dallas. Our school provides a full Judaic Studies program as well as a full Secular Studies Program. Our students graduate with a well rounded education and strong adherence to Jewish laws and values. Many of my students' parents struggle to pay tuition while providing for their families on a basic level. Please support School Choice/Educational Opportunity and Enrichment.

Mary Hollan

Self, Supervisor

San Antonio, TX

N/A

Mary Selby

Self

Austin, TX

I firmly oppose HB1. True school choice comes when our government correctly funds our public education system. For over a decade they have failed to properly fund public education and I do not want any of my tax dollars to go to private education institutions that I have no say in, and who are not held to the same standards as the teachers and staff in our school districts. As a person who grew up in rural Texas I know for a fact this would harm my city and the schools I attended. How are we to have our kids in football or basketball, see them in marching band take the field, or come in first at the various UIL academic competitions? In my hometown the two private schools available were of a faith that I did not belong to. How could my parents send me to a place of schooling/education and know I would have to engage in a faith that was not part of our family values and choices. I don't see how this is a choice at all. Texans and our representatives have repeatedly voted no against vouchers. Now it is the selfish motivations of a few in government to keep pushing this agenda Texans have said we don't want. Please hold strong and say no to vouchers. Texans don't need or want them.

Jessica Kane

Self, parent

Irving, TX

I support parental choice in education and implore you to pass this bill so that Texas families have more options, especially those who need it most.

Ronda Meldrum

Self -- Teacher Katy ISD

Katy, TX

I am an elementary school public education teacher. Over the past few years, teachers largely have become a political target. Testing has significantly increased, school safety has become a constant worry, and work-load demands become overwhelming. Pay raises are held hostage while inflation cuts deep into our small shrinking paychecks. Every year a significant amount of teaching positions go unfilled. Education savings account programs -- vouchers -- threaten to take even further deep cuts into public education funds. Under the current HB proposals, private schools, who are not held accountable to state testing or HB's for student test failure, who do not always provide necessary special education programs, and who can be very selective over which applicants they will choose to fill their school, will be receiving more dollars per student than public education students. Thank you to those who have stood firm against vouchers and are fighting for teachers! We appreciate your efforts and hope that you will continue the fight for what is truly best for ALL of our children, not just those that can afford private schools!

Karen Porter

Self

Azle, TX, TX

Texas needs an educated population. We need all children to have equal access. Vouchers just widen the gap between the haves and the have nots. Vouchers are bad for Texas.

Parents already have school choice and do not need public tax dollars if they choose to send their children somewhere other than a public school.

The Governor needs to stop acting like a spoiled child. The constituents of Texas do not want vouchers, so stop calling special sessions, wasting taxpayer money and accept the way of the people not the super-rich bigoted men who want to crush public education.,

Brent Eilers
Self
San Antonio, TX

To whom it may concern,
We have four children with the two older children going to a private high school. We feel it is important for us to have a Christian (faith) based education for our children. Most importantly having a school that is allowed to teach values that are important to a well balanced life. Life seems to be tougher for our kids with all access to social media. I know many kids that go to public school that do well and I am grateful for these schools. However we know options and competition make everyone better. If we allow private schools to receive the tax money we are all paying, we strengthen our school system. Certain values can get lost in a public school system because you need to keep all participants happy. I pray that you see the benefit for all young men and women to allow public funds to supplement the high cost of private education.
Thank you,
Brent Eilers

Sasha Payne
Self
Comanche, TX

We don't need more reading programs, we need to use the resources we already have. We don't need virtual education, we need students to be face to face in the classroom with teachers. We don't need vouchers, we need teacher raises. The house needs to stop telling us how to teach our students and focus on supporting teachers and students in the classroom.

Brett Guillory, Mr
Self
Houston, TX

I am a lifelong conservative and Republican voter. There is nothing conservative about this bill and you all know it. I will not vote Republican in the next election of vouchers continue to be pushed and I will actively work against Republican candidates that push this lobbyists scam.

We want the accountability system fixed, stop punishing schools for removing unruly students and allow local officials to take back the schools. We want teachers to be paid and respected. And we want our schools funded. The state has neglected its duty by putting most of the financial burden on the local property owner. We have the surplus BECAUSE you're not properly funding education. You're not conservative, your globalist and you're ruining the Republican Party

Martin Blutworth
self, student
Austin, TX

I am a student and currently go to a very underfunded public school. The computers provided are often so slow it's impossible to do much work on them, the food isn't filling enough to get through half the day, the air conditioning breaks every other week, our teachers are forced to use money from their paychecks to buy supplies like pencils and staples, and in some portions of the school, you can pull bricks out of the walls without any trouble. All of this being said, I hope you can understand why I am very strongly against taking away our already poor funding to let some people go to a rich, religiously owned, for-profit private school. Since the beginning of this country, there has always been a fundamental call for the separation between church and state, and these private schools (I believe) remove that separation in education. By removing this separation the schools are no longer meant to simply educate the populous in America, but to promote their own political and religious ideologies AND to make money. Vouchers end up not helping a kid learn in a better environment, but instead help promote a growing idea that education can and should be privately owned and for profit. Kids who go to private schools have been proven to learn LESS and have worse social and emotional development (University of York, 2020) despite the poor physical conditions in public schools, and by getting more people to go to said private schools the already bad problem is worsened. That is to say the lives of people in public schools get worse and more people are "educated" by a company working for their own goals and not for the greater good of the children who are supposed to be learning. It's already so bad, how much worse are you going to make it? Thank you.

Leilani Clark

TRTA

Austin, TX

Please say NO!!! to vouchers. I believe that granting vouchers to parents will undermine the public education system in Texas by taking away essential funds from public schools and allowing parents to enroll their students elsewhere leaving less money for the public school system to do its job of educating all students.

Leslye Roberts, Mrs.

Self/Educator, Principal

Abilene, TX

As a state, we must focus on providing a free public education for all students. A voucher or ESA program should not be considered when Texas public schools are not adequately funded. Public school funding, teacher pay raises and school safety are issues that should be considered and voted on separately from an ESA program. As a committee, please focus on the issue that is going to benefit the future of all Texas students and increase public school and school safety funding and compensation for all educators.

Adjusting the basic allotment for inflation and providing an increase in the allotment to provide the staff and resources needed to meet the learning needs of all students is key to the future success of schools and students and our state. In addition to funding increase, basic allotment determined by enrollment rather than attendance improves school funding.

Public schools serve all students without requiring an application of student's academic level, behavior, beliefs of family, or economic status. As a public school principal, I have students come enroll in my school because they had a discipline issue and are being considered to be expelled from a public charter or private school or they are not accepted into these schools because of behavior or academic need. We enroll these students and provide the services needed for the students to learn and to have a successful future. ESA is not about family choice. It is about the schools' choice to accept or not accept certain students.

The priority of Special Session 4 must be on the schools that accept and teach all students - Texas Public Schools.

Belia Gonzalez McDonald

self- student programs director

Cibolo, TX

Please support this Bill so that all families can have an equitable choice for their children's education. Parents are the first advocates for their children. Please do this for ALL children. Thank you!

Dana Winland

Self homemaker

Sealy, TX

Parents are the first teachers and know their children have certain educational needs. School choice has to be a priority for the well being of our kids and meeting those needs.

Lisa Lobb, School Board Trustee

Self - retired teacher and school board member

Irving, TX

Please help change the climate in Austin to pro-public schools! No vouchers - none. None at all. Do not be party to the death of public schools in Texas. We want higher teacher pay, more support for public schools and local school districts, fewer charter schools, less testing, and more financial support for all the new legislation you are imposing on schools. Be a voice FOR us, not against us! First time I've ever been ashamed to be a republican with the unbelievable lack of support for public schools coming from Austin.

Josie Geck
Self
Austin, TX

I do not support school vouchers, or this bill. I strongly and kindly ask you to not pass this bill. Thank you!

Daniel Olivares
Self
Sunnyvale, TX

Elected officials should stop trying to give out coupons to the wealthy and focus on funding our schools and give teachers raises. They should disclose all the money receives from public school defunders or speak as to why private schools won't be held to the same standards and how that provides "transparency"

Vouchers are bad for Texas. Fund our public schools!

Olayinka Ayedun, Mrs.
Institute for Justice
Huntsville, TX

I and my family are in support of Educational opportunity and enrichment here in Texas.
This will help our children to be able to advance and grow even with low socioeconomic group.
Thanks

Greta James Maxfield
self, non profit admin
Austin, TX

High quality public education has never been funded here in TX and I look forward to that grand experiment and fully reject the idea of trying to fund two different systems. I can only imagine the bureaucratic infrastructure that would be needed and can't imagine what would motivate anyone to deny such innovation and creativity to our existing school infrastructure. Like they say in football I think: when there's two you don't have one.

Pam Gates, Mrs
Self, sales manager and mom
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

Laura Cannon
Self, public school teacher
New Braunfels, TX

Public schools are the foundation of our communities and the future of our state. They are regulated by the state and local control rests with a school board elected by the communities they serve. Texas should not weaken public schools by giving tax money to private schools. It is time to invest in public schools and teachers, not unregulated private schools that can select their students and turn away students they don't want. Public schools educate everyone,. Let's get behind them and prepare Texas for a successful future for all.

Manuel Saenz
Self
Adkins, TX

I respectfully request our Representatives and Senators fully support HB 1 Educational Opportunity & Enrichment. We need our State of Texas to provide for more educational options to be given to families needing it most; those economically disadvantaged and those living in school districts not meeting the standards to educate our younger constituents.

Glynda Tischmacher
self - retired
Mesquite, TX

I support this bill.

Anne Darr
Self
Fort Worth, TX

The facts speak for themselves. Public schools welcome EVERY child, create communities, provide educational programming and related services for students with disabilities, are held accountable, and are required to comply with state and federal laws. Private/parochial schools pick and choose their students, are ill-equipped to serve students with diverse learning needs and disabilities, are not governed by representatives elected by the public, and are not held accountable for student academic outcomes or responsible spending. Therefore, diverting funding from public schools and giving that money to private/parochial schools is a reckless, irresponsible, inequitable way to spend the taxpayers' money as well as an invitation for corruption, misuse, and fraud.

Madison Skinner
Self
Marshall, TX

NO VOUCHERS!! It's a SCAM!!!!

Jody Wells, Ms.
Self teacher
Katy, TX

Teachers and parents are not interest in vouchers. We value public education and this is the best placement for the majority of the kids. Most private schools do not perform Special Education testing; that falls in the student's "would be" public school. If private schools are the "new thing" wouldn't that in essence turn them into a public school? Without public school teachers, who will continue to contribute to TRS so retired teachers continue to receive their annuity for the remainder of their life? How to parents pay for the money above 8,000? What if they take the voucher then a month later return to public schools? Is that just free money for them? Same with homeschooling. Homeschooling is free so why do parents needs vouchers for that? Then what if they change their minds?

What is needed... pay teachers more that have remained teacher above 10 years. My salary between a teacher with no experience and my 30 years is around 15,000 a year before taxes and health insurance. Veteran teachers need to be valued! STAAR and all high stakes testing needs to go! Kids aren't smarter overall than past generations. High stakes testing tied to monies has created a downfall. More resources are needed since Covid for the kids that do not qualify for Special Education classes. We don't need more programs, we need more humans to help the kids in and out (pull-out) of the general ed classroom. Pay our paraprofessional that work directly with children a better salary!

As for health insurance, teachers are paying high costs for subpar insurance. For a single person PPO I was paying \$900 a month with help from the district. That's asinine. Show teachers you value us. Don't just give the high salary to the first year teachers! Reward the teachers that are still showing up after 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, etc.

Maury Grebenau
Self, educational non-profit
Dallas, TX

As a religious person the education provided by our local public school does not match my needs for my own children. Giving some level of school choice and funding is equivalent to allowing me and many others to make this choice. We are tax paying citizens and want the benefits of education that work for our children. Please vote to have Texas join other states that have passed school vouchers/school choice programs.

Saul Scott
self, student
Austin, TX

As a high school student, this bill sucks. Can you not.

Jenni Knox

Self / parent / social worker

Argyle, TX

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Jenni Knox, LCSW-S, CCTSW

cassandra posey

self

Waller, TX

An ESA is one of the most important issues of our day. Our children and future voters deserve the opportunity to an education that serves them. As a prior public educator, I am strongly in favor of ESAs and hope you consider the needs of the entire state during this time.

Michelle Ortiz

Self/ Dispatcher

Waco, TX

The Hope is this will would allow parents to receive some of their tax dollars back , “75% of the cost of sending the student to public school — to help pay for the educational institution of their choice” . We need this! And quoting “ The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that parents have “the first responsibility for the education of their children” (2223). Mothers and fathers, the Catechism says, retain the right to both teach their children the morals imparted by the Church and “to choose a school for them which corresponds to their own convictions” (2229).

Laura Yeager
Just Fund It Tx and Self
Austin, TX

The Texas Legislature has the constitutional requirement to fund public schools. Texas has the money but needs the will to increase funding for public schools by over \$40Billion this biennium just to reach the national average per student expenditure. It would take over \$15 Billion just to keep up with inflation since 2019. Vouchers/ESAs are merely another way to suck out funds from our already underfunded schools. VOTE NO on any ESA, voucher, or other scheme that gives public dollars to unaccountable private schools. Tying funding and teacher pay to ESAs is a move of desperation. We can do better. Fund the schools. Thank you.

lori kirkpatrick
Self, Physician Assistant
Dallas, TX

I am a public school parent and I oppose ESAs. I ask that you fully fund our public schools, give teachers raises and stop discussing diverting tax dollars to subsidize private school tuition (ESAs).

Theresa Hart
Self
Pearland, TX

I would like to comment and request committee members to vote against this bill. I work as a therapist in a public school district. And I pay taxes in support of a public school district. I am opposed to any tax dollars being used to fund someone else's choice to place their child in private school. If a family chooses to place their in private school then it should be their financial responsibility alone.

Private schools are not required to accept all students. Therefore it is not proper to use public funds to pay for it. And since they are not required to accept all students it is unlikely they will accept special education students. It is also unlikely they will accept students that increase diversity in their student body. Public schools will become the place for these "leftover students." We will effectively be segregating schools again, setting ourselves back by 70 years.

Please, vote no to any bill that calls for school vouchers or any educational savings account program.

Matthew Brown, Private Citizen
Self
Burleson, TX

His is a bad idea and will not regulate for those that use vouchers. Families will not be able to pay tuition because costs will inflate. This is for the elite.

Cherie Mallory

Self

Eules, TX

I struggle to understand why the per student funding for students attending private schools would be higher than those attending public schools?

I also think that any school - private or public - that accepts state funding should operate under the same rules and standards. Private schools receiving state money should accept all students, should service students with special needs (SPED and 504) and be asked to follow and state and federal guidelines regarding those kids, should be held to the same school accountability standards, should teach all state required curriculum, should be required to give all state tests, should be funded per day- a student is absent - they do not receive funding- just as public schools, follow all regulations regarding how state funds may be spent, offer transportation for all children who are too far away to walk, contribute to the recapture program, follow all state educational laws - no exemptions - any requirements for state schools should apply to any schools receiving state payer dollars. I have not met one person that disagrees on this. Same per student funding and all the same rules - private or public - no exemptions.

No rules and more money for private schools seems

to imply there are a different set of rules for the wealthy. Many of these private school tuition are \$20k or more- so clearly those sending their children to school coensice private schools have the means to afford that type of schooling - yet this proposal offers more for funding for those affluent families children. The biggest result of this will be a loss of funding for public schools. Public schools that will accept those kids from private schools halfway thru the year when they are kicked out or their parents are unhappy - yet this program would mean the private school got the funding and the public school would not.

If private schools are required to operate under all state laws/regulations to receive funding and that funding is the same for all children / I remove my opposition- until that time I hope this committee will do the right thing.

Susan McNutt Shofkom

Democrat Chairperson of Montgomery County Voting Precinct 29

Magnolia, TX

I attend Magnolia ISD school board meetings frequently in my capacity as a precinct chair. It is abundantly clear that our District administrators and the board are vehemently against any voucher/ESA program as it will directly and negatively effect the district's ability to provide individualized and high quality education to students. Currently, Magnolia ISD prides itself in overall district performance and academic accomplishments. The district is a draw for many newcomers to West Montgomery County. I have a child enrolled in the district and the district has identified and diagnosed my child's autism. The district has followed the IEP and because of their dedication to her education, my child is now, no longer in need of the additional programs they provided. I trust the administration and the board when they say that school vouchers will negatively effect what we all have worked so hard to achieve in our district. School vouchers will surely be a big mistake and will negatively effect many high performing, rural districts. Do not continue this misguided crusade to install ESAs or Vouchers in the state of Texas.

Tiffany Davis

Self, Nurse

Arlington, TX

We need a robust and fully funded public school system. Draining our public school money and resources to subsidize private schools that are temporary and ineffective is going to hurt our public school system and hurt all of our youth.

Sandra Vasquez

Self

San Antonio, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs. In the times we live in, it is imperative parents are able to find schools that fit their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you for your time,

Sandra Vasquez

Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo
Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities
Austin, TX

Chair Buckley & Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1. My name is Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo, and I am speaking on behalf of the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD), registering on the bill.

TCDD is established by state and federal law and is governed by 27 board members, appointed by the Governor, 60% of whom are individuals with developmental disabilities or family members of individuals with disabilities. The Council's purpose in law is to encourage policy change so that people with disabilities have opportunities to be fully included in their communities and exercise control over their own lives.

TCDD has significant concerns with the establishment of an Education Savings Account (ESA) Program for students with disabilities proposed in HB 1. These apprehensions are extensive, with the main concerns being the loss of legal protections for students and their families, the lack of academic and student outcome accountability in the private sector, and the segregation of students with disabilities. The Council supports the principle that schools accepting public state or federal dollars to educate students must provide students with the same educational rights and opportunities they would be accorded in the public education system.

However, given that the issue of ESAs and school choice are a priority for some state leaders, lawmakers should prioritize protecting the rights of students with disabilities and their families. TCDD would recommend referring to the National Council on Disability's recommendations for education leaders seeking to establish an ESA program. These recommendations include:

- Ensure that ESA amounts are based on the cost of individual special education and related service needs of the individual student, including transportation.
- Require private schools receiving ESA funds to fully implement the child's individualized education plan.
- Require private schools receiving ESA funds to be subject to the administrative due process proceedings provided by the LEA.
- Provide oversight, data collection, monitoring, and reporting on participating private schools to ensure accountability for nondiscrimination, including disproportionate discipline, segregation, and academic equity.
- Collect and make publicly available data on students with disabilities.
- Require private schools that accept ESA funds to administer state assessments to students, including students with disabilities, and publish data showing comparisons among private schools and public schools.

These recommendations would aid in making an established educational savings account program a less risky option for students with disabilities. Please feel free to contact us for additional information or if we can be an additional resource.

Respectfully submitted,
Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo
Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

Andrea Troncoso
Self
Austin, TX

I vehemently oppose any and all attempts to get vouchers as a system in our education system. As the wife of a public school teacher and parent of count them 3 public school students we need to be providing our schools with more money not taking them away. I worry about these public taxes going to uncertified schools with accountability for how they spend my hard earned tax dollars. Just NO.

Tammy Owens

Self

Mount Enterprise, TX

As a Conservative parent, grandparent, educator and voter, I see no value in the voucher/ESA component of HB1. This program will benefit an extremely small number of students while further damaging the already sorely underfunded and understaffed public school program.

I have been a Texas educator for nearly two decades and have watched the decline of public education. Unlike the politically charged "indoctrination" rhetoric being pushed to scare parents into falling for the voucher scam, I know the real problem with public education does not lie with educators but with inadequate attendance based funding, lack of special ed support, unfunded mandates, and high teacher turnover. Rather than address the problems created by inadequate funding and poor TEA policies, the current Senate solution appears to be to abandon our most needy students and subsidize a private education for students who can already afford it.

Even after spending millions on a task force to determine why schools are hemorrhaging qualified teachers, our governor has chosen to withhold adequate funding for millions of students and teachers as a "carrot" to force his failed voucher plan through. Sadly, Texas teachers are used to doing much with very little and are working hard for our students despite lack of support.

Even more disturbing is the proposal of giving up to \$10,000 to private school that can cherry-pick students, refuse hard to educate students, teach whatever they want and have little to no taxpayer oversight. However, public schools would get a little over \$6000 that is tied to attendance, extensively regulated, over-tested, and accountable to taxpayers. I see no value in a two tiered taxpayer funded education system. Every single dime of public tax dollars for education needs to be accountable to every regulation and education code that public schools must adhere to.

Thus far, the Texas House has stood strong in their support of public schools and against vouchers. Please continue to stand strong against vouchers and begin the work of strengthening our public schools. Our students deserve for us to overhaul a public school system into one that benefits ALL students.

Kellie Wostal

Self

Austin, TX

Say NO to vouchers. ..the proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement.” -

Leah Neff
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Leah Neff
317 Bunny Circle
Fort Worth, TX 76179
817-881-1056

Flo Ann Randle

self (Real estate associate broker)

Austin, TX

It is SO disappointing that our state government, governed by Greg Abbott, has been called back AGAIN! to support school vouchers. If there is ONE goal for the future of our state (and even our country), it is the importance of educating our children--our beloved "kids"--who start out knowing very little. With luck, those children have been loved at home. Then a goal of the public education system is to educate those kids and broaden their minds to think and wonder about the future (of themselves and others) and to learn about the history of their country. A goal is even to question what's important? What has made a difference in our country? To think that our state funds are divided so that some families that can AFFORD private schools can access state funds for their children's private schools (if that 's what the parents want) is unacceptable. Totally unacceptable.

Representatives/state senators--please please please --step up and say, No--No Way. Our state is better than that. We care about public education. Public education is the groundwork of our state's future. If anything, we want to offer MORE funds for public education, and we want to encourage more of our talented and smart Texas citizens to seek the TEACHER ROUTE AS THEIR CAREER, even if that is a short-term career. Each talented teacher matters! Consider funds for that! More teachers with exceptional qualifications. Our state government has gotten off track with the wrong goals.

To offer state funds so that families can subsidize their children's private school costs is beyond unacceptable. What has happened to our state? We applaud those families who choose private schools. Good for them. Most likely, those kids will receive exceptional educations. But our state goal for the education of our state's children and groundwork for our state's future is that all children matter, especially those have NOT way to go to private schools. Our state representatives must speak up and be vocal about the use of state funds. We are off track on this. So off track. Offer early childhood education. Educate new teachers. Care about the kids! Upgrade the public schools. Take a look at the physical condition of the public schools. Upgrade the school's libraries. Hire a public school librarian!! I know of ONE school without a school librarian for TWO years. Come back to some basics! Please. Flo Ann Randle, Austin, Texas.

Howard Blanton, Mr.

Self- Horticulturist/plant merchandiser

Jacksonville, TX

I strongly encourage you all to pass this bill because I believe it benefits students from all walks of life, allowing them the opportunity to choose the school they believe will provide them the best education available rather than limiting them as the current system does.

Laura Dunnells, Secondary School Counselor

Self/ secondary school counselor/ former special education coordinator

Harker Heights, TX

Dr. Buckley and members of the House of Representatives,

I am writing to implore you to NOT allow state money to be used for school vouchers! I understand that there is a lot of political pressure to allow vouchers, but please use funds to pay teachers a decent wage, and support student success by funding and providing resources to the PUBLIC education system. Please say "NO DEAL" when voting on school vouchers!

As a former Special Education District Coordinator, I am also very against the idea of delaying funding for special education for several more years. The students in special education deserve the same quality of education as their peers, and to do so many special needs students need additional resources and curriculum materials. Districts also need additional funding to pay a lucrative salary to special education evaluators in order to recruit and retain them. School districts are overwhelmed with the amount of special education referrals, especially now that dyslexia has been put under the special education umbrella. Due to the lack of staff, it is becoming increasingly difficult to remain in timeline for initial referrals.

Thank you for considering these points as you discuss and vote for House Bill 1.

Sincerely,

Laura Dunnells

Current Texas educator with 33 years of experience

Karoleigh Goldfine

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Eve Margolis

self

Austin, TX

Absolutely NO VOUCHERS. NO COMPROMISE. 'Parental choice' for what?. Parents have choices of public, private, charter, magnet schools and homeschools. They have choices to opt out of any curriculum or events they wish. Voucher give parents of certain children the 'choice' to use constituent tax money to fund their own private education. NO VOUCHERS.

There is a reason that vouchers/ESAs haven't passed. We see what has happened to education in states that have them already.

We see how public schools are underfunded so are not able to function well. This is a financial crisis, not a human crisis.

Increase the basic allotment. NO VOUCHERS.

Melanie Petersen

Self

Austin, TX

Hello, My name is Melanie and I am a constituent in zip code 78759. I am writing to oppose HB1 and all voucher schemes. I support public education and believe public schools should have the funding to support every child. I do not support any measures that will defund public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child.

Sumit DasGupta

Self

Austin, TX

Public schools are the bedrock of a thriving democracy. It is the system that ensures, as much as possible, a level playing field where all children are provided the same / similar education so that they all can access the same or similar opportunities in life. It drives unity and harmony.

A voucher system that enables some families to take their children to a more exclusive environment defies the whole definition of a "level playing field." Please understand that I have no opposition to a private education system which some (likely quite wealthy) may employ for their children. It is that I firmly oppose state moneys, collected from taxes, to support the desires of the wealthy few to divide our student population into a set of "have's" and "have not's." Rather than sending state moneys through vouchers towards private schools, I strongly urge our lawmakers in the TX House to spend the money instead to upgrade / enhance our public education system and increasing our investment in STEM so that our students can more aggressively / effectively compete with students from around the world.

Therefore, this bill should NEVER be voted into law.

Paul Kienlen, Dr.

Self - educator

San Antonio, TX

Keep public funds in public schools. Do not approve vouchers or ESA.

CYNDI KRUPA, Dr.

Self-Dean

San Antonio, TX

The Texas Legislature has a historic opportunity to empower parents and improve the quality of education for students by supporting Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). ESAs would allow all parents to customize their child's education for their unique needs.

Some legislators are so opposed to empowering parents that they are even blocking billions of dollars in new education funding, including teacher raises.

It's time for Texas to put parents and students first. Education savings accounts and teacher funding are a win-win! I urge you to empower parents with ESAs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Abraham Jaber

Self

Mission, TX

Parents are the primary educators of their children. The Catholic Church teaches that parents have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options.

I support HB1.

Melinda Blackerby

Self- FWISD PTA, Monnig Middle School

Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Our school is already understaffed and under funded. We are raising money to help supplement our fine arts programs and help our children to continue to learn piano, band, art, JROTC, dance, orchestra and choir. These are students that can not afford private lessons. These children deserve fine arts programs, just as all children do. Teachers are rapidly leaving the teaching field because they are overworked and underpaid. Our children are being punished for what lawmakers are doing to our public education system and it's disgraceful. I urge you to think of these children when making decisions that directly impact our families.

Hang Doan-Meany

Self sales

Austin, TX

I oppose this

Ryan Meany

Self sales

Austin, TX

I oppose this

Beth Netherland, Mrs.

Self, Instructional Associate Professor

College Station, TX

My husband and I have sacrificed everything to provide our youngest with an appropriate education. At the age of 6, a developmental pediatrician at the University of Texas Health Sci Center Children's Learning Institute recommended several educational therapies for our son. Our district, College Station ISD, disregarded the research based recommendations from Children's Learning Institute - UT Health, a state agency that supports TX schools & families. My husband and I saw the handwriting on the wall. The school was not equipped to help, nor did they have an incentive to do better. We could use what little money we had to fight the district (and probably lose), or we could pay privately. As far as I know, not one TX family has won a due process hearing this year. When public Ed advocates say that children with disabilities have protections within public schools, I'd like to know what protections? Districts outspend families with taxpayer money EVERY single time. There is no recourse. This charade of a system has forced my husband and I to pillage our retirement funds so our son has a shot at life. The narrative that only rich families access private options is false. Every day my husband and I pray to God that we have enough money, so our son will never step foot into public Ed again. He is now a 7th grader at St. Joseph Catholic School in Bryan, and he continues to receive private academic language, speech/language & social cognitive therapy. St. Joseph's has embraced our son with open arms and he's doing well academically and socially/emotionally. However, we have sacrificed our retirement savings to make this possible. Please help ALL families have options outside this broken system that fails our most marginalized children in TX.

Corliss Bunkley

Self/Public Education Consultant

Arlington, TX

Public dollars should remain in public schools. It's that simple. As the parent of two public school students and a former classroom teacher and current teacher education professional, this bill is dangerous.

Based on what I've seen this bill aims to assist a large portion of middle class families in sending their children to private school. What then happens to the neighborhood schools? What happens to all of the public school teachers who now have no jobs because classrooms are being shut down for low enrollment?

If the state has money to give vouchers for more than the basic allotment, why not just give that money to public schools? Why tie this funding to teacher raises for the public school teachers you are working over time to put out of work?

Saying this is about school choice is disingenuous. Parents in Texas have choice. We are not required to send our kids to public schools and can choose a virtual program, private school, home school or charter school. Vouchers don't enhance choices - they create competition. Competition is great when talking about the automobile industry. It's not great when talking about educating children.

I urge you all to look at the data and put a stop to this bill. Do not be afraid to do what's right for ALL children in the state of Texas.

Miranda Utkin

Self

Eules, TX

Vouchers will destroy our public schools. You need to do better for the kids in the state of Texas - they are our future. Say no to vouchers!

Austen Moede
Self - Planning & Analysis
New Braunfels, TX

We need school choice, and I firmly believe this bill will help strengthen our education system.

Klaudia Forgacova
Self - Business Management
Mansfield, TX

I urge your opposition to HB 1. We need to keep public school funding to public schools, not funnel it to private schools. Our public schools are already underfunded and poorly resourced. They cannot take another hit like this bill. The education savings account would hurt public school students, not help them. Kids whose families cannot afford private school even with a coupon of sorts, who do not have the privilege of transportation, who may not practice a faith pressured or required at the private school by them, who may have needs private school won't accommodate, and so on would not get choice out of this. This is choice for the private schools, not for the students and in turn not for their parents.

Lori Rapp, Dr.
Lewisville ISD
Lewisville, TX

There should not be creation of a third taxpayer funded educational system, when the two current systems in place (traditional public schools and charter schools) are not adequately funded. There are numerous unfunded mandates that have been passed down to school districts in each legislative session. At least this bill begins to require one of these mandates for those who would receive a voucher, with the requirement to take the same assessment administered to public school students, but all rules and laws passed by the Texas Legislature for 88 sessions should be required to apply to those receiving a voucher. If the legislature determines that these laws and rules should not be followed, then the same freedom for parents from these laws needs to be extended to public schools.

The \$2.4B put towards the Golden Penny yield and not toward the Basic Allotment does not benefit all schools. An increase to the basic allotment is needed for addressing inflationary costs and a statewide educator shortage. The increase to the BA beginning in 2024-25 is a step in the right direction, to address inflation the BA should be raised to \$7,060, which is still well below any dollar amount that has been proposed for an education savings account/voucher. Funding, laws, and rules should be applied the same to any education system funded by taxpayer dollars. The additional funding for Special Education, Fine Arts, and other identified areas is important and was needed to be passed in the regular session. Money that is being used to increase the Teacher Incentive Allotment should be put towards the Basic Allotment, as pay for ALL teachers in Texas beyond a one time increase needs to be addressed first and foremost. The increase to the BA will help with salary increases to also help offset the increased cost of healthcare to staff. HB 1416 passed to address the shortcomings of HB 4545 during the 87th session is still an extremely unfunded mandate so any additional requirements for districts related to tutoring must also be funded and if those requirements cause TEA to increase data collection from local districts then funding for districts to administer tutoring bills to report on compliance to TEA should also be provided. Between HB 1605 and HB 3 passed during the legislative session, the fiscal notes indicated TEA could be adding 100 staff, while there are no staff funding provisions for LEAs. Any additional requirements for TEA that would require them to add additional staff should not be enacted at this time. TEA continues to increase staffing levels, when local school districts are reducing staffing levels while the data requests and paperwork burden on school districts from TEA only continues to grow with fewer and fewer staff to meet these demands. The Texas Commission on Assessment and Accountability should consist of members who are experts in assessment and accountability - these members should not be limited to appointees only.

Valari Mancha
Self-Registered Nurse
Fort Worth, TX

Our schools are already underfunded and because of this underperforming. It is not because teachers do not want to teach- it is because Texas public schools are not fully funded. Yet somehow suddenly our budget is supposed to support private school students and homeschool students when it has failed to adequately support our public schools. Not only does this take away from children who rely on free public education and their teachers but it could have serious financial repercussions for our state as other voucher states have experienced.

There are over 20,000 children in the foster care system. That number will almost certainly rise after the detrimental changes to women's reproductive rights.

Vouchers will not benefit the majority of these children. These kids already do not have families, their school is their family-their safe place. Their teachers are their role models. HB1 values a public school student at \$6,700 by 2025 and a private school student at \$10,500 now. This is despicable. It is shameful.

As far as parental choice goes, the way I see it fully funding public schools gives parents more choices. Private schools do not have to accept a student who applies. They do not have to accept a student with special needs or kids that do not prove they are the right fit for the school. They are the ones that can reject an applicant or student- where is the choice in that?

I was a graduate of Crowley ISD. I had a track coach Linda Arnold who pushed me to work hard. I hold two degrees from two Texas Universities. My parents' dream was for me to get a college degree. It was also mine. Today I love my career as a Registered Nurse. But more importantly than that I have the the privilege of caring for my community through that role. I have two kids of my own but I also see it as our responsibility to stand up for children who do not have a parent to stand up for them- this is why I write this now. Thank you for your time.

Lauren Freeman
Self
Hewitt, TX

Let's start with vouchers. As a public educator, I hear the concern over "taking funds from public schools." It is my understanding that this is not necessarily a certainty. This assertion would assume that the offer of vouchers would increase private school enrollment and decrease public school enrollment, therefore decreasing public school funding since that is based on student attendance. It is my current opinion that if it is possible to offer vouchers without affecting public school funding, I see no problem. Funding should be matched, dollar for dollar, to the amount provided for a public school student. It would not be equitable to offer a higher dollar amount for a voucher than the amount offered for the same student to attend public school. Additionally, we must create/maintain stringent requirements and accountability measures for private schools to maintain the quality of education being offered. Offering vouchers could have the unintended consequence of enticing people to form private schools that are of little substance simply to take advantage of the funding.

Now, for public education:

Public education is facing dire circumstances. Funding MUST be increased in order to attract and retain quality teachers. Bottom line, teacher salaries are no commensurate with the demands of teaching in today's public schools. The demands placed on teachers would make your head spin. Teachers are dealing with a dumpster fire of issues:

1. Societal issues like poverty, broken families, unfettered behaviors, trauma, soaring levels of ADD/ADHD, student addiction to electronics, lack of social skills and understanding of social norms, etc.
2. Demands that teachers meet every child's needs simultaneously, while ensuring that all students meet their expected growth. General education classrooms look very different than 10-15 years ago.
3. Increased "accountability" from the state via the ever-changing STAAR testing (which also eats up budget money) places undue stress of both teachers and students.

Setting teacher salaries aside, public schools need more resources in the form of behavior support staff at every campus, a paraprofessional in addition to the teacher in every classroom at the primary grades (pre-k, kinder, and first) and days built in for planning.

In short, teachers are quitting because they simply cannot keep up with the demands of teaching in today's public schools. Teachers are experiencing a mental health crisis as we continue to try to meet increasing demands on our time, talents, and mental capacity.

Ramon Alvarez

Self

Killeen, TX

Please support Parental Choice for schools. Public schools will only improve with healthy competition and will help to foster Christian values in our younger generations.

John Hoffner

Myself and my family

Austin, TX

I am part of a family of educators. My wife and two daughters have been teachers and councilors for a combined 50 years. They have dedicated their careers to teaching in the public school and have affected the lives of hundreds of children. The generations that follow us should be given the same opportunities to learn and thrive as a result of our fantastic public school system. I am disappointed that our legislature is even considering opening the door to a voucher program that will deplete our children's educational future. Please defeat HB 1. I have three grand children that need a promising Texas future.

Camille Smith

Self, accountant

Parker, TX

School vouchers are bad for Texans. All we have to do is look at how horrible they have been for other states, like Florida and Arizona, to see how unsuccessful they are. Instead of funneling money out of public schools, we should try to fully fund all of our schools, eliminate/revamp the recapture program, and pay our teachers a fair and living wage. This bill is shameful and all you have to do is look at the greed of the unqualified and undeserving "private schools" and "home school co-ops" that are pushing for it. I'm disappointed that the representatives considering this awful bill are more motivated by political games than actually doing what is right for their constituents. Vote no on vouchers.

James Ellis

Self; semi-retired educator

Humble, TX

At best, state funding never pays the full cost of state mandates to public schools, leaving the balance of the burden on local funds. Blaming school boards for high property taxes under that circumstance is an injustice too often engaged in. Diverting any of those funds to private schools compounds the injustice. "Freeing" such schools from the same accountability for student achievement required of public schools compounds the injustice and is a disservice to their students. During a time of inflation reminiscent of the 1970s, holding public school funding hostage to such a diversion would be an abuse of power unworthy of this body. Those who hope to make money available for a preferred version of Christian education should remember that the same principle will require funding for an Osama bin Laden madrassa or a Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry. Please preserve scarce taxpayer dollars to serve students in schools that must prove, not merely claim how good they are.

Rachel Mitchell

Self - Curtis Middle School PTA President

Allen, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Jamie Burns
Self - Attorney
Houston, TX

Vouchers will hurt our children! I have 3 children in public school who are doing very well. However, now because of the neglect of our state government, my children are at risk of losing valuable resources. I am ashamed that I helped put politicians in office that would ruin the lives of our children and not fund their schools. It's disgraceful.

Gregory Daniel
Self
Belton, TX

Please support this bill. Let's deliver what Governor Abbott promised parents across Texas. Parent's should be able to chose where their child's education needs can best be served and the money should follow the child. School choice provides Competition that will challenge public schools to improve. School choice is a big win for everyone because it breaks up the monopoly government run schools have had. Parents are responsible for their child's education. This bill gives parents the tools they need to ensure their child receives the best education possible. I hear Public school administrators fear mongering amount the ranks of their staff . Let's chose parents and children over institutions . Please pass this bill so Texas can have school choice.

Yitzchak Ehrenkranz
Self student
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.
Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.
?

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Swapna Swamy
Self
Flowermound, TX

These grants are very important for schools.

Maritza Wong, Mrs.
Self - Stay at home mom
Manvel, TX

NO TO VOUCHERS, they are an inappropriate use of tax dollars. Stop wasting money on special sessions. 5.5 million Texas public school children and their teachers and parents are waiting for you to do your constitutional duty and FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Enough with the games, the right thing should have been done back in May, if not earlier.

Manny Diaz

Self - Lakeview Centennialhb1 PTSA

Garland, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Lynn Tinney

myself / project manager

Austin, TX

I strongly support school choice! Let's give parents the tools they need to obtain the best quality education for their kids and let's give public schools the competition they need to be excellent.

Terri Childress, Mrs

Self retired

Plano, TX

Vouchers hurt public schools and education in general. Most importantly, vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, we should not be discussing ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers and inadequate will cause schools to close, student-teacher ratios to increase, staff job losses and a diminished slate of programs for our kids.

Lauren Powell

self - Frisco PTA member and solutions architect

Frisco, TX

Many generations of my family have been teachers for public schools in Texas. We moved to Frisco, TX, because of the high quality public schools. ESAs and Vouchers take money away from public schools. Please instead focus on additional funds for children and teachers in public schools and adjusting for inflation so we don't end up with budget gaps year after year.

Jennifer Perry, Mrs

Self

Highland Village, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

If vouchers pass I believe my district, Lewisville ISD will have to cut programs.

Please fully fund public education because Texas children are the future and deserve better.

Corin Reyes

Nichols Elementary PTA

San Antonio, TX

NO TO VOUCHERS. Vouchers will destroy our public schools and our public education deserves to be properly funded. Support public education in Texas.

Louise Honner
Self, SCM Manager
Houston, TX

This is a sham and a waste of money.

Ash Malina
Self
Austin, TX

Dear Texas Legislator,

As a proud Texan, I value the role public schools play in shaping our future. I oppose private school subsidies, also known as vouchers or education savings accounts. I believe private school subsidies are wasteful, deceitful, inefficient, and unfair.

Public school dollars should go only to public schools. Public schools in Texas are underfunded by billions of dollars every year. The Comptroller is projecting a large increase in state revenue over the next two years compared to the past two years, and that money should go to fully funding public education.

Private schools pick and choose which students to admit. Vouchers force taxpayers to subsidize private schools' preferences. And without elected boards or state oversight, vouchers give away tax dollars with no financial or academic accountability.

Public schools educate more than 90 percent of Texas students, serving all the students in their boundaries. They build the workforce that powers the Texas economy. We can't afford to underwrite a few special choices at the expense of our collective future.

We elect legislators to represent the interests of their communities. Responding to their communities, Texas legislators have rejected private school subsidies time after time.

In the face of increasing pressure from special interests, I pledge that I will stand with my legislators in opposing vouchers. When they vote against private school subsidies, I will make sure all their constituents know they did the right thing.

Sincerely,
Ash Malina

Ann Sullivan
Self - Mother, PTA President at Elementary, and PTA VP at Middle School
San Antonio, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Diverting money away from public schools that are already hurting is not the right thing to do. Please reconsider this BILL as it will make a huge difference in the lives of many children, educators and families of Texas.

Yosef Sobol
Self
Houston, TX

I believe that everyone can educate their children the way they want to receive the most suitable education for them in an enriching way that will give them all the best tools

Robby Robinson

Self Filmmaker.

Austin, TX

The proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement.

Naomi Hasson, Mrs

Homeschool mother

Houston, TX

Dear Staff and Congress,

I am a mother of 4 kids. We have been homeschooling 3 of our kids because we believe they need a better quality of education and according to their needs. I have to stop working outside home because the lack of resources to cover and alternative education. I wish this Bill pass so I can ensure long term education and programs for my other kids that are eager to learn. A good Education with love with care provides a better and responsible citizen

Thank you for being and understanding our burn for more economical resources to choose what is best for our children.

Keisha Barnes

Self

Houston, TX

Fully funding public education should be a top priority of our legislature. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Aaron Berger

SELF

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those who need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their children.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever-expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you

Aaron Berger

Houston Texas

Stephanie Hilz

Self

Austin, TX

My name is Stephanie Hilz, I'm a constituent in zip code 78757. It's important to me that we fully fund public education, so I'm calling on my elected officials to vote NO on any voucher schemes during the special session. Thank you.

Christy Forte'
Self, consultant
Allen, TX

This bill does not do nearly enough for public education funding. I am in favor of some sort of option that gives parents a choice (although I have many concerns about implementation), but public schools don't have a choice, they have a mandate. My two children were in private school for 6 years, pre-k through 4th grade, and are now in their 7th year of an excellent public school. However, the "Robin Hood" system and the lack of increase of the basic allotment to even keep up with inflation are causing harm to their education. With the surplus, there is no reason not to increase the basic allotment by the \$1100 per child that would adjust to inflation, or even the \$4000 per child that would bring Texas to the national average. Please do the right thing for Texas and the right thing for her publicly educated children, regardless of whether that includes school choice.

Christina Lawrence
Self - Bookkeeper
Flower Mound, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Bill Holt
self
Austin, TX

No public funds for private schools. The problem with education in this state is chronic underfunding. Do not steal public funds for private education.

Jill Hoffner
self
Austin, TX

As a 36-year veteran teacher, I am concerned that Vouchers will cause great destruction to the public school system. Additionally, I do not support the interests of the private schools. The accountability is questionable, the motives inconsistent with separation of church & state. I sincerely hope that HB1 will not pass!!!!

Paul Alvarez, Mr
Self
San Antonio, TX

Stop HB1 - public schools and students and communities will suffer. Please support our public education communities.

Carmela McCain Simmons
Self, retired CFISD Teacher of the Year
Cypress, TX

As a retired CFISD Teacher of the Year who also homeschooled my own children for three years, I strongly protest the idea of using money designated for public schools to be used for school vouchers or ESAs of any type. I spent hundreds of dollars of my own meager salary to buy books and supplies for my classroom each year because schools in Texas are drastically underfunded compared to many other states. I basically subsidized the education of my students because the Great State of Texas did not provide adequate per student funding. Taking money from public schools to subsidize the private school education of families wealthy enough to afford the huge tuition charges of private schools is unconscionable. The amount of the voucher is not enough to help poorer students attend those same schools. Public monies should be spent on public education!

Thank you for your kind consideration,
Carmela McCain Simmons

Stephen Sansom

Delf

Austin, TX

No to vouchers by whatever name and in whatever form the concept is being presented in this session. This is something the state of Texas does not want or need. Support public education. Don't provide inducements to abandon public education. That's all "vouchers" are about. No public money for private education.

Jennifer Vaughn

Self - PTA member in Dallas ISD

Dallas, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

I choose Dallas ISD public schools for my children because private school was not as academically challenging or competitive. Strong public schools like those found in Dallas ISD strengthen communities and help businesses thrive. Invest in your community and stop pushing vouchers.

Megan Haley

Fort Worth students

Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Betty Nemece

Self/nurse

Belton, TX

We need this to pass. The right to choose what is best for our children. Some children do not do well in public schools and need the structure and small classrooms. I went to public schools back in late 1960's after 2 years my parents enrolled me into private school it was a great sacrifice, I remember my parents working 2 jobs for years to provide a better education. As a parent with the assistance of my parents I was able to send my children to a private school after my children were labeled very quickly as troubled children in the public school system. My children had to go to tutoring not because they had trouble learning but because the private school was so much ahead in their academic program that my kids had to catch up. There was a big difference in the education, expectation from the student such as respecting others, taking responsibility for oneself and for their work. There was morals and values and my children were successful.

Passing this bill will benefit many families who cannot afford a better learning environment for their children.

It is a sacrifice for sure.

Currently as a Grandparent we are assisting our daughter with private school tuition because her family cannot afford to do it alone and they are successful professionals. Why private school when they cannot afford it, our Grandson was labeled as behavioral problem child and was making OK of grades but was struggling. They placed him in private school this year 2023 and he loves it and is making straight A's and they have no problems with him at all. My Granddaughter went to pre-k in a private daycare setting was starting to read at the end of her pre-k year, when she started her kindergarten year in public school system it was very disappointing she was learning what she was taught in pre-k. She graduated Kindergarten not knowing how to read. Both Grandchildren had summer classes to catch up for 1 and 3rd grade classes in the private school they started in.

I am proud to say both children are straight A students

Anthony Lawrence
Self, Business Development
Flower Mound, TX

Stop trying to divert money from public education. Until public education is properly funded, vouchers and ESAs should not be a discussion. Stop asking public schools to do more with less! Focus on raising the basic allotment and things that will help with teacher recruitment and retention. Stop letting Gov. Abbott bully through calling these special sessions. If it's something so important to him and something he thinks Texans want, let the people vote!

Keiawanna Pitts
Self
Round Rock, TX

Please stop holding public education hostage. Shame on Texas for not wanting to fund our future. Fund PUBLIC education and stop trying to take public dollars for private schools.

Sherrri Kring
Self
Keller, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Private and charter schools do not have to provide 504 and special accommodations, if they do not have to follow the same standards as public schools how can you stand behind private or charters.

Vouchers are inadequate funding for already established school systems, vouchers will impact my campus, district, and community. How will you handle schools closing, how are you going to help student-teacher ratios what about special ed programs?

You need to get back to the basic and find a way to help the public-school systems that have followed you standards and guidelines. We are still waiting on the necessary funding to keep amazing teachers we have in place. Stop this nonsense and say NO to vouchers.

Tiffany Amerson

Self - President, Canyon Creek Elementary PTA

Richardson, TX

I am currently the PTA President at Canyon Creek Elementary in Richardson, TX.

As someone who fundraises for our small school, I get to know first hand the struggles that public schools face due to inflation as well as the state failing to increase funding for public schools over the past few years.

Our teachers and staff work so tirelessly for our students and love on them well, and yet our schools are struggling to be able to afford copy paper, resources for their classrooms, and stay properly staffed.

I'm embarrassed that while our taxpayer public education system is crying out in need that our state is considering using taxpayer money to fund private education.

Public schools are a vital in our community and must be fully funded so that all students can meet and exceed the standards set by RISD trustees and the state of Texas.

I urge you to stand up for public education and prioritize funding for our schools and children. Texas continues to have billions of dollars in surplus funds and is anticipating even more revenue. We need to be investing in the future of our state by providing strong public schools for the more than 5 million students who are being educated here. As you know, our public school district has not received a basic per-pupil funding increase from the legislature since before the pandemic in 2019.

Public school students and teachers should be considered first, and separately, before the creation of any additional, expensive education system involving savings accounts or vouchers that does not attach the same academic or financial accountability to our tax dollars that is expected of our public schools.

As a TX resident and voter, I am asking you to please stand up for our public schools and say no to vouchers.

Lauren Hufham

Self, customer service.

Irving, TX

Pay teachers more. They should be making more than I do.

My property tax dollars for the schools belong to where I live. They shouldn't go to other districts or to fund a more private education through the use of vouchers. End this crap now. Tell Abbott no more special sessions over this nonsense.

Get rid of testing. They were teaching to a test 25 years ago and it hasn't gotten better. If you saw the poor writing and lack of reading comprehension I get to see daily with my job, you'd end it and let teachers actually teach.

Start funding school supplies for the teachers.

Chenique Lewis, Parent and Advocate

Self and Lancaster Parent Support

Lancaster, TX

Private schools are exempt from having to offer special education. Without needed supports, things fall apart quickly. Please vote NO, because vouchers weaken public schools including special education. My children have been on the charter and public side of education and even with regulations in place it is still challenging. This bill is definitely not a benefit, matter fact it is a damaging move to pass this bill. All systems need accountability and this bill does not implement that at all.

Cynthia Thoreson

self

Austin, TX

I believe that in order for our democracy to function by the people, as it should, everyone should receive an education that teaches how to think and understand and be a positive force in the world around them. This education needs to be available in the public school system for every child.

The proposed voucher plan does not support this and I believe should not be implemented.

Tara McCool

Self, mother

San Antonio, TX

I fully support this Bill. With one child in private Christian school to my other child in public school with Autism, this Bill benefits all.

Delaina Bishop

Parent of school age children in public schools

Austin, TX

Stop wasting Public money with these special sessions Greg. House members, you know what Greg Abbott is doing is wrong. Please stand firm. Public dollars should only go to public schools that are held accountable *by people our Governor appoints. Do not let our corrupt governor hobnob with billionaires while your constituents, their children are sacrificed. This is wrong on so many levels. I will say I am very encouraged by both parties actually coming together for what is right, democratic, enshrined in our constitution- funding public education for ALL Texans! This is not a red or blue issue! Children, especially children from the great state of Texas deserve an equal free public education system. The well off do not need a welfare check to help them snub real life Texas children. The states with Voucher type programs end up costing the state even more, Special needs students are inevitably left out, and children lose opportunities in their lives due to poor education. What is even more insulting is the new agreement Abbott is touting about 10,400 for an ESA which includes kids already enrolled in private schools. That is almost DOUBLE what a public school student can possibly bring in for their school, because public school funding is based on attendance. Why would these private schools get out of regulations and STAAR tests, not have an elected board the parents can vote for and give input, make more money, skirt certifications and mandates from the state, and be able to turn whoever they want away and still get more funding than public schools from public tax dollars? THIS IS A SICK JOKE. Your constituents will not stand for this. Thank you to those standing firm against this blatant dictator push from our Governor. Signed a Parent of elementary school age children, PTA advocate, Education advocate, Registered VDR and VOTER!

Barbara Kennedy

Self, teacher

Houston, TX

The priority of our legislation needs to be to help public schools. I live in Houston Texas specifically Spring Branch and this year our district is going to go into debt \$35 million. This is due to the recapture money we have to pay the state. Teachers don't get raises teachers get much more work. More and more teachers are quitting because we can't afford to be teachers anymore support our public school kids not people who choose to go to private school.

Jeff Jordan

Public Schools

Dallas, TX

Do not waste money on vouchers!

Paula Stratton

Self

The Woodlands, TX

I support HB 1. I support empowering parents in the education of our children. There is no greater promise or hope for future prosperity, then equipping children with the highest standards for learning. And I raised three children, and had the benefit of choosing where my children attended school. I experienced firsthand the benefits of that choice. It is only right that all children are given that choice.

I support funding teachers to do their jobs.

The great state of Texas has fallen way behind in education we should not be number 33 or 37. In these great United States Texans should be leading the way. We should be number one for as the saying goes as Texas goes, so goes the nation. so let's do the common sense thing and pass HB 1

Julie Campbell

Self

Austin, TX

Please do not divert MORE money away from already struggling public schools. As a resident in Austin ISD and a former employee of Eanes ISD I've experienced and witnessed how schools are suffering from under funding. Sending thousands of dollars to private for profit schools will only harm young Texans.

I believe in my heart that a voucher system will only lead to the destruction of public education and I suspect that is the ultimate point. SHAME

Mary Anne Godines

Self / Senior Business Analyst

Plano, TX

As a born & raised Texan who attended public high school in south Texas, I strongly urge you, our lawmakers who are meant to represent your constituents, to prioritize keeping education tax dollars in public schools and investing in quality public school choice and innovative programs in Texas public schools across our state. We have so much data that shows voucher programs DO NOT work, such as:

1. Research in states with established voucher programs (e.g., Indiana, Louisiana, and Ohio) shows that students enrolled in voucher programs have reduced scores on math state assessments.
2. In his 2014 book, "The Public School Advantage: Why Public Schools Outperform Private Schools," Christopher Lubienski, a researcher with Indiana University, found that accounting for demographics, public schools perform better than private schools.
3. A 2018 study by the University of Virginia found that private school enrollment provided no additional benefits to low-income children in urban settings by simply controlling for sociodemographic characteristics.

Please stop wasting time and money on this failed voucher campaign and instead focus on gun safety and fixing our power grid for another terrible winter season. I'm tired of seeing children dying in our state from military weapons of war. I'm tired of worrying if my power is going to go out before I can feed & bathe my son. Even though we are one of the most "economically strong states in the nation" to the point where if Texas were a country, we'd be the 8th largest economy in the world, we sure do feel more & more like a 3rd world country with gun massacres happening left & right and never knowing if/when our power is going to go out. From the Allen Outlet Mall to the State Fair of Texas, Texas has the second most mass shootings in 2023. A statistic no Texan should ever be proud of of. So enough with the vouchers. Let's prioritize our future by focusing on gun safety and fixing the grid.

Devorah Fish
Self, Teacher and Bookkeeper
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

There are so many parents like myself that need to send their children to a school that is not the assigned district school. Different children have different learning needs and parents are the people who know what each child needs to become successful, competent adults who will impact the world in a great way. Education for our children is our continuity, the greatness of our country, our hope for the future. Please join almost half of the states in our country in supporting school choice and supporting our children's educational success.

Paula Barkan
Retired
Austin, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1. While I understand the desire to provide options for education, I am deeply concerned that this plan could have detrimental effects on our already struggling public schools.

Redirecting funds from public education through vouchers undermines the essential resources our schools need to serve every child adequately. This potential reduction in resources could lead to a decline in educational quality and result in wider gaps in student achievement.

Furthermore, I am troubled by the potential violation of the First Amendment establishment clause when vouchers are applied to private religious schools. It is crucial to uphold the separation of church and state in education to ensure fairness and inclusivity for all students.

I urge you to reconsider and oppose the voucher plans outlined in HB 1. It is essential to prioritize the strength and well-being of our public schools to provide a quality education for every child in our community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I appreciate your dedication to serving our community.
Sincerely,
Paula Barkan

Paula Waggoner
Self - PTA Mills, Small MS, Bowie HS
Austin, TX

Diverting funds for vouchers hurts our local schools - the students, the staff and the teachers! Taking away funding puts our schools and students at risk of falling behind! Stand with and support our Educators!
No to Vouchers!! Please consider my children, all of our children - the future leaders!

Addy Guerra
self
Belton, TX

Everyone will benefit from Parental Choice. Currently, only those able to afford to live in the best public-school districts or to pay private school tuition enjoy a full range of educational options. However, through a well-designed parental choice program, families with fewer financial resources will no longer be limited to their local public school and will be able to consider additional educational opportunities.

Our son attends a private Catholic School where his education is thriving. My wish is for every parent in the great State of Texas to be able to say the same, no matter their zip code or financial situation.

As HB 1 comes up for discussion, please know that we support our government and pray for easy resolutions.

Cheryl Robertson

Self, pharmacist

Richardson, TX

Simply put: I pay taxes for public schools yet I am single with no children. My dollars should go to parents who choose where to send their children, wherever that is. I attended bot parochial and public schools. Let children have a choice. I would like my tax dollars to fund this choice. In the end it's about the best education for all children.

Roel Guerra Jr.

self

Belton, TX

I support parental choice , as I believe it will lead to increased access to educational opportunities to maximize student success, for ALL Texas children.

Cameron Samuels

Students Engaged in Advancing Texas (SEAT)

Katy, TX

Vouchers only exacerbate inequities in our public school system, and Texas students deserve better. We deserve a seat at the table in educational policymaking, so please listen to us when we say no to vouchers and yes to increased funding for our public schools.

School voucher programs are a scam to redirect public funds from taxpayers towards private institutions with limited oversight, accountability, and without obligation to follow many state regulations and civil rights protections to prevent discrimination against everyday Texans. As a result, they can lead to a myriad of issues that further harm the educational system of most Texans – that's roughly 95% of Texas students, in fact.

The misleading concept of parental empowerment overlooks the structural barriers many marginalized families face. Institutionalized racism, which has plagued our society for centuries, continues to create disparities in access to quality education, visible among communities historically redlined with oppression. Voucher programs inadvertently perpetuate this injustice by leaving behind those who are unable to navigate the complexities of admittance, enrollment, or transportation to private institutions.

Drawing funds away from public schools would ultimately harm class sizes, extracurricular activities, mental health services, special education, disability accommodations, environmental sustainability, programs to support individual student needs, and teacher welfare. Forcing public schools to eliminate these programs because of lost funds from vouchers would harmfully impact the student achievement gap.

Students deserve better. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that every student has access to a high-quality public education. Please reject HB 1.

Jimmie Gautt

Self/Stults Td. Elem. School, Fallas Tx

DALLAS, TX

- There are so many people that do not understand what you people in Austin are doing. You are taking advantage of individuals that dontnhave a clue. Making them second class citizens!! Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Eliseo Rodriguez, Mr.

Self/educator

Houston, TX

Dear Rep. Buckley:

I am writing to ask you to support public schools during the special session.

Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and students rather than diverting funds toward vouchers.

Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept.

We should strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement—not vouchers.

Sharon Richard

self - retired public school teacher

Sour Lake, TX

I am a public school retiree, and a grandmother of students who attend great public schools in Texas. I am vehemently opposed to education savings accounts or vouchers. Our public schools serve well over five million children, and our Texas Constitution demands that we furnish them a great free public education, for their futures and the future of our state and nation. Public funds should be used to improve our public schools. It is unconscionable that our Texas schools rank near the bottom of the fifty states in student funding. Our educators should not be used as hostages in this issue and should receive much better compensation and health coverage for their superhuman efforts in the classroom. Accountability is another factor; public funds distributed to private entities without comparable and considerable accountability is not a conservative principle. Of great significance, our Texas children with assorted special needs also deserve great schools and teachers; private schools generally do not provide services to our special needs students. We are proud of our public schools that welcome and include all children. Please vote NO to the establishment of an ESA program and make the singular decision to fully fund our public education system and reward our teachers and staff for the work they do in educating our precious children.

Tarma Grady

Self

Austin, TX

This bill does provide educational choice. Most families could not afford private school even with a 10K voucher. Private schools do not accept all students. They can out perform public schools because they can select to only allow a particular student profile. I want my tax money supporting ALL kids not just the most successful or those with the most opportunities.

And why should a private school voucher be more than the about allocated to a student in public school. If a voucher is 10k, each child in public school should be allotted 10k in funding.

School vouchers are just a reimbursement for families that can already afford to give their child advantages. An average family in rural TX is not sending their child to a 25k a year private school. Their most likely is not even a private school near them. Where is their "school choice"? Fund public schools properly and you won't need other choices.

Neva Cozart, Mrs.

Self - Retired Professional Educator

Nocona, TX

School vouchers have been a topic of intense debate in the field of education policy for many years. While proponents argue that vouchers can improve educational outcomes by promoting competition and empowering parents with choice, there are compelling reasons to be against school vouchers. In this discussion, we will explore some of the most significant arguments against school vouchers, considering their potential negative impact on educational equity, accountability, and the public education system as a whole.

Undermining Educational Equity:

School vouchers can exacerbate educational inequities. By diverting public funds to private and parochial schools, vouchers may indirectly siphon resources away from already underfunded public schools. Students in disadvantaged communities, who rely on these public schools, can find their education further compromised as a result. Vouchers may also contribute to greater social and economic segregation, as more affluent families can take advantage of them while low-income families may lack access or resources to do so.

Lack of Accountability:

Private schools that accept vouchers are often not subject to the same level of accountability and oversight as public schools. While public schools must adhere to state standards, participate in standardized testing, and follow regulations aimed at protecting students' rights, private schools may not have the same obligations. This lack of transparency and accountability can make it difficult to ensure that students in voucher-funded schools receive a quality education, potentially jeopardizing their long-term prospects.

Erosion of the Public Education System:

Critics argue that school vouchers weaken the foundation of public education. Public schools are intended to serve as a cornerstone of democratic society, providing equal educational opportunities for all children. When funds are diverted from the public system, it can lead to a downward spiral of reduced resources, which can result in the decline of educational quality. Voucher programs may ultimately weaken the public education system rather than improve it.

Cherry-Picking Students:

Private schools, including many that accept vouchers, often have the flexibility to select which students they admit. This can lead to a situation where private schools choose to enroll students who are easier to educate, while leaving more challenging or disadvantaged students in public schools. Such cherry-picking practices can skew the perception of private schools as being more successful, as they are not serving the same range of students that public schools must.

Potential for Discrimination:

Private schools, particularly religious ones, may not adhere to the same non-discrimination policies as public schools. Critics argue that using public funds to support private and religious schools can indirectly support

Michelle Upshaw

Self

Round Rock, TX

Vouchers will devastate our public schools and the future of public education. Please stand strong AGAINST vouchers! Thank you

Antonella Longo

self, researcher

Highland Village, TX

An education savings account program will support private schools with public money without accountability. This is not fiscally conservative. It is also against article 7 of the Texas constitution. Say no to voucher and support public schools to educate more than 5 million students.

Frank Netscher

Self

Austin, TX

Our tax dollars should be controlled by elected officials, not private school CEOs. That is democracy, and that is good government. Funding public education that accepts all students, no matter who they are or where they live, is better than sending rural family's funding to schools that are under no obligation to accept them.

Natalie Cannon

Self- Parent of school-aged children and Teacher

Austin, TX

I am opposed to the establishment of education savings accounts. I am opposed to public funds going to any for-profit or private school. Public funds are for public education- where all kids are accepted and educated. Private schools are not required to accept every student who applies, unlike public schools, which must educate ALL children--this means that private schools can be discriminatory against students based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, and any other criteria the private school stipulates.

I am also opposed to attaching this egregious bill to certification, compensation, and/or health coverage of certain public school employees. This ploy is keeping needed funds from our public schools, and ties the financial compensation of public school employees to private school vouchers. This makes absolutely no sense, and it reeks of quid pro quo and "playground bully." Don't mess with Texas public schools, and don't gamble on our children's future for political gain.

I do, however, strongly support and encourage the state to fund public school children at the "proposed voucher rate" of \$8,000 per child per year. That isn't enough for most private school tuitions, but it would be a substantial increase to the current basic allotment for public schools, which is woefully inadequate. I would also love to see that funding based on enrollment in a school rather than attendance, which seems to be the idea for the ESAs. Schools have to staff for enrollment, not attendance. Allowing STAAR to be replaced with a different norms-referenced assessment is also a fabulous idea that would save the state millions of dollars. These are great ideas that need to be applied to public schools, not private schools.

V Walker

Self - retired

Bedford, TX

(C)

The available school fund shall be applied annually to the support of the public free schools. Except as provided by this section, the legislature may not enact a law appropriating any part of the permanent school fund or available school fund to any other purpose. The permanent school fund and the available school fund may not be appropriated to or used for the support of any sectarian school. The available school fund shall be distributed to the several counties according to their scholastic population and applied in the manner provided by law.

Public dollars only for public schools!

Private schools who want public dollars MUST follow required STAAR testing, TEKS curriculum, accountability ratings, state & federal mandates, and accept all who wish to enroll... just like public schools!?????

Ruth Torres
Self
Mesquite, TX

Texas has been in control of GOP three decades underfunding public education making us 42 in the nation. Any failures in performance, all complaints about content are owned by GOP. Fully fund our public education and STOP holding teacher pay hostage.

Nationwide, Charter schools and vouchers are robbing are children of their education, creating cycles of poverty & inequity. They are criminal concepts by Judas Politicians selling our children and communities for profit.

The privatization of public education is the strategy to reverse Brown v Board of Education and desperately hold on to power in fear of the majority minority population, a great HisPANIC. Instead of eliminating DEI and enacting oppressive laws, you should be promoting DEI and equity based laws so we treat your kids & grandkids better than you treated us. I recommend you watch an old movie: White Man's Burden

Your agenda is a trillion dollar public land grab to give away public school land and trillions in no bid contracts to dismantle our education system.

Your agenda fails to improve academic performance as it removes accountability and transparency, lacking oversight for use of taxpayer monies.

Your agenda opens us to national security risks as EVERYONE can open a school including US enemies and terrorist groups including white nationalist and get paid to! Plus they will know who are scientists are and get grant \$ for projects + they will get the technology!

Please see my chart listing the many issues and dangers of charter schools and voucher program under EDUCATION here:
<https://truthincongress.com/issues-ruth-torres-will-fight-for-government-reform-economy-public-education-gun-safety-equity-and-womens-rights-government-for-the-people/>

Every plan to harm us will backfire. All that support these oppressive laws, every traitor that abandons their oath to God & country for their own profit will be held accountable, in upcoming elections and on both sides of history.

Isaiah 10:1-4: Woe to those who make unjust laws

Isaiah 9:14-17 & 31:1-3: they will fall together

Isaiah 1:11-17: God HATES your praise, worship, tithes, they make Him sick for you fail to speak for the hurting, the vulnerable and oppressed

Daniella Hampel, Ms.

Self
Bellaire, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Divya Rao

Self

Austin, TX

This bill is the absolute worst thing that can happen to education in Texas. It will kill public education, not be able to cover ALL children who seek private education(just the ones the private schools don't have a hard time accepting), is absolutely bad for any accountability to taxpayers and last but not the least will crumble our economy as home prices are directly dependent on public school ratings.

Janine Sirotiak

Self/hardy oak elementary PTA

San Antonio, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Malissa Williams, Mrs.

Self a retired teacher

Huntsville, TX

Vouchers are no good, and if you succumb to pressure from the Gov and his rich supporters who will line your pockets with bribes, Texas will suffer. Vouchers will backfire, like the abortion issue has for Republicans in other states. It is a short sighted issue that looks good now but will come back quickly to bite the state. Mark my words.

Philip Tuttle

My grandchildren in Harris County

Montgomery, TX

This is an important alternative to government controlled indoctrination, formally known as public education. As a grandparent and product of Texas public schools, I am dismayed to see what our public schools have become. Three of my grandchildren live in Harris county and I see what an awful education system it has. Pls give my grand children an alternative.

Lanet Greenhaw, Retired elected Richardson ISD Board of Trustees member

Self

Richardson, TX

Reject and oppose Education Savings Accounts and vouchers and instead raise the Basic Allotment to fund what it cost to meet the academic standards established by the legislature. It's deplorable to propose that private school students are worth \$10,000 and public school students are worth \$6,270.

D.C. Zamora
Self
Houston, TX

No vouchers.
No vouchers.
No vouchers.
No vouchers.
No vouchers.
No vouchers.
No vouchers.
No vouchers.
No vouchers.

NO NO NO NO NO NO

Now, take that junk out of HB 1 and go ahead with tossing crumbs to the children of this state.

I am grateful to the members of the committee who have remained steadfast in their OPPOSITION to this malarkey. (I do thank whoever was smart enough to jettison Harrison and Schaefer for the special sessions.)

Tell Brandon Creighton to take SB 1 out to the trash bin where it belongs.

Alvarado Debra
Self
Arlington, TX

School voucher program is ridiculous! We have underpaid and overworked teachers, stressed to the limit with unruly children. Give them decent pay, and better benefits. Stop helping the elites! Public schools are an important part of American life. We must all learn to get along, we should all be entitled to a great education. New text books, better lunch programs, after school care for working parents, athletic departments need funding. What are you people thinking???

Melissa Flores
Myself
Bullard, TX
Deny HB1

Stephanie Helfman
Self. Program manager
Austin, TX

I oppose these bills. They will be detrimental to the education of Texas children and increase inequality. Public schools should retain their funding.

Sarah Deakins

Self, Meadow Wood Elementary and Westchester Academy PTA member

Houston, TX

I am a proud parent of students enrolled in Spring Branch ISD schools in Houston. Due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. My seventh grader's choice school is being considered for closure. We love our schools, they are doing so much with such sparse resources as things stand currently- these cuts will devastate our district. Our class sizes will balloon. Our public schools are the anchors of our community- by putting them at risk, you threaten to upend the stability and community feel of our neighborhood. Our children have endured so many learning disruptions- our neighborhood was devastated by Harvey, and the stresses and learning loss associated with covid-19 school closures. Please do the right thing for our children who have already endured so much.

The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. Please focus on fully funding our public schools!

Yeevernett Anderson

Self

Houston, TX

Ours students do not need vouchers, we need fully funded public education schools. It's disingenuous to connect an increase in school funding on whether or not vouchers are accepted. Vouchers take money away from kids that even if they had a voucher, their parents would not be able to afford private school. Private school vouchers are not for the poor kids, they are for the kids of parents that can already afford private school and do not want their tax dollars to benefit or go towards public school children. Vouchers will never help the kids it's supposed to help. Private schools get to cherry pick who they will accept, how many they will accept, and they are not held to the same standards as public schools (testing, special education, etc). Please fund our schools, give our teachers and support staff a raise, reduce class sizes, bring back trades in schools, fund pre-K, provide wrap around services to our most vulnerable students, etc.. Please hold the line and do not be swayed by people that only have self interests.

TaNeika Driver-Moultrie

Self- Killeen, TX

Killeen, TX

Vote NO to vouchers. It's that simple. Public schools continue to suffer because of bad decisions made by our lawmakers. Do what is right and what is in the best interest for our children! They are our future and you owe it to them to make the right decision.

Jorge Estrada

Self/teacher

The Woodlands, TX

No vouchers. Teacher pay raise needs to happen without vouchers. No gutting of Texas public schools.

Diane Casassa

Self

Highland Village, TX

We need to fully fund public schools before we can even think about giving money to private schools. No to vouchers, no to ESAs, yes to fully funding public education.

Richard Brewer

Self

Allen, TX

Keep all monies in the public school system. NO VOUCHERS. Not one penny should be used for a private school or institution.

Pamela Kellom

Self / HR Recruiter

Aubrey, TX

I am in full support the HB 1 Bill, which will empower parents and kids with Education Savings Accounts, which will put Texas on a new course to lead in educational excellence! It's time we bring real accountability back into the public school system. I urge the Texas Legislature to pass this bill.

Thank you,

Pamela

Sarah Ahmed

self - parent and taxpayer

Round Rock, TX

Vote no! The public does not want vouchers.

Arthur Metcalf

Self Consultant

San Antonio, TX

Please do not weaken the public education system in Texas. If funding is reduced the quality of education that these young people get will go down as the best teachers will move on to other better paying states and schools. Texas is a great state with some of the best leaders in the world coming from this education system. I volunteer at my granddaughters elementary school and I see how hard the teachers and staff work to train these young people and they do it while their salaries are lower than they should be. Each year I see good teachers move away or quit to find better paying jobs and it is so depressing. If you make it harder to keep them the companies in your districts will suffer because well educated employees will be fewer. Please do not pass this legislation.

Kimberly Jackson

Self-17 year Texas Educator

Tomball, TX

Please remove vouchers from this bill! It's a shame that all of the things so desperately needed by PUBLIC schools have been chained to this private school funding. While I do believe parents should have the choice to send their children to private schools, I do NOT believe that taxpayer funds should pay for this. These ESAs will destroy public education! They will leave students behind whose parents are unable to subsidize the ESA for a private school education. They will leave behind SPED students who will not be accepted into private schools. They will leave behind teachers who will have to pick up the pieces when the funding runs out, as it will when our higher socioeconomic students leave our campuses. Rather than sinking PUBLIC funds into private school and turning education into a business, please fully fund our amazing public schools and place your trust in the system that has been working for 100s of years! I trust you to do the right thing for ALL students and leave NONE behind!

Kathy Holdway

Self

Ben Wheeler, TX

I oppose HB1 and 4th special called session to trick Texans, cheat public schools & abandon the right of all children, regardless of ability, to an education.

I oppose the creation of an expansive private school voucher program outlined. This bill poses a threat to our public schools by diverting essential funds from public education and undermining the ability of public schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement.

This bill has the potential to increase the numbers of children with disabilities institutionalized in state supported living centers.

I don't appreciate the haste to rush this bill through. I ask you to listen to your constituents, protect our public and kill this bill.

Nadine Smith

Self

San Antonio, TX

I am a parent that moved over 200 miles to put my kids in a quality Christian private school as the public school in our previous zone was unacceptable on many levels including academically and socially. Consequently we only see my husband on weekends as he couldn't leave due to work. Parents should be able to freely choose to homeschool or be in a private school and have some financial benefit to that.

Patricia Bryant

Self

Missouri City, TX

As a grandparent of children enrolled in public schools in the Houston area, I want the Texas legislature to fully fund our public schools. I do not wish to see public money siphoned off to pay for education savings account (vouchers.) Plainly stated, I am against vouchers. I wish to see Texas ranked as one of the top states in funding its public schools instead of near the bottom as it is now. This is what our children deserve.

Carrie King, Mrs.

Myself, a public school teacher and a parent of a highschooler

Round Rock, TX

Unless it ensures the same accountability systems that have been in place for Public schools (ie STAAR, school ratings, etc) then I'm not interested in a bill. Anything that is good enough for public funding should then follow the same scrutiny we've followed for years. If that same accountability system won't work for private and charters then perhaps our accountability system is garbage and the money should be spent to overhaul it.

Joan Barros, Mrs.

Self

Katy, TX

I support this bill for education savings accounts to give parents more choice in educating their children besides the failing and highly ideological public schools.

Deloris Capps, Mrs

Self

Selma, TX

Vote for the future of America

Libby Thoma
Self
San Antonio, TX

I fully support and am in favor of this bill.

Melanie Pharis
Self
Beaumont, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers and inadequate funding will impact our campus, district, and community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase, or programs be cut?

Amber Woods
Self
Bedford, TX

Please do what it right for our public schools and do not allow any voucher legislation to pass. This will take away from our already struggling public schools.

Charmin Calamaris, Ms.
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please support parents' choice for schools and allow financial support for students, allowing them to use that for private school tuition or some other approved expenses.

Sean Parker
Self Senior Manager Logistics
Killeen, TX

This is a much needed bill to support choice in education for parents when many public schools are not able to provide the level of education that will give Texas children the foundations needed for life and higher education. Many public schools are failing our children by not properly addressing bullying and violence in their campuses. I have pulled my children from public schools and enrolled them in private Catholic schools with a traditional education curriculum and now my children are excelling and no longer are distracted by the failures of the public school district for lax discipline.

Bianca Gibson

Self/Marketing

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet this morning, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG.

There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Bianca Gibson

Stacey McNeely
Self/School Counselor
DALLAS, TX

Raised in Texas attending Texas public schools from grades k-12 and earning degrees from three Texas public colleges, I am completing my 27th year as an educator, currently a high school counselor, all in Texas public schools. There is a reason few of my students express interest in becoming an educator in our state. Our state has failed to prioritize or properly invest in schools for as long as I have been in the profession. However, the current environment is drastically different than when I obtained my first job as a fourth grade teacher in 1991. Now, I don't go a week without a student expressing severe anxiety, depression, or thoughts of wanting to die. Our world has changed and our state government seems more interested in finding ways to give tax dollars to private schools than addressing the problems where the majority of our students are educated. The fact that the latest proposal gives approximately 8k to a student who wants to go private but funds the public student allotment at just over 6k tells citizens everything we need to know about our legislative priorities. I work in Highland Park. Many of our families have students attending area private schools as well as our local public school. Everyone knows a good private education costs more than 8k per year. Your offer just makes it "cheaper" for our families to send a child to a private school. So if you are wanting to reward the wealthy, your proposal fits the bill. If you truly care about the middle to lower income families, then properly fund our public schools. I am watching my colleagues leave our profession in droves. I chose this profession because I love kids. I felt I could make a difference. I'm fortunate that my husband's work more than provides for our family, so working for me is a choice, not a necessity. However, I plan to retire this year at age 55 because our state leaders have made it clear that my work is not valued and our government refuses to provide the resources needed to adequately address the severity of the mental health issues my students face. Just yesterday, we completed a health check and I counseled four students who noted that in the last three months, they had seriously thoughts of wanting to die. This has become our new normal, especially since the pandemic. However, you have failed to increase the student allotment since 2019. The governor enacted a task force to study the retention problem yet, you all refuse to listen to those results and implement their recommendations. Again, it has become clear what our legislators value and it is NOT public education. If it were not for the Democrats and rural Republicans in our state, public education would cease to exist. I will remember each of you on election day. I have never seen my fellow educators so inflamed in the decades I've been a part of this group. Retired or not, I will do everything in my power to make sure the public knows who you are and what you have done to our public schools.

Seth Bauer
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.
Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.
Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.
This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.
Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.
Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Amanda Stewart
Self/PTA
New braunfels, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Magali Hernandez

Self

San Antonio, TX

The TX educational system will be further damaged with vouchers! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Our school system in TX is already ranked low and having ESAs will only harm our educational system. Please adequately fund schools first.

Rebecca Bain, Superintendent

Self

Fruitvale, TX

Public Education should be funded through our tax dollars for every child. These funds should be accountable to the state as they have been, public school dollars need to increase to the top 10 in the nation- our kids deserve that. Private schools with zero accountability to the state should not utilize public dollars- there is zero accountability for them with these funds- you are asking for them to get more than you provide public school children, and they don't have to take the most needy kids- they are getting to pick and choose kids- it is segregation. We can't go backwards as a state!!

Nicole Ritter

Self

Plano, TX

As a resident who has seen how recapture is affecting school districts across Texas, I ask you vote NO on school vouchers. Private Schools are not held to the same standards as public schools and can pick and choose who attends their institutions. They also do not have to accommodate for students with disabilities. Public funds should support all children. Allowing school vouchers will create a two-tiered education system. For the FOURTH TIME we do not want vouchers.

Linda Litzinger

Texas Parent to Parent - Public Policy Specialist, and self (public policy)

Austin, TX

Texas Parent to Parent is a non-profit serving 14,000 families across Texas. We are AGAINST HB1 because the bill contains ESAs (vouchers), thus a:

1. Loss of Protections: Private schools are not required to provide students with disabilities or their families with vital guarantees and protections set by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or other state and federal laws. Students and their families will lose essential safeguards and support systems, endangering their educational rights.
2. Discrimination: Private schools are allowed to deny admittance to students for any reason. The vast majority of private schools do not accept students with disabilities, particularly those with moderate and significant academic, medical or behavioral support needs.
3. Lack of Accountability: Private schools receiving voucher funds lack the rigorous accountability mechanisms in place for public schools. This absence of oversight can result in inadequate academic and student outcomes, hindering the quality of education for students with disabilities.
4. Increased Segregation: A voucher program may lead to increased segregation of students with disabilities, as private schools are not required to educate children with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), which public schools are required to do under IDEA. This separation further isolates and stigmatizes students with disabilities.
5. Insufficient Funds: When a child leaves the public school, they take funding with them. The children left in public schools are then increasingly at risk of receiving lower-quality services as the pool of funding shrinks. Additionally, as students with disabilities with low support needs exit public school, there is less funding to serve students with higher needs.

In addition to the aforementioned concerns, Texas must address the existing crisis of special education services underfunding in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. Further, Texas was fined \$33.3 million by the federal government for illegally decreasing special education funding during the 2016-2017 school year. This crisis in funding must be addressed, and the legislature should prioritize adopting the formula based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure students with disabilities in Texas public schools are appropriately served.

We firmly believe that all students, regardless of their disability, deserve equitable access to high-quality education and the full protection of their educational rights. We urge policymakers and the community to consider the potential consequences of a school voucher program on these vital principles. We are committed to continued advocacy and collaboration to ensure that students with disabilities receive the support, services and protections they need to thrive within our educational system. Thank you.

Mildred Adair

Self-retired teacher

Pflugerville, TX

I think three no's for vouchers is plenty. Calling a fourth session to vote for vouchers is in my mind bullying and I hope and pray you don't give in! It's like the Governor is saying I'll spend millions until I get my way! Really? Is that what we want? NO!

Kerry Mays

Self

Flower Mound, TX

We need to fully fund public schools before we can even think about giving money to private schools. No to vouchers, no to ESAs, yes to fully funding public education. Yes to fully funding special education. Yes to teacher pay raises, yes to para pay raises. Yes to virtual education. Yes to CTE funding.

Ann Henkels

Self

Frisco, TX

The only people being enriched by vouchers are the rich. Don't give them more money. Give it to regular public schools in measure according to the level of poverty of the students and their parents.

Thank you for working in the best interest of the future of Texas.

In summary: NO VOUCHERS.

Scott Bumbaugh

"Self" educator

Huntsville, TX

Dear Committee Members:

I would like to express my strong opposition to school vouchers. Diverting tax money to help pay for private school education is a waste of our State's resources at a time when public schools in Texas need those funds to educate our children. One of my main concerns about the proposed voucher system is accountability. Public schools are overseen by the TEA. Public school teachers are certified by the State of Texas. Educators in our schools are required to teach curriculum based on the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills). Public school students in Texas are required to pass the STAAR exams in order to graduate. What mechanisms will there be to monitor private schools if they receive money from the State? Will these schools be overseen by the TEA? Will teachers in private schools also have to pass the same rigorous standards as public school teachers, and also be certified by the State to teach? Will students in private schools also be required to take the STAAR exams in order to graduate? Will the curriculum in private schools be required to align with the TEKS and will these schools be required to use state-adopted texts and other materials?

I am also concerned about the constantly changing accountability burdens that the TEA has tried to impose on school districts in our State. School districts that have made growth in student achievement still find themselves being penalized because the TEA wants to change the accountability system midstream. This essentially makes local school districts appear to be failing, making parents nervous about the quality of education in public schools. This in turn creates the illusion that private schools are better than public schools, when in fact, they are not.

If state legislators wish to improve the quality of education in our State, they can begin by improving funding to public school districts, increase pay for state-certified educators, and standardize the seemingly capricious school accountability system that the TEA is currently engaging in.

Again, I would encourage the Committee to OPPOSE school vouchers and INCREASE funding to public school districts across the State.

Sincerely yours,

Scott Bumbaugh

Columba Wilson

Self Guardian of autistic IDD youth

San Antonio, TX

Vouchers doesn't help disabled students! private schools , Charter doesn't accept disabled kids

Catholic school and church's are giving immunity to abuse kids by workers and volunteers!!

SB 694 gives protection to the abusers!! Autistic IDD

17 yrs was assault at Catholic Church by Ushers Andrew Almazan (bishop Gustavo Garcia protected the abuser) please No voucher with out accountability

Vouchers gives money to private schools there's no

accountability this HB 1 discriminates against autistic IDD students !! Taking taxpayer money

From public schools it's not a good choice

Samantha Taylor

Self

Kempner, TX

As a family of 6, an ESA would help us tremendously.

Martha Kokotajlo, Mrs
Blessings Sacrament church
San Antonio, TX

I support Parental choice, also known as "school choice," that will financially assist parents in choosing the best educational environment for their children by allowing their tax dollars to be used outside of the public school system.

Mark Pierson
Self
Plano, TX

We have separation of church and state in this country. It is offensive and unlawful for the State of Texas to take my taxes and give them to faith based charter schools. I have been denied by a faith based school when applying for enrollment for my child. The reason, I am gay. That tells you right there that public funds should only be used by public services. If this passes, it will be taken to the Supreme Court.

Danielle Edwards
Self/Parent
Austin, TX

For the sake of our kids and for the future of Texas, please do the right thing and keep public tax dollars with public schools. Vote NO on HB1. Unlike private schools and homeschools, which are selective in who they serve and operate under nearly zero regulation on what they teach, public schools serve every student, regardless of ability and finances, and provide a foundation to prepare young Texans to become successful, contributing members of society. HB1 does not address the needs of students and teachers in public schools and will divert nearly unlimited public tax dollars to homeschools and exclusive private schools. Please represent the voice of Texans and vote NO on HB1.

Jennifer Savage
Self - Walsh Middle School PTA
Round Rock, TX

Vouchers are only beneficial to wealthy Texans and bad for Texas Public Schools! Texas children deserve properly funded Texas Public Schools. How do we strengthen Public education? By strengthening it- fully fund public education and support the system rather than weaken it by introducing vouchers.

Lisa Lin, Ms.
Self, Computer technician
Houston, TX

This bill is detrimental to teachers and students in public schools. It will hurt the education public school children receive from the classroom ratios to the quality of education. Please do not support this legislation.

Patricia Scholl
Retired
Desoto, TX

I am fully in support of school vouchers. They have been promised for a long time! Texas is a perfect place to see the full benefits of parental choice in education. We should show our courage in adopting this especially now that parents are economically stressed because of inflation.

Deborah Cano, Dr.

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Repeal the WEP that takes SS benefits away from TRS retirees who qualify for both, & also takes away their SS spousal benefit when a spouse dies.

Our military veterans receive their full retirement, benefits for their service, and full retirement benefits when they leave private industry jobs. Retired Texas educators are public servants, just like our military brothers & sisters, and they should have access to all benefits they've earned too.

Amanda Whittenburg

Self

Plano, TX

I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to fund other's private school choices, and these voucher schemes (repackaged under different names) reduce fair access to educational opportunity, cut into already inadequate public school budgets, disproportionately hurt our rural schools, weaken rights for students with disabilities and expose taxpayers to fraud. Rather than wasting time and taxpayer money trying to force a system most in Texas oppose, the legislature should adequately fund and support innovation within the Texas public school system.

Thomas Collier, Deacon

Self - Pastoral Associate

Midland, TX

I am strongly in favor of this bill, in particular, the education savings account. This bill will increase a parents options in the education of their children while improving the quality and responsiveness of our educational system.

Mercedez Rassi

Self

SAN ANGELO, TX

I live in San Angelo and belong to Sacred Heart Cathedral parish and my children attend Angelo Catholic School. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options.

Parents should be given the most authority and power when it comes to choosing what is best for their children. Please support HB 1.

If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Sincerely,

Mercedez Rassi

An Loy

Self

Austin, TX

HB1 does not

Honor the commitment of our country's foundation in offering quality public schools because. It really should not pass and be written this way. It is shameful that our public schools are being "helped" this way. The bill Should be written with only public schools at its focus.

Adrienne Gidley, Ms.

Self - Hightower Elementary PTA

Plano, TX

Taking money away from public schools is not a solution that will benefit the majority of the children in our state. The voucher system will weaken public education in Texas and make us fall even further behind in terms of quality education available to the student population. We are going to handicap our children by cutting funding for resources and diverting them to schools that are NOT NECESSARY. Focus on fixing what we already have in place and making it better for everyone. Reject this bill.

Sara Thomson

Hurst Junior High PTA

Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Roger Rueda

Self/Custodian

VON ORMY, TX

Texas parents deserve choices in education and we should ALL kids eligible for Education Savings Accounts.

School choice will only make education better in our state and it will NOT harm public schools, in fact it would help them get better.

Not to mention that Texas families overwhelmingly support education freedom right now across the state.

In fact, nearly 90% of Republican primary voters last year supported school choice, voting in favor of this language in Prop. 9:

"Texas parents and guardians should have the right to select schools, whether public or private, for their children, and the funding should follow the student."

Please stand with kids and empower parents to give us options for the schools that best fit our children's needs.

Support HB 1, the universal school choice program in the special session. Thanks so much for all you do.

Emily Jelen

Self, wardrobe stylist, mother of 2 DISD students

Dallas, TX

Please say no to vouchers! Keep our tax dollars going to public schools!

Erin Moore

Self - teacher

Sealy, TX

When public schools have to jump through hoop after hoop to maintain and secure funding it is ridiculous to allow that funding to be pulled and sent to schools with little to no accountability.

School vouchers for schools that can promote their own religions, ideologies and agendas is a direct violation of the separation of church and state.

Marta Pinheiro
Self
Cedar Park, TX

As a constituent of yours, I'm writing to ask for your support for Texas public schools this legislative session. Adequate funding for public schools is crucial as districts' address issues like teacher recruitment and retention, school safety, and the mental health of students and school staff.

My family and I came to America in 2012 chasing the American dream. Last year we finally fulfilled this dream by becoming citizens.

As an imigrante we always looked up to the US as the best place in the world to live. Unfortunately what I've been witnessing now saddens me. Our education system is crumbling down and our children are paying the price. In other worlds our schools are slowly starting to resemble the ones from the country I was born in the 3rd world. Our kids deserve better.

As a homeowner, our property taxes skyrocketed since 2019 but not a penny from that increase went back to our school district! Now, for the 4th time, the house is meeting to talk about the same agenda that didn't pass all previous times: vouchers.

I am a parent and I am upset with education system BUT I am also a School District Employee, so I can see that is not the school's or district's fault. Yes, parents just like myself are upset because their students are not getting the best education. The district's are dealing with staff shortage because they can't offer a higher pay and the current teachers have to flex their plans to have much more students than originally planned. This increase of pressure is resulting in staff changing their paths and going to work in a different industry, in other words staff shortage. All of that is making parents withdraw their children from the public education system. Vouchers will increase this problem not solve it!

Let me give you a clear example of what has been happening around the schools. Last school year my 8th grade daughter hated science until the beginning of April. Do you know why? In the begging on April he school was finally able to hire a science teacher for her 7th grade team. During the last two months of 2022-2023 she came home happy and sharing everything she learned about bones and also circulatory, respiratory and digestive systems.

Our children don't deserve to go through this! They deserve much more!

Given that I also ask you to oppose any education savings account, voucher, or privatization scheme. Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending taxpayer dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

We need, at least, a 1K per student in the basic allotment! Our taxes should be sent to public education, not religious or private education.

The economic future of Texas depends on a strong public education system where parents and educators work together for students.

I urge you to help our children! Please help Texas to have a once again a first world public education quality!

Thank you in advance for your support.

Marta Pinheiro

Marisa Williams
SAHM/Self
McKinney, TX

As a retired public school elementary teacher and a current homeschool mom, I stand against HB 1. As a homeschool family, it would be more logical if we could keep the \$4,500+ we pay towards our local ISD via property taxes. We don't need our money to be processed through the government and returned to us in some form. All that does is create more bureaucracy. School Choice should mean if you choose public school, you choose for your property tax dollars to fund your ISD. If you choose private or homeschool your property taxes designated for ISD shouldn't be touched so the family can choose the best educational route for their own children. Please vote against HB1.

Octavia Calhoun
Self
Grand Prairie, TX

As a parent of children in the public school educational system, I do not think it is fair or right to allocate public funds for private and homeschools. People should have a right to send to their children to a publicly funded school and still receive a great education. Private and homeschools are choices that people have made and therefore should fund that choice. It is also not fair to say that teachers will not get a raise unless this bill is passed. The cost of living has increased and teachers should not be punished for a bill not being passed if people don't get their way in legislation. Teachers not only teach but serve as parent figures, counselors to some children and pay for things out of pocket to ensure that certain children are left out. Instead of funding private and homeschools take that money and fund the public schools. Invest in the future of our children in the public sector.

Heidi Buschang
Self
Austin, TX

Good Day,

I'm against HB1 as I firmly believe that the proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement.

Our public schools are the bedrock of our communities and the stepping stones for our children's futures. Let us stand together to ensure they receive the support and resources they rightfully deserve.

Sincerely,
Heidi Buschang

Elizabeth Filyaw
Self
Baytown, TX

Families in Texas need to be able to provide the youth with choices on their education and not feel tied to the public school system.

Bridget Brewer

Self, Public Health Professional and PTA leader

San Antonio, TX

Vouchers hurt children!

Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers.

I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools.

I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

We need to look at the states that have done this previously. Arizona for one. It didn't fair well.

Not only will this create issues in the primary and secondary education level, private schools do not have to meet any of the state standardized testing and have much more time for extra curricular activities, clubs and volunteer work which colleges look at on applications and the scholarship programs feed off of. This will ultimately create a huge division in those that go to college and get the scholarships as well.

Texas is already a Choice public school state and that has drawbacks to it but it allows parents that have the means to provide the transportation to the school of choice to go to a different campus. Leave it as is or put this funding into our public schools.

It's funny how we have no more funding for schools but we have this excess funding in Gen Rev. If we can find this funding for vouchers, put it towards the public education system. Can you imagine the level of education our entire state would hCe if wr did this? Investing in tomorrow's leaders is the best ROI you are going to get.

Susana Gomez

self/legal assistant

San Antonio, TX

I am a parent, and grandparent of children having attended private schools and I am in full support of HB1 bill.

Cary Williams, Mr

Self, teacher

Cedar Park, TX

Please fund Texas education. Say no to the stupid voucher scam perpetuated by our governor and money coming in from outside of Texas. Texas is a proud state and we should be number one in PUBLIC school education every year!

Diana Anthony

Stone Oak Elementary PTA

San Antonio, TX

Diverting funds from public schools to private or charter schools can lead to decreased resources for public education. Private schools are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools, potentially resulting in unequal access to quality education.

Until public school are properly funded there should be no discussion about diverting money to private/for-profit schools

Peggy Elliott

Self - Educator

Sweetwater, TX

No Vouchers! Although this bill has some positive for education, vouchers (also known as education savings accounts) are not good and will destroy public education. Vouchers discriminate against our students! Please DO NOT pass HB1

Erika Mercado

None

El Paso, TX

No school vouchers. Stop taking money away from public schools.

Karen Pizette
self
Plano, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Karen Pizette

5900 Lindfield Ct

Plano, Tx 75093

Laura Adcock

Self, Hightower Elementary PTA

Plano, TX

HB1 is poised to destroy the public schools that Texas has worked so hard to build the reputation of. My family moved to Texas and specifically Plano because of the excellent school districts. All children deserve a great education with adequate funding, high quality instruction, and appropriately monitored schooling. ESAs will cause teacher-student ratios to increase as well as campus involvement to shrink. Please vote against vouchers!

Tracy Flowers

Self

Kerrville, TX

Article 7, Section 1 of the Texas Constitution, says “The general diffusion of knowledge, being essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.” As stated by TASA, “The American dream cannot be outsourced to private schools and profiteers. If our state and nation are going to continue to thrive, we must not abandon our public schools and our democracy.” I oppose this bill and all other similar bills. In my 30 years in public schools, I have yet to see our public schools funded appropriately. Rather, I have seen them underfunded and strapped with burdensome regulations that interfere with good teaching. I DO NOT support taxpayer money supporting private entities in education in any form.

Cimarron Gilson

Self and wife and several family and friends I know

San Antonio, TX

I am from Steve Allison’s district and strongly support ESAs for Texas children, all of them. I also strongly support charter school funding. My three kids attend or will attend charter schools near my home because the local public schools are riddled with pro lgbt and dei policies and lack of discipline or strong academic rigor. If I had ESA money though I’d be sending my kids to a Catholic school that offers Spanish immersion (or dual language programming). Since we can’t afford the tuition we are missing out on the ideal type of education we want for our kids. I think ESAs would solve our dilemma. Please SUPPORT HB1.

Amir Goldenberg

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver’s seat of their children’s education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Sincerely,

Amir Goldenberg

Lindsey Naquin

Self- McKinney ISD Council of PTAs

McKinney, TX

As a mom of two special needs kiddos, I can attest to the fact that we need more funding for special education in public education! The educational savings accounts proposed will hurt our public schools and in turn, hurt my kids. We aren't eligible for private schools and the amount provided through ESAs doesn't come close to the cost of schools that accept kids with special needs like my children. Please consider those that rely on the public school system for not only education but socialization and special skills training for kids with special needs. Please focus your energy in making these schools great by providing more funding and not taking public tax dollars to private sectors that are not inclusive to all! Thank you for your time!

Emily Roberts

Self-Nimitz Middle School PTA board member

San Antonio, TX

Vouchers hurt our communities. Any time we take money away from public schools, our entire community will suffer. We need well funded public schools to thrive. Vouchers will not help all of our children reach their potential.

Tabitha Temple

Self

Lufkin, TX

My son began his educational journey in kindergarten at our neighborhood's public primary campus. He was getting pulled for interventions and when he moved up to our neighborhood's elementary campus, I was told he tested out and no longer needed to be pulled for interventions. By the middle of his third grade year, he was failing language arts and math. I advocated for him all year but kept being told since he wasn't failing all subjects he wasn't being flagged for testing and doesn't qualify for special services. At the end of his third grade year he struggled to read and was performing below grade level. I applied for scholarships to a private school in our area and borrowed money in order to get him enrolled. Within the first few months of his fourth grade year my son was tested and diagnosed with dyslexia and dysgraphia! He began to receive therapy and is now reading and ultimately performing on grade level! I currently am a teacher at my son's school in order to receive a discount on tuition and I work several other jobs during the summer just to keep my son enrolled in a private school. An educational savings account would mean the world to me!

Diana E Elizondo

SELF / HIGH SCHOOL TESTING COORDINATOR

San Antonio, TX

No vouchers. Lower accountability requirements for credit recovery campuses. All educators deserve higher pay to keep up with higher insurance premiums and inflation.

Cameron Markeloff

Self

Houston, TX

Education Savings Accounts are a bad idea. They take money from public schools and give it to private schools, with no accountability. Say no to education savings accounts and fully fund public schools.

Siva Mila
Self
Northlake, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

Van Lo
Self
Austin, TX

Why are you ruining the future of education in Texas? Why do you want to destroy the one thing every child deserves which is a strong education? Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Add how vouchers and inadequate funding will impact your campus, district, and community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase, or programs be cut?

Anita Sorensen

Self - elementary school counselor

Dallas, TX

I am completely opposed to this finding of school vouchers. All this does is give “discounts” to people who send their children to private schools while taking away from our public schools. If people want to send their kids to private schools that is their choice but why should that be paid for by the state? It’s not an equal opportunity for all kids because the families who couldn’t afford private school still wouldn’t be able to...they are trying to feed kids and pay the crazy high rents! It’s all such a mess.

The reality is that there are more schools with kids who are at risk and we need to help them and fund great school programs for all students. Our focus should be on ALL of the children in Texas, not just a select group. We need to be able to hire more highly qualified teachers, more special education teachers, and more counselors and mental health professionals. Our society has changed so much and we are seeing a change in students. Whether it is from too much screen time, changes in family units, financial stresses at home...it’s hard to tell...but the majority of our kids/families need to be in great schools where innovative learning is happening. We need good parent education for many parents also. There is just so much. Please use these funds for the good of all kids.

Mamta Verma, Mrs.

Arc of Texas

Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

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There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Mamta Verma
14202 Canton Spring Lane
Houston,

Shirley Koop
Self- Comal ISD Council PTA
Spring Branch, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Lorin Furlow
Self - Educator
Lake Jackson, TX

As a 21 year educator, specifically special education, I urge you to vote no on HB1 or any bills that include educational savings accounts or vouchers. Without accountability or rights under IDEA following the public tax dollars, our most vulnerable students are placed at risk. Please appropriately fund the public school system.

Stephanie Roodettes
Self
Helotes, TX

NO TO VOUCHERS!! My husband & I have moved all over the world with the military and the first thing we do before a move is research **PUBLIC SCHOOLS!!** NO (as in not a single penny) of government funds should go to private schools ! School choices exists, if you want private ...YOU can pay for it!! Say **NO** to **ANY** form of public money going to private education!! This is an issue we need to stop talking about and move toward funding **PUBLIC** education , so teachers can go back to doing their jobs and stop worrying about the ridiculous attacks on their character. The reasons this is being pushed are so obvious to anybody who bothers to look ...**MONEY FOR THE RICH** to the detriment of our teachers and our schools ! **MOVE ON & DO THE JOB VOTERS ASKED OF YOU!**

Kristin Shelton
ATPE
Austin, TX

Thank you for serving. As a public school teacher in her 31st year, I ask you to continue fighting against educational savings accounts, in any form. The five and a half public school students in Texas deserve fully-funded public schools. We keep hearing testimony about how ESAs only support a small percentage of current public education students. Instead of sending money that is used for public schools, I ask that you work towards supporting us financially. We accept and education all the students who come in our doors. Right now, I have 19 prekindergarten students. Our families speak 12 different languages. These families would not be able to transport their students to a private school or to make up the difference between proposed assistance and the actual tuition. We spend our days learning to value each other and treat each other with respect as we learn academic skills needed for the rest of our lives. Unfortunately, Governor Abbott is not listening to the will of the people. We are counting on you to continue fighting for us.

Margaret Barnett
Argyle ISD and Self, School Psychologist
Argyle, TX

November 9, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Your Name
Margaret Barnett

Elisa Vasconcellos, Mrs.
Self-Parent Stone Oak Elem PTA
San Antonio, TX

I believe that vouchers hurt children. Until children and teachers in public schools are adequately funded, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Amy Verhulst

Self - member of Texas PTA and Edna Mae Fielder Elementary PTA

Katy, TX

Texas public tax dollars belong with public schools in Texas. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. Strong public schools are fundamental to making every child's potential a reality. We must ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Jose Vasconcellos, M.D., F.A.C.E.P.

Self-Parent Stone Oak Elem PTA

San Antonio, TX

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Carlos Ortiz

Public school administrator

San Antonio, TX

Vouchers help the wealthy who send their children to TMI, Keystone, Hagee castle, and others. Private school seldom take Special Education children. Rural Texas does not have private/parochial schools-Rural vs Urban. Basis School (Shavano Park) sends its profit to Arizona. Owners of parochial/private school property want to rent the properties. PUBLIC TAX MONEY SHOULD BE USED TO SUPPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Evelyn Robinson

Self/stay at home mom, school volunteer, substitute teacher

Austin, TX

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Laura Stafford, Texas PRA member

Self

Lantana, TX

NO to vouchers that will hurt the HUGE MAJORITY OF CHILDREN IN TX. Public schools in TX need ALL of the tax dollars and vouchers will hurt the whole state. Please, please vote no to vouchers.

Claire Foster, Mrs.

Texas PTA

Austin, TX

Please protect the amazing students, teachers and administrators at public schools, don't let any voucher legislation pass this session. We need you to be their voice and create a brighter future for our public schools. Thank you for your leadership and all you do for our great state.

Justin Barnett
Argyle ISD, Self, IT Professional
Argyle, TX
November 9, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Justin Barnett

Patricia Luna
Self
San Antonio, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers and inadequately funding public schools will cause schools to close, increased class sizes and only further expand the inequity gap. It will affect our economy for many generations to come.

Jessica Levesque, Dr

Self

Austin, TX

I am a product of Texas Public education. I have 3 children currently enrolled and attending Austin ISD. Our current public education system must be protected. The proposed voucher plan outlined in HB1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every Texas child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality and wider gaps in student achievement. Protect the public education of Texans. Protect our public schools and VOTE NO to HB1.

Anna Skalka

Fielder PTA- President

Katy, TX

Katy ISD can not thrive with ESAs. Our community is busting at the seams with massive growth, especially along major highways, creating insanely large class sizes, teacher shortages, a loss of space. Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

I am also a small business owner who owns an automotive shop within the boundaries of Katy ISD. We employee students directly from the district into our blue collar industry.

Tracey Castleberry

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

Jessie Chrobocinski

Self - Windsor Park Elementary PTA

Corpus Christi, TX

Investing in public schools is paramount! Prioritize adequate funding for children and teachers before considering ESAs or vouchers. Strong public schools are crucial for unlocking every child's potential. I am advocating for policies ensuring high-quality education, proper funding, and effective regulations. Vouchers and insufficient funding in public schools can trigger a domino effect of adverse consequences, including essential programs being slashed, limiting extracurricular opportunities. Overall, the quality of education diminishes, hindering students' academic growth and future prospects.

Amit Anand

AISD

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Amit

Jenny Jackson

Plano PTA

Dallas, TX

As a former Oklahoma teacher I am strongly opposed to vouchers. The voucher system has destroyed public education in that state. Teacher to student ratios are at an all time high, teachers don't have a planning period, and the majority of my former coworkers are looking to leave the field. If we'd like to keep our state competitive and have businesses move in, and/or stay here we need to maintain strong public schools. As a native Texan I love our state and would like to stay here and be proud of where I live. Unfortunately, pushing for vouchers makes me concerned about the future of my child, her education, and the students I evaluate as they do their student teaching. I would definitely consider leaving the state if vouchers are passed, as I know many others that would as well. Please stop trying to destroy our state with the extreme conservative agenda.

Christine Hanes

Self (parent)

Cypress, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Christine Hanes

A very concerned parent.

Katherine Nicksic

Fielder PTA

Katy, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

I do not support ESAs or Vouchers.

Amanda Boquist

Self - Educator

Katy, TX

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Elizabeth Haine

Self

Houston, TX

I am a parent of 3 boys who have all gone through Spring Branch ISD. One remains in SBISD and the other two have gone on to high school at a private school. Even with our use of private schooling for high school I am appalled that our legislature would tie public school funding to the passing of vouchers. In an effort to appeal politically to a particular group of people I believe that it will negatively effect a large number of Texas students particularly in more rural areas where private school options don't exist or for families but also in urban districts like ours across the state.

Our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers, programs across the district, will increase class sizes and subsequently effect the quality of teaching, not because of the quality of teachers but because the the size of classroom and lack of resources.

The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. **FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!**

Thank you, Elizabeth Haine

Amy Conine

Self

Corinth, TX

I am against the establishment of educational savings accounts. I am disappointed that taxpayer money is once again being wasted by additional special sessions to discuss an idea that is fiscally irresponsible and unsustainable.

John Fessenden

lead4ward, llc

Austin, TX

Requiring TEA to use the 2022 Accountability System to assign ratings in 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 as provided in Section 9.02 of HB 1 is not a viable solution to the concerns expressed regarding the 2023 Accountability Refresh. Specifically, changes to Academic Growth made/proposed for 2022-23 are good changes which will benefit teachers and students. A more tailored provision requiring TEA to "freeze" the standards and indicators for CCMR - or to phase in CCMR changes starting with students entering 9th grade in the year following the year in which the CCMR measure is revised would be preferable and would help support planning for students.

Marlene Bullard

Self

Tornillo, TX

As an educator in a rural district I stand against vouchers. Our districts should be funded appropriately, so our teachers can be paid what they should be paid without any passing of a voucher program. Private schools are private for a reason sending our public money to them is wrong. Those schools don't want to be accountable for ALL students as our public schools are so they shouldn't receive our money. Let's fund public schools and the 5.4 million students who are in those schools appropriately without any vouchers.

Lauren Smits, Dr.

Self - General Dentist

Argyle, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Lauren Smits

Jennifer Burnette, Dr.

Self

Austin, TX

As a citizen of the Austin community, I oppose this bill. How will it actually help support families in educating children?

Elyse Eckart

Space Center Intermediate School, CCISD, PTA advocacy chair

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Tina Verma, PTA President Hicks Elementary, Frisco

Tom Hicks Elementary School and PTA

Frisco, TX

Yes please!!

Beverly Roberts

Concerned Women for America of South Texas

Houston, TX

Competition ALWAYS encourages innovation and movement toward excellence. Let's allow parents to determine which style and place of education will be best for their children. GET THIS DONE!!!

Jandel Crutchfield

Self

Mansfield, TX

Most public school districts in Texas have created choice programs within their public district, siphoning money away from public schools districts will therefore reduce choice not increase it. No to vouchers

Rene Antonisse

Self

Colleyville, TX

Public money = public schools. If a family elects private school, they elect to use their own money.

Michelle Nguyen

Self

Austin, TX

Every child deserves a high quality education. School vouchers take away resources, especially from our most vulnerable children. Texas public schools deserve the highest priority to ensure every child has the support to thrive.

Mary Ann Gonzales, Dr.

self

Austin TX, TX

Texas public schools are the backbone of our communities. Educational Savings accounts would allow my public tax dollars to be used in private institutions.

People have choices now where to educate their children. my tax dollars are not there to subsidize private education.

The Texas constitution ensures a robust public school system yet Texas ranks in the mid 40's out of 50 stars in per capita student funding and we have the 10th largest economy.

our schools are stressed and strapped financially. that's just wrong.

Do better for our children in our state...Not siphon public tax dollars into private education.

education for ALL.

invest in all children..it'll pay off in dividends,

Mary Ann Gonzales, MD

proud product of Texas public schools

daughter of public school teacher

mother to public school child

Dolores Hancock

None

Saint Hedwig, TX

I support this bill.

Andre Levesque, Dr

Self

Austin, TX

The proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every Texas child. Diversion of funds will lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement. Families who choose to send their children to non-public schools have the choice to do so, and their choice should not take funds away public funds from public schools. Texans public tax dollars should only fund Texas public schools. I am a product of the Texas Public School System and a father to three children currently attending Texas Public schools.

Denise Berry

self

Austin, TX

Public money should stay in public schools. Every child deserves a quality, fully funded education. Shifting tax dollars to private schools WILL hurt public schools and our most vulnerable children. I often hear, "My child, my choice," from voucher supporters, but what about the children who have no voice? All children, those born to addicts, those with mental health issues, learning disorders, those whose parents can't pay the rest of the tuition, those who are in our sad example of a foster system...all children deserve a quality education.

Jodi Webb

Parent in favor of HB1 parental choice education

San Antonio, TX

As a parent and primary educator of my child I am in full support of parental choice of education and wish to add my name to those in favor. Please support those of us who appreciate our faith filled education for our children. It has been a huge support in raising a well rounded and faith filled young lady, my daughter.

Jessica James, Mrs

Aisd

Austin, TX

Opposed to this bate and switch bill.

Kasidy Blankenship

Self. Business owner.

North Richland Hills, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. The fact that tax payer dollars have been sitting unused while teachers and students suffer is abhorrent. It may just be numbers to you guys but it is the livelihood to those in these positions and the education of the next generation. The cost of living in this state has gone up to numbers that has most people struggling to just keep up with the taxes. The same is true for the teachers and schools. Until you take care of the needs you currently have, how can you even think about taking more money away. A crumbling educational system is what you will have.

Jessica Mokry

Self

Coupland, TX

Our family story is unique and probably one of the rare kinds that not many fall in our box. First, I'm a single mom raising 6 children, one who has already graduated high school and now attending college and five siblings all enrolled in the same private school. My children and I live in the rural area in a small school district in northeast Williamson county where there is not a high school option. Kids who enroll in the public school from Kindergarten to Eighth grade must transfer into another adjacent school district.

Transfer options with local agreements used to give automatic transfers with all neighboring school districts but over the past two decades, this option has changed. Recent pressure in achieving successful rates based on certain criteria from profiling students by more than academic performance has occurred. The public high school choices are now more limited than before for high school students.

For some families that will impact further driving their students approximately 10-20+ miles depending on their location in our no-high school district to the adjacent school district's high schools. This puts all the responsibility on the family to accommodate living in a district without a high school, additional commute time and travel costs, including paying taxes in a school district that their potential high school students are not getting to use towards that other public high school.

I decided for my students to bypass that entire burden because our family values are more aligned with a certain private school and not be excluded based on some predetermined criteria for certain high schools.

This opportunity to choose my children's private school is imperative because I have sought an option not available with the public school choice. The public school district where I reside stops at eighth grade. The option I chose for my children allows all of my children to attend one school (PK3 to 12th grade) and be included not based on factors as mentioned above.

This option has already been an additional cost because I have forgo the school district I live in and enroll my kids to attend. The school choice would allow us to use our tax dollars that were not used directly for my high school children to attend a school that doesn't exist currently.

In the future, my school district plans to build a high school since a bond was recently passed in 2022 but with current school district administration turnover in superintendent and principals, they have delayed building that high school. By the time it becomes an option, my family has already been established in our private school where all my children will attend.

I know there's a few in the state that may have a similar burden and experience as my family. I chose with my freedom to do better than what's been in place in my school district that has not been the best option for my family.

I can imagine that more families have their children stretched between two districts.

Angela Reese

Self, mother

Sachse, TX

I worked in the educational field in Oregon before I had children. While I worked there, bills were passed that gave people vouchers so that they could be more "responsible for their children's education". These vouchers eroded the public school system causing significant funding issues for the public schools- specifically not allowing the public schools in Portland to "keep up" with the growing technology needs of the public schools, keep wages competitive, an allowing for innovations in educational instruction. Please don't do this same thing here. The money was taxed for the funding of the public schools. Keep that money with the public schools.

Sabrina Vaughn, Executive Director
Hatching Hope Foundation
Prosper, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Sabrina Vaughn
svaughn@hatchinghope.org
469-929-1294

Felicity Maxwell

Self

Austin, TX

Please oppose HB 1, Vouchers hurt students, Texas Public Education, and do not produce good long term results: From TIME Magazine / Josh Cowen:

"New evaluations of vouchers in Washington, D.C., Indiana, Louisiana, and Ohio show some of the largest test score drops ever seen in the research record - between -0.15 and -0.50 standard deviations of learning loss. That's on par with what the COVID-19 pandemic did to test scores, and larger than Hurricane Katrina's impacts on academics in New Orleans.

And these harmful voucher impacts from existing statewide vouchers lasted for years, with little else on balance to show for it.

What explains these extraordinarily large voucher-induced declines? Aren't private schools supposed to be elite educational opportunities? When it comes to private schools accepting voucher payments, the answer is clearly no. That's because elite private schools with strong academics and large endowments often decline to participate in voucher plans. Instead the typical voucher school is a financially distressed, sub-prime private provider often jumping at the chance for a tax bailout to stay open a few extra years."

Texas Public Education needs financial support, not additional failing schools. Please focus on the backbone of our future - Texas students.

Amy Connor, Ms

Retiree from TDFPS and parent of individual with IDD

Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

I am greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

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Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting. But more importantly, it promotes a life deprived of living in the community with a mix of people. It offers social isolation, segregation of people with IDD, and estrangement from family life.

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Amy Connor

4325 Nitschke St Austin, TX 78723

512-963-7841

Austinaconnor@gmail.com

Michelle Hernandez

Self - Marcus High School PTSA

Flower Mound, TX

Stop the nonsense on vouchers. Parents already have the ability to choose where to send their children. What we do not have is a education system that is funded appropriately. The voting public of Texas does not want vouchers, we want our state to be competitive with the world and our Public education system funded. Reducing the public education to ashes while funneling money elsewhere will do nothing but destroy our children's future and the economy of Texas.

Marleen De Heyn
special needs son
San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

Writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

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Sincerely,

Marleen De Heyn

Michael Overton
Self, Teacher
Weslaco, TX

Please vote NO on any ESA / voucher program. Public education in Texas needs the support of state government, not for profit programs thinly disguised as school choice.

Kelli DeGeeter

Self - stay-at-home parent of Catholic school students

Katy, TX

I support this legislation and urge the committee to do so. This parental choice legislation, if enacted, would improve the opportunities available to low-income families and would prioritize poor and vulnerable students to receive funds to improve their education. The legislation amplifies transparency, accountability, and oversight of school choice in a responsible way, as for example, by requiring schools be accredited to participate and requires testing standards be met. It honors the separation of church and state. It is least likely to impact rural public schools (one of the opponents' fears), because rural schools are not beset by the problems of large, urban districts, so students are less likely to leave, and families living in rural areas also have fewer schools to draw them away from public schools. Parental choice legislation is a win-win for communities so that all kids can be educated and flourish in an educational system that suits them, which is particularly important to families with specialized needs, and especially low-income families. Thank you for considering this comment, and please support our younger generation by passing this legislation. It's a great step toward giving families more suitable options!

Tina Verma

Tom Hicks Elementary PTA

Frisco, TX

Disregard my previous comment as I am not sure I understood the language here. Upon first glance, this appears to be in support of fully funding public schools and if that's case, then yes please.

If this is really about saying yes to vouchers and defunding public school, then absolutely NOT. Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

I am a member of a private country club, which is our choice. The parks and amenities in Frisco are available to us through our taxes, so we don't get a voucher to not support those things in favor of joining a private club. Schools should be no different.

Or, maybe I should hire private security, EMTs and fire safety and ask to reduce my taxes there. That would provide less support for those services, hiring everyone else. But hey, no worries, my house won't be harmed.

If we reduce funding for public schools and teachers, we're headed downhill. NO TO VOUCHERS.

Cameron Wiley, Board Trustee

Abilene Wylie ISD

Tuscola, TX

At what point are we going to introduce legislation in regards to private schools receiving tax dollars that have the exact same accountability standards as public schools? Moreover, when is teacher recruitment, retention and salary going to be a separate issue? Holding our educators hostage to pass a voucher bill when everyone in Austin knows is a critical issue is absolutely insane to me. Please protect the integrity of our tax payers dollar within Texas education and take care of our educators.

Karyn Weiss
Self
Cedar Park, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Karyn Weiss
1024 Horne Drive
Cedar Park, TX 78613
txweissfamily@gmail.com

Karen Steger
self/PTA Guyer Highschool, Denton ISD
Corinth, TX

Vouchers will hurt our public schools. We need to invest in our communities, the schools that are in our backyard. Not so much Liberty Christian which already has a hefty tuition to enroll there! What about the free public schools? I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Chase Palmer
Self/Attorney
Marshall, TX

The State of Texas is constitutionally mandated to fund public education. This mandate has produced educated citizens for Texas since its inception and is one of the primary drivers behind our State's current economic position. Can our public schools be better? Absolutely. Are our public schools broken? Absolutely not. By any measure, public education in Texas is underfunded. Texas ranks in the forties in per student spending for education. We need to adequately fund public education, which includes increasing base teacher pay, and we need to fund Texas schools on enrollment and not on attendance.

An ESA program will be a disaster. It will bankrupt our state in the long run, as Texas will not have this level of funding in the future. The current surplus is a one time windfall and will not be something that the State can count on to bail out this program in the future. It will not "fix" the perceived issues with public education. Poor and marginalized children will never be able to afford a private school education and reduced state funding will negatively affect their education. ESAs have not worked in any state where they have been implemented. ESAs will increase government, as the Secretary of State will have to hire additional staff to monitor the ESA program and to handle enforcement. It will give funds to private entities without any accountability as to how those funds are spent. There will be no testing requirements to determine if the educational program is even working.

Lastly, if you pass an ESA program, you are failing the very people who have no voice in this process - children. There is a reason we have the TEA. There is a reason we have standards for grade levels and standards for promotion. There is a reason we have curriculum that is vetted by the SBOE. We know that children need to attain certain educational knowledge to transfer from one grade level to another in order to have a foundation for success beyond high school. This is research based and research driven. We know this to be true. Today, we allow parents to homeschool children with no accountability as to what they learn. Who is harmed if Mom or Dad can't teach? The child. And that is not a temporary harm, that is a lifetime harm. If this State allows parents to obtain an ESA and use it for whatever they believe is in their child's best interests, I contend to you that this State will sentence many children to a life of inadequate education, which will lock that child in poverty for their lifetime. The answer is not parent choice. The answer is funding public education and holding public education accountable for the use of those funds utilizing metrics that are practical and measurable, unlike the current STAAR testing system. ESAs are not conservative. ESAs do not work. ESAs will not solve our perceived issues or problems in education. We are wasting countless resources debating something we don't need. Please reject HB 1 and fund public ed.

Aubrey Stock
Self (Stay-at-home parent)
Lucas, TX

I do NOT support HB1 and urge the Committee and my representative, CANDY NOBLE, to reject HB1. I am a mother of five children ages 9 to two months and a strong advocate of public education. My two children currently attend elementary school in Lovejoy ISD. In the five years we have lived in this district, we have watched cut after cut being made to our schools. The district had to close my daughter's elementary school, pair down the elementary GT program, eliminate Spanish language classes, etc. And I know the cuts are far from finished with the very little state funding my district (AND MANY OTHERS) are trying to stretch. So, before this Committee considers adding a complex voucher system to Texas school finance, our public schools must be FULLY funded. Increasing the basic allotment to \$6,700 is NOT ENOUGH. We are \$4,000 behind the national average in per-student funding and at least \$1100 behind if we're simply trying to address inflation from 2019. FULLY FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS FIRST. Not only is \$6700 NOT ENOUGH for our students, it is a slap in the face when Mr. Buckley is proposing a \$10,500 voucher to be used for private education. Why are my public school children essentially worth less? Why will more of tax dollars go to support private education instead of my children's public school education? There is a significant gap between \$6,700 and \$10,500. WHY? This discrepancy has to be addressed! Again, I am a mother of five children. Even with a \$10,500 voucher, private school will NEVER be a choice for our family financially. Please support mine and many other Texas families' choice to attend public school. FULLY FUND OUT PUBLIC SCHOOLS FIRST. Stop debating vouchers and focus on what Texas families, schools, teachers, and most importantly, our children, CHOOSE and NEED. FULLY FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS FIRST. Thank you.

Elizabeth Vincent, LCSW

self, social worker

Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Vincent LCSW

5715 Greencraig

Houston, TX 77035

Amanda Palmer, Mrs
self, stay at home parent, special needs caregiver
San Antonio, TX

The words “educational savings account program” is just a new way to say vouchers. This bill exists because a very small select group of people want to see it pushed through so they can benefit from it. Educational savings account programs ultimately hurt public schools, communities and children. It has happened time and again in other states that enact these programs; despite repeated assurances to the contrary.

The worst thing about these programs is that the group that suffers the most are special needs children. Private schools are not required to accommodate special education. Educational savings account programs always take money from public schools that provide some important needs to our most vulnerable children. If you really mean it when we say that every child deserves the chance to live learn and grow, then don't vote for this bill.

Kelly Lawson
Self - parent from Waco, TX
Waco, TX

I am a parent of a public school student and a private school student. I wholeheartedly believe vouchers hurt children.

Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers.

I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. This is what is good for our local communities and for our state. Stronger schools develop stronger individuals, which is good for all of us. Vouchers will widen equity gaps in every sphere. This isn't what we want for our state.

I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Please reject HB1.

William Smith
Self
Dallas, TX

We need to approve this voucher plan to give posted the opportunity to change to a School of their choice, providing the financial ability to do that.

Allyson Poer
Self
Austin, TX

For my daughter, special education public school student.

Rod Sheffield
Seld
Houston, TX

Do not divert money away from public schools. Absolute NO to “education savings accounts” aka vouchers.

Bojan Gutic
Self
Northlake, TX

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6700 is not enough to offset the impact of significantly rising costs. We are in a very high-growth school district and have not been able to keep up with inflation or the rise in our student population.

We also need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. It expires this year and our school district faces a MAJOR funding cliff and there is no solution for our school district to balance their budget without severe cuts across the board. Our students have been fortunate to be in a district where we can provide them with the resources to excel and we hope to continue to provide the best possible educational experience for all students.

Thank you for your time in reading this!

Michelle Wethers
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Fully fund public education and do not use tax payer dollars for private schools. Give teachers the raise they need and deserve and stop using this necessity as a pawn to get vouchers passed.

Lisa Stuckey
Self
San Antonio, TX

It does not matter If you call them vouchers or ESAs, the fact of the matter is they segregate students and siphon money off our already underfunded public schools. We have a crisis in Texas where teachers are leaving by the thousands, and you are not helping by continuing to ignore basic funding and teacher salaries by pushing this billionaire wish list voucher scheme. Don't destroy our schools and Friday night lights!

Deana Ratnala
Self
Houston, TX

Please vote against any vouchers and to fully fund public schools. We desperately need the increase per student to continue, and we're already having to cut positions and programs, which directly affects our students' learning and success.

We also need the surplus to go to fund public schools, as we have consistently paid the unsustainable recapture amounts and have very little to offer new teachers and to keep experienced teachers. This teacher shortage greatly increases class sizes, and turns teachers away, which directly affects our students.

Our students are literally going to be Running our community one day. Why will we not work to ensure they're as prepared and capable as possible? Thank you for your support to not accept the voucher push and to directly fund public schools with at least a minimum to address the cost of living increases.

Karen Martinez, Educator
Self/teacher
El Paso, TX

Please vote against vouchers and the TIA program. Teachers are professionals.

Heather Foster
Self, parent
Sugar Land, TX

I support this bill. I am against school vouchers. Public schools are very important!!

Cynthia Pearson
Day Nursery of Abilene Inc
Abilene, TX

As a comprehensive, high-quality child care provider for 50 years which offers, high-quality early childhood education including for those who are preschool-age children (3-5 years) receiving preparatory education for kindergarten, I request that HB1 be amended to include prekindergarten students as children eligible to apply for Education Savings Accounts.

Elisha Fishman
Self
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you, A mom of 6 kids who need to be in private school

Denice Jones
Self PTSA leader
Frisco, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Student ratios will increase and programs will be cut.

Pamela Krewson
Self/Therapist
Austin, TX

Stop trying to pass school vouchers. Instead fund our public schools. Spend taxpayer money where it's needed.

Bryan Davis

Self

North Richland Hills, TX

Tax dollars should be used for public schools. The idea that public monies should be used to fund private schools is completely unconstitutional and inherently wrong. The evidence of corruption and misuse of funds in the other states that have enacted voucher legislation, such as the one here, have shown that vouchers are wrong. Public schools accept all students, regardless of their gender, race, religion or special needs. Private schools often do not. Public schools have to meet accountability standards in terms of finance, personnel and academic progress. Private schools do not. The idea of school choice is flawed. The reality is that private schools choose their students. Not the other way around. In many parts of the state there are no private schools locally, removing any notion of school choice. If vouchers pass in Texas it is easy to predict that unscrupulous charlatans will establish "private schools" that will be nothing more than a money grab for unsuspecting folks who have been brainwashed to believe that their schools are less than a private school. The Texas legislature has consistently underfunded public education for the last twenty plus years. And now that our education system is on the brink of starvation, a few billionaires see an opportunity to make even more money off the backs of our poorest and most vulnerable citizens. I urge our representatives to say no to any voucher legislation no matter what name it is presented with. I am a graduate of Texas public schools, the parent of public school graduates and a twenty five year veteran teacher in two of the highest performing public school districts. It would be tragic to see our schools collapse as money is siphoned away to enrich a small group of people. Please stand firm against vouchers!

Irene Engel, Mrs.

Self

Converse, TX

Vote for HB 1. Empowering parents and kids with universal Education Savings Accounts, puts parents and students first. Education savings accounts and teacher funding are a win-win!

Thank you for your consideration.

Sarah Evans

Self, mother

Austin, TX

The proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement.

Jane Sears, Mrs
self / parent / office admin
San Marcos, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

As a parent of a child with IDD / Autism, I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

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I hope you have already viewed the negative impact this bill has on our children and schools if it passes.
I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education.

I have a child with Autism, and the school district was our lifeline so I send this letter comes with a sincere request to oppose House Bill (HB 1)

Sincerely,

Jane Sears
721 Willow Creek Cr
San Marcos, TX 78666
searsjam@gmail.com / 512-753-9833

Geoffrey Jones
Self PTSA member
Frisco, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Programs will be cut and student ratios increased.

Julie Jennings

My family

Sealy, TX

The schools in Texas have been subjected to DEI and other policies that are eroding our children/grandchildren education. If we choose to send them where they can have a better education and environment then this option should be available to everyone.

In 2012 Texas fired the good teachers. Then went on a campaign to rehire substandard teachers. Schools are also the biggest portion of our property taxes. We are paying out huge amounts to educate illegal children. Americans are being put aside.

This bill is far from perfect, better than nothing. The schools are eroding!

Fay Watson

Self

Pearland, TX

Self Educational savings accounts do not and will not benefit the majority of Texas students. Public schools willingly teach every single student that enters its doors. Until private and religious institutions are willing to do the same it will never be a level playing field. Support public education and its teachers. Give teachers pay raises and fund schools that are already hurting, especially since inflation. Do NOT tie teacher pay raises to ESA's hidden legislation. It's so disrespectful to these professionals to have them choose between getting more money and their moral convictions regarding their jobs as public educators. Listen to all your constituents, not just the big donors. NO TO VOUCHERS AND ESAs

Erin Mace

Self- Comal ISD PTA

New Braunfels, TX

Please vote no to vouchers! We need strong public schools and adequate funding. Public dollars should stay in public schools which offer education to all. Prioritize all students and retaining public school teachers and keeping quality education available to all children.

Rachel Upshaw

Self

Austin, TX

The funneling money into private — especially religious institutions— instead of appropriately funding public schools will be the crumbling of our state education system. As a Texas public school graduate, I am proud of the education I received. I hope for my children to continue this tradition. Please adequately fund and support our public schools and especially our teachers and administrators. As a mom of a kindergarten (at a well-funded school), it is eye-opening to see how much of the public school system rests on the shoulders of unpaid parental labor (almost always mothers). Please do not give away our hard-earned property tax money to private schools! Fix the schools under your jurisdiction!

Dana Goode
Self
Granbury, TX

Done. Here's what I wrote; I tried to hit the high points without making it too long:

I am opposed to the establishment of education savings accounts for those who wish to send their children to private schools and am also opposed to attaching this egregious bill to certification, compensation, and health coverage of certain public school employees. This takes away needed funds from our public schools, and ties the financial compensation of public school employees to private school vouchers--that makes absolutely no sense. It is simply a gift to wealthy people, as the vouchers would not cover all the costs associated with attending private schools, thus still restricting the ability of many low-income individuals to attend private schools. Private schools are not required to accept every student who applies, unlike public schools, which must educate ALL children--this means that private schools can be discriminatory against students based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, and any other criteria the private school stipulates. There are many areas in the state where there are no private schools within reasonable driving distance, so this program would discriminate against those areas. This is a bill designed to help the elite, not the average person. I, for one, do not want my tax dollars to support the voucher program, which has a clear agenda to destroy our public schools. Please give proper compensation, without restrictions or any provisions, to the individuals who are responsible for the education of future generations.

Cyril Pajestka, Mr.
Self
Magnolia, TX

This state legislature has marginalized educators time and again. Voucher programs, such as this, have no real benefit to truly underprivileged students. This doesn't invite "competition". A better option for this government would be to use the current surplus to give educators an actual raise. Not a "bonus", a raise. Recently there was a task force set forth to determine why teachers were leaving the profession. The answer is they are asked to do more than they are paid. And they have, because they love their students and love their jobs. But this voucher debate and lack of funding is more than absurd, it is downright derogatory. What happened to "teachers are heroes" in 2020? Now educators are vilified by bills like this. Please withdraw this bill.

Krisheena Rippey
Public school teachers and students
Austin, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded teachers and children in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers.
I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children and teachers have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Stephani Parish, Dr
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Vote against vouchers!!!

Shelly Turner
Self/Teacher
Garland, TX

Public education will not be served by taking away money from schools. School tax money has to be used to fund Public schools. Parents have a right to send their child to whichever school they choose. That doesn't mean taxpayers should pay for it. Teachers deserve higher pay and less bureaucracy in the classroom. Students need more meaningful experiences and less standardized testing.

Yvette Martinez
self
San Antonio, TX

Please Texas pass this bill and give parents school choice. Other states have already done this and there is no detriment to public schools. Parents are the FIRST educators of their children and the government should do all in its power to support this endeavor. Get it done Texas!!!

Gale Carr
Self/Fort Hancock Independent School District
Ft Hancock, TX

Vouchers, public money, should only be used for private schools held to the EXACT standards as public schools. Public schools must take children who are discipline problems, have severe disabilities that require special staffing, cannot expel for poor grades, children who do not speak the language (Houston schools deal with more than 6 languages) and more. Charter and private schools cherry pick the students they want to teach and now they want the public school system to pay them for it. Public schools are working on a 1990s budget and rules that tie their hands. Now taxing has been capped. This is a joke. The state is setting up the public schools to fail.

Robert Ortiz, Teacher/Coach
Teachers
Katy, TX

We stand strong against the ESA/Vouchers. Please stand with public education and the 5.5 million students in Texas. These do not benefit us and are against the Texas constitution.

Tracey Lewis
Self
Seabrook, TX

I believe in strong public schools! Vouchers hurt children! There is no room for ESAs or Vouchers in public schools. Instead of vouchers, adequate funding to public schools will better help children and teachers. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers and inadequate funding will impact our school district and community by increasing student-teacher ratios and cutting needed programs.
VOTE AGAINST VOUCHERS!

Milt Shalla
Texas Citizen
Eustace, TX

I am 82 years old so fortunately at the time I attended Mission H.S. you could still get an education. Today? Not so much. Too much indoctrination.

David Menzel, Mr.
Self
Desdemona, TX

Vouchers are a give away to the wealthy and won't improve education for 5.5 million students. Pay public school teachers and fund the schools.

Casey Helmick
Self- educator & mom
Haslet, TX

Tax monies should be used for public goods- like public schools. Parents already have choice in where they educate their kids through homeschool, charter, private and public schools. This bill will harm public schools and allow private schools to gain public dollars. Fully funded public schools can provide for students in a way that this bill says “choice” will provide.

Jonathan Whitman
self
Richardson, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.
Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.
Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.
This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.
Putting parents in the driver’s seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.
Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Jay Crossley
Self
Austin, TX

“ THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE 7. EDUCATION

Sec. 1. SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE OF SYSTEM OF PUBLIC FREE SCHOOLS. A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.

(Feb. 15, 1876.)”

Please stop degrading the Texas public school system. Please fund public education. Please do not send public tax funds to private schools.

Thanks!

Pamela Ferworn

Self - Parent, PTA Member, Mentor, Speech-Language Pathologist, Artist

Houston, TX

Dear all,

I have lived in Spring Branch ISD (SBISD) for over 25 years. We are conservatives that strongly believe in public education. I am also an immigrant and our children are first generation Americans. They have all attended/are attending local public schools.

Texas needs to FULLY FUND PUBLIC EDUCATION.

INCREASE THE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION. Increase the BASIC ALLOTMENT to \$10,000/student.

FUND all the additional costs for requirements that you place on public education. For instance, school safety measures with the additional armed police officer for each campus is not fully funded. Our school district (SBISD) will have to find \$2 Million dollars to cover these costs. In an era where cuts are looming, fulfilling this state requirement will result in sacrificing teaching staff.

FIX RECAPTURE - temporary tax relief doesn't address the problem. It just kicks the can down the road. Fix it.

To recap:

I am a conservative that believes in public education.

I support the choice programs that we already have in SBISD within our public school system.

I support parents having the ability to choose where to send their students for school; on their own dime.

I support keeping all public education tax dollars in public education and not funneled to the general fund or private schools.

I do not support vouchers of any kind (education savings plans) while recapture is in place.

I believe in limited government and local control.

I do not support the bloating of government entities such as the TEA while school districts are forced to cut key staffing positions like teachers to be fiscally responsible. Nor do I support the addition of new government entities to supervise vouchers. Be brave and fix the system you have.

If vouchers are so fabulous, let them stand alone in a bill and see what happens. Stop holding public education funds (and our children) hostage for your agenda.

If nothing changes, SBISD will have to cut \$35 million from its operating fund this year. This means the choice schools and programs that our over 36,000 students enjoy today will be gone next year. Additionally the bulk of SBISD's operating funds are in people; which means we are going to lose a tremendous amount of talent to education our youth. That is simply not acceptable.

FULLY FUND PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Respectfully,

Pamela Ferworn

Cheryl Wilburn

Self

Lubbock, TX

ESAs are not in the best interest of all kids and families. You would be taking money away from free education that many families need. It is a form of segregation and wrong! Private schools do not have to have certified teachers or be held accountable. They are not the answer. Instead invest in your certified teachers who need more help serving the large low economic population of Texas. One time stipends aren't enough. Give teachers a pay raise for years to come and educators will come back.

Sara McMullen

Self/Public School K-12 Teacher

Bryan, TX

As a public school educator, the priority of the legislator should be to increase initiatives that assist the functioning of all public schools in the state. This includes universal Pre-K and teacher and school staff salary raises. This will increase functioning of schools and opportunities for all Texans. Education savings accounts are misleading and wrong that only function to take away tax payer funds from ALL public schools. Stop pushing for vouchers to pass. They are bad for all Texans. Vouchers benefit the affluent and take from the disadvantaged. The consequence will have catastrophic economic consequences.

Velma DeLeon, Mrs.

Los Fresnos CISD

San Benito, TX

If a family opts for an ESA and enrolls their child in a private school, do they forfeit their eligibility for FAPE? If the student requires an IEP and specialized services not offered by the private school, can they still access them through public schools?

Susan Kirkpatrick

Self, Educator

Friendswood, TX

Please vote in favor of increased funding to public schools, increased funding for special education, and increased funding for educator raises. Thank you!

Kelly Munoz

Self - mom of 2 (accountant)

Helotes, TX

Please vote for this bill. It's crucial for so many families, including mine.

Juan Campos
self
Richardson, TX

Gov Abbott has stated that Texas is the 8th largest economy in the world, with more than 15 MILLION people in the civilian labor force, & is the largest energy producing state in the nation. Having personally lived in & traveled to all 4 directions of this great state, the small rural towns in which the PEOPLE who maintain & work in the gas, oil, wind, solar, & nuclear production, the very same people who keep Texas the 8th largest economy in the world, send their children to public schools.

Texans all over the state take great pride in their local public schools. When you work 15-48 hour shifts in the the field, it is comforting to know that your children are going to great schools, being taught by teachers who are also your neighbors. While the great citizens that support gas, oil, wind, solar & nuclear production spend their money and live in Odessa, Glen Rose, Georgetown, & Midland, it is the Friday Night Lights of the local public schools that is the heart of these towns. It is the local public schools that keep these towns alive and keeps our energy workers out in the field.

Having run for the school board in Canton, TX, I can personally attest to the razor thin margins in which public schools operate. Their biggest operating cost? People.

HB1 should NOT have an educational savings account program (ESA). ESA's are vouchers and there is NO place for vouchers in Texas.

Schools all over the state play a juggling act with their budgets to keep the doors open, and keep the Friday lights on, which their fellow Texas, their fellow neighbors, rely on and build community with.

If you pass ANY BILL with an ESA, educational savings account program, or voucher, you will not only deny the necessary financial blood away that keeps our current anemic public schools one heart beat away from closing, but you will also DESTROY the towns which support our energy production.

You will DESTROY the safety, security, and community that keeps these energy workers out in the field; knowing that their children, Texas children, are getting a great public education. And why would they stay working in these extremely dangerous jobs, if their kids aren't being taken care of and provided a great education?

Educational savings accounts, over the long term, will destroy our public educational system, will destroy the towns which support energy production, will destroy the pipe line that produces the 15 million workers in the civilian labor force, which will destroy our status as the largest energy producing state in the nation, and will ultimately destroy Texas current status as the 8th largest economy in the world, which is heavily due in part, to the amazing people in Texas public schools.

If you pass ANY kind of ESA, you sign off on destroying Texas.

Michelle Polasek
Self
Austin, TX

We need all the funds to be kept at our public schools! Please don't take it away!

Kathy Weiler
Self
Austin, TX

Texas is already shamefully behind in school funding (40 out of 51) and teacher pay. Please don't contribute to this situation Public Schools when property funded can be both vital components of a healthy community and a catalyst for a well educated new generation.

In urban areas this bill just provides subsidized private school for those seeking state funded religion based education. In more rural areas it will undermine a vital resource and diminish an already struggling system.

Shame on those of you who promote this bill! So many of us who care deeply about public education are watching. Vote for what is right for the vast majority of Texas children, not just a privileged few .

Nelly Castillo

PTA representative Plano ISD

Plano, TX

Public education is essential for the future of our children for the future of our state. Is it the right of all of all to be given equal access to a proper education. Why disrupt the way the system is with vouchers? The system will be shifted and who is to suffer? What will be of our future? Who will be to blame? Our children's education is not something to gamble with. They are not the pawns of greed. Let the children learn equality in the great state of Texas as we were growing up. I love Texas. I loved my education and opportunities here. I am a fifth generation Texan. Please don't take the community of public schools away from future generations. The connections to our schools and teachers, administrators, communities in our public schools is what makes us Texans. It's a part of us. Don't take that away with private schools. You are ripping apart our communities. I beg you to please create more funding for public schools and let's show the other states how great we really are. We have the best teachers and resources and communities. Let's bring people together not take them apart.

Leigh-Anne Conroy

Self, homemaker; PTA, Smith Elementary School President

Frisco, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I truly believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. The direct impact of vouchers to my local district will hurt many in our community by limiting needed transportation/bus availability for students, cutting programs and extra-curricular activities for students to expand their life skills and experiences, increasing student-teacher ratios and more. Vouchers will not help this cause!

Jody Wright, Ms

Self

Elgin, TX

It's time for Texas to put parents and students first. Education savings accounts and teacher funding are a win-win! I urge you to empower parents with ESAs.

Jo Ann Hagemeyer

Our Lady of the Hills Regional Catholic High School

Kerrville, TX

As President of the Board of Directors of Our Lady of the Hills Regional Catholic High School, I would like to emphasize this statement from the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops in support of HB 1 by Buckley: 'Parents are the primary educators of their children. The Catholic Church teaches that parents have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options.' Thank you.

Sandy Godbolt, Self

Self

Arlington, TX

Just stop. The people of TX are tired of this. Listen to the people no vouchers. Do not defund public schools. Increase public school funding so there isn't a "need" for vouchers. It's ridiculous athletics can get all \$\$ but not actual learning programs.

Michelle Adams

Self - Public School High School Math Teacher

Martinsville, TX

After 22 years in education, I am still paid far less than any other professional with the same number of years of experience, and mainly because I choose to work at a small, rural school where state-base is the only pay scale they can afford. In a few years, I will have to make the difficult decision to either stay where I am now and retire with a very low average salary or leave the school and students who I love to try to work somewhere that can pay me more than what I make now in order to raise my salary average and be able to retire without having to find extra income.

Teachers were valued at one point during COVID when parents had to keep all their own kids with them, but there has been no change in compensation for our value.

I am a mentor teacher for new teachers and have continuously heard new teachers leaving the profession after one or two years because they can find more money at a job with less stress and less responsibility. It takes a special kind of person to be a teacher of children, but even those people deserve to feel appreciated by their employers and society in general. If you asked the general public if they thought teachers were paid for their expertise, most of them would say that teachers deserve a raise, but those people are the not the ones in control of the budget. Please consider your own school teachers, would you have paid them more if you could? Do it now. Show teachers that the state values our children by giving more attention to all of ways you can help support both teachers and students. Thank you.

David White

self

San Antonio, TX

We need this. Thank you.

Michelle Cervantes

Friendswood ISD / Teacher

Friendswood, TX

Good morning,

As an educator in both public schools and private, I have been on both sides of this bill. I understand the drive to provide all students with equal opportunity to thrive in a school setting be it a smaller classroom in the private sector, or a classroom in our public school system. I have served as an educator for 18 years, two of those years have been in a public school. I have seen the strong need for more funding for our special education programs in our public schools as the number of students qualifying for this grows immensely each year. Our special education specialists and paras are overwhelmed with trying to make schedules fit their availability and collaboration with the general education classroom. We need more hands on deck to provide the quality education that each family deserves. We can accomplish this in our public schools, we just need the resources to do it. Teachers LOVE to teach. We love to create engaging and challenging lessons to our students. This takes time to create and time to execute. Our time in the classroom does not end at the close of school. Our evenings are filled with creating, grading, organizing, communicating with parents, preparing materials for lessons, collaborating with team members as well as vertical alignment teams to ensure our students are being prepared and ready for the following year. For most, this is a way of life. For some, this is overwhelming. We have seen amazing teachers leave the classroom over the load that is on them without proper compensation. They are choosing to get higher pay in other areas of work. We NEED these teachers to stay in the classroom. Our students NEED these teachers. If we don't fund our public school systems with what they need, our public school system will decline. We are already seeing the demand of increased student standards state wide, with a huge decline in student readiness. Students are entering the classroom each year at a deficit. They are not ready for the standards that they are required to learn. From reading, phonics, writing, and math, these students are behind. I LOVE our school system and I believe we can do great things. We need you to help us to accomplish this. Help our teachers by providing competitive compensation and health coverage. Help us to reach ALL students by providing more funding for our special education programs. I believe we can accomplish great things both now for our students and in the future as they become fantastic model citizens as they lead the future. Thank you so much for your time and your consideration in helping both teachers and our students.

Brooke Green

Self - PTA Member Richardson ISD

Richardson, TX

The proposed "increase" to the per pupil allotment is a joke. It's not going to make a difference in 2023-24 when you see the amount of kids that need critical help. You HAVE to better fund schools. No ESA or vouchers are going to help a critical amount of TX students. Start showing leadership that matters! I'm a parent in Richardson ISD and we love our public schools. There are many private schools in the area but they aren't helping students with learning issues or handicaps. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Thank you,

Brooke Green

Chris Tackett

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers have been a focus for some since 1954, since *Brown v Board of Education* desegregated schools. That was when segregation academies popped up across the South. It's when Milton Friedman began advocating for public tax dollars be given to parents to make the best "choice" for their child and that the best outcome was for the elimination of public schools, but as that was unlikely to occur, vouchers were the next best thing.

As we moved through the 1960's and 1970's, other Supreme Court cases reinforced that in our diverse nation, the separation of church and state is sacred, and the state should not be forcing students to be indoctrinated in a Christian faith by teaching from the Bible or leading prayer in public schools, leaving that as a decision for individual students. There is a strong desire by some for students to be indoctrinated in faith, and there are many private faith based schools. If that is what a parent desires for their child, they can make that choice. But the state should not be funding private schools, any more than they should be teaching from the Bible or forcing prayer.

Many private schools pick who they want to let into their schools, have tuitions that vouchers won't fully cover, don't provide transportation, and don't provide services for special needs students. This means the "choice" isn't that of the parent. The "choice" is the school's.

Who is most likely to leverage a voucher? The people already in private school. The data from other states shows that very clearly.

Are outcomes different for private schools? As they aren't required to measure / test the same way public schools do and don't accept all kids, that can be tough to see in all situations. But when it's apples to apples, outcomes are the same and in some cases worse for students.

Funding parallel systems ensures the public school system doesn't get the real attention it needs, to allow it to continue to flourish. It slowly destroys public schools, as the propaganda about failing schools becomes a self fulfilling prophecy, leaving only those without the means in a public school system.

And who is truly pushing vouchers? It's billionaires with agendas, looking to drive an ideology across the country, into every level of government and education.

They want indoctrination.

They want segregation.

They want to line their pockets.

That's what vouchers are really about.

Not kids.

Heather Morse

Myself

Houston, TX

Fully fund public education before any discussion of ESAs. Separate these bills and let them stand on their own merits. The people's priorities will be clear. \$1,000 to the basic allotment. Then we can talk ESAs.

Michelle Lorio

Self, teacher

El Paso, TX

I am vehemently opposed to school vouchers. It is wrong to take taxpayer money away from public schools which are already being insufficiently funded. It is especially wrong when the schools the money will be given to are not required to follow the same requirements and guidelines as public schools and are allowed to turn away students as they choose which public schools are not. That alone should disqualify them from receiving taxpayer money. Public schools keep receiving more and more requirements with no funding yet you want to allow taxpayer money to be removed from public schools and given to schools that don't have to follow all the requirements that are imposed. That is insane. Instead, fund public schools adequately. Raise teacher pay for all teachers so that ALL teachers are being paid what they deserve without having to worry about the bonus of TIA. You will help keep qualified teachers in the classroom and draw in new ones. On behalf of ALL children and teachers in Texas, do the right thing- vote against vouchers and fit a raise in pay to all teachers.

Maria Tetro, Ms

Self Military

San Antonio, TX

I strongly support HB 1, and request that as my representative for the state of Texas that you do the same please.

God bless you and thank you.

Maria M Tetro

David Gustof

Self

Mesquite, TX

No money should be spent on vouchers or any scheme that public money goes to private schools. Public schools in Texas are underfunded and any money diverted will make this problem even worse.

Amy Kraft

self

Flower Mound, TX

I strongly oppose school vouchers and ESAs. I urge my state representative to vote "no" on their implementation in the upcoming special session. Our public education system should be adequately funded. Our children deserve access to high-quality, adequately funded public schools. I support policymakers who ensure all children have access to this in the public schools.

David Bedwell

Self

Austin, TX

I am firmly against any bill resulting in decreased funding in any way from public education. Our public education system needs more funding. Thank you.

Catherine Lazo

Self - Northside ISD Council of PTAs

San Antonio, TX

Vouchers will not help our education system or our families. So much time and energy have been spent on an idea that will ultimately hurt children. Please invest in public schools, the students of this state deserve our attention and consideration. Why is the proper funding for our students being withheld? I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. We are losing teachers and not encouraging the addition of new teachers and campus leaders. Will classes grow larger as the teacher population grows smaller? Please consider how your choices affect the majority of families and students in the state. Please consider what the lack of funding is doing to the wonderful programs students receive at public schools. Will they have to lose these programs? Our students are counting on the policy makers in Austin to do what is right for them and public schools.

Michael Polasek

Self

Austin, TX

Please don't take away our public school funding!

Adam Kaman

Self - Project Manager

Austin, TX

Please pass this. We need it. Florida has it, we are lacking and we desperately need it here in Texas

Michael Cardona, Superintendent

San Marcos CISD

San Marcos, TX

Please place the needs of the 6.5 million public school students and fully fund the educational services to the levels that incorporate inflation. ESA's should not be approved that gives handouts to those who have made their choice. We have options available for families in the current system. ESA's are not fiscally conservative policy when we already know the funding gaps that exist. ESA's are costing taxpayers in multiple states more than what was intended. Our policy is largely based on the Arizona model which has exploded the burden on taxpayers. This is not a policy to benefit all, it's a handout. When it's still the schools choice and when the playing field remain unlevel, the potential of this policy is to further segregate communities is real. Vouchers are a scam by neo-liberal thinking persons who seeks to go back to the old days. It is my hope this committee understands that fiscal and ethical implications of this policy. Thank you for your attention and service.

Cherie O'Dell

self, teacher

Spring, TX

I believe virtual education would be a very good resource for the state of Texas and would allow students access to educational opportunities they may not otherwise be able to have. Students in remote areas could take classes that aren't offered in their public schools, for example, like perhaps Calculus, AP Environmental Science, or even college-level courses. This would also be a good resource for students who are being home schooled, or for students who are pursuing additional opportunities, like acting, sports, or other activities that do not allow them to receive a regular school education while they are involved in them. In addition, virtual school can be structured to meet the needs of many students, such as those who want to accelerate their learning or receive extra tutoring opportunities, for example. Virtual education would also provide more job opportunities for educators who are interested in this mode of providing educational resources, and would allow more teachers with credentials for teaching advanced topics to reach students across the state. It can be used to help a variety of students at different ages as well as for adults, and would be beneficial for students with learning disabilities, students who are advanced, students who are incarcerated, and students who would prefer an education centered around their lifestyle as they pursue additional objectives such as competing in the Olympics, or students seeking a college degree, and honestly just about everyone. I believe this is a modern mechanism for advancing education overall.

Ed Heinbaugh

Self

Kerrville, TX

Please Pass!

Darryl Ohlenbusch

Self Architect

San Antonio, TX

Vouchers, ESAs, etc. have no place in a public education system as called for in the Texas Constitution. Not now, not ever.

Joe Gordy

Graham High School

Graham, TX

As has been evidenced throughout the legislative session, there is opposition to ESAs or vouchers in Texas. Providing school vouchers does not level the playing field for Texas students. ESAs would have dire consequences for Texas Public Education, particularly in urban and rural areas of the State. Any use of public funds in private education must require full compliance with Texas student accountability, financial accountability, and transparency of District actions.

Lisa O'Toole

Self

Richmond, TX

I'm in favor of this bill and support investing in our teachers and education for the children of our state.

Sal Rivas, Mr

Myself

Dallas, TX

As a hard working teacher and tax payer, I think this is a horrible use of tax payer money. To you who is reading this, please say not to ANY legislation that takes money away from public schools and gives it to the rich. Instead how about you work on a bill that pays us, STRUGGLING TEACHERS and who are living paycheck to paycheck, a salary increase. I love my job, but it's hard out here. Come spend a day in my classroom, Dallas ISD. Email me, come find me and come spend a day with me to see how much of a disservice a voucher program would be to us all.

Tom DuBose

Self

Pflugerville, TX

??ESA's should not be allowed in Texas. It will separate the poor and would end desegregation of our schools. Not all Private Schools will provide accommodations for Students with learning disabilities. Private Schools can pick and choose their students. In other words they can deny entrance to their schools. Private schools taking taxpayer dollars should follow TEA guidelines and regulations which they will not. Totally unfair to all families! Do not pass this bill. The Texas Legislature should fund Public Education and give raises to Teachers so that retention will rise and draw a talent of new educators onboard to help with the overwhelming demand in our schools. The only failure in Public Education is the lack of leadership in our Texas Government to help Educators rather than denounce them. To much bigotry in our leaders will only tear our proud public school apart. No to Vouchers!??

Joanne McDaniel, Mrs.

self

San Antonio, TX

I am urging you to please support HB 1, which will give Texas broad school choice through universal Education Savings Accounts (ESAs).

I respectfully ask that you make it a priority for the report to include universal school choice for ALL Texas students.

Rachel Moore

Self

Frisco, TX

Vouchers will hurt our public education system and the whole state. The voucher system will be a huge setback for our future because some children will be left behind. Every child should have the right to a fully funded education. Public schools need more money and these vouchers are ensuring that they will never be properly funded. Strong public schools will make us a strong state with educated students. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded public schools.

Kurt Nolin

Self, Business Analyst

Providence Village, TX

Please stop with this Voucher NONSENSE! Keep public money in public schools and give public schools more damn money without any vouchers. We are \$4000.00 dollars behind the Nation Average on per student spending, and rank in the BOTTOM 10 of states. This is an absolute crisis that needs to be addressed now with real solutions. Instead you are messing around with trying to make your friends wealthy on the backs of Texas Children. Why do I keep reading stories about sorely underfunded schools in rural Texas areas with zero reaction from the Texas Legislature. I am ashamed of how much time our public officials are wasting on vouchers instead of fixing the very real underfunded public schools. We have a surplus of literally BILLIONS of dollars, how the hell haven't you all funded public schools to appropriate levels yet?

Jennifer Morrison, Mrs.

Self

Carrollton, TX

Oppose school vouchers and fully fund public schools. Our money is sitting in a "surplus account", spend it and fully fund our public schools.

Kulvinder Stamper

PTA - IM Terrell Academy

Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Joann Robison, Mrs

Self, retired physical therapist

Austin, TX

School savings accounts will move taxpayer money away from public schools in select neighborhoods. The idea that underserved children will benefit ignore the reality that few private schools have programs for disabled students and the costs, even after a subsidy, will be prohibitive for children living in poverty. The best use of taxpayer money is to improve programs and teacher pay at public, accountable schools. A well rounded education with a respected and motivated teacher will remain the foundation of democracy. I urge each House member to remain committed to public education as you have in the past.

Lauren Gomez

Self

Denton, TX

I have been a public elementary school educator for 11 years, and while I would love higher pay, my main concern is school vouchers. Please do NOT allow school vouchers in the state of Texas. We only receive \$6,000 per student right now, and these vouchers would give already wealthy parents a \$10,000 discount on the tuition they are already paying.

The low-income students I serve would not have the opportunity to use that \$10,000 because they cannot afford the rest of the tuition, nor do they have transportation to get there. For many, school is their safe place and the only place they receive a decent meal. Their parents are working 2 or 3 jobs each just to make ends meet.

Even I, as a teacher and in the middle class, could not afford to send my OWN children to a private school with those vouchers.

It's bad enough that charter schools receive public education funds when they do not have to allow all students into their schools like public schools do. They can expel students and not allow students with disabilities as they wish.

Vouchers will only continue to magnify the divide between the rich and the middle to low class.

PLEASE reconsider how these funds are distributed and make sure that the majority of our youth who are currently in public school continue to receive appropriate funding to be successful in this world.

Louise DeRusseau

Self

Cedar Creek, TX

I am in favor of HB 1. We need to improve our State's education program and this is a step in the right direction. You should be embarrassed at how low this state is ranked in how well our children are educated. This must improve. Vote YES to HB 1!

Melanie Cawthon, Ms.

Self (Executive Director, disABILITYsa)

San Antonio, TX

Dear Esteemed Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment,

I write to you as a committed member of our Texas community and an advocate within the disability sector to express my sincere reservations regarding House Bill (HB 1). This bill, in its current form, presents significant barriers to the advancement and inclusion of students with disabilities, particularly in the context of equitable access to education.

At the heart of the issue is the allocation of public funds to private educational institutions that are not bound by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This discrepancy not only creates an uneven playing field but also perpetuates a system where private entities benefit without the accompanying responsibility to serve all students. I propose a critical reassessment of HB 1 to ensure that any private school receiving public monies via education savings accounts is also mandated to comply with IDEA, providing a non-discriminatory, accessible educational landscape for every student.

Furthermore, the provisions concerning state-supported living centers (SSLCs) delineated in Section 29.0056 of HB 1 necessitate a thorough review. The potential increase in the institutionalization of children with disabilities is both concerning and contrary to the principles of family-centric care, as upheld by the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* and the state's own legislation. Recommending SSLCs removes youth with disabilities from community, often isolating them from inclusive and meaningful experiences. It is vital that we pivot towards a system that promotes family and community integration, rather than one that inadvertently steers families toward the most restrictive and expensive residential options.

In light of this, the specific reference to SSLCs as a recommended residential option is both an unnecessary expenditure, given the existence of a comprehensive residential options brochure, and a potential influence on families that may not align with their best interests or those of the state financially. [Existing brochure:

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

Taking into account the substantial cost disparities between SSLCs and community-based services, it is both fiscally responsible and ethically imperative to reconsider the promotion of such institutions. Instead, we should champion and invest in services that support integration, empowerment, and fiscal prudence.

I respectfully urge the committee to stand with our most vulnerable citizens by opposing HB 1 or, at minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1. Your leadership on this matter is crucial to maintaining a just, equitable public education system that serves the interests of all Texans.

Serving together,

Melanie Cawthon

210-643-8935 / mcawthon@disabilitysa.org

Jose Jimenez, Mr.

Self

Houston, TX

I do NOT support private school vouchers. Private school parents choose to pay out of pocket for their children's education. That is their school choice! Stop wasting time on school vouchers. PLEASE focus on increasing the student funding to school districts. PLEASE focus on providing funding increases to public school districts to provide employee salary increases! Focus on the 5.5 million public school students that need better paid employees. Make being a public school teacher a coveted career again! Please provide teacher pay raises.

Adeline Castleberry

Texas PTA, Keller ISD Council of PTAs

Fort Worth, TX

Please do what is right for all our students and teachers and select to direct funds to public schools and not the voucher program.

tyan hutchinson

Friendswood isd/ Cline

Friendswood, TX

I have been in education for 15 years and I absolutely love what I do. I feel that teachers and staff in public education need a raise due to the increase in behaviors, cost of living, the amount that teachers come out of pocket to make learning fun and engaging, and also the extra work we do at home to plan authentic lessons. Please consider giving teachers the raise they deserve, we are creating the future.

Laura Adair, Mrs.

Plano Senior High School Parent Teacher Association

Plano, TX

Texas has a constitutional obligation to make suitable provisions for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools. School vouchers run counter to those provisions by turning public money into discount coupons for private schools. Private schools can reject students who are disabled, who struggle with English, and who have behavior challenges, in other words, they can opt to only take the kids who are easiest to educate. Vouchers will incentivize parents to pull their kids and their PTA donations and their volunteer hours away from public schools without providing enough money to cover the full cost of a decent private education. Vouchers will cause public schools to diminish in quality until they end up only serving the kids who are toughest to educate. Meanwhile the rest of us will struggle to find the money to cover the difference between a voucher and a decent private school. The far better solution is for Texas to fully fund public schools so that every child in Texas has access to a decent education.

Traci Stephens

Self- Teacher

Pearland, TX

Teachers need more support from the state, but less testing. Teachers deserve raises due to the cost of living, the cost of everything and the amount of money they spend on their classrooms. Teachers need their voices heard. There is a shortage because of how we are treated. Teachers can make more and have less responsibility in other professions. If the teachers all leave, what will the world come to?

Sarah Franklin

Self - frisco, PTA member at Pearson MS and Reedy HS

Frisco, TX

Vouchers are not the answer! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

The students who need public school the most will be the ones who are negatively impacted the most. People who choose to go to private school know they will pay a price for it. They have a choice. Don't take money away from the students who don't!

Brent Newsom

Self

Mansfield, TX

First, I would like to thank you for considering the increased funding for public schools. Education is imperative for a thriving Texas Economy. However, I would encourage you to separate the funding from a voucher type program. I believe voting on issues of this magnitude should be voted on independently. Thank you for your time and consideration and for all the hard work you do for your districts and the State of Texas.

Penni Askew, Ms.

Self, Family of 4 voters (ages 21, 23, their parents)

Fort Worth, TX

Stop trying to pass vouchers in the state of Texas. Fund the schools we have and should be fully supporting. Stop trying to slip these voucher bills past us in so many forms. Just stop it. Support our public schools.

Victoria Obregon

Holy Trinity Catholic High School

Temple, TX

Dear Mr. Shine,

My name is Victoria Obregon, and I am a junior at Holy Trinity Catholic High School in Temple, Texas. My whole life I have been attending private schools in the state of Texas, elementary in El Paso and middle through high school in Temple. I firmly believe that my attendance at these private schools have uniquely prepared me and shaped me in various ways that helped me grow into who I am today and who I will be in the future. Currently at Holy Trinity, the theological teachings have greatly inspired me and many students to serve our community and become virtuous leaders. I am very blessed to have the opportunity to have a unique education that I cannot find in other schools.

The passing of the HB-1 bill which funds families who wish to send their child to private schools would have a great impact on our communities here in Texas. The small, close knit, welcoming, and focused environment is found in almost every private school and is what many children need to improve their learning and skills. Private schools allow for a more personal interaction between a student and their teacher such as tutoring and guidance. For some students, private school opens many doors of opportunity to grow in education and possibly faith. I believe that if more students have the opportunity to have an education in private school, we can have a greater variety in students with different backgrounds and beliefs. A diverse group of students in our private schools is essential in teaching us more about our communities.

I and all the students at Holy Trinity would like to thank you for being the representative of Temple, Texas. We appreciate all you do for our communities, and would be grateful if you, as our representative, would help have the bill approved so that our schools and students may benefit. Our private schools will grow as a family and students will be assisted in achieving academic excellence.

Sincerely,

Victoria Obregon

Holy Trinity Catholic High School student

Class of 2025

Kelly Magin
self
Stephenville, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the use of public funds for vouchers to private schools without adequate accountability measures in place. As your constituent, I believe it is imperative that we carefully consider how taxpayer dollars are spent, and I have serious concerns about the lack of transparency and oversight in this matter.

While I understand the desire to provide parents with more choices in education, it is crucial that any use of public funds for private schools comes with strict accountability mechanisms. Without such safeguards, it essentially becomes a gift of public funds to private entities without any assurance that the funds will be used effectively and in the best interest of our students and our community.

Private schools are not subject to the same level of scrutiny and regulation as public schools. They often operate with greater autonomy, which can lead to a lack of transparency in how they use public funds. This lack of accountability can result in mismanagement, discrimination, or a failure to meet the educational standards that our society expects.

As a taxpayer, I am deeply concerned about the potential misuse of public funds when vouchers are provided without adequate oversight. Our public schools have an important role in our communities, serving all students and being held accountable to the public through elected school boards and other mechanisms. When public funds are redirected to private schools without corresponding accountability, it undermines the very principles of our public education system.

I urge you to stand with your constituents in opposing the use of public funds for private school vouchers without strong accountability measures in place. Instead, we should focus on investing in and improving our public schools, which serve the diverse needs of our communities and are accountable to the public.

I appreciate your attention to this matter, and I hope that you will use your influence to ensure that public funds are used in a responsible and transparent manner that benefits all students in our community. Thank you for your service, and I look forward to hearing about your efforts to protect the integrity of our public education system.

Joseph Wachsman
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Jeremy Pope, Chaplain
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Public monies should remain in the public arena (public education). Private schools are not subject to the same regulation and oversight that public schools receive. For the good of all Texas Children, vouchers should be a no go.

Arianna Gonzales
Holy Trinity Catholic High School
Temple, TX

Dear Mr. Shine,

My name is Arianna Gonzales, and I am a Junior at Holy Trinity Catholic High School in Temple, Texas. I have attended Catholic private school my whole life. I believe that the education I have gotten from private school has shaped me into the person I am today. Being at a private school helps me focus more on my studies because of the small class size.

With HB-1 being voted into effect it will help bring students into private schools across Texas. With most private schools having a smaller student population, students have a closer bond with their peers. Smaller class sizes also let students have more one-on-one time with their teachers. If these students were at a public school, they would be seen as a number and not as a member of a school community. The big price tag on private schools may be a big struggle for low-income families. With the vouchers given to families it can make the family not struggle to give their kids the best education they can get. The voucher can also help children get the therapy they need.

Voting for this bill will help many private schools like Holy Trinity to grow in students. When voting for this bill, think about the opportunities it will bring to many families across Texas. With your vote it will help kids get the education they deserve and need.

God Bless,
Arianna Gonzales
Holy Trinity Catholic High School Student
Class of 2025

Veronica Ayala
Self
GALVESTON, TX

Remove the SSLC language in the bill. This is an education bill. The "option" of SSLC is a health care issue not to be discussed or advised by educators.

Xochitl Rivera
Holy Trinity Catholic High School
Temple, TX

Xochitl Rivera
Holy Trinity Catholic High School
6608 West Adams Avenue
Temple, Texas 76502

November 8, 2023
Mr. Hugh shine
Representative District 55
101 East Central Avenue, Suite 122
Belton, TX 76513

Dear Mr. Shine,

My name is Xochitl Rivera I am writing on behalf of my school to ask that you help pass HB-1 bill. I have gone to Holy Trinity Catholic High School since my freshman year of high school. Holy Trinity Catholic High School stands out as an exceptional choice for parents seeking a well-rounded Catholic education that combines academic excellence, strong moral values, and a supportive family-like community that focuses on its student's education while also making it a safe catholic environment. The smaller class sizes allow more personalized attention, ensuring that each student's unique needs are met, this sense of community creates a safe and nurturing environment in which students can thrive academically and socially.

HB-1 will allow students in need who are stuck in their failing public schools to take the tax dollars given to them and put them toward public or private schools of their choice. The HB-1 will help our school because it will increase the number of students at our school while also giving them a safe environment. It will also help the existing students by giving us more sports opportunities and a diverse learning environment.

Please consider approving this bill it will help not just private catholic schools like Holy Trinity but also other public schools and students in Texas.

Sincerely yours,
Xochitl Rivera
Holy Trinity Catholic High School Student, Class of 2025

Danielle Chavez
Self
BEAUMONT, TX

Universal ESA's for students in Texas would mean that I have a choice on how to educate my children. One size fits all is not the way to go and doesn't fit all anymore. We need support and the choice to decide what is best for our students. If we have ESA's we can choose the right path to educating our children and creating a better future!

Angela Carey, School Mental Health Therapist

self

Austin, TX

Hello-

I am begging you to not pass the school voucher bill or HB1. Why are we diverting our tax payer funds to private schools? Especially private religious schools which is a violation of the First Amendment of separation of church and state. My tax paying dollars need to funnel back in our FREE public schools for ALL! I have worked in public schools for 22 years and I have real life testimony of our public schools already struggling with academics, teacher retention, COVID after effects with low school performance in reading, HIGH insurance premiums such as \$800 per month for a family of 4, and poor testing data with much needed academic interventions to get our kids up to national standards. Our Texas and rural schools need as much state funding as possible and we need law makers to actually increase of allotted tax percentages for adequate funding. If funds are diverted away from our already struggling schools, just imagine the repercussions such as mental health programs operating in public schools going away. I am a mental health therapist and we are already on the chopping block from the possible of this bill passing and losing funding. Our kids are barely hanging on with mental health concerns, drop out rates are increasing along with meeting ALL our students needs. Why are we focusing on a small percentage of wealthy families that have a means to provide an alternative private education. Please give us our adequate funding and refuse HB 1, this bill will destroy our students and their future. We the people such as, pubic educators and students deserve better attention and treatment in TEXAS. We need to pay our teachers better and reduce these insane insurance premiums. I vote No to HB 1! Please have some compassion for the less fortunate (rural/ poverty) schools and ALL public schools. We need law makers to stand up and say NO to HB 1.

John Welch

Self

Katy, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

John Welch

Stefanie Kemp

Self and public school teacher

Austin, TX

I firmly believe that the proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement.

I teach ESL students who already have huge gaps in their learning. Funds are crucial to have enough resources for these students. We must remember no child left behind and make sure this voucher plan is not passed. Our public schools and the student population deserve better!

Shraga Senft, Rabbi

Self - Teacher

Plano, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

As a teacher I know first hand that educating our youth is a delicate endeavor. Every child has unique needs and a distinct learning style. In a utopian world, each pupil would have a private teacher who would cater to their needs in a way and at a pace that is ideal for them. Obviously, this is not practically feasible. We are forced to settle for a classroom model in which one teacher teaches multiple students who are at similar levels and have similar styles and needs.

The least we can do is ensure that every student has access to the best classroom to meet his needs. That is most effectively accomplished by giving parents, who know their children and their needs best, the ability to choose which school their children will attend. By supporting HB1 and the Education Savings Account program you will be doing exactly that.

So many states in this country have realized this truth and have implemented some form of a school choice program. It is time that the great state of Texas catch up to them and keep our education top-notch.

Kimberly McCage, Mrs.

Argyle ISD

Denton, TX

NOVEMBER 8, 2023 UPDATE

TAKE ACTION ARGYLE

Written Testimony Script (copy and paste)
for the Texas Public Education Committee

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Kimberly McCage

Karri Axtell
The Arc of Fort Bend County
Pearland, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (Please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Karri Axtell
Program Director at The Arc Fort Bend
Parent of a child with IDD in Alvin ISD
Pearland, TX

Annebel Roberson

Self

BENBROOK, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

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There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Annebel Roberson

5909 Beverly Dr W #3177

Benbrook, TX 76132

(615) 545-6504

jordan philipbar, rev.

self, father and guardian to two daughters, one a sheriff's deputy and the other is disabled..

HOUSTON, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

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Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

rev. jordan philipbar

Aimee Wortendyke

self

Plano, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program. Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs. This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever-expanding list or risk being left behind.

Patti Colt, Ms.

Self

Arlington, TX

If the bill includes any form of vouchers, vote no. State tax money belongs all in for public schools and no where else. No matter what else is attached, it should be separated to another bill. Vouchers are a no.

Don Cotler

Self, startup advisor

Houston, TX

Dear House Committee,

I'm writing to encourage you to support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every Texan child deserves access to great educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or want an educational setting other than their assigned school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that meets their needs.

This bill will let parents make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Almost fifty percent of states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind. Please vote yes! Thank you

Alyssa Fathy
self
Richardson, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the educational opportunities, including our children Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Eitan Bass
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind. We moved here from out of state because we truly believe Texas law makers have its constituents true needs in mind and will fight for it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sara Rivas
Self
Farmers Branch, TX

No to vouchers.

Public school matters to Texas communities.

Taking funding from our public schools would break communities and families and create a gap in access and failing outcomes for at risk students.

NO VOUCHERS FOR TEXAS!

Derrick Almeida
Self, public school teacher
Richmond, TX

Vouchers have not worked in other states. Our tax money should go to fund public schools and not private schools where they have the right to refuse any child. In addition, private schools are not held to the same standards as public schools in terms of taking the STAAR test or the TEA accountability ratings. We should not undermine public schools. Support our teachers who you said you would back up during the election season.

As an educator, I believe it is important that you do not advocate or vote to divert state tax dollars from public to private schools. I oppose all vouchers and related schemes — including education savings accounts, tax-credit scholarships and for-profit charter and virtual schools — that use tax dollars to pay private school tuition for selected students while undermining public schools where the vast majority of Texas students are educated.

We should be making a larger investment in our public schools, not diverting resources to private interests.

Vouchers will do nothing to address the teacher shortage and may very well worsen it, if districts losing tax dollars to private schools are forced to lay off teachers and other employees. And any voucher program in Texas will ultimately cause higher property taxes to pay for it.

Gov. Abbott claims that public schools will remain fully funded. That is not true because public schools are not fully funded now and never have been under his administration. Even after the extra school funding appropriated in 2019, Texas still spends more than \$4,600 less than the national average in per-student funding.

Brynne Eichelkraut
Holy Trinity Catholic High School
Temple, TX

Dear Mr. Shine,

My name is Brynne Eichelkraut and I am a student at Holy Trinity Catholic High School in Temple, Tx. I am writing on behalf of my school to ask for your support of the HB-1 bill to help pay for student's education in a private school.

We would like to request your support for this bill because it would be very beneficial to our school and students. It would be beneficial for us because it would allow more students to attend our school giving both them and us a better school experience. It would give new students the opportunity to learn in a smaller environment and it would give the previously enrolled students a more diverse environment for us to learn in.

Please consider supporting this bill in order to help us, all private schools across the country, and the students that would benefit from attending these schools.

Godspeed,

Brynne Eichelkraut
Holy Trinity Catholic High School Student

Judy Mayhew
Retired
Humble, TX
No vouchers

Sandra Geller, Mrs.
Self, teacher assistant
Houston, TX

personalize.

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

?

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you so much,

Mrs. Sandra Geller

Stacie Smith

Self

Houston, TX

I am a mother of 4 school age students and one upcoming student. Vouchers/educational savings accounts have no place taking public funds away from our public schools.

Private schools do not have to accept all students. They do not meet the needs of all students.

The funding suggested in this bill is higher than public education receives and private schools receive the full amount not based on attendance.

We need to first focus on funding our public schools.

Menachem Ziemba

self Teacher

dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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MZ

Maria Martinez-Corrick

Self

McAllen, TX

Dear legislators, you must know that vouchers are bad for Texas students, and that no good will come from spending public tax money to enrich private school operators. Public education is a basic human need. Schools for profit or vouchers will only damage the foundation of towns and communities across our area. Please 'educational opportunity and enrichment ' simply means give more to the ones that have more already. Please fund public school education.

Jennifer Bourgoyne

self

Bee Cave, TX

The proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 is a short sighted and serious threat to our excellent public school system in Texas. Vouchers take away essential funds from public education, making it harder for our schools to serve every child. This hasn't worked well in other states, why on Earth would we do this to Texas children?

Shifra Zakon, Ms.

Self

Plano, TX

members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Jadira Acosta

Self

College Station, TX

As a low income family of 4, I support HB 1 (parents choice) because it would help families like ours send our kids to private catholic school. I believe these types of schools help out families grow closer to God and raise kids who become good members of our community.

Thomas Roosth, Dr.

Self/physician

Bellaire, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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chana greenfield, Mrs.
Torah Day School of Dallas
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you.
Sincerely, Chana Greenfield

Amy Grogg
Self
Bedford, TX

Texas families do not need 'choices' for education, we already have that. Texas families need fully funded public education systems without restrictions or tradeoffs. Stop holding public funds intended for public education hostage. Vouchers under any name are not what the public needs. You have already enacted legislation requiring districts to spend more funds on security without providing the funds for it. You appealed to homeowners with tax compression, but it's not beneficial to the schools, they aren't receiving more. The schools are struggling because you have suppressed their abilities by withholding funds and are none trying to make us believe public education is failing our kids. Nope, the Texas Governor and his closest friends with their political contributions are failing our kids. Own what you have done and take the logical corrective action, fund our schools.

Yael Yiztchak
Self
Houston, TX

We need help with jewish education

Yael Stromer, Mrs.
Self, special education teacher
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Sincerely,
Yael Stromer

Zehava Wolbe

TORCH

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Jay McWilliams

Big Spring ISD

Big Spring, TX

As a school Superintendent, I fully support raising the basic allotment (It is way past due), giving teachers significant pay raises, and aid to our SPED and early childhood programs. However, even though I know our state and our teachers deserve this, I cannot support these much needed additions if they include vouchers. Governor Abbott has made it very clear that he will not spend a dime on public education needs unless his voucher program is passed. (I refuse to call it school choice, when we as educators realize we have had school choice since the mid 1990's. I am speaking for myself, and as the leader of a 4A school district when I ask you to reconsider passing any type of legislation that would include vouchers in our state. Vouchers have not proven to improve education, and instead of being a huge financial burden on the states that have added this type of program. Plus, let's keep in mind that private schools have no accountability, no financial transparency, and do NOT have to admit all those student who apply to go to their school. For this and many other reasons the argument that this would create competition and make public school step up their game is completely false. Competition is based on everyone playing on the same, level playing field, and obviously with private schools not being held accountable, the playing field would not be level. The state legislature needs to do the right thing and simply fully fund public education in our great state. Using vouchers as a carrot to force us to accept vouchers is unethical and flat out wrong. Thank you for your time.

Liz May

Self

Weatherford, TX

I come from a strong line of family members who devoted their careers as public educators. Our country has benefitted by a strong free public education system. The voucher program will destroy public education in Texas. Instead of giving your rich political donors a tax break, how much better it would be for Texans to invest MORE DOLLARS in public education. Look at our natuonal rankings in education. Doesn't that speak volumes?

Gilbert Garza, Voter/ Education Advocate

Teachers

Brownsville, TX

School vouchers have been a topic of much debate in the field of education policy for years. While proponents argue that vouchers can improve educational outcomes by promoting competition and empowering parents with choice, there are compelling reasons to be against school vouchers. Let's explore some of the most significant arguments against school vouchers, considering their potential negative impact on educational equity, accountability, and public education system as a whole.

Undermining Educational Equity:

School vouchers will exacerbate educational inequities. They serve to divert public funds to private and parochial schools, and indirectly siphon resources away from already underfunded public schools. Students in disadvantaged communities, who rely on these public schools, can find their education further compromised as a result. Vouchers also contribute to greater social and economic segregation, as more affluent families can take advantage of them while low-income families lack access and resources to do so.

Lack of Accountability:

Private schools that accept vouchers are often not subject to the level of accountability and oversight as public schools. While public schools must adhere to state standards, participate in standardized testing, follow regulations aimed at protecting students' rights, private schools do not have the same obligations. This lack of transparency and accountability potentially jeopardizing their long-term prospects.

Erosion of the Public Education System:

School vouchers weaken the foundation of public education. Public schools serve as a cornerstone of democratic society, providing equal educational opportunities for all children. When funds are diverted from the public system, it leads to a downward spiral of reduced resources, which results in the decline of educational quality ultimately weaken the public education system rather than improving it.

Cherry-Picking Students:

Private schools have the flexibility to select which students they admit. This leads to situations where private schools choose to enroll students who are easier to educate, while leaving more challenging or disadvantaged students in public schools. Such cherry-picking practices skew the perception of private schools as being more successful.

Potential for Discrimination: Using public funds to support private and religious schools will indirectly support discrimination, as many private schools may exclude students based on factors like religion, sexual orientation, or disability.

Insufficient Oversight and Regulation:

In conclusion, while the concept of school vouchers may seem appealing in theory, there are many compelling arguments against their implementation. They have the potential to undermine educational equity, weaken the public education system, lack accountability, raise concerns about discrimination and constitution. This amounts to nothing more than a subsidy for the rich!

Shameful!!

Ryan Comburn

Self

Temple, TX

As a grandparent of two children attending a Catholic school, I am strongly in favor of providing equitable access to all approved education providers.

Tobi Rothschild

Self, parent

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Joellen Killion

Self as citizen and taxpayer of Texas

Lakeway, TX

Public education guaranteed by the US Constitution and state constitution is under threat by this bill. In addition, the governor's continuous refusal to accept a defeat is merely political gamesmanship. Vouchers do not improve equity in education, but rather rob every child of it. They create greater classism and opportunity for the privileged rather than ensuring equity for all Texas children. Please give up the game playing related to holding Texas legislators hostage over one man's inability to accept defeat and his self interest rather than ensuring that every Texas student deserves a guaranteed, viable and adequately funded education in public schools.

Karen Pearce

Self, high school teacher

Austin, TX

The way this HB 1 bit is written, it seems to conveniently avoid the fact that there is necessary funding for public schools being dictated by a private school voucher issue. This approach to education only hurts the students in both private and public schools. Have you noticed the education system in Mississippi?? I taught in the public system there in 1990. Funding for public schools was dismal. The majority of middle class (and up) families chose private schools and would not choose to fund the public schools. It resulted in a horrific education system. Is that really the effect you want to have here in Texas? The strength of a community is as strong as its weakest member. Strengthen our public education to help the entire community. Give all of our children access to high quality public education and then everyone benefits.

(No to HB1 as it is currently written) On a side note, you are invited come visit my classroom.

Lindsey Ramirez

Self

Austin, TX

Any attempt to take public dollars and spend it on private education that only benefits the already wealthy is not beneficial for the community. Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers and further, they do not have to service our kids with any accommodation or those that need special programs like our kids who are Spanish speakers or in special education.

Tom Plumbley, Reverend

Self, Senior Minister at First Christian Church, Fort Worth

Fort Worth, TX

It's time to stop all efforts to use public money for private and parochial education. Vouchers, or education savings accounts (the language not so skillfully buried within a list of commendable things) have been defeated over and over and over again, and for good reason. Let's make our public schools better, yes. But we don't do that by denigrating them for a couple of decades and then cutting their collective throats. No more playing politics with the futures of our children. Let public funds go to public schools which are accountable to the people of Texas. No vouchers!

Baila Epstein
Torah Day School of Dallas
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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shimmy censor
YTE
Houston, TX

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Emily Witt
Texas Freedom Network
Austin, TX

I oppose vouchers

John Hutcheson, Mr.
TSTA Retired
Arlington, TX

It is irresponsible to give public school money to promote private schools, especially when public schools are under funded.
Tying teacher salaries to this scheme insults our hard working educators.

Becky Sternberg
Torah Day School of Dallas
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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karen polatsek, mrs
self
Houston, TX

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Mary Arriola
Self
Belton, TX

This important to pass I work with children in a private school and have seen where parent bring there children from public to private and how it helps the child and I also have had a child that went to private and finish his last 3 years in public so he could take a class that private didn't have so it works both ways for the children and the parent can help the child in whatever challenges he or she has its about the student how can we help them I was a single mom sending my child to private school it was hard then but now my granddaughter has her child in private but it takes everything for her to send her daughter she works at Roadhouse doesn't make any money she knows she wants the best for her daughter but needs help please pass this bill.

Lindsay Passell

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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John Rieschick

Self- Educator

El Paso, TX

Dear Representative Escobar,

I live in the city of El Paso and belong to the Cathedral parish where I am employed at St. Patrick Cathedral School. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Sincerely,

John Rieschick

Keith Wray

Self

Round Rock, TX

Please consider supporting this bill to promote education.

Maureen de la Rosa, Mrs.

self, retired EPCC instructor

El Paso, TX

Representative Ordaz,

I live in your district and belong to St. Raphael Catholic parish and my children attended Catholic Schools. I know the value of an education that promotes not only kindness and respect for all, but also the importance of giving back to the community. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. No one should be kept from the school of their choice because of their socioeconomic status. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Sincerely,

Maureen A de la Rosa

SARA LEAH FRIEDMAN

Self
Houston, TX
Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Sincerely

Rhonda Hanson
Self - TEACHER AND ONE DAY GRANDPARENT
Haskell, TX

Hard pass, NO, to vouchers. Get it through the governor's thick head to STOP TYING funding/compensation for public schools and teachers TO VOUCHERS. Enough is enough and just do what's right for ALL KIDS in Texas, not just the rich cronies who want a discount for private school tuition. Make public schools better with appropriate funding

Rebecca Ferguson
Spring Branch Independent School District
Houston, TX

I am writing as a supporter of public schools (employee and parent) to state public education should be fully funded before ESAs are considered. Public schools are about access and continuing to dismantle the public school system by not providing full funding is criminal and an injustice to our future. ESAs should only be considered once full funding is provided to the public schools which have a duty to provide a quality education for ALL children in Texas.

Cynthia Zeplin
Self
Yoakum, TX

No to vouchers. More Texans are understanding that Texas GOP have not invested in our schools for years. I implore you to say no to vouchers and start investing in teachers and our children's public education. Where are the old republicans who fought for public education and our children? Start acting now and be a leader that fights for all children.

Cindy Zeplin

Denise Coffman, Mrs
Self retired teacher
Keller, TX

I am completely against any form of vouchers. You will dismantle our public schools.

Jenny Quinn
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.
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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.
Thank you!

Raizel Ganz
self- occupation teacher
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.
Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.
Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.
This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.
Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.
Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

David Bell
Self
Lago Vista, TX

I want my tax dollars to go exclusively toward funding public schools. Vouchers threaten the quality of education in our state. If a citizen wishes to send their children to a private school that's fine, but don't ask me to subsidize that choice.

Oliver Bernstein
self - public relations
Austin, TX

Our public schools are the bedrock of our communities and the stepping stones for our children's futures. As a parent and voter and taxpayer, I oppose HB 1 and oppose vouchers and ESAs.

eliezer perlman

self, clergy

dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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Leah Senft

self

Plano, TX

Dear Members,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. We should have the freedom and ability to choose a school that best meets our needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child-- a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program. Our great state should definitely be one.

Thank you!

Michael Wiseman, Rev.

Self

Dallas, TX

1. Any recipient of the voucher must not require additional tuition. This will prevent this handout from inflating the cost of the school without expanding access and choice.

2. Any school that accepts the voucher must be subject to the same scrutiny as a public school.

Rosey Yachnes Jakob

Torah day school

Richardson, TX

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Karen Conyngham, Mrs.

Self Employed

Austin, TX

I am TOTALLY OPPOSED to school vouchers. Fund our public schools adequately so that all children have an equal chance at a quality education. Many rural states have no access to private schools. Do not deprive them of a good public school education. This should not be a political issue; it is an ethical one.

NO VOUCHERS!

Hadassa Pam

self

DALLAS, TX

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Maureen Woods

self/teacher

Santa Fe, TX

I am a public school teacher, and vouchers would drain money away from public schools. This would endanger my job and my livelihood. Please do not continue to push for this law passage.

Leora Ringelheim

Self

Dallas, TX

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Janice Englander

Self

Dallas, TX

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Greg Mooty

Self / Retired

Austin, TX

I vehemently oppose HB 1. Vouchers siphon drastically needed funds from already struggling public schools. This bill is not supported by a majority of Texans and is only being pushed by Abbott because of the millions of dollars being thrown at him by right-wing white Christian nationalists Tim Dunn and Farris Wilks. Do not allow billionaires to dictate the future of our Texas children. Oppose HB 1.

Baila Dubrawsky, Mrs

Chabad of Dallas

Dallas, TX

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Sincerely

Baila Dubrawsky

(mother of 8 children and grandmother of 25)

avigayil helprin
SELF - MOM
HOUSTON, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Katrina Huffman
Self, Mother/Graphic Designer and Printer
Brady, TX

Forcing this school voucher bill is a slap in the face to all of the rural constituents who have voted for and supported the many Republicans in office. If this were a popular program, you wouldn't be in your 4th special session trying to pass it. It is clearly unpopular with the people, and would have drastically negative impact on the vulnerable population of children that rely on schools for regular food and welfare reporting. It also removes oversight and protections for special education and special needs children. The results of similar programs have proven disastrous in Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana, and Washington D.C. This is wrong and it is unfair to the teachers and administrators who have devoted their lives to the education and wellbeing of our children. Perhaps the answer is to stop stripping funding for public education, and invest instead. Please do not pass this bill and risk much needed support and resources for my community's school system.

Chani Rodin
Self, educator and parent
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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Aliza Mann

self

Dallas, TX

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Thank you!

Nava Diamond, Mrs.

Agudah

Houston, TX

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Bob Rankin

Self/Retired

Austin, TX

I firmly believe that the proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement.

Ritchie Bowling

None

Maypearl, TX

While the bill requires testing for students with a norm referenced test it now pulls an even large amount of funding away from what could be available for local schools. Special Education in the State of Texas has been underfunded for decades and it is estimated to be underfunded by billions at this point. School safety fund is still inadequate to properly ensure schools have all the safety equipment, ongoing licenses for equipment, and to hire safety personnel. Public Education has never been fully funded as well. Until all of those items are fully funded it is hard to understand why we would dedicate taxpayer funds to a voucher knowing how it has hurt budgets in other States. This is not a conservative thing to do, and it is not a good thing for Texas. School choice exists now and is funded via public schools and charter schools that serve all students and the choice is still up to the parent not the private school on whether they may attend or not. This is basically a money or tax refund to those who are already in the private school system. Nothing keeps the private school from increasing rates to keep those out they do not wish to serve.

Erin Witte
Self
College Station, TX

Honorable Members of the Education Committee,

Again, another session has been called despite the Governor publicly stating he would call no further special sessions. I find myself prevailing upon you to say “NO” to vouchers, ESAs or anything disguised as such AND absolutely no deals.

My reasons to say “NO” are to protect all public school students.

1. Texas is currently listed in the top 5 states for graduation rates!! This should be a testament that public schools are doing something correctly.

2. Vouchers do not help our students academically: <https://news.stanford.edu/2017/02/28/vouchers-not-improve-student-achievement-stanford-researcher-finds/>

3. Vouchers do more harm than good: <https://time.com/6272666/school-voucher-programs-hurt-students/>

4. Vouchers/ESAs are a type of reverse segregation because private schools and some charter schools SELECT their student body.

There are many other reasons, but these in itself should be enough. Please vote “NO!” The education of our future generation is in your hands.

Joseph Ravitsky
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver’s seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. This will improve our schools as well.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind. School choice will soon impact company relocation plans as corporations take education opportunities for the families of their employees into consideration.

Best Regards,
Joe Ravitsky

Bryan Armes
self
LUBBOCK, TX

As an educator, I believe it is important that you do not advocate or vote to divert state tax dollars from public to private schools. I oppose all vouchers and related schemes — including education savings accounts, tax-credit scholarships and for-profit charter and virtual schools — that use tax dollars to pay private school tuition for selected students while undermining public schools where the vast majority of Texas students are educated.

We should be making a larger investment in our public schools, not diverting resources to private interests.

Vouchers will do nothing to address the teacher shortage and may very well worsen it, if districts losing tax dollars to private schools are forced to lay off teachers and other employees. And any voucher program in Texas will ultimately cause higher property taxes to pay for it.

Gov. Abbott claims that public schools will remain fully funded. That is not true because public schools are not fully funded now and never have been under his administration. Even after the extra school funding appropriated in 2019, Texas still spends more than \$4,600 less than the national average in per-student funding.

Your vote OPPOSING all vouchers and education savings accounts is a vote in support of Texas students, educators and public education.

tova perlman
self, engineer
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Yehudah Abrams
Torah Day Shool of Dallas
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, especially our children here in Texas.

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Thank you very much!

Shelley Cardwell
Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic School
Angleton, TX

I am in support of all families having the opportunity to provide the best education possible for their children. My children are older now but if my husband and I would have been given this opportunity we would have sent our children to private school. I am hopeful that this legislature will pass so my grandchildren and greatgrandchildren will have this opportunity.

Sabrina Streusand
Streusand, Landon, Ozborn, & Lemmon
Austin, TX

Our public schools cannot survive with public funding removed through the voucher system. Please protect our public schools and public education.

Jacqueline Wright, Mrs.
St. Mary's Catholic School- Self- Teacher
Temple, TX

Parents should have the choice of which school they send their children to. They should have equal access to private schools if they deem that their child should go there. They should be allowed to choose where their tax dollars for school go. This should not penalize the public schools and it should be ensured that any money that is taken from public schools and given to parents who choose to have their students attend private school is not taken from their teachers but cut in some other way. Money should not be an obstacle for Catholic families who want their children to attend Catholic schools where their faith would be nurtured. Please follow suit with other states and pass HB 1.

Daniel Weinstein

Self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Zelda Rosenberg

Self

Dallas, TX

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Dor Gamliel

Self, engineer

Dallas, TX

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Thank you for your consideration.

Tracy Porter

self

Allen, TX

I am strongly against implementing a school voucher program for our state. We already don't provide enough funding to our state schools. Why does anyone think that taking funding away will be a good idea?

- Families who are already sending their children to private schools will get taxpayer funds to supplement their costs. I don't want my taxpayer funds to be used to help affluent families. I want my taxes used to help families who need help.
- Private schools will just raise their prices because the state will be subsidizing every student who attends a private school. I don't want my taxes to be used to increase salaries of private school teachers. I want my taxes used to increase salaries of public school employees.
- We will see a trickle and then a flood of students switching from public to private schools as the quality of education in public schools declines. Again, the students who escape the declining public schools will be those from families who can afford the costs.

Education is the most effective way of helping families who live at or below the poverty line. If we don't make public schools better, we are failing the people who need the most help.

Our top priority should be to fully fund Public Schools and give educators the raises they deserve.

Just say NO to vouchers.

Shalom Rodin

Self, educator and parent

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Esther Abrams

self

Dallas, TX

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Norma Cortez

Self retired

Austin, TX

Although I am retired, I have a granddaughter who is just entering public school. She is in kindergarten. Her school is seriously underfunded. The school needs both better equipment and building improvements. The teachers also need to be awarded salary increases they deserve. The wealthy citizens that currently afford private schools made that choice for their children. They do not and should not receive any support from public funds designated for public schools.

Rivka Sionit

Torah Day School of Dallas

Dallas, TX

Esteemed members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment, I implore you to lend your support to HB1 and the Education Savings Account program, as every child, including those in Texas, deserves access to quality educational opportunities.

It's imperative to acknowledge that not every institution can cater to the needs of every student, and education is not one-size-fits-all. Therefore, parents must have the freedom to select an alternative educational setting that best serves their child's interests and requirements.

By empowering parents to make informed decisions about their children's education, we can enable them to drive their child's future and unlock a brighter tomorrow for our students, educators, and taxpayers.

It's noteworthy that nearly half of the states in America have implemented some form of school choice program, and it's high time for Texas to follow suit to avoid being left behind.

Ryan Howard

self

Plano, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Yaakov Wohlgelernter

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever-expanding list or risk being left behind.

Sarah Womack

N/A

Mansfield, TX

I urge you to vote AGAINST this bill. It is very unfortunate that as there are some good aspects to it, it also supports education savings accounts, which is the worst thing we can do for our public schools. Public schools will be hurt, not helped by this.

Ronald Kotts
Alief TSTA , Self
Houston, TX

- Public schools, teachers and support staff need more state funding and higher pay, but not at the expense of taxpayer-funded vouchers and with no accountability/controls.
- House Bill 1 is a voucher bill that legislators are trying to make pretty with more school funding. We do not buy it. Why would the voucher be funded at a higher amount than the per pupil amount sent to public schools.
- A voucher plan may initially be limited, but within a few years it will expand and soon be sending billions of tax dollars to unregulated private schools that should be going to under-funded public schools. That has been the experience in states that have adopted vouchers.
- The governor and the Legislature have a responsibility under the Texas Constitution to adequately fund public schools that accept all students. They have no responsibility for private schools, and Texas taxpayers should not be forced to pay for private schools, which can pick and choose their students.
- Take vouchers out of House Bill 1, and then we can have a much-needed discussion about public school finance.

Diane Bolton
Self/State and Federal Programs
Sulphur Springs, TX

Please vote NO to this bill and fully support public education.

David Sichel, Mr
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Best Regards,
David

Yisroel Shulman, Rabbi

self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

The Children need this for thier futurs. Please>

Eric Pines

Self

Houston, TX

Please do push this through -- as taxpayers we feel that we should have a choice of schools and we pay taxes for everyone else to go to school but we receive no benefits for our kids. Thank you for considering it -- Texas is the perfect state to help with freedom and school choice.

Anna Paz

Self, Accountant

Longview, TX

Support parental choice! I am a product of 15 years of private school education and I would not be the person I am today without it. My parents had to make sacrifices to send me to the school of our choice. It didn't come easily. That being said, I know many classmates of mine whose families made bigger sacrifices in order to give their children the education that was right for them. Who can say how many more parents could have made the same decision for their children if they were allowed a little assistance? And what is more Texan than freedom of choice, except perhaps care for our neighbors, especially those neighbors of ours who are struggling and need a leg up.

Please vote to support parental choice in sending our children to private school. And please research the diversity in students who choose private education. We are not all in upper income brackets. We are not all of one race or political party or religion. We are good, honest, sometimes struggling Texans trying to do best by our children.

Thank you and God bless.

Anna Paz

Mary Kay Erben, Mrs.

Self - Retired teacher

New Braunfels, TX

NO to vouchers.

Jan Cato, Mrs.

Self

Houston, TX

No matter how you word it, the voucher scheme will take much needed money away from our public schools to transfer into a set of "private" schools that are not required to meet the same standards or provide the same services. There is not enough money set aside to fund a worthwhile percentage of students nor is there enough to pay for a full year's education per individual student. This is a scam to funnel funds away from our trusted school system to transfer to unknown, untested and, I suspect, religious "schools". Put the money where it is needed ... fund our existing public schools and give raises to public school teachers. Let parents teach their religious beliefs to their children through traditional methods in homes and religious institutions. We demand untainted education.

Schneur Dubrawsky

Self, Finance

DALLAS, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Caroline Guillen-Holst

St. Mary's Catholic School in Temple

Temple, TX

In our small town we have very little choices and the choices we have can be expensive as far as upper grades go. Without assistance private schools will not be an option for most and will become less diversified.

Israel Tarshish

Self

Houston, TX

Please make school choice available to all Texans!

Jessica Diric, Mrs

Starr Family Jewish Day School

San Antonio, TX

As a former public school educator, and now they had a school for a private school, it is very important that our children in the state receive equal opportunity and funding. So many of our children are leaving failing public schools and coming to the private setting in order to receive more personalized education. These parents are homeowners and tuition paying individuals. If their choice is to send their children to a private school, it's important for their tax dollars to be represented in the private sector.

Moshe Naparstek, Rabbi

Self rabbi

Dallas, TX

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Asher Yurowitz

Mesivta Of Houston

Houston, TX

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Kelsey Plichta

Self- Speech Language Pathologist

Plano, TX

Please vote NO to all vouchers or ESA. As an SLP, vouchers will not help children with special needs. Our Local ISDs can't hire enough skilled special education professionals or paraprofessionals? I am unsure why anyone would think a voucher would help this situation. What you will see is that schools for children with special needs will be opened. These schools will not be required to follow the same rules and regulations as our local ISDs.

As a parent of two children in a local ISD, I also don't understand how this bill is proposing to fund an ESA at a much greater amount than it will fund my sons ISD. How is this an equitable and fair use of tax payer dollars? How do you propose low income students pay the difference between the cost of private school and what an ESA provides? This "plan" will not help the demographics it claims it will. It will just help families who probably could already afford private school to afford private school.

My local district is also being hemorrhaged by recapture payments. So not only are we paying all this money in recapture we will lose students if a voucher or ESA program passes.

How do you propose that schools that take these vouchers remain accountable. My children have so many tests and things that their teachers and schools have to do to remain accountable. Why would it not be same for schools who will take the ESA or vouchers?

Vote No.

Don't be bullied.

Your constituents don't want this.

Look how prop 9 passed.

People will vote for public education.

Jayne Serna

self/educator--also member and elected president (volunteer) of the Association of Texas Professional Educators

Leander, TX

As a 33 year educator, I did want to express my concern regarding public funds being used for private schools or any school that does not have accountability similar to public schools. My tax money should not be used to fund for-profit schools or any institution that does not have accountability to voters through the means of elected school boards, STAAR tests, financial reporting, ESA and ADA access to special education services, and other forms of public reporting and accountability. It would be like using my tax money to fund a shadow state government because what you do doesn't always fit my needs or values. Public money belongs in public schools.

By any measure, Texas public schools are underfunded. Since we have a surplus, please use these funds to enhance students funding (currently 44th out of 50 states overall, 42nd in per pupil spending) and teacher salaries (\$15,000 below the national average), or to help implement the recommendations of the governor's Teacher Vacancy Taskforce. Please use public money only for public schools. Any voucher would only serve as a subsidy for wealthier Texans who already enroll their children in private schools as a financial boon for investors in those schools. The best way to help the most students in Texas is to fully fund public schools. Until this is done, spending tax dollars anywhere else truly makes no sense.

Thank you for your time in reading my opinions.

Paula Nichols
Self
Huffman, TX

I am a conservative Republican AGAINST school choice/voucher program legislation. Government funds for private educational services of any kind are an entitlement program and come with several strings attached. In the great state of Texas we already have school choice. The parents of children all over Texas have the choice to send their child traditional public schools, to pay for private school, or to educate their children at home. That is the definition of school choice, the parents choice without government assistance. Limited government. I do not want the government in my homeschool classroom. I do not want the government to have funds attached to my child. Please vote against school vouchers!

Ahiva Keilson
Self tutor
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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?

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Victor Dykman
Self
Dallas, TX

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Donna Benami

Self

Plano, TX

Please vote yes to school choice!

Joseph Benami

Self

Plano, TX

Please vote yes to school choice!

Michael Loewenthal

My family and community

Houston, TX

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Ginger Gaskamp, Lesbian

Non-Profit Education

Houston, TX

Fund public schools NOW!!! Education is important to all, and pay the teachers what they deserve!

Problem with ALL problems in the world, start with old white men, aka racist, arrogant, entitled, etc.

Tom Sawyer, Mr.
"Self" - Consultant
Plano, TX

As in the health Insurance Industry, SDOH (Social Determinants of Health) factors like one's Zip Code, can determine one's Life Expectancy. In the City of Chicago alone, life expectancy varies from a high of 88.9, to a low of 67.3 (a 21.6 year reduction of Life). So is the same in Educational Opportunities based upon Zip Codes ! Why should a child be relegated to a Poor performing school within his or her Zip Code, delaying their educational Level of achievements by having lesser qualified Staff members or too few Courses of study that would enable to a Child's mind to grow and learn .

Zip codes can also be associated with a child's Living Conditions, Lack of Transportation, being a possible Victim of Crime, being subject to Substance abuse through the Sale of Narcotics on the streets, language barriers in their neighborhoods, living in food and medication deserts (affecting classroom performance).

It was once said: "I Have a Dream" just suppose we tried some Integration and allowed everyone the Freedom of selecting where they choose to be Educated, so a person has the ability to climb to new heights, that are not permitted in a poorer educational environment ! Flash back to the 1960's and learn a lesson from those who've passed before us !

Think of the Children for once, instead of keeping your small town district's doors open and your Friday night lights turned on, and do what's BEST for the Children of our State !

A Rising Tide floats All Boats Let the Rains begin !

Moshe Klein
Self
Houston, TX

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Thank you

Romi Naim
Self
Houston, TX

Yesterday, Governor Abbott called a 4th special session with school choice on the agenda. The House immediately filed HB1 which contains their version of an Education Savings Account program. This is the best school choice proposal to come out of the Texas House of Representatives. The bill will be heard in committee tomorrow Thursday November 9th. We are urging all Texas residents to submit a comment urging committee members to support the bill. Please click on the link below to submit a comment. Select HB1 (there may be two HB1's listed, you can select either).

This is a sample comment you can submit. Please feel free to edit and personalize.

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment, Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program. Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs. This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Sharon Phillips
Self/educator
West Columbia, TX

Students and public schools deserve to be funded adequately without being used as a "carrot" for vouchers. Public funds should not be used to fund private schools especially since they do not educate everyone and do not have to follow TEA requirements like public schools do. The fact that public education funding has been held hostage by the Governor and those who align themselves with his tactics in order to pass vouchers is disturbing and disgraceful. Those who vote for vouchers will definitely lose my vote come election time even though I am a lifelong Republican.

Binyomin Medetsky
Self, real estate
Houston, TX

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Binyomin

Penina Medetsky

Self, teacher

Houston, TX

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Penina

Malka Plummer

Self

Houston, TX

Please support the bill for educational opportunity and enrichment being presented November 9th and 10. I believe most strongly, that as parents we should have the choice of where they send our children for school and the content of the education they receive. This bill enables us to provide that type of education which our family embraces on a daily basis.

Leo Varghese

Self

San Antonio, TX

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Thank you

Vicki Wilmarth

self

Amarillo, TX

Dear Members of the Texas Legislature,

As a 7th generation Texan and a resident of Amarillo, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed "school choice" voucher system, which would allocate public tax dollars to private schools. This initiative overlooks several critical concerns inherent in funneling public funds into institutions that are not held to the same standards of accountability, governance, and inclusivity as our public schools.

Firstly, private schools in Texas are not required to adhere to the accountability measures established for public schools, such as the STAAR test. This lack of accountability means there is no consistent measure to ensure that public funds are contributing to a quality education comparable to what is expected in our public schools.

Secondly, private schools are governed by individuals or private organizations rather than by officials elected by the public to oversee and be answerable for educational outcomes and fiscal spending. The potential shift of funds from public to private schools diminishes democratic control over how taxpayer dollars are spent in education.

Moreover, using public tax money to fund private schools with religious affiliations violates the principle of separation of church and state. This funding model risks government sponsorship of specific religious doctrines, which is inherently discriminatory and divisive in our pluralistic society.

In addition, private schools reserve the right to selective admission, meaning they do not accept all students. This exclusivity is problematic for students with disabilities, behavioral challenges, and other children with special needs, as private schools are usually not equipped or mandated to cater to these students' specific needs, as public schools are.

It is also important to note that the Texas Constitution mandates the state to provide free public schools. Withholding school funding contingent upon the passing of voucher bills, as Gov. Abbott advocates, undermines this constitutional requirement and shortchanges our commitment to a universally accessible public education system.

Holding public school funding hostage in the interest of advancing the voucher agenda not only threatens the quality and accessibility of education but also stands on questionable constitutional ground. Public education is a right for all Texans and should not be compromised by diverting funds to unregulated, accountability-free private entities.

I urge you, as my representatives, to uphold the Texas Constitution's promise of free public education and to reject any and all proposals that would undermine it through a voucher system. Let us work together to invest in and improve our public schools rather than dismantling the system that serves as the bedrock for an educated and equitable society.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely, Vicki Wilmarth

Jill DeLaSierra, Ms.

Self

Dallas, TX

Save money for public school. The voucher program is a shame and a waste of taxpayer money.

mindeleah pollak

RMBA

Houston, TX

PLEASE SUPPORT THIS. No school can fit every child.

MARY MONZON

Self

Pasadena, TX

Please support public education and its teachers and students.

Daniel Masri, Rabbi

Self

Houston, TX

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All the best,

Rabbi Daniel Masri

Levi Dubrawsky, Rabbi

Self

Dallas, TX

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Laura Harroch, Mrs

Self

Houston, TX

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Renee Rice

Self

Houston, TX

Please fund our public schools!!!! ESA's take money away from public schools and the constitution states that it is the governments job to fund PUBLIC schools, not private schools

Menachem Dubrawsky

Self

Dallas, TX

My entire family is for HB1 it is about time

Stacey Herron

Self

Houston, TX

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Jeyla Moran

Self

Longview, TX

As a mother to 3 your children, I feel the educational choice is very important in the educational growth for children. I believe more children would benefit for their parents being able to choose where the go to get their education and some time this is not possible due to financial responsibility that is placed on parents for private schools vs public schools. I have two children in public school and one child in private school and can say I know for a fact that my child in private school would not be thriving like he is if this opportunity was not able to be given to him. The financial side as well as child care for off days and breaks is definitely a struggle but I as a parent make sacrifices to keep my children in this school. If I was unable to get my child in private school they would definitely be struggling going in to public when the time came. I feel personally that parent choice in education and school choice can change many lives in the future. This can make it where children can be placed in the school of choice without the fear of financial ruin.

Courtney Carpenter, Dr.

Argyle Independent School District (Superintendent of Schools)
Argyle, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Courtney Carpenter, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Argyle ISD

Rachel Golfeiz
Self
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Cynthia Keene
Self
Johnson City, TX

Not in favor of any Voucher/ESA program. Feel like Public funds should be used strictly for Public Schools.

Nirmala Thomas
self, Principal
Lake Jackson, TX

Parents should have the right to choose the best educational environment and not be limited by the fact that they cannot afford a private school. Their financial contributions to Texas State should go to the entity that they want to send their child too. What parent would not want to put their child in a school where there is accountability, respect for adults, and respect for others. Our kids need to be safe in their schools. There are more threats from within than from the outside.

Chaim Helprin
YTE
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Alyssa Boyd
Mother of 3 school age kids
Fairview, TX

In the last few years inflation has driven up the cost of food, housing, goods and services, basically everything. However, funding for public schools has not gone up. Schools are having to do more with less. Education of our Texas students needs to be a priority. Texas prides itself on drawing businesses to our state but those executives and employees aren't going to want to come here if our public school system isn't a priority.

Tzvi Wachsman

Self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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All the best,

Tzvi Wachsman

Eliezer Poupko

Self

Plano, TX

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Eliezer Poupko

chana poupko

self

Plano, TX

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Chany Poupko

Menachem Levertov

Self rabbi

Austin, TX

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Please support this program

Yocheved Gewirtz

self - teacher

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. I am a teacher and I feel very passionate about the importance of education.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Zvi Selevan
self, financial analyst
Houston, TX

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Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Netanel Shadovitz
self - CPA
Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Thank you for your representation and support!

Rachel Dvorin

Self

Houston, TX

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Hilah Tanev

Self

Plano, TX

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Rachel Mally, Mrs

Self - parent

Houston, TX

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Thank you,

Rachel

To submit a comment click

Roe Hasson
YTE
Houston, TX

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Daniel Bryant
Self - Educator
Pasadena, TX

I have been in education for 27 years and firmly support any public policy that would assist parents in choosing the best educational environment for their children. Should that choice fall outside of the local public school system, then it is only right that families who pay into these systems be afforded some level of freedom to apply a percentage of their tax dollars toward the education of their own children.

David Gewirtz
Self - school administrator
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Thank you for your consideration!

Marisa Ortiz
Self
Corpus Christi, TX

As a mother of multiple children, we as a family would never be able to afford private school. There is no point to this bill!! The wealthy can afford private school just fine. Stop this nonsense

Levi Grossbaum
Self
San Antonio, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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Thank you

Hannah Juarez

Agudah

Houston, TX

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Shifra Robkin

self

Plano, TX

We the taxpayers would appreciate our funding supporting our children's education.

Baruch Schiff

Self, parent, Compliance

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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My apologies for the copy/paste. Many of us feel strongly but don't have the right words. I know school choice would help many members in our community feel like we are living paycheck to paycheck to provide the best education for our children. School Choice would give us breathing room to keep growing our Houston community in a positive direction without fearing we let down our children.

Sincerely,

Baruch Schiff

Katie Herbst
Self
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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Thank you,
Katie Herbst

Jackie Gaskamp
Self
Houston, TX

Fund public schools NOW!!

Spring branch ISD in Houston TX is facing \$35 million in budget cuts due to the state government not acting!!! This means the CHILDREN and their education will suffer.

The state is sitting on its largest surplus ever and it needs to be spent on PUBLIC education that benefits all and does not discriminate!!! Teachers need help and to be fairly compensated; and more kids added to classrooms.

As our elected officials please do your job!!

Esther Littman
self, Early Childhood Director
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Avigail Abutbul

Self

Houston, TX

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Amy Moore

Self

Houston, TX

Please increase the basic allotment by at least \$1000 per student. Texas is the best state in the Union, yet we are in the bottom 10 in public school funding. Your constituents are begging daily for you to put our kids and the future of Texas first. Please support public education.

David Kessler

self teacher

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Lily Landry

Yes Every Kid

Austin, TX

Texas should follow the lead of other states to provide educational options for all children regardless of socioeconomic status or any other factors. Every child should be able to find fulfillment and growth through learning and should not be constrained to regulations on where or how they should learn. ESAs allow families to opt in if they aren't satisfied and gives them a chance to find works best for them, the demand for the program will be shown once in place by those who take advantage of it. Families want options, they want flexibility, and they want individual learning environments for their child, if their current school setting isn't matching their needs then we should give them to opportunity to find something new.

Nosson Dubin
Self
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Joanna Pines, Mrs.
self, Director of Development
Houston, TX

Hi! I have 5 kids ages 22 to 12 and none of them have gone to public school. We have worked hard to make sure that we could afford to send them, and all the time we pay just as much taxes as other people! Parents in Texas deserve to choose where they send their kids to school!! Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program!

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas!! Many parents want to choose private school, or religious schools, for their children, but it's not affordable- please help make this possible! Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program- it is time for Texas to join that list!!! The teachers unions should not have so much power that they constantly push this topic away- let them be competitive in the education they offer the children and parents can choose! It will make our public schools better! Everyone will benefit!

Letting parents have more choice in their childrens' education will be good for parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Please support HB1!!!! Thank you!!

Alexander Salter, Dr.
Self, economics professor
Lubbock, TX

Chairman Buckley and Honorable Members of the Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment, greetings.

My name is Alex Salter. I am an economics professor and a resident of Lubbock. I am writing to support the creation of a school choice program, such as an education savings account (ESA). You have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that all young Texans get the resources they need to secure a high-quality education.

I have extensively reviewed the scholarly evidence on school choice programs. The research demonstrates that school choice works. The vast majority of studies show that these programs raise participant students' test scores, improve high school graduation and college acceptance rates, and bolster civic education and values. School choice even improves education outcomes for students who remain in traditional public schools. School choice is also a good deal for taxpayers: It saves the public money while ensuring students do as good or better in school.

I would like to clear up some misconceptions about school choice. First, it will not harm rural school districts. You have heard some representatives claim that families will withdraw from traditional public schools en masse if you create a school choice program. This is false. Most obviously, rural districts lack the population to support a thick market for private schools. Also, polls consistently show rural Texans are happy with their public schools. Why would families withdraw their children if they are satisfied with their existing schools? School choice can radically improve the quality of education for students trapped in underperforming urban districts, but the effects on rural districts will be minimal.

Second, school choice does not "defund" traditional public schools. ESAs are a complement to public schools, not a substitute. The problem with K-12 education is that it's one-size-fits all. The current model works well for some families but not for others. We need a bottom-up approach to education that respects young Texans' diversity of talents and learning needs. For many families—mine included—that likely means traditional public schools. But for others, it means private schools, homeschools, "microschools" and education pods, and a host of other possibilities. The State of Texas should help students flourish by allowing them to use their education funds in the way that works best for them.

The Texas Constitution requires the legislature to ensure that all students have access to safe and effective schooling. Currently, too many students are falling through the cracks due to the inflexibility of our top-down system. We can fix this with an ESA or a similar program. Honorable members, I urge you to empower the next generation of Texans by embracing school choice. Thank you for consideration, and God bless Texas.

Alexander William Salter, Ph.D.

Shira Buchwald
Self- Early Childhood Administrator
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

It is imperative that every child has access to the best educational opportunities.

Each child deserves to access schools and programs that will best fit his or her needs. At times, their assigned school district will not have the resources needed for their success. It is crucial that each student and each parent has the power to make educational choices that are best suited for their education.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Sigal Shadovitz, Mrs
self
Houston, TX

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Daniel Pickelner
Self - Attorney
Houston, TX, TX

I support school choice and it should be available to all Texas residents with children in public or private school systems. We pay property taxes to public schools and if a parent wants to send their children to private school, that is a double-whammy. Our public schools are not doing the job of educating our children and some of us do not have a choice because the public schools are so unsafe. School choice should be available to all Texas parents regardless of income and regardless of whether their children are already in private school.

Tim Costello, Mr
Greg Abbott is a POS
The Colony, TX

Please stop pushing vouchers down our throat and stop dangling teacher pay as a carrot to pass something a majority of Texans don't want. I waited 33 years to be able to buy a home and you are destroying the sense of community that comes from paying your property taxes and supporting the local schools. Pay teachers better and then get out of the way!

Judith Wyble, Teacher
Self - retired educator
Spring, TX

Vote No! The governor is decimating public education so his buddies can profit off of our kids!

William Reagan
Self
north Richland Hills, TX

I strongly oppose the school voucher issue. Please put this nonsense to bed. This would only benefit families that will be sending their children to private school anyway. I have no interest in subsidizing those tuitions. It will also negatively impact rural districts, geographically most of the state. Very curious how this benefits the Governor for him to be so dead set on forcing this on a state that doesn't want it. Stand up to this tyrant.

Kayla Warren, Mrs
self - insurance agent
Houston, TX

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Thank you,
Kayla Warren

Janelle Williams, Active voter
Self-
Fulshear, TX

Everyone has a right to education. If a family chooses to go to private school, they are forgoing their right to publicly funded education. Vouchers help no one. They take funding from public education.

If you insist on vouchers, any school that accepts public funding, they need to be held to the same standards as every other school. Students must take STARR.

Any school excepting state funding must be held accountable. This includes acceptance policies. They must provide services for all students in accordance to public school and federal laws.

Tehilah Greenwald
Start family Jewish day school
San Antonio, TX

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Leah Ullman
Self. Psychotherapist
Plano, TX

I firmly believe this is vital for an educated, thinking community.

Camille Simpkins
Concerned parent from Lovejoy ISD
Mckinney, TX

Please increase the per student allotment. We are in the bottom 10 states in terms of allotment per student - shameful! We also have not increased our per student allotment since 2019 yet we expect our school districts to provide the sane support. Please increase the per student allotment by the \$1000 needed per student. Thank you

Bryan White, Superintendent
Patton Springs ISD
Afton, TX

I am opposed to vouchers in any form or fashion because 1) public tax money is not mentioned in the Texas Constitution, 2) there is no accountability associated with the vouchers, 3) vouchers will hurt funding for public schools. The part of HB1 that deals with public schools is not sustainable and vague.

Daniela Schachar
Self
Carrollton, TX

This is very important for parents to have school choice for early childhood education and all education for their children.

Davina Levin
Starr day school
San Antonio, TX

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Thank you

Kaitlin Hoffman
Agudath Israel of America
Houston, TX

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Trina Carlton, Mrs.
Self-Public HS Educator
Amarillo, TX

Vouchers will take away from already underfunded public education. Please say no to vouchers and make our public education system greater than it already is.

Kaspit Gavish
Self
Katy, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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Daniela Kabins, Mrs
Self
Houston, TX

Please support this measure. This is what Texans want and it will be better for the state. Students today need more individual education options and parents want what is right and best for their child.

Ray Kay
self
houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Erika Westreich
Yeshiva Torat Emet
Houston, TX, TX

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Thank you so much for all you do!! We appreciate you!

Aviva Friedman
Starr Family Jewish Day School
SAN ANTONIO, TX

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Thank you

Yehoshua Knopf

Self

Houston, TX

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Yochoua Arrouas

Self

Dallas, TX

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Thank you

Natanel Greenwald, Rabbi

Self

San Antonio, TX

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Dikla Biton- Pickelner, Mrs

Agudath Israel of America

Houston, TX

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Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Josh Rothstein, Mr.

SELF - Vice President, Sales

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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My children (3 - 1 just graduated high school and 2 are still in school) have not benefited from Public education. It was not a fit for our needs. While I'm proud to pay into the school system with the taxes I pay, it seems only fair that when another school was appropriate for my child, I would get some benefit for the taxes I've paid. Please help make this a reality.

Howard Feinberg

Self non-profit professional

San Antonio, TX

Please support school choice.

Thank you.

Cecily Riesenber

Self - Educator

Amarillo, TX

Texans have made it clear that we do not want vouchers or ESAs. We know that these are paid for by the working class and mainly benefit rich families rather than struggling students. Private schools don't have to accept struggling students, and most won't. Bills like this have bankrupted other states and are likely to bankrupt Texas if passed. Texans want strong public schools - to do that we need to fully fund them and retain educators by paying them more. These issues should be in separate bills and not held hostage by the attempt to privatize and profit from public education.

Shoshana Kessler

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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Regina Ben-David

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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?

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Jonathan Ouzzan
Yeshiva Torat Emet
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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Naphtali Buchwald
self, Rabbi and educator
HOUSTON, TX

Dear Members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs. We have a very strong value system which cannot be conveyed in a public school setting and therefore need to send our children (I have 5) to private school, spending more than 25% of my income! I work 3 jobs to ensure this education for my children.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.
Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Debbie Etheridge
Educators of Texas
College Station, TX

No educators want vouchers ! None - zip - Zero,.

Vote NO. For once, how about you vote what your constituents want instead of playing the politics /fill your own pockets vote ??? Be the difference - vote what educators want !

Yosef Marrus

self

Boerne, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program. Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. As a Jewish person, I deeply believe in the importance of allowing Jewish families to be able to send their children to schools that reflect our values. We pay taxes and we should have a say in the education of our children.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs. This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you.

Kim Smith

Self - retired

North Zulch, TX

Honorable Representatives,

I sent an earlier comment and left off some important information to consider regarding vouchers/ESAs. In addition to my earlier comment, I would like for the committee to know that:

* Vouchers do not cover the full cost of private schools - items such as LUNCHES, books, transportation. * Rural county schools or inner-city schools don't have private school options. *Students with intellectual, behavioral or medical disabilities are often not accepted at private schools. *What happens to funding should a parent or private school decides the student should attend public school after the parent/private school receives funding? *I would like to know, after the House has rejected vouchers, how much the special sessions are costing the taxpayers and if representatives are the voice of constituents, why do we have to keep beating a dead horse?

Please so NO to vouchers/ESAs and fully fund and support our public schools.

Thank you for listening.

Respectfully,

Kim Smith

Yochai Robkin, Rabbi

Data of Plano

Plano, TX

I strongly encourage the house to pass the above bill. It's about time that people paying property taxes and sending their kids to private school because they feel that that's the best choice for their children get something in return. Thank you

Solomon Pacht

Self, Educational Administrator

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program!

This is so important to so many of us who chose to live here because of our family values and our focus on our children. We place tremendous value on education and would like to have a voice in how our children are educated!

Thank you for all the great work you do!

Solomon Pacht

Richain Herod

Self

League City, TX

We do NOT want public funds used to pay for a small group of private school users. Period. If you want to give Texans better options for education, invest in public education fully. Fund programs needed to support Special Ed students. Fund programs for the Arts. Fund programs that benefit struggling students. Fund highly qualified and certified teachers who do the work to educate our students. Fund support systems such as housing for all and meals for all. Taking money AWAY does not support the 5.5 million students who have CHOSEN a public schools already. Our schools are producing successful students that want to stay and continue their higher education and adult employment in their communities. Investing in public education supports communities big and small state wide. Say no to any voucher or educational savings account by any name. 5.5 million public school students deserve the full support of their representatives.

Kim Zeman, retired teacher

self - retired teacher

Amarillo, TX

After the regular legislative session and three special sessions, it is clear that a majority of Texans and their elected representatives do not support any sort of educational voucher program, no matter what it is called. It's time for the governor and lieutenant governor to listen to the voice of the people and to realize that a voucher program will do little to help those students most in need, and will do much to undercut our already unconstitutionally underfunded public education system. It is time for voucher proponents to crawl out of the pockets of billionaires and to instead do what is best for the school children of Texas - fully funding the public education system.

Naomi Abrahamson, Dr

Self, pharmacist

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
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Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Thank you for your consideration,

Naomi abrahamson

Courtney Salinas

Self

Houston, TX

I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston. We are small highly economic diverse school district in the city. I, among many others in my community, moved here for the public education. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget.

This will include cuts to school choice (3 of our 5 kids are enrolled or graduated from special programs including dual language) and teachers (our eldest is now a high school teacher in the district). Our school district will likely be forced to close and combine 1 or more Title 1 elementary schools. Failure to fully fund our public education in Texas will impact our most vulnerable students and community members.

Texas government should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!

Michael Cohen

Torah Girls Academy

Houston, TX

Please support school choice. Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

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Cory Bucsko, Rabbi

Torchwood

Houston, TX

Please allow funding for our children to be educated according to the wishes of their parents!

Beckie Rosenblatt

Self , loan processor

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Kim Rollins
Lovejoy isd
Fairview, TX

Raise the basic allotment

Anne Smith
Self, Parent in Lovejoy ISD
Lucas, TX

Please consider increasing the basic allotment by \$1100 per student to properly fund our Texas public schools. Thank you.

Rachel Feit
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Stop the madness and of all the special sessions. No school vouchers. Period.

Akiva Diamond, Dr.
Parent / resident
Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

As a father of six children - I know each one has their unique educational need. Everyone of my children required some form of enrichment. Separate from that we have specific expenses due to our need and desire for a religious education. This bill would be a huge help to allow us to make sure each of my children get the education they deserve.

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Yechiel Birnbaum
Agudath Israel of America
Houston, TX

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Yehuda Bresler
SELF Director of Operations
Houston, TX

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Sarah Stern
Self, homemaker
Houston, TX

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Thank you!!

Sarah Stern

sarah zelmanowitz, Mrs
Self , teacher
Houston, TX

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Amy MacArthur
self - homemaker
Coppell, TX

Public schools need to be funded fully and this continued effort to try and divert funding away from our schools/teachers into ESA/School Choice - whatever euphemism you want to call it - will only provide a benefit for those already attending private schools. This does not serve the state or its citizens in any broad capacity. Every student in the state regardless of income level, ability, or location can attend a public school. Our public schools are vital and our teachers deserve your respect and fair pay. Why with our budget surplus our legislature continues to deny our teachers a raise that would make them in line with other states is embarrassing. You can only surmise from the variety of actions taken that the desire of those in charge is to cripple public education in the state.

ayelet Berger
Yte
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Norma Rodriguez, Ms
self
Allen, TX

Our schools are woefully underfunded. Texans do not want vouchers and this has been shown time and time again. Our public schools need funding for resources and teachers need raises. Private schools do not have to meet the same testing standards as public schools so the idea of them getting funding without any accountability does not make any sense. Say no to vouchers! Let's fund our public schools and give much needed raises to our public school teachers.

Eli Nissel
Dallas Torah Institute
Plano, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please, please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

This bill is of utmost importance to my community!

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Debra DeLucia
self retired
Seabrook, TX

I will not support any bill that gives Texas tax payer money to education savings accounts or vouchers for home schooling, private or religious schools. Texans want to fully support public schools and their educators. This bill would be a tragedy for rural districts in Texas. No to school vouchers. Fully fund our public schools.

Brittany Kennedy
Self, professional
Houston, TX

I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston. We are a niche in the big city. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. Not only am I worried about my children's education, I am concerned about future property value as people have historically chosen this area BECAUSE of the schools. The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. **FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!**

Avraham Scheinberg
Self. Rabbi.
San Antonio, TX

Please give my family the right to choose the education that best suits us!

Reut Mizrahi
Self
Houston, TX

Every child deserves an access to the best education opportunities including our Texas children. Not every school can serve the needs of every child. Those that need an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom to choose an alternative that better meet their needs.the bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their kids. It's a win for students, parents, teacher, and the taxpayers

Ryan Howard
Self, Educator
Schertz, TX

ESAs or vouchers are detrimental to the education of students in Texas. Texas currently and historically already fails to fully fund public education to where schools can function well and allow students to learn. Instead of actually holding up to their constitutional obligation, Abbott wants to defund public education and allow average Texans fund others ability to go to a private school, homeschool or whatever they so choose.

That choice is counteractive of what Texas stands for. Approving ESAs/ vouchers is giving money, with no accountability, to schools to CHOOSE which students can or cannot attend their schools. The state is lackluster at supporting students with special needs and this is adding to the problem. Teacher raises should NEVER be tied to or be a carrot for vouchers. I, as a teacher, am willing to forgo a raise as long as the state holds up their end to fully fund schools. Fully support public schools and teachers. Do not allow vouchers to pass ever.

Frieda Schuck
Self, Mom of three and Real Estate Office Manager
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

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We appreciate all the efforts going into this and look forward to the positive outcome!

David Granovitz
Self
Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

This issue is the #1 issue in the community that I live in.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, and educational freedom and entrepreneurship should be encouraged. The voters of Texas in every poll overwhelmingly support school choice (especially in minority constituencies).

Melanie Garlinger
Self, parent
The Colony, TX

As a person who has worked in a public school system and been offered a job for a private school, I do not want money taken out of public schools to support parents making the choice to segregate their child into private schools that usually have under educated teachers when compared to public school teachers. I was shocked by the lack of requirements to teach at a private school. The only reason parents do not want their children in public school is because they do not want them mingling with people who are not like them. I support diversity and inclusion in schools. I believe parents can have options, but they can pay for whatever premiums they desire themselves, not at the expense of the vast majority of students who do not want to or can not afford to attend a private school.

alex gordon
self
houston, TX

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Erin Evans
Agudah
Plano, TX

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Thank you!

Rikki Rutchik
self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. Parents know their child better than educators, and need to make decisions that are best for their child's education.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Please support this bill.

Doreen Lerner, Dr.
Self; Psychologist
Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.
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Jacob Dorfman
Self
Houston, TX

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David Wyler
self
Houston, TX

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Lindsey Thomson, CPA

Self

Bryan, TX

I am a product of Texas public education and my children both go to local public schools. I STRONGLY oppose a voucher/ESA plan in ANY AND ALL forms. Public money should NEVER go to private institutions. Also, stop calling it 'School Choice'. That already exists in Texas. Parents can choose public, private or homeschool. Studies show that 80-87% of families who use vouchers were ALREADY IN a private school. Which means vouchers are NOT an effort to give 'poor families' or students, but rather fund money into private institutions at the expense of public schools. Public schools are NOT failing, and teachers are NOT groomers. Also, the Governor/Republican Party have been in charge of TEA and public school curriculum and funding for almost 2 decades. If there is a problem and he believes schools are failing, it is on HIM. I see the threats of 'primary-ing' the Republicans who continue to vote against school choice. I am here to let you know that I will not vote for ANYONE who votes FOR vouchers, and there are plenty of conservative, Christian, middle class moms just like me.

Voucher programs will decimate public education - which is who educates 90% of the population. I have read the studies and looked at the data. And I am starting to believe the Governor hasn't. He also has not visited a single public school when touting his plan. If it is truly to give 'all families' a choice, then why is he only visiting schools where the families can financially already make that choice? Or who have kids that don't have any special needs or learning differences? Why not visit a PUBLIC school? I suspect it is because public school kids are not who this plan is for.

Please FULLY FUND public schools. and vote AGAINST a voucher plan. If vouchers had the support Abbott claims they do, he wouldn't need to 'dangle a carrot' to get the plan passed. Split up the bills and see what happens. Serve your constituents! Fund public schools!

Sally Taylor

Self--Retired

Manhaca, TX

Please support HB1 and empower Texas families with universal school choice.

Shalom Tauber
Self
Houston, TX

Dear Esteemed Members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

I urge you to lend your support to HB1 and champion the Education Savings Account program.

The Texas of tomorrow depends of the quality of education today!

In our great state of Texas, every child deserves unfettered access to the finest educational opportunities. We recognize that education is far from one-size-fits-all; the truth is, not every school can cater to the unique needs of every student. It is essential that those students and families who seek an educational setting beyond their assigned district school are afforded the freedom and the means to make a choice that aligns better with their requirements.

HB1 presents a transformative opportunity to empower parents to take charge of their children's education, ensuring that their decisions are tailored to what's best for their child. Placing parents in the driver's seat of their children's educational journey is not just a victory for them; it's a triumph for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers alike.

It is noteworthy that a substantial number of states across the nation have already embraced various forms of school choice programs. Texas must now seize this opportunity to join the ranks of these forward-thinking states, or else we risk falling behind and denying our children the chance to thrive in a diverse and dynamic educational landscape.

Let us stand together in supporting HB1 and advancing the cause of educational freedom and choice for our beloved Lone Star State. Your dedication to this noble cause will undoubtedly have a lasting and positive impact on the lives of countless young Texans.

Sincerely,

Shalom Tauber

Aryeh Minkin
Seld
Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Tatum Stern
self, Dietitian
houston, TX

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Sincerely,
Tatum Stern, RDN, LDN

Miranda McKee
self
Houston, TX

I am a resident and parent of Spring Branch ISD in Houston. We are a niche in the big city. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public primary education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 24-25 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. Our class sizes will balloon from already exempted ratios. The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully to address the annual impacts of inflation, the recent extraordinary increases to insurance premiums and coverage, and rising costs of utilities - all elements that are out of the districts control. The 2021 American Rescue Plan has helped districts bridge that growing gap since the last Texas school budget legislation in 2019, but those federal funds are coming to an end.

Spring Branch ISD is one of a few anomalies in the state that could cover the costs via local property tax, but with no thanks to the state's Recapture program we are strapped in what we can retain and have to count on state legislation to increase the per child allotment to cover: appropriate teacher to child ratios, teachers' salaries to be competitive with other reasonable job markets, mental health counselors, healthy food choices (that do get subsidized to a good extent), public security (district police, building security measures, in-school resource officers, and teacher personal security tools), insurances that we have all seen an increase in, general facility maintenance needs - we all want reasonably aesthetically pleasing environments for our children and our neighborhoods, and lastly, public utilities.

Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. All this while the state has a historic budget surplus of \$33 BILLION - a large portion of which is from district recaptured funds INTENDED for public primary education.

As proposed by our governor and various state legislatures, Texas taxpayers' monies should never be distributed at an exorbitantly disproportionate rate of \$8000 for vouchers vs \$6160 for public schools, and expect districts to be competitive.

Before vouchers should be in consideration, Texas public schools need to be FULLY FUNDED. For the future of Texas do the right thing.

Pam Fischer

Myself and Tx Teacher Task Force member

Waco, TX

As a veteran teacher of 31 years, I know what Public Ed needs and it cannot withstand a funnel of money away from its students. You need to fully fund Texas Public schools for once, yesterdays vote of 83% for Prop 9 proves Texans agree.

Dovid Wohlgelemer

self

houston, TX

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Shira Meltzer

self. SLP

Dallas, TX

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Brandon Pollard

self

Fort Worth, TX

We do not want our tax dollars paying for private educations, especially at religious schools. Those funds are for public education, so that every child can enjoy the benefits. No vouchers, no ESA's. You need to fully fund our public school system as the Texas constitution mandates. Stop wasting our tax payer dollars on special sessions to force this on our State. We clearly do NOT want vouchers or ESA's.

Yosef Goldberger

Self

Houston, TX

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Avichai Metchik

Myself

Houston, TX

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Erika Lenk-Hatfield

Convention of States, State Director

Heath, TX

Providing Education Freedom for Texas parents is necessary as more and more teachers and administrators are only offering education that goes against many family values. Parents need an option to remove their children and send them to the best educational environment so that they can get a high quality education as well as value-aligned according to free market system this country has been founded upon. Although some Public schools are doing a good job, that's not the case in all public schools. The Texas Public School System is a monopoly and needs competition to improve services.

Michael Ringleheim

Self/ attorney

Dallas, TX

This bill is fantastic and equitable. It allows choice for students with diversified needs and I believe it will significantly enhance educational opportunity. Please let's get this passed. Thank you!

Tzivie Pill

Self

Houston, TX

Not all education is one size fits all.

Wendy Goldman
self - admissions coordinator
Houston, TX

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Moshe Friedman
Self
Houston, TX

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Moshe Friedman

Shalom Meltzer
Texas Torah Institute
Dallas, TX

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Meir S Lam
Self, Healthcare Admin
Houston, TX

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Katie Abbott
Anderson County SSA
Frankston, TX

I am the Special Education Director of Anderson County SSA. We serve the special education population in Cayuga ISD, Elkhart ISD, Frankston ISD, Neches ISD, Slocum ISD, and Westwood ISD. I strongly oppose education savings accounts or voucher programs for Texas. Please consider supporting public schools and ALL students in which they serve.

Bridgette Wallis
taxpayer/parent
McKinney, TX

We need school choice in Texas. Public schools are fine for people who want them for their children. Public schools are fine for those who feel the available schools are educating their children. Public schools will not go away. If anything, public schools will become more responsive and innovative with school choice. Those of us unsatisfied with the system that is available need options.

Kimberly Pickens, Ms
Self, Community Health Worker
Victoria, TX

Vouchers are not good for our k-12 youth. In rural areas, we do not have the choices that big cities have and this means we deplete and drain resources from public schools. This effects not only youth, but economic health of cities. This 4th session is a waste of taxpayer funds and it is offensive to have a governor who be abuse he isn't getting his way, continues to waste our money. Stop this now!

Gillespie Christine
Self, mother and taxpayer
Jersey Village, TX

How many millions of dollars is Greg Abbott willing to waste in special legislation sessions before he accepts the will of his constituents instead of pushing through the will of the big donors? End school choice debates. Fully fund public education.

Emma Vogler
Self - Teacher
Garland, TX

An "Educational Savings Plan" or voucher is just a tool created by Greg Abbott and his cronies to begin the process of statewide dismantling of public education. This program has failed now THREE TIMES in special sessions, because even Republicans know it's not designed to benefit Texans. Abbott jut wants to ensure that any black or brown student in this state has limited access to a quality education.

Rebeka Bounds
None
Crosbyton, TX

Please vote NO to vouchers. Underfunded public schools will suffer. We should not be paying for rich peoples Ed choices for their children.

Stacie Jacobs
Self
Arlington, TX

This will destroy the public school system. There aren't even enough private schools in Texas to support this voucher system. It will further the divide between wealthy, middle class and poor families. Vote no on this bill.

Leigh Ann Brown
Self
Dallas, TX

No vouchers! We need to fully fund our public schools and raise teacher pay. Taxpayer money should only be used for our PUBLIC schools, which are required to take and educate ALL children. We cannot allow taxpayer dollars to support religious or other private schools that discriminate against special needs kids and/or families of other religions or beliefs. Support our pubic schools and say NO to ESAs.

Hayden LaJaunie

Self - Engineer

Farmersville, TX

As an adult who grew up in public education, I know first hand how vital it is to our state and country. Education Savings Accounts will be detrimental to the children of our state and put us further behind the national average when it comes to student success. Living in a somewhat rural area, I know that private schools are not readily accessible and have no accountability resulting in students being left behind by our education system. As a taxpayer in the state of Texas, I DO NOT want my money going to education savings accounts and private schools. Public education is our only hope at a better future therefore I and all of those I know DO NOT support this bill.

John Mitchell

Cy Woods High School

Cypress, TX

Keep tax dollars in public education. NO VOUCHERS! Support our kids and teachers!

Karin Dunker

Self/swim instructor

Benbrook, TX

I do not want school vouchers aka school choice. Citizens of Texas already have school choice. Tax dollars do not belong in private schools, especially Christian schools. While I support the other items in this bill, I think putting all of that with the vouchers is a sneaky way of getting vouchers passed. I am a Grandma of three students in San Marcos schools. They are receiving an excellent education and I want that to continue. Instead of wasting money on the special sessions, invest money in public education and return quality education to Texas.

Christin Wise

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Our family is against the voucher bill. The focus of Texas should be on providing fully funded public education to all students.

We are \$4000 per student below the national average. Ranked in the bottom 10 states as far as funding per student. Until we at catch up to the average, we should not be considering funding private schools that can deny Texas children access to, and that will not have any accountability to Texas taxpayers. ?

Vouchers for a private education are not what is good for our children and communities. We shouldn't have to seek out a private education and hope our children are excepted. Vouchers are not a guarantee of a better education. In fact it can be the exact opposite. There is no accountability for private schools on a state level, no requirement that the teachers be certified. Private schools will segregate our communities.

What we need is to take all that funding that is being proposed and put it toward what we already have in place, making public schools better than ever. Strengthening communities, providing a realistic diverse world that students will grow into mirroring the workforce they will encounter as they graduate.

If you want to build a better future for Texas it is not in a private school option. Strengthen what we already have. Boost the value of public schools.

Brenda Stumpp

self, retired

Texas City, TX

No school vouchers. I don't know how many times and how many ways that it needs to be said but I'm saying it again.

Ann Smith
Self Attorney
MANSFIELD, TX

I am strongly against using public tax money for private school vouchers. I believe this entire scam to be special interest legislation at its finest and nothing more than a way to funnel taxpayer money into private Christian schools. I say that as a mother, a Christian, an attorney, and a fiscal conservative. I urge you to tell Governor Abbott, once and for all, that this is NOT something the people of Texas want.

Kristen Cooley
Taxpayer
Klein, TX

All school vouchers do is defund public education and give money to folks that do not need it. Stop entertaining the idea that this is a parents' choice. Many rural school districts do NOT have a choice. Many students would not be accepted in a private school. And private schools do not have to live by the same strict and protective standards as public schools. And the Governor's math does NOT make sense.

Richard Moore
Self
San Antonio, TX

VOTERS DO NOT WANT THIS VOUCHER SCAM! I work at a private school that would benefit from it financially, and **EVEN I** know it's terrible for Texas. Our state already ranks near the bottom in public education, so **SUPPORT** public schools! **NO PUBLIC TAX MONEY** should go to **PRIVATE SCHOOLS!**

Cris Levy
Self
Katy, TX

Vouchers aren't cool and will never pass. Texas is already blue and Ken Paxton will go to prison for stealing votes to keep it red. Only question is who goes with him?

Heather Miller
Self
Argyle, TX

Vouchers have been pushed through various states for well over a decade and time and time again, the only people who benefit are politicians and organizations who run the schools. Vouchers fail students, teachers, and communities. Conservatives in Texas have continually devalued public education year after year after year with the sole goal of defunding public education. These attempts to further charter interests are another nail in the coffin. If public education hasn't continued to decline in this state, who is to blame? It isn't the teachers or parents or students or communities. The blame is on the shoulders of politicians in Austin. Get rid of the STARR test, stop micromanaging teachers, and get politics and special interest groups out of public education. The right to community supported public education pre-dates the constitution and began with the early settlers to this country. It's time to remember the principles this country was founded on and I urge the government to stop charters and stop defunding public education.

Christina Zini

Self, Parent of SBISD student

Houston, TX

I am a parent of students enrolled in Spring Branch ISD schools in Houston. We are a unique district in the big city. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. My student's choice school is being considered for closure. We love our schools, they are doing so much with such sparse resources as things stand currently- these cuts will devastate our district. Our class sizes will balloon. The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!

Kris Ogilvie

Self

San Marcos, TX

No vouchers. Support public schools

Jeff Ogilvie

Self. Retired

San Marcos, TX

No vouchers. No esa

Mary Hall

Self

Spring, TX

Please stop trying to push these vouchers!! I am a parent of a high school student in Texas. These districts already don't receive enough funding to ensure well trained teaching staff is available and that students have the resources available to them to learn, but now you're going to give them even less?! A well educated society is good for EVERYONE. There's only one reason you'd want our education to be ranked lower than it already is, and you know it. Focus on the real issues like school shootings, mass shootings, hate crimes, our grid, infrastructure, homelessness, mental health, and reproductive rights! This is such a crock of shit and I'm tired of these little special sessions that are going to be called until Hot Wheels gets his way.

Melissa Endicott, Dr

Parent, PTA member, constituent

Houston, TX

As a parent in Spring Branch ISD, I am horrified to watch our district begin to make budget cuts to make up a budget shortfall of \$35 million dollars. We are cutting staff, programs, and closing schools because our governor's pet project is preventing our public schools being fully funded. My children's school is likely closing to try and close the budget shortfall, all while we send even more money back to the state in recapture.

Our state constitution requires a free public education system. As any fiscally minded person knows, you address your needs before your wants. While the Governor wants public money for private education, it is our state's duty to fund its requirements first, and that includes public education. Stop holding public school funding hostage on a pet project of vouchers. Fully fund public education and let all kids thrive and succeed.

Pamela Dooley
self - Teacher
San Antonio, TX

School vouchers can exacerbate educational inequities. By diverting public funds to private and parochial schools, vouchers may indirectly siphon resources away from already underfunded public schools. Students in disadvantaged communities, who rely on these public schools, can find their education further compromised as a result. Vouchers may also contribute to greater social and economic segregation, as more affluent families can take advantage of them while low-income families may lack access or resources to do so.

Private schools are often not subject to the same level of accountability and oversight as public schools. While public schools must adhere to state standards, participate in standardized testing, and follow regulations aimed at protecting students' rights, private schools may not have the same obligations. This lack of transparency and accountability can make it difficult to ensure that students in voucher-funded schools receive a quality education, potentially jeopardizing their long-term prospects.

School vouchers weaken the foundation of public education. Public schools are intended to serve as a cornerstone of democratic society, providing equal educational opportunities for all children. When funds are diverted from the public system, it can lead to a downward spiral of reduced resources, which can result in the decline of educational quality. Voucher programs may ultimately weaken the public education system rather than improve it.

Private schools often have the flexibility to select which students they admit. This can lead to a situation where private schools choose to enroll students who are easier to educate, while leaving more challenging or disadvantaged students in public schools. Such cherry-picking practices can skew the perception of private schools as being more successful, as they are not serving the same range of students that public schools must serve. Religious private schools may not adhere to the same non-discrimination policies as public schools. Using public funds to support private and religious schools can indirectly support discrimination, as some private schools may exclude students based on factors like religion, sexual orientation, or disability.

Voucher programs often fail to allocate funding in an equitable and efficient manner. For example, voucher amounts may not cover the full cost of tuition at private schools, thus still limiting access for low-income families. Administrative costs associated with voucher programs can divert funds from the classroom, further undermining their effectiveness.

In conclusion, while the concept of school vouchers may seem appealing in theory, there are compelling arguments against their implementation. They have the potential to undermine educational equity, weaken the public education system, lack accountability, and raise concerns about discrimination and constitutional issues.

Watson Wright, Teacher
HFT
Humble, TX

Vouchers are welfare for the rich therefore I'm against vouchers.

Tammy Henson
Self, homemaker/former teacher
Pleasanton, TX

Please consider the Constitution's stance on public education. Tax money needs to be reserved for public schools and does not belong in private, religious, homeschool, or any other entity EXCEPT public schools. Our schools need to be fully funded. If tax dollars are allowed to go to anything other than public schools, this will be a form of segregation.

Tyler Simpson

Self

Lucas, TX

I am strongly opposed to the education savings account program as drafted. Although I would support a smaller ESA program targeted specifically at low-income families who do not have the funds to choose private schools, the current bill would steal much needed resources from public schools and put those tax dollars in the pockets of high-income families who already have the money to afford private schools. Texas does not need to waste taxpayer money to incentivize high-income families to choose private schools over public schools. Also, please de-couple the school funding portion of the bill from the ESA portion. Texans like me strongly support increased funding for public schools, who have been hurt by inflation and wage increases in the private sector.

Maria Webb, Parent

Self

Houston, TX

Do NOT pass school vouchers! Fund our public schools and get rid of Mike Miles!

Adriana Lozada

TSTA/NEA

Pflugerville, TX

- Public schools, teachers and support staff need more state funding and higher pay, but not at the expense of taxpayer-funded vouchers.
- House Bill 1 is a voucher bill that legislators are trying to make pretty with more school funding. We do not buy it.
- A voucher plan may initially be limited, but within a few years it will expand and soon be sending billions of tax dollars to unregulated private schools that should be going to under-funded public schools. That has been the experience in states that have adopted vouchers.
- The governor and the Legislature have a responsibility under the Texas Constitution to adequately fund public schools that accept all students. They have no responsibility for private schools, and Texas taxpayers should not be forced to pay for private schools, which can pick and choose their students.
- Take vouchers out of House Bill 1, and then we can have a much-needed discussion about public school finance.

Kim Smith
Self - retired
North Zulch, TX

Honorable Members of the Education Committee,

Again, another session has been called & I find myself prevailing upon you to say “NO” to vouchers, ESAs or anything disguised as such AND absolutely no deals.

My reasons to say “NO” are to protect all public school students.

1. This week Texas is listed in the top 5 states for graduation rates!! This should be a testament that public schools are doing something correctly.
2. Vouchers do not help our students academically: <https://news.stanford.edu/2017/02/28/vouchers-not-improve-student-achievement-stanford-researcher-finds/>
3. Vouchers do more harm than good: <https://time.com/6272666/school-voucher-programs-hurt-students/>
4. While Texas is not Arizona, it was found that, instead of the \$60 million quoted to taxpayers in Arizona, it has been found that the cost exceeds the projected amount.
Vouchers could cost \$1 billion a year | Arizona Capitol Times (azcapitoltimes.com)
5. In my opinion, vouchers/ESAs are a type of reverse segregation because private schools and some charter schools SELECT their student body. When you select only the brightest and those without behavior problems it seems as if private schools do a better job. The hard job is done by public school teachers that teach a multitude of abilities, while addressing any behavioral problems that arise in a classroom that is at its maximum number of students.
6. I have not seen any accountability measures addressed. Parents that have students in the public school system can address concerns to the teacher, principal, superintendent, or the school board. The school board is composed of elected people within the school district and is a reflection of the school populace that are taxpayers.
Public school students also take a state mandated test that private school students do not have to take. High school students also take the SAT/ACT. If public money is sent to private schools those private school students should also be required to take the STAAR.
Public schools also post their financial records.
7. I see more "Money Groups" focused on getting vouchers passed instead of constituents. I have to wonder why people like Tim Dunn, Betsey DeVos and other billionaires are fighting for vouchers.

Please fully fund public schools to a level they were in the past and say no to the money that is behind the voucher movement.

Lastly, thank you for listening to your constituents and for standing up for our public schools and public school students.

Respectfully,

Kim Smith

David Smith
Self - retired
North Zulch, TX

Honorable Members of the Education Committee,

I copied this from my wife, however, her sentiments are a reflection of my own.

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Respectfully,

David Smith

Mary Freire de Carvalho, Dr.

Self, epidemiologist

Houaton, TX

I am a parent in spring branch isd. This excellent district is under threat by the lack of full funding and inflationary increases in funding for public schools. In addition, we pay over 20 million a year in recapture. Further undermining our children's opportunities. The lack of funding will result in larger classrooms, deficits and limited opportunities for our children. Considering vouchers before fully funding public education is reprehensible and short sighted! Work for a better future for ALL of our children. Not just a chosen few. Fully fund public schools independent of vouchers.

Jana Manders

self/stay at home mom

Fairview, TX

Good morning, I would like to offer my plea to reject HB 1 and any further discussion on a voucher program for Texas public schools. It is ridiculous to think that a private school would be given the ability to take in tax dollars with absolutely no accountability. In order for a public school to be funded at the 100% annual allotment my child has to be in the classroom every single day of the school year. This bill would allow a private school to take in more than that number without the same requirement. My children have had to take the STAAR test every year since they entered the 3rd grade and they have to meet minimum requirements. Private schools do not have the same requirement. Private schools do not mandate their students sit for the STAAR test. As I see it, there is not accountability for private schools. In addition, private schools are not mandated to have certified teachers in a classroom; whereas public schools are.

Our public school have the ability to perform at much higher rates if our representatives would fund them properly. As you are aware, there has not been an increase in the allotment since 2018. How are school districts supposed to pay teachers and educate children based on figures that are nearly 6 years old? Every aspect of educating a child has increased. The electric bills are more, the water bills are more, and teachers certainly deserve more than they were paid in 2018. It is no wonder teachers are fleeing the profession. Why would they stay in a career in which their salary grows at less than the cost of living?

It is embarrassing to know that public school children are worth barely \$6100 per school year to the state and yet some of the law makers have no problem sending over \$10,000 to private schools. I implore you to vote against this bill. I have also asked my local representative (Candy Noble) and senator (Angela Paxton) to do the same.

I appreciate your time,

Jana Manders

Jodi Perez

Self and family

Bulverde, TX

Please say not to private school vouchers. Invest in public schools that serve ALL of our children. Our public schools deserve our tax dollar support. Our public school teachers deserve better compensation. Our kids deserve better public school programs and education.

Danielle Robbins

Self

Houston, TX

We do not want school vouchers! This is nothing but a ploy, by Republicans to defund public schools and give voucher money to rich parents who don't need that money to begin with. The people have spoken. We do not want it. It will harm poorer Districts and communities. Enough with this. You are taking money from billionaires and PACs Just to pad your own pockets at the peril Students and communities that need public school education.

David Guerrero

Self

Brownsville, TX

Teacher raises, public school funding yes. No to education savings accounts.

Cori Agnew
Self
Houston, TX

Fully fund public schools before ESAs. Vouchers are not wanted in Texas.

Claire Wrigley
Self - parent
Houston, TX

I cannot support any program that will shift my tax dollars away from supporting public schools and instead allow it to benefit private institutions. Public school systems have well established guidelines and state testing to ensure student outcomes are being monitored that private schools do not have to follow.

I am one of the lucky individuals who could move to a private institution with the financial help of this bill. I would not do so. In my metro area, private school tuition can run over \$30k just for basics. Our lower income residents would not be able to make up the difference between the voucher and school costs leading to a financial segregation. Many private schools are also religious affiliated and I believe in a separation of church and state. My tax dollars should not support religious education.

There is also a concern for those with special education needs. Taking tax money away from public schools who have been systematically underfunded but are still an important resource for the sped children is unconscionable. Private schools have no obligation legally to accept or serve those with special needs and many do not do so.

Instead of pushing this voucher program which the majority of Texans do not support, instead focus on properly funding and supporting our teachers and our established education systems.

Barbi Petty, Citizen
Self
The Woodlands, TX

I'm asking the committee to not advance the bill on vouchers/ ESA's my reasons are - they will take much needed funds from public education, studies show that vouchers do not help low income families but mostly families already sending their children to private schools. I also do not want my tax dollars subsidizing wealthy families private school tuition or propping up failing religious schools. ESA's will destroy rural communities bc the local school district is usually the largest employer in the area & the hub of community activities. Also the use of ESA's will not be held to the same accountability standards as public schools thus is not acceptable. Texas ranks 43rd in funding public education why not adequately fund it as stated in the Texas Constitution so that ALL students can benefit ? ESA's are a money grab for individuals wanting to profit off our children , I say children aren't a for profit business. Please do not advance this bill & fully fund public schools

Donna Clement
Self
Spring Branch, TX

I am against school vouchers. I am also against Abbott wasting money by continuing to call special sessions to ram his own agenda thru the legislation instead of the citizens agenda. I think this should be up to the people and be voted on by the public, not politicians with hidden agendas.

Debi Wooten

Self

Plano, TX

Please do not give in to the "education savings account program". Vouchers for private school is not the answer for improving Texas schools. Parents already have choices within the public school system. Students can transfer to other districts, a different school within their district, or a public charter school. Funneling money to private schools will most definitely hurt public school funding. Wealthy families who choose to send their child to a private school is school choice and should not receive voucher money. Voucher programs in other states have proven that they are not effective. Public money should not be used for private (especially religious) schools. Private schools have no accountability and can refuse any student they don't want to educate. As you are aware, public schools accept all students and are held accountable for every single one of them. We desperately need to fully fund our public schools. The district where I live is having to start the process of school closures due to recapture where our tax dollars are being used for non educational programs. Please spend your time fixing this and stop wasting time on vouchers. Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion.

JOHN DENHOLM

SELF / RETIRED

SPRING, TX

I am OPPOSED to school vouchers. You can call it Education Savings Accounts but it's still school vouchers. The Texas Constitution mandates public education be properly funded and you SWORE AN OATH to uphold the Texas Constitution. Start abiding by your oath. You cannot justify stripping the public schools budgets to fund wealthy private schools. And that's all it is, a subsidiary for the rich. Also quit attacking teachers. I have a son-in-law who was a teacher of the year in Katy ISD. He has taught for 16 years and loves being a teacher but he doesn't know how much longer he can "put up with the bullshit coming out of Austin." Start representing Texans and not some crazy billionaires in West Texas. Once again, live up to your oath to support the Constitution.

Terri Wilhite, Retired Teacher

Self

Valley View, TX

As a retired teacher of students in Special Education, it is my concern that those students will not benefit from the proposed voucher system. The voucher system indirectly discriminates against Students with disabilities under IDEA. Because: 1) Private religious schools have an application system which allows for discriminatory practices. 2) Private religious schools are not required to hire college educated state-certified teachers, therefore are not qualified to effectively teach students with disabilities. 3) Private religious schools are not held accountable to state requirements or federal requirements. Thus, Special education students will be left in the underfunded Texas public schools and suffer continued educational discrimination by this state.

Rural Texas areas do not have the same "choice" options as urban areas. There is a possibility that "pop-up schools" will poach teaching talent, then fold after a few years due to lack of proper management and/or positive educational outcomes, as data in other states suggests.

The voucher system will benefit the majority of students currently enrolled in private (religious) schools, as the private school rolls are full. Private religious schools should NOT receive my public tax money! PERIOD!

As you know, Texas ranks in the bottom 25% of US public schools in several educational criterion. Improving public education for all is the best way to support the Texas economy.

PLEASE, fund and support the public education that the Texas Constitution requires and make TEXAS public Schools the best in the nation!

Whitney Jones

Self, teacher

Canadian, TX

Vouchers and any attempt at anything that LOOKS like a voucher is a direct attempt from the governor and his followers to kill public education. It is NOT going to help struggling schools. It is NOT going to provide equitable education opportunities for students in Texas. The path to improving schools is very simple. FULLY fund Texas public schools. The money is there. Do it. Pay teachers what they're worth and you'll retain and ATTRACT quality educators. Fund schools so we can lower class sizes and purchase the tools necessary to educate students. Because you won't FULLY fund public education in Texas it is very clear your only goal is to kill public ed. So just say that.

Curtis Cochran

J&J Supply, Inc.

Fort Worth, TX

No school vouchers. It is the duty of our state to provide the best, free education for all students. Every Governor until the current one made public education a priority. It needs to remain so.

Laci Northam

Self-License Clinical Social Worker

Paris, TX

Let it be known that I am against providing funding for the voucher program. I am also in favor of ensuring that the public school system including teachers receive the adequate funding needed to provide a quality education to my children and the millions of children that rely on the public school system. I am not swayed by the efforts to illude Texans on how the voucher will not take away funding from the public school system. I know it will and most others know it will. Vote no to vouchers and vote yes for ALL kids in the state of Texas!

Robin Phillips

Self - Attorney

Houston, TX

I encourage all Texas legislators to soundly reject any voucher "deal" to provide public funds for private educational institutions amid promises to increase public school funding. Texas should increase its funding to its public school systems, which currently ranks among the lowest in the country despite Texas's enormous budget surplus this year. A majority of Texans do NOT want school vouchers of any kind, and there are a lot of reasons why this is bad policy for Texas. Vouchers reduce fair access to educational opportunities, cut into already inadequate public school budgets, disproportionately hurt our rural schools, weaken rights for students with disabilities and expose taxpayers to fraud. Students using vouchers tend to perform worse academically, and private schools accepting vouchers do not have the same (or any) financial and performance accountability metrics imposed by the State on public schools. Private schools are not required to serve all students, and most of the voucher proposals would be inadequate to cover private school tuition, allowing only those with means to have access. Most voucher programs in other states serve only the upper-middle to upper class student populations and have ballooned to an increasing and unsustainable percentage of state budgets. Vouchers are taxpayer-funded government subsidies for private schools and vendors and have been soundly rejected by the Texas Legislature for decades. When the state should be focused on moving Texas out of the bottom ten in per-pupil spending, a voucher program that diverts hundreds of millions from our public schools is tone-deaf and negligent. Please vote no on vouchers, ESAs, business tax credit scholarships, bracketed vouchers or any other private school subsidy using public funds. The people of Texas simply don't want it.

Rebecca Sales

Self

Mansfield, TX

I greatly resent that school vouchers have been buried in with these other items. I oppose school vouchers and find the terminology "education savings account programs" to be misleading to many. While many of the other items included in this bill may be beneficial to education in the state, I oppose this bill overall because of the damage vouchers will inflict on public education. Please do not let this bill pass and do not continue to waste tax payer dollars with extended sessions. Support public education and public school teachers who work for all and oppose vouchers that do not benefit all.

TERESA DENHOLM

SELF / RETIRED

SPRING, TX

I am OPPOSED to school vouchers and opposed to HB1. We always hear how it is "Their money." Please explain to me how a family with two children, who pays maybe \$2,400 in school taxes is entitled to \$20,800 in vouchers, a net profit of \$18,400.

Sarah Deakins

Self

Houston, TX

I am a parent of students enrolled in Spring Branch ISD schools in Houston. We are a unique district in the big city. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. My seventh grader's choice school is being considered for closure. We love our schools, they are doing so much with such sparse resources as things stand currently- these cuts will devastate our district. Our class sizes will balloon. The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!

Jacquelyn Spiers

Self

Houston, TX

I have two children in Spring Branch ISD in Houston. They are both straight A students. In fact, my sophomore at Stratford High School just found out he scored in the top 1% of 10th graders in the state of Texas on the PSAT. Unfortunately, because you, the people we elected, have not raised the Basic Allotment, now our district is being forced to make enormous budget cuts. The cuts will adversely effect both of my children's education. We should be approving Basic Allotment increases BEFORE there are any discussion of vouchers. We the people are all aware of the budget surplus the state currently has, use it to FUND PUBLIC EDUCATION NOW!!

Stephanie Girolamo

Self, high school public teacher

Arlington, TX

The focus of Texas should be on providing robust fully funded public education to all students. We are \$4000 per student below the national average and until we at least catch up to the average, we should not be considering funding private schools that can deny Texas children access to, and that will not have any accountability to Texas taxpayers.

Lori Ziegelmeyer
Self, retired Texas teacher
PASADENA, TX

Vouchers take monies - earmarked by the Texas Constitution - away from public schools. Our public schools serve the needs of *all Texas children, not the few.

Vouchers are a bad idea. If parents want to send their kids to a private school, they should pay for it, like they've done for years. Public monies shouldn't support religious schools.

This bill has failed to pass numerous times. Many Texans have voiced their opposition to this bill, over & over. Repeated Special Sessions take our tax money & precious time away from our legislators each time. Stop this insanity! No to vouchers!

Thank you for your time.

Catherine Khudairi
Self - homemaker
Houston, TX

PLEASE say NO to vouchers & just fund public education which will benefit way more students in our state!!!

Jacquelyn Neylon
Self
Dallas, TX

Say NO to vouchers!!! It is a detriment to our children, and the right to public education for all to succeed.

Laura Garza
Self
San Antonio, TX

Our state government must do it's part to not just listen to parents who may be the squeaky wheel but to listen to the pleas, evidence and needs of school districts to support their stakeholders. Parents may be talking loud about vouchers but it is because public schools are extremely underfunded especially when the Texas Education Agency and state government continue to enact new laws and requirements they do not adequately fund. Do what's right for all kids, not just the ones who's parent's have time, energy and know how to flood your email and phone messages.

Leah Ratliff
Self
McKinney, TX

Don't hold Texas Public School funding hostage with the ridiculous addition of vouchers. The only people who want vouchers are Greg Abbott and his wealthy donors. Parents have a choice in Texas, if they choose private school then they have to pay. That is their choice. Similarly, the police are funded by taxes, if someone chooses private security, they pay for it. The question to be asked is: what does Greg Abbott gain by so doggedly trying to get this to pass? What carrot has been dangled that he won't let this go? Perhaps we need to find a way to get this on a ballot so Abbott will finally understand, no means NO.

Matthew Neylon
Self
Dallas, TX

Our children in the state of Texas deserve to be able to have free public education in order for them to thrive in life

Donald Mills, Dr.

Self

Boerne, TX

Texas is not ready for vouchers! There are too many only wanting it to benefit their private schools. Texas public education needs support to improve learning across the state for all students. Charters are already showing it can be done. Don't turn your back on public education!

Tricia French

Self

Allen, TX

Don't hold Texas Public School funding hostage with the ridiculous addition of vouchers. The only people who want vouchers are Greg Abbott and his wealthy donors. Parents have a choice in Texas, if they choose private school then they have to pay. That is their choice. Similarly, the police are funded by taxes, if someone chooses private security, they pay for it. The question to be asked is: what does Greg Abbott gain by so doggedly trying to get this to pass? What carrot has been dangled that he won't let this go? Perhaps we need to find a way to get this on a ballot so Abbott will finally understand, no means NO.

Jessica Haak

Self, education

Stockdale, TX

I'm thankful this holiday season that members of the House can actually work together and say no to the voucher scam 3 times. It's is ridiculous and an absolute waste of time and money to have a 4th special session on this. Don't budge on this and for the students and educators in the public school system, don't let this pass. Fund our public schools. Give teachers a raise they deserve. Don't tie it in with vouchers that the majority of this state does not want.

Mistie Snowden

Self

Groveton, TX

Don't hold Texas Public School funding hostage with the ridiculous addition of vouchers. The only people who want vouchers are Greg Abbott and his wealthy donors. Parents have a choice in Texas, if they choose private school then they have to pay. That is their choice. Similarly, the police are funded by taxes, if someone chooses private security, they pay for it. The question to be asked is: what does Greg Abbott gain by so doggedly trying to get this to pass? What carrot has been dangled that he won't let this go? Perhaps we need to find a way to get this on a ballot so Abbott will finally understand, no means NO.

Abe Gott

Self

Amarillo, TX

I am a conservative Christian Republican and I say NO TO VOUCHERS or ESAs or anything like that. Fully fund our Texas public schools!

Jill Melancon

Self

Houston, TX

Public school should come 1st! Fund our public schools before focusing on vouchers. If people wanted vouchers it wouldn't take 4 special sessions to pass them. You have the money and are holding our public schools hostage!! We pay taxes and should be able to send our children to good public schools.

Chau Pham
Self
Grand Prairie, TX

As a former teacher, a current parent, and a fair and reasonable person, I object to the establishment of an educational savings account, as well as the bully politics that make it possible for this issue to be brought up repeatedly simply because a small group of people cannot accept that No means No.

Jerry Sturch
Self / School Counselor
Commerce, TX

I am vehemently opposed to HB 1. I am opposed to any bill that includes any form of school vouchers regardless of any “carrots” that are attached to the bill to try to make it look better. I am deeply offended by the implication from the governors office that educators will receive raises only if vouchers are passed, which is a clear attempt to buy compliance from educators. I do not agree with continuing to spend money on special sessions only to try to force through school vouchers. I urge any who read ties to vote no on any form of school vouchers.

Stacy Wilson
Self - homeschool mother
Allen, TX

Every child in Texas is entitled to a taxpayer funded education. The funds are to educate the child. The Public School System as it is set up today cannot serve the needs of every child.

My daughter is 11 years old and has Cerebral Palsy, which has resulted in several learning disabilities and ADHD. She attended PPCD & 5 years of elementary school in a very rich school district. At the end of 4th grade, she could not read or do basic math. She was on an IEP the entire time.

Our school district used a reading curriculum that has been proven ineffective for 60% of children to learn to read, yet my daughter was stuck with it. The school district micro managed the IEP process and would not collaborate with us. I did the research and knew my child needed an Orton-Gillingham approach for reading, and the District refused for 2 years. They didn't document that part of the IEP meeting, of course.

The IEP process is very stressful & can be very expensive for families of special needs children. These families already bear the brunt of medical costs and other expenses that typical families don't face, and then you add these expenses on top.

In our experience, the IEP team would rather spend money on attorneys to fight us than give our daughter the Specially Designed Instruction that she requires in order to read.

I pulled her out of school this year for 5th grade, and we are now homeschooling. In the 6 months we've been homeschooling & using an Orton-Gillingham reading curriculum (what the school refused to do 3 years ago), my daughter has made up an entire year of reading skill deficit. She is finally reading. Why wouldn't the school listen to me?

Nothing happened to that rich school district that saddled my family with stress, who didn't give our daughter what she needed to learn, and who threatened us with Due Process.

Public School doesn't work for every child, especially kids with disabilities. Districts don't abide by IDEA laws. Our kids don't have time to wait for the system to change for them. They need options now.

Funding should follow the student so that every child can be educated in the place that works best for them. Providing an ESA to parents who know that Public School is not what's best for their child is the most efficient way to educate all of the children of Texas.

Velma DeLeon, Mrs.

Los Fresnos CISD

San Benito, TX

If a family opts for an ESA and enrolls their child in a private school, do they forfeit their eligibility for FAPE? If the student requires an IEP and specialized services not offered by the private school, can they still access them through public schools?

Jessica Black

Self

Arlington, TX

Please vote NO on HB 1 and any other voucher bill that will siphon public tax dollars from our already severely underfunded public schools to private schools that are unaccountable to voters, not required to meet the same performance standards as public schools, and are able to pick and choose the students they accept, meaning they do not have to admit or provide services to students like my youngest child who has a 504 plan.

Parents in DFW already have a plethora of public school choices when it comes to their children's education, ranging from open enrollment public school districts, in-district transfers, specialized district magnet schools and academies, along with a large and ever-growing number of public charter schools.

The cost of the majority of private schools in my area such as Oakridge, Fort Worth Country Day, Pantego Christian Academy and Nolan Catholic High School charge tuitions that FAR exceed the voucher amounts that have been proposed, meaning HB 1 will NOT provide any additional "choice" to families of average means who cannot afford to cover the difference between the voucher and the tuitions these schools charge. Please focus on your energy and efforts on fully funding our existing public schools in order to fulfill your oath to uphold the mandate in Article 7 of the Texas Constitution to support and maintain an efficient system of public FREE schools.

Andrea Lavigne

Self

Mansfield, TX

I am against the education savings account. Vote no on this bill. Also, a fourth special session to try to push this through is ludicrous and a waste of time and tax payers' dollars.

Elizabeth Brannon-Lopez

Self

Red Oak, TX

ESAs are not good for Texas. Data from other states has proven this time and again. This bill would create a playing field that isn't level, and give state money to schools without accountability in place. It also discriminates against students with exceptionalities. Do not vote for this, or any, bill that includes ESAs.

Mercedes Westphal

Public Education

Frisco, TX

NO to any kind of vouchers.

Katie Hays, Rev. Dr.

self, pastor

Fort Worth, TX

As a Christian pastor for 30+ years, a valedictorian of a Texas public school, a parent of two kids who graduated with honors from Texas public schools, the daughter of a Texas public school board member and a Texas public school principal, I urge you to keep public money in public education. More clearly: do not re-route tax dollars to the private use by some families for private education choices. "School choice" is already a reality in Texas, and so-called "education savings accounts" (which we know as vouchers) will not increase choice for most Texas families. Studies show that voucher programs re-route public money to families who have already chosen private education for their kids, without accountability for how those private institutions actually serve kids. It is a Christian principle that we take care of each other's families, and the public education system in our state is our strongest embodiments of that value. Further -- it is a shame that the governor has continued to bully rural and small-town legislators into giving him what he wants. Don't fall for it, neighbors. Stand strong for *all* the families you represent, and keep our tax revenues in public education where they belong.

Nora Heverly

Self

Arlington, TX

I oppose the school voucher program because I'm a product of our public schools and my children are currently successful in public schools. Our family still supports the local public schools via fundraising because the funds that the schools have are already so limited. Please vote NO. We are in need of those funds in public schools to attract better teachers and pay raises to retain our teachers.

Mary Piehl

Self—Retired

Tomball, TX

Please continue to vote no on vouchers (or similar proposals by any other name). A compromise is unacceptable, as any funding redirected to charters, home schooling, and parents will continue to undermine public schools. State over-regulation/"accountability" measures stymie much of public education's effectiveness already, and unavoidable cuts resulting from more funding deficits will only prove to destroy public schools altogether. Absence of regulation in the proposed appropriation of funds is a grossly misdirected use of our tax dollars. Public teachers, as a whole, do a wonderful job when they are not overburdened with directives from people who have no experience in education. Do not succumb to bullies in TX politics! Fund the schools, refrain from promoting untrue politicizing propaganda, and let teachers teach! Thank you.

Kaila Stovall
Self - teacher
New Braunfels, TX

Since I was in middle school I wanted to be a teacher. I didn't know what they made. I didn't know what happened in the background of lesson plans. But I knew I wanted to teach. I love learning, and being a teacher is enlisting in a lifetime of learning.

Since becoming a teacher six years ago, I've been disappointed in how everyone outside of the education systems treats those of us who spend countless hours planning what we will teach our students. Countless hours continuing our education through professional development. And countless hours being concerned about each and every student who walks through our doors.

We've been underpaid, underrepresented, and underfunded to the point of teachers leaving the profession at an alarming rate.

Vouchers will not fix any of the problems in the system. They will widen them. We have a surplus available to fully fund public schools. Why aren't we? Why are we wanting to fund private schools instead? Our public school system works if we have the funding to make sure students are getting the best education possible.

We've turned public education into a political battleground. And if we approve vouchers, we will turn it into a wasteland.

Please do not support these vouchers. Support public education and fully fund it instead!

Paul Dunk
Self teacher
Katy, TX

After approving billions in funding for public schools months ago, it is high time that the Texas legislature stop, holding those funds hostage to governor Abbott's school, voucher, scam, and send them where they belong. Additionally, using public funds to subsidize a discriminatory private system of schools that slams its doors on many children that it deems to be too difficult to teach, will never be right for Texas. Keep up the good fight and vote down the Texas voucher, scam and vote for the funding needed to help all children serve by our public schools.

Glenda Thompson
Arlington Residents for Inclusion
Arlington, TX

Absolutely NO to any private school funding with public's school money! Our schools are underfunded now. We don't need corporate schools.

Amy Lott
Self , public educator and school librarian
Austin, TX

Texas cannot afford to find the three different types of school systems that follow three different sets of holes. The state has already chosen to spend billions a taxpayer dollars each year on charter schools in the money comes directly out of neighborhood public schools. Charters are under represented by children in special education. Those experiencing party and children with behavioral and emotional needs by law. They are required to be open to all children but in reality some charters put up all kinds of barriers to keep those kids from enrolling. Vouchers will tax everyone, but the average Texan will have to have no say on how their tax dollars are spent what curriculum is used whether certified teachers are hired or what programs are offered. Private schools don't have to have a grievance policy, follow the open meetings act or show transparency about anything! What is democratic about that? As a public educator of 31 years, I am for you to protect our public schools, and say no to vouchers.

Kathy Goss
self
Houston, TX

We do not want vouchers. Fully fund public education before vouchers. Separate the bills and stop holding public ed funding hostage to the bad voucher bills

Starla Kelley, Teacher
Self-veteran teacher
Amarillo, TX

Have we not said it loud enough? NO TO VOUCHERS!
Fund Texas Public Schools! That's it! Tell Governor Abbott we cannot be bullied! And teachers are coming for him and Dan Patrick next election!

Joyce Meals, Ms
Self... retired PA teacher
Cedar park, TX

Vouchers do not serve all children because they can pick and choose who they enroll, omitting those with special needs or discipline problems. State money should not support this discriminatory practice.

The funding structure for public schools must be improved with more financial support instead. Public schools take all children and support their learning. Public education should be fully funded for operating expenses, teacher and staff livable wages.

The money needed for the future costs for vouchers will not be there to support that system either, further limiting the ability to aid public schools

We do not support any type of voucher system.
Say NO .

Lopa Shah
Self
Sugar Land, TX

Keep the funds for public schools. Private and charter schools do not provide equity - as a state we are already far behind other school systems in the USA. With the growth and influx into the state keep the money in public schools!

Bernadette Rodriguez
Self
Denton, TX

I don't think this is the best use of our state resources. Vote no for school vouchers.

Jennifer White
Self - Clinic Director
Leander, TX

I do not support the education savings account program. Please vote NO on this bill.

Erin Landis
Self
Arlington, TX

Insanity that this is even under consideration.

Melissa Goodman
Self
Mansfield, TX

I am against HB 1 because of the proposed establishment of an education savings account program.

Tiffany McGuffin
Self
Arlington, TX

Vouchers are not for everyone. Those that have the ability to make a choice, whether financially or geographically, already make the choice. This money will not solve any of the proposed problems and take away from those families who rely on fully funded public schools. Public schools can build a community and lift a town together in ways that privates do not.

Mary Birdseye-Dowthitt
Self
Arlington, TX

Please consider voting NO to school vouchers.
Vouchers will take money away from public schools. Vouchers will greatly harm rural school districts.
Help protect our neighborhood schools, lower and middle class families, students, teachers by saying NO to school vouchers.

Jay Raman
Parent and children of Texas
HOUSTON, TX

This bill is pretending that private school will not raise fees. This means vouchers may not cover the cost and then where do students go? The schools will be allowed to enforce their religious training as they are private . What about kids in special education ? They will be left out. However, it obviously the authors do not care about the welfare of those left behind and simply want to create more support for profit and religious schools who will not be required to serve those populations. The level of callousness by masquerading these voucher plans is to name it opportunity but it effectively guts public schools.

Regina Pires
Self
Cypress, TX

We want you to properly fund our schools. We DO NOT want vouchers.

Matthew Herzberg
Seld
Mansfield, TX

I am in opposition to this bill due to the educational savings account that is a part of it. These types of funneling of public money to private schools in other states has shown to only hurt public schools and only help a select few that can actually use the ESA. Please separate the school funding language from the ESA language.

Ben Waits

Self

Carrollton, TX

As a parent of 2 children in public schools in TX, I OPPOSE education savings accounts. Our schools are only struggling because of the over testing of our children through the STAAR tests, the unfair school grading system, unfunded mandates like HB4545 (now HB1416), and the general “demonization” of our schools and teachers by politicians and pundits. If you want to fix our schools, stop trying to funnel money away from them. Support and strengthen our existing system. There are definitely things that need to be fixed, but ESA’s and school vouchers are not the solution.

If ESA’s must be passed, then the money should come with the same strings and requirements that public schools are held to. Any private school accepting ESA’s should be required to administer the STAAR tests, hire highly qualified teachers, support all Special Education students, and receive an A-F school grade just like public schools.

Grace Mamcilla

Teachers

Palestine, TX

Vote no to vouchers and ESA. Fund our public schools.

Lindsay Ellis

Self

THE COLONY, TX

I opposed vouchers.

No public funds should be used to support private entities that have no government oversight.

No public funds should go towards institutions that are faith-based.

The premise of vouchers, or educational savings as they've been rebranded, is a lie.

Just because somebody could choose to go to a private school does not mean they will be admitted. It does not mean that they will have transportation to it. It does not mean that they will even be able to afford it as a voucher will not be sufficient to cover the full cost of tuition. It does not mean that there will even be a private school for someone to attend because many counties in Texas do not even have a private school option.

Vouchers are a lie, meant to weaken public schools which must ensure they educate all children and meet stringent standards. If our public schools are not to our governor's liking, perhaps he should reflect as to why they are not as good as they should be when Republicans have been in power and he has been in office for so long.

The best possible school for a child to attend should be their local neighborhood public school. If it is not, then it needs more funding. Stripping funding from public schools for a voucher scheme that reeks of corporate interests will not strengthen our public schools. As the governor is holding public office, it is in his interest and indeed his duty, to protect and improve upon our public institutions and services which include our public schools.

The data coming back from states that have implemented vouchers show that they mostly go to serve children already in private school and it is not driving the needle towards better education for all.

Here in Texas parents already have choice. They can homeschool, they can attend public schools, they can transfer districts, and they can choose a private school. We should not fund private schools. We cannot and should not create winners and losers in education. Strong public schools will ensure that all children will have an equal opportunity to succeed.

No vouchers!

Linda Erback
Self - retired teacher
Dallas, TX

Public funding of education should be for public schools only. The only way I could see vouchers is if the private school had to follow all the rules and guidelines public schools do. That includes accepting everyone, doing testing and special ed services, be rated the way public schools are, and allow attendance for free after the voucher. The vouchers are not enough to pay for private school. This automatically causes a preferential class.

Emily Miller
Self, public school teacher
ARLINGTON, TX

I am against school vouchers. I have been teaching in a public school for 17 years and the possibility of vouchers threatens my livelihood but more than that, it threatens the quality of and access to education for millions of students.

The focus of Texas should be on providing robust fully funded public education to all students. If public schools are falling short, it makes no sense to take money away from them. Invest money in public schools!

Texas spends \$4000 per student less than the national average and until we at least catch up to the average, we should not be considering funding private schools that can deny children based on social, emotional, and academic needs, and that will not have any accountability to Texas taxpayers.

Jacqueline Echols
Self/retired educator
Fort Worth, TX

No means NO! Texans overwhelmingly oppose vouchers no matter how they are packaged/marketed. They are inherently unfair to students who don't have the luxury of parents who are able to supplement the state funding to secure placement in the elite private schools. They have replaced the practice of segregating students in public schools by enrolling them in advanced academic classes. Efforts by College Board and local districts to expand educational opportunities to equally qualified, but less affluent, often minority students precipitated this practice.

Vouchers defund public schools. The very future of our democratic republic and free enterprise economy depend upon an educated populace. Vouchers will limit educational and economic opportunities as they appear intended to do. Relegating a large population of Texas students to low wage employment opportunities can only help the privileged few who already enjoy the advantages of wealth. Vouchers are a sinister way to perpetuate this condition.

It is shameful that Governor Abbott and the sponsors of this bill have refused to listen to the will of Texans. There have been no serious attempts at polling and the pleas of activists are being ignored. I urge you to reconsider this unpopular legislation. One way or the other it will be on the ballot in a future election. If you believe as the governor claims, that Texans want this, put it to a vote before it's codified into law. Elections have consequences. So does bad legislation. We will vote our interests.

Lorena Herrera

Self, former educator and now public school parent

San Antonio, TX

Vouchers for private schools are a slap in the face to the 5.84 million students enrolled in our amazing public schools. Private schools intentionally exclude the underprivileged, minority students, students with disabilities, and any student who does not fit their mold. As a former elementary vice principal, time and time again we saw private and charter schools send back students who didn't "fit their criteria" or whose needs they could not (or refused to) support. YALL means ALL in Texas, and public education is a place for ALL Texas children. Private school institutions cannot say the same and admittedly refuse to support all students academic needs.

Now is the time to be funding Public schools, not private school vouchers that are wanted by out of state millionaires. The Texas legislature should not cave to millionaire old men who do not live in nor represent Texans! Any legislator who supports voucher bills does not support the true Texan spirit or its residents. Out of state lobbyist, Nathaniel D. Cunneen, confirmed on twitter today that the push for vouchers in Texas is largely backed by out of state PACs. Keep these lobbyist and anti-Texans away from the funding of our children!

Karen Masraff

Self

Houston, TX

NO to vouchers. Fund public education

Sarah Hissin

Arlington Residents for Inclusion

Arlington, TX

All Texas students should have access to a fully funded, evidence-based, robust education.

Texas needs to focus its priorities to fully fund its public schools (our per student amount is \$4000 below the national average) before considering helping to fund private schools.

Especially when private schools can deny students access and will have zero accountability to the state and the taxpayers.

Walter Bambrook

Self

El Paso, TX

This bill seems to be nothing but a money grab shifting public dollars into private hands. There are very few indications that it will positively affect Texas students or save the state money.

Rhonda Collins, Dr

Self. Registered Nurse

Georgetown, TX

No to vouchers. We want our public schools. Fund our public schools. Hold the line against vouchers for the good of Texas and our children.

Tedra Ulmer

Self; retired

Brady, TX

Texas needs fully funded public education. Vouchers will only benefit the wealthy. Until private schools are required to follow IDEA guidelines, they get nothing. Small schools in rural communities and urban schools will all be killed by this misguided and dishonest use of taxpayer dollars. I certainly don't want my money spent on private education, charter schools or homeschooling.

Leslie Loyd, Mrs

Self

Dallas, TX

Currently, about 5.4 million Texans attend Texas public schools, which accounts for about 85% of all school aged Texans. Over 60% of those students are economically disadvantaged. Over 1 million of those students receive services through IDEA or section 504 and over 1 million receive ESL instruction. These are your constituents and the people you were elected to serve. Texas public schools are the life-blood of Texas communities both small and large, employ over 400,000 Texans, and promise to educate the next generation of Texas thinkers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, and visionaries. There is no doubt that it is in the best interest of all Texans to have a robust, thriving public school system. There is also no doubt that our schools are underfunded and our teachers are underpaid. Any voucher or educational savings account program will make those realities even more true. They will hurt the 5.4 million Texans enrolled in public schools and they 400,000 plus Texans employed by the public school system. They will threaten to shutter the doors of schools in rural communities where there is no other schooling option. And they will disproportionately harm economically disadvantaged student and students with special needs for which the doors of private schools are unattainable or not open. Please serve your constituents by supporting the public school system, fixing school funding, raising the basic allotment, funding teacher raises and rejecting any form of voucher program that will hurt Texas public schools. Thank you

Alejandro Villegas, Parent of Texas public school children

Parent of Texas Public School Children

Houston, TX

As a proud parent of Texas public school children, I want to voice my concern about the proposed school choice, school voucher bill. I believe vouchers damage, our public school system I believe that they are harmful and defund Texas public education I believe that they do not provide choice for parents. I believe that the choice is for schools to further cherry pick the students that they want to attend at their religious or private institutions, I believe that this will be harmful for more than 5.6 million children in Texas public schools and I believe that this only serves to profit private entities and religious institutions. Please invest in our current Texas public school system. Fix it, improve it.... don't defund it.

Please make sure we adequately compensate our educators continue to provide development, training and mentoring for educators and focus on at risk youth.

Texas is a great state because of its people. The cart majority of Texans have been educated through Texas public schools. Our incredible economy is based in large measure on the capacity of our workforce that provides the labor, energy, innovations and intellectual capital to achieve this success.

Fund our educators and our public schools. Develop metrics that are both accountable and empowering. We have lots of work to do. But we are getting there !

Thank you for your time !

Lisa Henson

Self

Cedar Park, TX

I am saying no to vouchers. I had 3 children go through public schools and they are doing very well! Vouchers will take away from public schools and are a terrible idea! Vouchers also will be no help whatsoever to students who live in rural areas! No, no, no!!!!!!

Teresa Martini

self

Dallas, TX

I am writing today as a mother to two kids currently in Texas public schools. I am asking for you to support the 5.5 million kids in Texas public schools and the teachers and support staff that put their hearts into educating our kids. The basic allotment has not increased since 2019 despite double digit inflation. It is time to fix that. While the state may be paying a larger share of the education funding in order to lower property taxes, the schools haven't seen an increase in 4 years. We all know that a lot of changed in 4 years.

I am vehemently opposed to school vouchers and ESAs. Have you looked at the results from Florida, Arizona, or any of the other states that have passed universal school choice? They're not good. These programs cost billions of dollars, take much needed money away from already struggling public schools, and don't really improve outcomes. Often new schools will pop up, take all the state money, and then fold halfway through the school year resulting in kids going back to the public schools despite the public schools getting no money because the voucher has already been cashed. Private schools get to choose which students to serve and often don't serve special needs kids or kids that may be struggling. Texas parents don't want to have to leave their neighborhood schools and drive across town to a private school, if they even have that option. This is not even an option in rural areas where the public schools are the heart of the community, and the only schools around. Vouchers are a coupon for the wealthy that are already paying for private schools. They won't help lower income families because many families don't have the means to pay the difference or have access to transportation to get kids to different schools. It's not true competition if the rules aren't the same.

Texas parents want well funded, well run public schools in their neighborhoods. That starts with respecting the teachers and staff that run these schools. The time is now to show your support of Texas public schools through your actions, not just your words. Giving public tax dollars to schools with no accountability measures or standards is about as unconservative as you can get. Increase the basic allotment and say no to vouchers/ESAs. Texans have spoken time and time again about this issue. You were elected to represent all the constituents of your district, not the Governor, and definitely not the GOP.

Billie Dixon

Self

Austin, TX

A fourth, and then discussed fifth special session in regards to school vouchers is a huge waist of Texas Taxpayer money. The public has worked to reject this bill over and over again. It is time for Abbott to listen to the People of Texas, and stop trying to push this issue on us when we don't want vouchers. We want to uphold the Texas Constitution and make sure there is adequate Public Education for all, which is currently underfunded by \$40 billion. This is a violation of our State Constitution, and has a direct negative effect on Texas Residents. Please take this bill off the table and respect the majority opinion in Texas that our Constitution should be followed and public education strengthened in perpetuity.

David Alcantar

Self Artist

San Antonio, TX

I, as a product of the public school system and with two children enrolled in the public school system, oppose the creation of education savings accounts, as these will siphon badly needed monies from all public schools and funnel them to a few already well funded institutions, increasing the cultural and economic disparity that exists in Texas. The lack of accountability for private schools compromises overall education quality. This voucher program clearly advantages religious institutions, again, already well-funded, encouraging indoctrination of a myopic worldview and against broad critical thinking.

Helen Manroe
Self/Retired
Helotes, TX

I strongly oppose the imposition of a school voucher program on the children of Texas. A voucher program would undermine public education funding, disproportionately affecting students in rural and middle to low income areas.

A voucher system also would be detrimental to special needs students or those who require additional educational support, since private schools would not be required to serve these students. Public schools are mandated to accept and accommodate all students, regardless of their abilities, but a voucher program would rob them of desperately needed funds to serve these children.

I also have serious concerns about the lack of accountability for private schools that accept vouchers. If my tax dollars are being used in any way to fund a school, I deserve the right to understand what that school is teaching and how those children are performing relative to their non-voucher peers.

Finally, I am concerned that a voucher system will make it even harder for the public school system to attract and retain quality teachers. Public schools already have a difficult time competing with private schools when it comes to teacher salaries, and a voucher system will only exacerbate the problem.

I firmly believe that all students deserve to have a quality primary education. A voucher system would make attaining that goal even more difficult, especially for already underserved populations in rural and middle to low income areas and special needs children. Please hold the line and continue to oppose these efforts to shove a highly unpopular program down our throats.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Erin Otness, Dr
Myself - pediatrician
Houston, TX

Vouchers will absolutely destroy public education and widen attainment disparities. Please just fund public education.

Stephanie Garza, LMSW
Self, social worker
Mission, TX

I strongly oppose this policy. It is a direct threat to our public education system, undermining its fundamental principles of equity and inclusivity with no accountability. Private and religious schools aren't subject to the same federal laws that guarantee services to students with special needs as public schools are.

By diverting funds to private institutions through vouchers, we risk further exacerbating resource disparities and leaving behind the most vulnerable students in our community. There is no way to create a voucher system that does not take money away from public education here in Texas. Vouchers are a distraction. The focus must be on fixing our unconstitutional public school funding system.

Heather Bishop
Teacher
Argyle, TX

Truly struggling with teacher retention. Teachers are leaving this profession in flocks due to compensation and lack of support.

Rachel Reynolds, Teacher

Self

Lake Dallas, TX

The basic allotment should be raised, even if it's the bare minimum. Education Savings Accounts will be detrimental to our public education system. As a teacher, we are constantly dismissed and forgotten about. There has been no real increase in income, even though the responsibilities of our profession are constantly changing. We're held to higher standards than ever before, but aren't acknowledged for the work we put in.

Brittany Trinite

Self, music therapist, Board certified

Round rock, TX

NO VOUCHERS. Where will all the kids displaced by public school go? There are not enough private schools to provide for all the families AND the kids that need additional supports not allotted in their amount given will be forgotten and left behind to fail. Public education is necessary.

Alice Jensen

Public schools

Galveston, TX

abbott, quit trying to force legislators to vote yes on a law their constituents have told them to vote "No" on. If it was in the best interest of All students it would pass with flying colors but the SCAM has been revealed. I don't want my state representative to support this ludicrous legislation by our corrupt governor. AJensen , Galveston, TX.

Georgia Polley

self; Spring Branch Speaks

Houston, TX

I am a product and parent of Spring Branch ISD in Houston. We are a niche in the big city. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. Our class sizes will balloon. The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!

Brandon Slawson

Self/Analyst

Canyon Lake, TX

We don't want vouchers. The constant push to hinder public schools to put money back in the pockets of the wealthy is gross. Do your constitutional duty and fund our public schools and pay our teachers.

Fabiola Escalon

Self

McAllen, TX

No to ESAs or vouchers.

Patsy Camp

Self

Dallas, TX

I am totally against any type of voucher. Please stop trying to take money from our public schools & send to private. This is detrimental to our public school system!

Wendy Cone

Parent

Dallas, TX

Governor Abbott needs to listen to the people and their representatives. We do not want vouchers! A growing body of research shows that vouchers only hurt the children in public schools. Please stop these ridiculous special sessions!

Gordon Martinez

Self

Richardson, TX

I offer opposition to the waste of my taxes on a Fourth Special Session and opposition to this bill that threatens public schools enshrined by the Texas Constitution. Public schools nurture the potential of the next generation and ensure that Texas remains a land of opportunity for all. It is incumbent on the Legislature to ensure adequate resources are available to support the needs of teachers & the more than 5 million public school students in Texas while also providing accountability & transparency to taxpayers.

Continuous improvement is a critical component of a strong education system and should remain committed to fostering an inclusive and participatory legislative process where all viewpoints and ideas are considered and where the ultimate goal is the betterment of our schools and the success of our students. Complex, multifaceted topics such as school funding (including teacher compensation) and Education Savings Accounts / vouchers deserve focused deliberation in order to explore implications thoroughly. These topics merit transparency in the policymaking process. As we saw earlier this year & in the 3rd special session linking the debate on school funding and teacher pay with ESAs or vouchers could complicate the legislative process and potentially hinder efforts to move the needle on all matters. Advocating for separate evaluations is not about dismissing any idea or measure. Rather, it is about ensuring that each issue receives the thorough examination it deserves. By providing dedicated forums for distinct policy initiatives, we can engage in a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis of each, leading to better informed decisions that serve the best interests of our students & uphold the principles of accountability, choice, & equitable education in Texas. By addressing these issues w/ clarity, open minds, & a genuine commitment to excellence, we can chart a brighter future for our children and our state with exceptionally funded public schools.

Francesca Romans

Self - Parent

Leander, TX

I am opposed to any education-related bill that includes vouchers and/or ESAs. Our public schools educate over five million Texas children and employ thousands of educators. They do incredible work and go above and beyond for our children every single day, but this body refuses to support and respect them. It is disheartening to see our leadership join the culture wars and slander our educators to create mistrust. It is frustrating to see our leadership wanting to throw more and more money to unaccountable private schools while our special education allotment has not been increased since 1991.

Our public schools are not “carrots.” Texans do not want vouchers - that’s being made clear. I urge you to vote NO on any bill containing vouchers and to start prioritizing our public education system.

No vouchers. No ESAs. No deals. Fully fund our public schools.

Heather Smith

Self / Veterinary Technician/Hospital Manager

Prosper, TX

Vouchers are a violation of public funding. These vouchers usually end up support Christian schools and that is a violation of the constitutions separation of church and state.

Patricia Vaughan, Mrs

Citizen

Yantis, TX

Abbott's bullying to push vouchers is despicable. He especially is ignoring rural Texas schools as vouchers would be highly detrimental in rural areas. Please continue to vote against vouchers.

Barbara Ellison

Self, Freelance Court Reporter

Pearland, TX

"All children" should mean: EVERY SINGLE SCHOOL-AGED CHILD ATTENDING A CERTIFIED AND ACCREDITED PUBLIC OR PRIVATE TEXAS SCHOOL (PK-12) WHO ARE U.S. CITIZENS THAT LEGALLY RESIDE IN TEXAS, WHOSE PARENTS/LEGAL GUARDIAN ARE TAX-PAYING U.S. CITIZENS THAT LEGALLY RESIDE IN TEXAS, REGARDLESS OF INCOME LEVEL OR DISABILITY, AND WHOSE TAXES MAKE THIS POSSIBLE WILL EQUALLY SHARE AND RECEIVE THE SAME AMOUNT OF FUNDS IN HB1, NOT JUST PRIORITY CHILDREN BELOW OR AT THE POVERTY LEVEL. THE ONLY PRIORITY CATEGORY SHOULD BE THE STIPULATIONS OF THE SCHOOL-AGED CHILD ATTENDING A CERTIFIED AND ACCREDITED PUBLIC OR PRIVATE TEXAS SCHOOL (PK-12) AND THE LEGAL TAX-PAYING U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND TEXAS RESIDENTIAL STATUS WITH THE CAVEAT THAT THE CHILD ANNUALLY PASS APPROVED STATE ASSESSMENTS. Children of Texas taxpayers should be the only children benefitting from HB1. Protect our Texas borders and protect our Texas children. Any undocumented illegal alien wishing to reside in the U.S., specifically, Texas, should do so legally; thereby granting a legal status, residency, and providing any benefits therein. As a hardworking U.S. taxpaying Texas resident, I do not want to fund any undocumented, illegal alien in any way shape or form. DO NOT UNFAIRLY PRIORITIZE/CATEGORIZE CHILDREN BELOW OR AT POVERTY LEVEL. ALL CHILDREN SHOULD EQUALLY RECEIVE THE SAME AMOUNT OF FUNDS IN HB1. If you want to prioritize/categorize, then prioritize the parents who PAY MORE TAXES so they can RECEIVE MORE HB1 FUNDS FOR THEIR CHILD. Schools already receive funding from the state of Texas. If the schools do not maintain their accreditation, shut them down. If teachers do not maintain valid certifications, revoke their Texas licenses. If school children do not make the grade, revoke their HB1 funds. It is your duty to represent your constituents and be fair across the board. If you cannot do that, then hand over the reins to someone who will.

Karen Locke

Self retired educator

Lewisville, TX

NO to education savings accounts-No to any form of state money to private schools

Dorothy Preisler

Self

East Bernard, TX

I am totally against voucher and will vote accordingly based on this issue

Craig Verley

Self

Mission, TX

ESA's and vouchers are not in the best interest of Texas students. The state would be better served by appropriately funding public education as we are severely lagging behind the rest of the country in this regard. No to ESA and no to vouchers.

Christopher Holmes

Self

Houston (HARRIS), TX

ESA's/Vouchers make absolutley no sense in Texas. Worse even is that it actually causes a problem for the stated end user respectful of transportation. But lets not even get into that. Lets talk about how Public Education is for all students in all of Texas. That is 5.5 million students and giving this money as a carve out will starve already financially strapped school districts of much needed funds. Governor Abbott has chosen to do this Voucher thing in spite of The Majority of Texans. including most Republicans, fighting against it. Why he chooses to die on this hill is beyond me. Our Public School system needs to be fully funded and then it can be fixed but having 40 kids in a classroom just to manage your budgets makes no sense and that is what Gov Abbott is wanting to do. He knows that 40 kids in a class can not be successful so he is effectively putting his thumb on the scale to push forward his Vouchers. Truly disgusting.

Lastly this idea that once this Voucher system is in place will remain limited is crazy, name one Government program anywhere that ever stayed within it's boundaries and cost did not go through the roof. Vouchers are not successful anywhere and someone needs to tell Abbott he is losing the Republican vote over this stupid fight.

Haroon Monis

Self

San Antonio, TX

No to vouchers; no to privatization of public funds. I'm a public school teacher, and in the 23 years I have taught, teachers keep being asked to do more with less. This bill is the worst of all though, and I urge all of you to vote no to the dismantling of our public schools. No money from public schools should ever be diverted anywhere else. Thank you.

Laurie Appelbaum

Self/ retired

Flower Mound, TX

I am 100% AGAINST any type of school voucher. My tax dollars are to pay for the support of public schools. If a person makes a decision to send their child to private school that is their choice and I do not want to pay for it. As far as low income families go, many, many private schools offer financial support. This is one more way the people WE put into office can gut public schools. VOTE AGAINST SCHOOL VOUCHERS!

Rose Gteer

Self retured

Houston, TX

This will only benefit already affluent families and will be a huge disservice to families who cannot provide the money beyond a voucher for private school. It will be a system of segregation favoring affluent families and once again providing less for the general population especially including special needs children. This is a system which allows gir blatant discrimination against students who won't be recruited by private schools. If a private school springs up that is affordable ie can use the Boucher system, who is actually going to make sure the education offered is up to par??

Janet Brady

Self. Retired

Port Lavaca, TX

Texans do not want school vouchers. It does nothing for Students in Rural Communities

You should stop wasting our money calling for these Special Sessions.

Put it on the Ballot and let Texans vote.... You are so sure it's what Texans want

...Then let us decide.

Matt Reeder

Self

Spring, TX

This bill should not be up for any type of discussion. It is a detriment to all of Texas. This bill must be killed.

Veronica Averhart Preston

Self - Data Analyst

Dallas, TX

I oppose this house bill, as it is likely to contribute to greater inequities in the Texas public school system.

Carla Horton

Self - retired TX educator

Watauga, TX

NO, NO, NO to vouchers! Calling another special session is nothing but bullying!

Kimberly Whitaker

Self

Fairfield, TX

Texas public schools need to be funded much better but Vouchers are not the answer. Rural public schools will be especially hurt by this. My district has 1652 students and it would absolutely face significant problems. This bill is nothing but let's help the rich and leave all the educationally disadvantaged to fend for themselves. Please do not segregate our students based on their race and monetary status. HB 1 not good for Texas.

Kaufmann Karen

Self. Retired School Principal

Longview, TX

Please vote NO on Vouchers! As an educator and a tax payer I do not want monies for public schools funneled to private schools. I also resent the bully governor repeatedly trying to push his agenda forward when it is clear Texans do not support vouchers. Stay strong and vote NO ON VOUCHERS.

Susan Causey

Self

Saint Jo, TX

\$8000 for vouchers (all) \$6000 for public school (students in attendance ONLY)

Absolutely NOT!

What part of NO have you NOT heard from the voters? (Might want to review voters power in Virginia this morning)

STOP trying to strangle our ESSENTIAL rural public schools!

Janifer Wheeler

Self/Business Owner

ROUND ROCK, TX

No vouchers. Invest in PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Josh Westrom, Attorney, Argyle ISD Board of Trustees

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

This bill not only creates education savings accounts a/k/a vouchers, it vastly increases the size of our State government by the tune of \$40 million dollars and 3 new State agencies. Read it. There is a provision that pays the Texas Comptroller 3% or \$15 million out of the \$500 million, and pays another 5% or \$25 million to newly created State agencies called Education Administration Organizations. This is not conservative, small, local government.

It is disappointing a conservative, high-performing school district in Texas like Argyle ISD would received less from the State in this bill on a per student allotment than the State is allocating to vouchers. Since schools like Argyle receive no federal funding, our total allotment (when consider all funding sources) is less than \$9,500 per student. This bill will give \$10,500 to private school kids. We need to be represented in this bill. We are not.

This bill is silent on the \$400 million Formula Transition Grant (“FTG”) set to expire in 2023-2024. FTG was created to fill a gap in State funding for school districts like Argyle. Argyle receives an estimated \$3.5 million from FTG to close the gap in State funding between it and other districts in the State that qualify for funding Argyle does not. There are 80-125 districts that rely on FTG. A loss of FTG will result in a funding crisis and funding cliff for our district. The consequences will be extreme to staff and programs. The \$400 million FTG needs to be extended or replaced in this bill. I can’t understand why our representatives would fund vouchers for 50,000 kids with \$500 million and allow the \$400 Million FTG to expire when it impacts as many or more students across the State, nor does FTG administration cost the State \$40 million like this proposed bill does.

John Skelton, Citizen

Self

Plano, TX

Public schools get public funding. Private schools get private funding. We do not need private schools to be publicly funded.

Sarah Yap, Mrs.

Self

Pearland, TX

This would be helpful to ALL families. Education is expensive, especially a private school education. We chose private school due to district we are zoned to and because we want our child to receive a catholic education. This would alleviate so much stress and financial woes for many families.

Thank you

Stephen Plant

Self, project coordinator

Dallas, TX

No vouchers - if my rep votes for vouchers, I will vote them out. This state is going away from doing what’s best for its constituents and what the West Texas Billionaires want. We loose public schools, we loose corporate \$

Esther Min

Self

Dallas, TX

As a mother of 4 school age kids, I am against school voucher system/educational savings account. Rather than vouchers increase funding per child directly to public schools, increase funding to special education.

Lee Crews
Self
Iola, TX

No vouchers for Texas! Fund Texas Public Education! Put it before the voters of Texas to decide.

Matt Maudlin
self/parent
Spring, TX

The fact that the legislature is in the 4th S.S., to try and force vouchers through, is a clear example that the overwhelming majority of Texas do not support their tax dollars going to private education. These schools do not have to meet the same accountability standards, or requirements, as our public schools. Texas families have always had Parental Choice/Freedom where their children's education is concerned. This voucher push is simply going to be a subsidy for families who already have children in private education. If this was about "All Texas children" as the Governor has continually said, then he would've visited public schools, and their families, during his push for vouchers tour. The State of Texas constitution mandates that the legislature must support and maintain an efficient system of public free schools. This should be priority #1, to adequately fund public schools and staff members. However, this priority has been tied to the voucher push. These two issues should stand alone on their own merits, not be combined in the hopes that Texas tax dollars go to a voucher system.

Patricia Bowman
Unlicensed schools
Corp Christi, TX

I will be brief. Vouchers will destroy our public school system. Texas needs a strong public school for every child.

Heather Wright
Self/retired
Willow City, TX

Whereas funding a system of free public schools is required by the Texas Constitution, it is imperative that the State not divert funds from public tax dollars to private schools through ESAs or vouchers. Vouchers of any kind are a pyramid scheme designed to steal taxpayer moneys for private businesses. By examining the effects of voucher/ESAs in other states that are 2-3 years along in the process, we can see the effects of such schemes. Funds are diverted from public schools, children are harmed, and the voucher system quickly outgrows the available funding. Too many out-of-state businesses stand to benefit off the deprivation of Texas's poorest and most needy students. The vast majority of Texans love their local public schools and want to see them fully funded.

Additionally, Texans currently have a smorgasbord of school choice: public, charter, private, homeschool, learning pods, and online schools. Each of these choices belongs to the parents. Endorsing private schools with state money moves the "choice" to the school—private schools get to choose which students to admit. They do not have equal state oversight compared to public schools. There is no required testing, no public records requirements, no financial transparency, no guarantee of rights, and no grievance process. All of the power transfers from parents to the private schools, quite a contrast from our public schools where parents are true partners in their children's education.

Thank you for your continued support of public education and for your determination to do the right thing for the people whom you represent by ignoring special interests seeking to grow rich at the expense of Texas children and families.

Carol Smith

Retired Teachers and current educators of the Texas Public Schools

Coppell, TX

How can intelligent lawmakers and representatives of our state think that this bill is an equitable distribution of tax payers money for education. School vouchers have no place in education. Do not take money that public schools desperately need and give to those that think private schools will be an improvement in educating children. There is no accountability of services, how to decide who gets the money or how curriculum will be determined. Private schools and charter schools do not have to accept children that they determine have learning differences. There are no restrictions on equal education for all within a privatized system in education. This will be one of the worst decisions you can make if this bill passes!!!! I will be ashamed of our elected officials and I will be embarrassed and very, very disappointed. My grandfather, my father, my mother, my sister, my nieces, and my cousins are past or present teachers, principals, and counselors; our love of public education runs deep in our family from 1918 to today! You will disgrace us and give false information to our parents and children if you pass HB1. I implore you to vote a resounding NO!

Margaret Riess

Self

Grapeland, TX

I am respectfully asking that the committee rejects any type of school voucher or Educational Savings Account. Please support public schools by fully funding public education. Thank you.

Wendy McRoberts

Self

Danbury, TX

We're paying \$3 million dollars a session? So \$12 million dollars for a tantrum to satisfy billionaire voucher scam donors of Abbott and Patrick?

If you're so sure TEXANS want this, put it on the BALLOT. Isn't that how this works? How many times do teachers, parents, kids, taxpayers have to show up and say no taxpayer dollars to religious institutions that already have the benefit of not paying taxes.

This personal pet project of ABBOTT's is going to cost Texas legislators much more than Abbott who's secure for far too long.

No matter how many times TEXANS say no, this keeps coming back.

Somebody needs to show Abbott NO MEANS NO. Maybe then he'll have a better idea of how to "end rape" too!

Allen Roark

Self, teacher/coach

Temple, TX

We don't want out of state lobbyists pushing vouchers on our state that will merely be a tax break for those already attending private schools destroying our public schools in the process. No vouchers.

Jen DuPont

Self/teachee

Austin, TX

As a public school educator I believe in the right to a free and appropriate public education. The idea of vouchers that would take away additional monies from public schools so parents could pay for private schools is wrong and should not be supported. Protect public schools and provide money where it would benefit ALL students- in public school classrooms.

Kelly Dennison

Self

Arlington, TX

I implore the house to stop wasting taxpayer money on this bill. It is evident that school vouchers, savings programs, grants, whatever you want to call them - are not popular among taxpayers in the state. The state of Texas once had superior public schools and it is time to shore them up again. Start focusing your efforts and energy on what your constituents want (and I am speaking directly to you Mr. Tinderholt) and that is public schools. Private schools can use scholarship programs to help students attend, because they will be teaching curriculum that is far different from what is required in public schools. The majority of Texans don't want their children in religious institutions. The Christian Nationalists are trying to blur the lines between the separation of church and state. Leave religious education up to the parents and civic education up to the teachers. It worked for the last 50 years. It will work for the next 50 years. There is no reason to take this country back to segregation and civil unrest and that is what this bill is designed to do. It is time to put the word woke to bed.

Shannon Noble

Texas Industrial Vocational Association (TIVA)

Austin, TX

TIVA is a membership organization of Texas' Career and Technology Educators. While TIVA appreciates the pay raises and other increases in funding for public education, our members oppose HB 1 due to the funding of private school education through its education savings account program. Thank you.

Patricia Martin

self

Keller, TX

Tx House, I urge you once again, to oppose this political scheme of Gov Abbotts' and OPPOSE school vouchers/choice. Texas does not want vouchers. This would create hardship for many, destroy our fine public education in Texas. Vote NO on HB1. Stand firm against this nonsense.

liz reichman

self

SHAVANO PARK, TX

Enough with the vouchers already!

We love our public schools, especially in rural areas. They are centers of our communities.

We have choice. Texans have charter schools and magnet schools galore.

We give less money to our schools than other states, yet we are a rich state. Those school security measures after Uvalde? unfunded. What is wrong with this picture?

Texans have a strong sense of justice. We want ALL students educated. It is in our constitution. All means students of all races and religions and students with disabilities. Private schools do not educate all students. And we do not want to pay for a bunch of rich folks to send their kids to private schools. They can afford it. They do not need our tax money.

Other states have tried vouchers. Those plans have polarized society and bankrupted local schools. We do not want a bunch of outside consultants who screwed up other schools coming here and screwing up OUR schools. (I see you Betsy.)

No vouchers.

Judith Lee
Self -Educator
Beaumont, TX

Texas ranks 43rd in public education student funding. Texas public schools have not been fully funded in decades. When the legislature decimated school funding in 2011, our schools suffered a huge blow and that funding cut has never been rectified to keep pace with inflation and our growing state population. Yet now, Texans are looking at a funding bill which would touch the tip of that iceberg only to see further funding losses (vouchers) attached to the life raft. What a slap in the face. It sets per student funding at \$6700 and vouchers at \$8,000 - just to make it more insulting. Our state constitution prohibits sending our tax dollars to private schools - and Ken Paxton saying it is "ok" does not make it so.

It is high time Texas legislators took a good hard look at our schools. Fully fund them, pay teachers a professional wage and set the per student class cap at 22 for K thru 12th grade.
Instead of insulting, degrading and defunding our schools - which the governor seems hell bent on doing - step up and do what is best for our kids and our state.
Stop holding our schools hostage!

Amy Knusta
Self/public school instructional specialist
Greenville, TX

Vouchers will cripple our public school system and create more inequity, not reduce it. Diverting funds from already struggling schools will never fix the issues on these campuses. Please listen to the thousands of people working in the schools with students every day when we say NO to vouchers.

Jyusef Larry
Self, Teacher
Katy, TX

This bill cannot by nature be for every child in the state. Simple economics says all this will do is drive up the pricing for private schools because it will seem as though there is more demand which means still only a select few will get to attend their school of choice because the only choice they have available to them is to pay the higher rate.

This does not serve all parents and students. Funding the public education system is what the focus should be. Find the system that is actually in place to service all students in the state.

Todd Romig
Self, insurance
Highland Village, TX

I stand firmly against any public school funding that is going into education savings accounts for private schools. We're well behind the rest of the United States in public school funding and we need to improve the quality of public education for all.

Diane Graves

Self/retired

Austin, TX

Re:vouchers: The public school system is the vehicle through which knowledgeable and functional citizens are made, and I am happy to provide my tax dollars to support our public schools. I am not, however, willing to pay taxes to the government to support private/religious schools. I will not support a situation in which those who can afford private school benefit from my money, but those who can't are left with increasingly underfunded public education.

The voucher system will send my money to religious schools where students can be, and sometimes are, indoctrinated against those of other religions or cultures - and yes, I do have experience with this. People who want this for their children are free to pursue private education, but I believe it is unconstitutional to require me to pay for it.

Democracy, our Great American Experiment, relies on a level playing field for all children, on a thriving public school system where identity as Americans brings cohesion while respect for and interest in our differences broadens our perspectives and enriches our lives. We all benefit from public education. Our significant state wealth should lavishly fund public schools - and pay teachers well for their critical role in our children's lives. Give ALL our children the opportunity to become educated participants in secular society.

Juan Torres, Senior Master Sergeant

Self

Boerne, TX

I urge to you to consider not passing HB1, our Texas education system needs every valuable resource to ensure Texas continues to be a world leader in business, agriculture, energy and innovation. Pulling funds in any form from the public school system would severely hamper our efforts to deliver the education system our state deserves.

Mary Beth McCormack

Self

Keller, TX

No vouchers. Work harder to fund public schools at the levels needed. Stop wasting money on special sessions. NO VOUCHERS, NO VOUCHERS, NO VOUCHERS.

Evelyn Wedgeworth

Self

Long Branch, TX

I am opposed to ESA, vouchers, or any other name you want to call them. I believe education should be free for ALL Texas children and that public education should be fully funded. Looking at states that have passed ESA's, it's a disaster. Do what the majority of Tx residents want and say no to ESA's. If you thought people wanted ESA's, you would have put it on the ballot for a vote. Vote no for ESA's and prove to us Texans you care about ALL children, not just wealthy ones.

David Coppedge, Mr.

Self

Pflugerville, TX

It is ridiculous to continue spending taxpayers money to hold these sessions. The legislature needs to represent the will of the people and say no to any kind of tax relief just because I want to send my kid to private school. We all benefit from a strong public school system. That is where the money needs to be spent. Will you pay my toll bill when I choose to drive on it rather than the public road? It's no different. Parents already have school choice. I also wonder about separation of church and state when so many private schools are religion based? Vouchers only continue to separate the rich vs the poor. Public schools are for everyone. This bill is just wrong as long as it has any public money going to private schools

Brandi Roppolo
Self
Georgetown, TX

Please say no to vouchers! As a former teacher in both public and private schools, vouchers will destroy our public school system. We must do better for public school students and staff!

Kathy Zarate
Self
Austin, TX

I am against this bill. School choice already exists. Let's increase public school funding instead of subsidizing wealthy families sending their children to private school. This bill would be detrimental to rural communities as well.

Catherine Berkeley, Dr
Self
San Antonio, TX

NO to vouchers! NO to subsidizing private schools. NO to religion in public schools. FULLY FUND Texas PUBLIC schools & Public School TEACHERS.

Corey Thompson
Self, manager
Denton, TX

Texans have spoken. Stop pushing a billionaire agenda on our public school system. Parents do not want vouchers, and we expect our representatives to stand firm in their vote against this repeated attempt to force them on our state. Don't mess with Texas public schools.

Matt Arend
Self
Mckinney, TX

School choice already exists and ESAs should not take away from school funding of public schools. Fund public schools. Students and teachers are not a carrot and the way public school is being used as a pawn is embarrassing. No vouchers!

Mary Loden
Self - Parent
Plano, TX

Please vote NO on HB 1. No to anything that includes taxpayer money to private schools. I am writing in support of public school funding and public school teacher pay increase. Tax payer money should only be going to fund public schools. Please say NO to education savings accounts - no public money for private schools.

Dustin Qualls
Klein ISD
Klein, TX

Please separate voucher programs from public education funding. These can and should be mutually exclusive issues, and not bundled together in an "all or nothing" bill. If voucher programs are needed and have benefit, then they should be able to stand on their own without dangling public education funding carrots alongside them.

Thank you,
Dustin Qualls
Klein ISD Trustee Elect

William Martin

self

Keller, TX

I OPPOSE the school vouchers in Texas. Vote NO VOUCHERS

Joe Kucera, Dr.

Lorena ISD

Lorena, TX

Good morning,

Vouchers (ESAs) will eventually drain public education funding. Public education desperately needs an increase to the basic allotment and safety funding, but not when vouchers are included.

If you decide to pass a voucher bill, please make sure private schools are required to follow the same state mandated rules/regulations as public schools. In order to have fair competition, we must all play by the same rules. If you don't want to hold private schools to the same standard, you need to loosen standards on public schools. You cannot hold public schools to one standard and private schools to another. The money comes from the same place, our state taxpayers. This money deserves the same accountability.

I appreciate all you do for the state of Texas. Thank you for your service.

Laura Osborne

Self

Sealy, TX

No educational savings accounts, vouchers, grants, or any other verbiage should be allowed. My expectation is that you fully fund public schools. If private schools want the same money then they should play by the same rules! Stop holding public schools hostage to appease those that can already afford private school. Texas should educate all children! That is crucial for our state and our future.

Drew Flowers, Sgt

Self

Tyler, TX

My name is Drew Flowers and I'm a Marine Corps veteran who served from 2009-2013. What Greg Abbott and his supporters are doing to teachers is disgusting! If your vouchers are so amazing put them in their own bill! Stop attaching teacher pay and other items as incentives to the vouchers. Give teachers the pay raise they deserve! Greg is calling a 4th special session and it just screams "I can't get my way so I'll just keep doing it for my rich friends." I'm even to the point to say the VA treats veterans better than what Greg has treated his educators. School safety should be a high priority item as well but sadly it's not. Poor leadership by Greg and his supporters has been displayed and enough is enough. It's sickening especially during a time of inflation.

Terri Pease
Self/parent
San Antonio, TX

Please do not give in to Governor Abbott's bullying and abuse of power. The will of the Texas people is clear: uphold your constitutional duty to fully fund our Texas Public Schools and not private schools.

As a parent of 3 public school students in San Antonio, I can already see the negative impacts charter schools have had on my community by diluting precious resources; vouchers will no doubt do the same. To hold hostage funding and teacher pay that is desperately needed is cruel; to tie it to vouchers is unconscionable. It is an absolute abuse of power and will be remembered as such.

As a Christian, I'm ashamed of the way my faith is being used by as an opportunity to wield power and horde resources. Through dishonesty and fear tactics, neither of which are true to Christianity, the governor has sewed divisiveness and distrust in our communities.

Please do not trade the robust public education of millions of current and future Texas children to appease the ego of one man.

Elizabeth Gallier
Self / retired teacher
China, TX

Please reconsider the voucher system and invest in public education. Taking my money and using it to pay for private education does not sit well with me. I taught in the public school system and totally support it's worth. It is a parents right to private education, but that is a choice the parent makes, therefore they pay for it!
Say no to vouchers and support our public schools!

Jennifer Fountain
Self - Teacher
Pasadena, TX

Any bill that includes vouchers is a bill that is anti-public education. Sending public money to a private institution with zero oversight is wrong. In this bill, vouchers are worth \$10,500 while public education only receives \$6,700 in a historic surplus year. Creating two paths of education and providing this financial break to the wealthy will only segregate and exacerbate the divide in classes as the rich become richer. Vouchers do nothing for rural parents without access to a different school or for urban parents who still can't afford a different school. The original campaign for vouchers was to get students out of "failing" schools, but it is evident in Abbott's visits to only private Christian schools that these vouchers are truly intended for a different audience.

In addition, this bill places the onus of standardized testing on the vouchers recipients, not the schools. This means that these institutions have zero accountability with TEA. With the HISD takeover, we have seen that TEA feels they need to step in with underperforming schools...why is that not true for schools that accept public voucher money? HB1 states that if a student is unsuccessful on a standardized test for two years, they are out of the voucher program. But what happens to the school that clearly wasn't educating them at the level of the test? Nothing, according to this bill. At which point, public education must then absorb back a student who has cost them \$12,000 in funding by being gone two years and who is now behind the level of expectation put on public education by the state...because we CANNOT just kick out the students who don't perform on tests.

Supporting public education is the only way to truly support Texas. There are so many tools, manipulatives, technology pieces, supplies, etc that public education does without because of a lack of funding. Educated people form more cohesive societies, have better health, contribute more economically, reduces crime, and more. Funding schools so they can be everything they are capable of, to educate the full future of Texas is the only path forward.

Jennifer Mills

Self- teacher

Spring, TX

Public education needs to be funded without vouchers. Say no to vouchers. I teach 5th grade math and science in public school. I have students that go to private school and within months come back because there are not standards in private schools. So if vouchers go through then the money would go to private but then I would be teaching a student for free. When students come back to us, they have loss of learning and we spends months trying to get them where they were before.

Vivian Menzel, Mrs.

Self

Desdemona, TX

I am opposed to ESAs, or vouchers. They haven't worked in other states. I support our public schools and I implore you to fully fund them and to treat teachers and staff with respect. The governor ignored the findings of the committee who studied why teachers are leaving. Follow the recommendations they discovered. Thank you.

Joseph Ranzau

Self - management consultant

Boerne, TX

Let us spend our public tax dollars for the public benefit and not the select few.

Rebranding private school vouchers as grant programs is a disingenuous approach to hide a program rejected multiple times in Texas.

Well, there is no income threshold to receive the grants, and proponents will point out that they could benefit folks at the lowest economic level. The reality is those dollars will go to people who can already afford to send their children to private schools. This becomes another redistribution of tax revenue and its benefit from the bottom upward.

I encouraged the legislature to reject the voucher or grant programs.

I firmly favor better funding for actual public schools, increased teacher salaries, and innovative programs to improve literacy and special education. ?

Sara Windham

Self/Speech Pathology

Salado, TX

There is no place for vouchers in the state of Texas. Vouchers are proven to be ineffective and disastrous to other states. Look around and learn from the mistakes of others. Parents already have choices on how to educate their children. It is irresponsible to think that a plan to give tax dollars to private or home school entities without any expectation of accountability will be successful. Dr. Buckley has seen the services that public schools provide to all students of all abilities even with the limited funding formulas currently in place. Private or home schools (not even charters) don't and won't ever serve the needs of all students. What happens when students go to a private school who gets the voucher funds just to be kicked out because they need too much support or have a behavior challenge? They will return to public schools who serve all students without the option to turn students away. ESA/Voucher plans do not support all children. Do NOT support this bill because it opens the door to misuse of taxpayer dollars.

Edwin Scott Elphingstone

Self. Retired

Dallas, TX

I oppose any laws aimed at promoting at state expense school vouchers for private schools, however named in the legislation. Strong public education is essential for the prosperity of individual persons, robustness of our democracy, and progress of our state. A far more productive area for the legislature to investigate would be the role of money in our state government. I applaud the House's efforts so far to resist the self-interested legislation presented so far. That persistence of the promotion by the Governor should raise questions about what's really going on. For the good of us all, find a way to shine some light on the role of money leading to all these school voucher proposals. Voters look to be keenly interested in understanding.

Stephanie Saucedo

Myself

San Antonio, TX

Texas is tired of public education funds being held hostage. Shame on every person speaking ill of our great public schools, speaking ill of our teachers, who do the most, for the least!

Texas is almost last in funding! That is reprehensible considering our massive surplus.

No vouchers! Not now, not ever! Fully fund Texas schools! Stop playing politics with our students and teachers!

No public funds for private schools! No vouchers! Just no!

Cassandra Knight

Self, educator

Fort Worth, TX

Why do I have to keep doing this?! Vouchers are UNACCEPTABLE.

1- The last bill was going to give 8,000+ to those that qualified- yet public school kids only receive \$6500? And that's based on ATTENDANCE? If you're doing vouchers, then the price they get per child should be the SAME as public schools.

2- accountability measures. Abbott seems to believe that private schools are so much better than public, so then why don't we have the same accountability measures?? If a school is using MY PUBLIC tax money, then I would expect them to have the SAME standards, testing, attendance and all other laws/requirements that we do (looking at you HB1416 and HB3).

3- acceptance of all learners- if schools are receiving PUBLIC funding, they should be required to accept ALL learners just like we do. We don't get to pick and choose who walks through our doors; our jobs are to educate them no matter what.

4- while I do believe teachers deserve a raise, I do NOT want it in conjunction with this bill or ANY bill that takes away from public education.

5- just a general reminder that if public schools are "failing children", we've been under Republican control for how long now? TEA, State reps? Maybe it's time for a change then.

6. Come visit a public school! I work in Coppell ISD and would welcome you with open arms.

Sincerely,

Cassie Knight

Sapna Singh, Dr

Self

Sugar Land, TX

No to vouchers. Fund our public schools. Stop wasting our time. The teachers and staff deserve better. We have the funding. Please just fund our public schools

LeAnn Wilkins

Self Teacher

Hico, TX

No VOUCHERS (ESA)!! Research shows this does not work. As much as I need a raise, I want what is best for ALL students, and that means funding public schools.; not vouchers.

I have a granddaughter who is in a gifted program. Any school; ie public, private, charter would be happy to have her. I have another granddaughter who is nonverbal autistic, and no private or charter school would take her. Vouchers widen the gap between the haves and have nots.

Please stop this! We will not be worn down. We will always say no to vouchers.

Amanda Segovia

Self /management consultant

San Antonio, TX

As a parent and registered voter, I strongly oppose every single effort forcing the school voucher scam on Texas families. Please continue to stay strong and support public schools.

James Kowalewski

Self - Sales

Katy, TX

I am against the proposed private school vouchers.

I grew up in our wonderful Texas public schools and taught in Texas public schools for 9 years and have seen first hand the impact these schools make for all students. Particularly in extracurriculars like athletics and fine arts. We have something special here in Texas. The quality of our Texas public schools relative to private counterparts is not comparable to other states. Our public schools are thriving we need to continue funding that, not divert funds for private school vouchers. In my opinion anyone who wishes to pursue a private school education most certainly can, but should fund that privately as has been our custom.

There's nothing like the "Friday Night Lights" in Texas when an entire community comes out to support the students out there on that field. Be it athletes, band and dance, student-trainers, etc. This doesn't happen in a private school where families can come from all over town. It is unique to public schools like Katy High School where we can come together as a community in a pursuit of a common goal: excellence for our kids.

I ask that you please not divert students and funds from that experience. Again I say NO to private school vouchers. Thank you and take care.

Consuelo Sánchez

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Good morning, I ask that you give teachers a raise, retired teachers a COLA and no to vouchers.

Rev. D. E. Clark Jr., Pastor

First Pentecostal Church of Edna/Edna Christian Academy

Edna, TX

This is a necessary piece of legislation that needs to be implemented to all parents who want what is best for their child. No child should be a slave to government education, but be able to choose the style, atmosphere, curriculum, content, and goals education should provide. God gave parents, not the state, the unequivocal command and responsibility of raising their children in a wholesome, safe, and moralistic manner. Please, in the name of all that's holy, return this right to those who are heavenly endowed by conception and birth their God given responsibilities.

Russ Johnson

Lorena ISD

Lorena, TX

Dear Representative Buckley,

As a school board member, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the school voucher program that is being proposed in our state. School vouchers are not only ineffective, but also detrimental to the quality and equity of public education.

School vouchers divert public funds to private and religious schools that are not accountable to the public. These schools can set their own curriculum, standards, and policies, without regard to the state's educational goals and requirements. They can also discriminate against students based on their faith, sexual orientation, or disability. Moreover, vouchers do not guarantee that parents have a real choice, as private schools can set their own admission standards and tuition fees, and may not have enough seats or transportation options for all voucher applicants.

School vouchers also undermine the quality and equity of public education by draining resources and students from public schools. Vouchers take money away from the public school system, which is already struggling with inadequate funding. Vouchers also create a two-tiered system of education, where the most advantaged students leave for private schools, while the most disadvantaged students remain in public schools that are increasingly segregated and under-resourced. Vouchers do not improve student achievement, as studies have shown that voucher students perform no better or worse than their public school peers on standardized tests. Vouchers also do not improve public schools through competition, as public schools face many challenges and constraints that private schools do not, such as serving a diverse and needy student population, complying with state and federal regulations, and providing a broad and balanced curriculum.

As a school board member, I am committed to ensuring that every child has access to a high-quality and inclusive public education. School vouchers are not the solution to the problems facing our public schools. Instead, they are a threat to the public interest and the common good. I urge you to reject the school voucher program and to support public schools and public school teachers.

Sincerely,

Russ Johnson

Donna Coppedge

Self

Pflugerville, TX

It seriously should be unconstitutional for our governor to continue to abuse his power by calling another session. Public dollars belong in public schools, period. You are constitutionally required to provide public education in Texas and your time and our tax dollars should be spent on making our public education system the best in the nation. It is way past time to support and value our teachers. Please stop pretending educational savings accounts will improve the life of disadvantaged children. We all know it is just another excuse to give to the wealthy. Instead, fully fund public education and stop allowing the governor to hold us all hostage.

Kristin Clark

Self/Teacher and Public School Parent

Arlington, TX

Fully Support Public Schools and say no to vouchers in any way please!!!! I would rather not get any funding if it means vouchers do not pass! No Vouchers!

Brandi Nortman

Self

Dallas, TX

I do not support a bill that allows for vouchers or public savings accounts for students. A strong public education system is needed for a strong future Texas. Let's make the system we have one worth staying for by fully funding public schools. Can we find a state using the voucher system that has a stronger public education system post vouchers?

Denny Kramer, Dr.

Board of Trustees, Lorena ISD

Lorena, TX

Fully fund public education.

No vouchers.

Increase funding for basic allotment, teacher pay, and safety & security.

Thank you.

Jennifer Reeder

Self

Spring, TX

Vote NO for school vouchers!! I do not and the masses that live in this state do NOT want vouchers for schools!! Please do NOT pass this bill! Those in office in this great state are skating in thin ice and will be voted out as soon as possible if these bills pass! No to school vouchers!!

Brian Bloss, Teacher
Texas public schools
Grapevine, TX

As a teacher and small government conservative, I am appalled by this legislation as it represents a clear dereliction of the duties of the legislature of the State of Texas.

If you speak with educational leaders, they will tell you that their operating budgets and ability to give teachers a sustainable cost of living adjustment in future years is being held hostage by trying to tie the passage of ESAs to increasing school funding.

Before a dime is spent on ESAs, almost every district will tell you they had to go into deficit spending to try and offer teachers a pay increase this year.

I appeal to all my Texas legislators and ask why would we choose a path that so many states have taken that has proven do not improve educational outcomes, lead to the erosion of public schools and ultimately will enrich organizations that do not have to teach the same rigorous education standards as the publicly overseen Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills?

I ask you who call yourself conservatives to please consider the Pandora's box Governor Abbott is asking you to open. You can stop it and I think if you are about ensuring accountability when it comes to tax dollars you have an obligation to reject ESAs.

Once you pass ESAs to go to religious schools, you won't be able to deny those funds to any religious organization. So let's make sure you are okay with the following:

- 1) are you okay with funds going to private schools that call Israel occupiers? Or what about religious schools that teach the Holocaust never happened?
- 2) Are you okay with private schools that can teach the 1619 project? Because that can happen under this legislation and once the genie is out of the bottle it can't go back in.
- 3) Are you okay with public money going to schools that can and do discriminate against the differently abled and those with special needs in their admissions processes?

Please lawmakers, do not push to create a massive entitlement that will balloon in size by the admission of the advocates pushing for this bill. Instead, fully fund the public schools of our great state and give teachers the pay raise that shows there is dignity in their public service.

God Bless you and thank you for your time.

Brian Bloss

Emily Funderburg
Self
Austin, TX

It is clear that Texans do not want the voucher program. We should be prioritizing better public schools for all. This bill will weaken Texas schools. I urge you to continue to stop the Governor from forcing his will on you and the people of Texas.

Cynthia Brookhouser
Self
Bay City, TX
No to vouchers

Tina Lacey
Teachers
CLARENDON, TX

NO VOUCHERS OF ANY KIND!!

Michelle Yanez, Ms.
Public School Teachers
Kerrville, TX

Good evening!

I have been a public school teacher since 2011 and been working in the public school system since 2009.

I would think I would not need to repeat facts that are thrown out during sessions dealing with education, but in the event this is news: Texas ranks among the bottom of the fifty states when it comes to how much we spend per student in public education.

Why would we take money away from an already underfunded system??

Public schools are mandated by law to accommodate and educate students with learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, and students with physical and mental disabilities that prevent them from spending a full day at school with the general population. These students operate in life skills classrooms. They learn to make coffee, how to do laundry, how to survive in a world they might one day have to live in without their support system at home. You will be taking away money from these kids.

There is no conceivable way that we can offer vouchers to families and continue to fully fund our public school systems. Our marginalized populations are going to lose out. Kerrville Independent School District has close to half of its student population that qualifies to receive reduced cost or free lunch. You will take money away from these kids.

Our extracurriculars already operate with minimal budgets and have to fundraise for trips, uniforms, and additional resources. In the last week alone, I have given money to choir kids, ROTC kids, and band kids. Creating educational savings accounts will take away money from our sports, fine arts, and other extracurricular students.

I am pleading with you to not do this. I do not want to see the future of Texas go the way of Florida or Arizona. Public education is a right enshrined in our Texas Constitution. Please continue to keep it this way.

Heather Chapman
Seld
Buda, TX

Do not pass a voucher bill. You are failing the future of Texas by continuing these political shenanigans to please your donors. Solidly against any type of ESA or voucher. Parents already have choice. Stop the madness.

Jovonna Harris
self/educator
Channing, TX

Vote no! It's not a good bill and will hurt more schools that will do good. Rural schools whose numbers are already low and borderline to close will for sure be shut down due to no funding because of these low numbers. It is not a bill that takes ALL parties involved into consideration. As a teacher myself, I don't appreciate my salary being held as a bargaining chip by our governor so that he can get his way either! This is uncalled for and will not be acceptable. You just thought you had a teacher shortage before, pass this bill and watch your numbers rise!

Shelley Harrington

Self/Teacher

Spring, TX

I am strongly against any form of voucher or education savings account. It is extremely unfair to allow a few thousand students in the state of Texas to get partial funding for private school when private schools have zero accountability to the state or federal government. Isn't that the point of private school so you can run the school how you want? That's already parent choice! If parents want to choose private school, great! They should not get tax payer money for it. Public Education benefits EVERYONE and it's not fair to take money away so that some get the "benefit". Private school might be great for many kids, but it's not great for ALL. AND there are not enough seats in private schools for EVERY Texas student so some will be turned away, which means that public schools still have to keep their doors open. We need to FULLY FUND public education and stop wasting time and money on special sessions Gov. Abbott to try to make it happen. It's not what is best for EVERY Texas student and students are already suffering...not because the schools are "bad" but because they need funds. Funds pay for teachers and aides. Specialists for Dyslexia, Speech, etc. cost money. No matter how many students walk through the doors, we still have to have these specialists because we TAKE EVERYONE. It's not optional to offer these services. It IS for private schools. It literally makes NO SENSE why Governor Abbott wants this so badly except for the campaign money he's getting and special interests of people that have lots of money and want segregation. DO THE RIGHT THING. Provide for the constitutionally guaranteed opportunities for EVERY child. And by the way, I think for many this is frustration over overcrowded schools and the border issue. First of all, Texas is a growing state and if we are making money from the influx of people, we should be helping school districts with those expenses. Plus, immigrants pay taxes when they buy stuff. I have foreign nationals at the school where I teach buying or renting very nice homes. They also pay sales tax which is a major part of the public education funding formula. We need to stop punishing schools for doing the work to teach every child, and who knows, maybe the next cure for cancer will be discovered by one of these children. They are worth the investment!

Shannon Petersen

Self, school counselor

Katy, TX

Representatives, I am writing to you as both an educator and the mother of a daughter with an intellectual disability. I am asking you to please oppose vouchers, ESAs, or any other kind of account that moves public tax dollars away from public schools and diverts them to private, less regulated schools. I do not want a raise if it means I have to accept vouchers and I hope that those of you who continue to oppose vouchers continue to hold strong on this. Vouchers are not fiscally conservative and I cannot, for the life of me, understand why my Republican political party is promoting them. My daughter currently receives an excellent public education. Diverting dollars from her school will most definitely lead to special education cuts that will affect her. The very few private schools in our area that might consider accepting her are a huge burden to our family based on cost, distance, and odd schedules. The small amount offered in vouchers comes no where near the cost and in no way provides for the transportation issues or other barriers. Vouchers only help rich and upper middle class families with children with typical or minimal needs and I believe vouchers will lead to more segregation in our school system.

I have heard many arguments for vouchers. Promotes competition! Gives parents choice! Prevents indoctrination! And on and on and on. The issues at the heart of this are that we, as a society, are letting our children down whether that be through a lack of parental oversight, technology and social media, educators over-sharing their political ideologies, etc. In my opinion, it stems from the lack of community being promoted by all. Public schools used to be a beacon for promoting community but they are slowly being denigrated by private businessmen and extremists with an agenda. Please work on fixing the public education system. Find solutions to fix what we have. Our Texas educators are some of the best in the country but they are burning out due to a lack of support. The idea of vouchers Promoting competition is advocating for some schools to fail while others succeed. We cannot promote a system that allows for any failure when it comes to our children. That is a disservice to children and Texans everywhere.

I know you all are tired and I am sorry that our governor does not understand that a majority of Texans do not want vouchers. I hope that those of you who have continuously said no will continue to do so. I cannot tell you enough how much you are appreciated for representing Texas. Thank you for representing your constituents even at the risk of being threatened and called ridiculous names. Keep up the good fight!

Mary Lee
self
Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers are a scam on the tax-paying public in Texas. There is plenty of data to see the disaster vouchers create. Vouchers will destroy the public school system in the state of Texas. They will starve public schools of much needed funding. They are more expensive than public education, and they create a system where private schools choose to leave students behind while also taking taxpayer funds. They create a system of inequality for all and a coupon for wealthy parents to contribute to their private school tuition and fees. Public schools provide education for all and are accountable to the state. Public school curriculum is secular and approved by the state, created by educators. Vouchers do not contribute to parent choice. Parents have the choice right now to send their children to private school or home school their children if they would like to do so. But our taxes do not fund that exclusionary private education. Our taxes pay for our community schools. Schools with locally elected boards and public schools that are accountable to the tax payers. Our taxes do not pay for exclusionary religious education. Public schools are the great equalizer in our country. Are public schools perfect? No. But they should not be destroyed by a voucher program that give more to the wealthy and deprives others of a quality education. Vouchers are wrong for Texas families. There is no compromise here. Support public schools and communities across this state and say no to vouchers across the board. Right now we are 43rd in public school funding. Instead of wasting time working to destroy the public school system in Texas legislators should insist in fully funding public education for our students and fully supporting that education by saying no to all voucher plans.

Kelly Petty, Ms.
Self
Montgomery, TX

I do not support taking public money from the state to support vouchers for private schools in no way, no shape or no form.

Daniel Henneke Henneke
Self, educator, citizen, proud graduate of public education
Stephenville, TX

Since these funds are being diverted from the public education fund, will the groups who receive these funds be subject to any of the rules and regulations that apply to public schools? Specifically, will a private school be able to refuse to admit a student with disabilities? As it stands now they can. One of the major pushes from Austin in regards to public schools has been about accountability. What standards would the private schools be held to? Now, please acknowledge that these are real concerns and issues, and not just regular citizens recognizing that some politicians are trying to line the pockets of their backers. Of course we know you do that. However, we do wish you would be more subtle about it.

Tishara Jackson

Self

Fort Worth, TX

I am writing as someone who worked in pumice education for 15 years, 11 of which were in Texas. I know firsthand that public schools around the state are under-funded and under-resourced. Even if you look at some of our more affluent school districts, there are areas of student support that are under-funded.

The voucher system - no matter how one chooses to name, define, and describe it - is detrimental to all public school systems. Yes, families have the right to educate their children in the type of school system of their choice (public, private, charter, homeschoool), but that do not give them right to receive money allocated for public schools to do so. A voucher system will only contribute to the ongoing teacher, school counselor, and other school staff shortage; expand public school systems' ever-growing budget shortfalls; and place an even heavier burden on public school employees who delve into their own financial, material, and community resources to provide students with the education that prepares them to be well-informed adults who are able to think critically, formulate opinions, solve complex problems, and positively contribute to society.

Voting against HB1 is not a political decision, it is a practical one. It is a decision in support of a Free & Appropriate PUBLIC Education. This is the moral, ethical, and legal choice to make. Voting 'no' ensure that Texas remains committed to doing what is best for all students. Public Schools do not get to decide which students the teach. We welcome, teach, and support all students - and often with the scarcest of funds and other resources. We provide services and supports that other school systems either cannot or will not provide to students these systems either cannot or will not support. I urge you to support us in these efforts by voting against HB1.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Pamela Clark

Self/retired

Arlington, TX

Taxpayers dollars should be spent only on public schools, NO TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS, it's ludicrous and short-sighted, taking away from much-needed funding out PUBLIC schools need and hurts those in marginalized communities.

Sheila Schatzke, Dr.

Self

Friendswood, TX

As a college professor and dedicated public school educator, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the use of vouchers to fund private schools. While the idea of school choice may seem appealing on the surface, I believe that it can have detrimental effects on our public education system and overall societal well-being.

With my extensive experience in the field of education, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that public schools face, including resource limitations, overcrowded classrooms, and the pressing need for teacher support. Redirecting public funds away from public schools to private institutions exacerbates these challenges, ultimately harming our students and their future prospects.

Moreover, my experience as a college professor has shown me that a strong public education system is the bedrock of a well-prepared and diverse student body. The separation of public and private education through vouchers can lead to greater educational inequality, as private schools often lack the accountability and inclusivity standards that public schools are held to.

In my role as an educator, I have seen the positive impact that public schools have on building inclusive communities and promoting diversity. Public schools have historically served as melting pots, fostering understanding and social cohesion among students from all backgrounds. Diverting resources to private institutions can threaten this sense of collective responsibility for education and further fragment our society.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the potential negative consequences of vouchers for private schools on our public education system, our communities, and the future of our children. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools, ensuring that every child has access to a high-quality education, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Sincerely,
Sheila Schatzke, Ph.D

Tara Bowers

Self

Houston, TX

I oppose the establishment of vouchers to use for charter and or private schools because taking money allotted for public education will defund public education and dismantle it. If charter schools were the answer why are politicians wanting to place charter schools in underserved communities only. Typically, charter schools do not remain open beyond 5 years. Removing a public school from an underserved community depresses it and causes it not to thrive. Taking money from public schools and giving the funds to chartering schools is causing an inequitable situation to the community of learners and creating a have and have not lifestyle. This would create a larger gap between our at risk children and non at risk children. Politicians in a democratic nation. Defunding public education for private and or charter school sends the wrong message. Currently public schools have standards of accountability, state mandated assessments, open enrollment and transparency. Charter and private schools would be subject to less government accountability and lower standards. The answer in part to improve education is allocating funds in specific areas, for example; lowering pupil teacher ratios across the state in elementary schools only. Cuba's pupil teacher ration in kindergarten is 8:2. Kindergarten in Texas ratio might be 22:1 depending if the principal writes to TEW for a waiver to increase class size. TEA always errs on behalf of the administrators without additional inquiries. Cubas literacy rate ranks in the top 6 of other nations in the World. On the otherhand, Texas is 5 from the bottom.. Texas also ranks 45 in infant mortality rate and anything related to child care issues. This ranking has been in existence year after year. Children don't vote so Texas politicians appear not to care. I suggests legislate smaller classes, and provide federal funds for early childhood education in pre-K and kindergarten. I personally think that Abbot is getting a financial kickback if he can turn Texas into a system of vouchers. I oppose everything related to vouchers and not lifting up public Ed.

Nicole Timmons
Self and Texas Public Schools
Commerce, TX

I am a Texas public school graduate, veteran public school educator of 16 years, wife to a public school educator, and mother to four public school children. I am beyond concerned that the governor continues to waste taxpayer money with his voucher scam special sessions. The majority of Texas residents do NOT want any kind of voucher system. Call it what you may...WE DO NOT WANT IT! We want our public schools to be fully funded and our teachers to be paid accordingly. I urge you to lay this topic to rest and focus on upholding our Texas state constitution and fully fund our public schools.

Nicole Timmons
Self and Texas Public Schools
Commerce, TX

NO VOUCHERS! NO ESAs! Even after wasting taxpayer funds and calling a fourth special session, the majority of Texans do NOT want vouchers!!!! We want our public schools fully funded. We want the Texas State Constitution upheld by the leaders charged with running this state.

Terri Fontenot
Texas Educator
Fort Worth, TX

Do not provide public funds for private education. The state is not properly funding public schools, and is holding this money hostage and calling special sessions to get this passed! This is not fair to our children! Teachers need pay raises and those are also being held hostage!! Please fix this! No money for ESA's, but properly fund our public schools with public money. Private schools are a choice of the individual. If public money is being spent then they should not be allowed to deny admission to these schools for things like behavior, and disabilities or special education needs. They should also teach the same standards and take the same state assessments as public schools. No money for ESA's!

Nicole Timmons
Self and Texas Public Schools
Commerce, TX

Please stop. The majority of Texans do not want vouchers. We cannot be bought with empty promise "carrots" as the governor believes. We want our public schools fully funded and our Texas state constitution upheld. Unbelievable that we continue to waste taxpayer money with special sessions!

Nicole F
CST
Dallas, TX

E

Mario Acosta
Retired/self
Pflugerville, TX

No to vouchers!

Suzanne Beaulieu

Self/ Education

Spring, TX

Just as we admire those Texans in our history books who came before us, someday we all will be remembered for what we created in this special land of Texas. We must be careful to take care of our people of today as well as leave great opportunities for the people of tomorrow. Building a robust and fully funded public education system is of utmost importance. Strong systems can stand through the difficulties that we are sure to face as a society. As a body of publicly elected leaders, I ask that you solely and resolutely dedicate public funds to build up our existing, expansive public educational system. I ask that you not agree to allow public funds to further be maneuvered into Educational Savings Accounts, (e.g. school voucher program or parental choice program). Rather, provide the money to our public schools and support the strengthening of our existing programs. I ask that you not support this or any other bill that includes educational savings accounts which send money to private education providers. Our legacy as Texans will be judged by those who inherit this land that we all care so deeply about. What will our legacy be?

Mario Acosta

Retired/self

Pflugerville, TX

No to vouchers!

Jennifer Coke

Self/Retired TX Public Educator

Waco, TX

Do not pass vouchers in any way, shape or form. I don't care what you call them. Public dollars belong to public schools. Period. End of discussion.

Amy Hood

Self

Blanco, TX

Vote NO to vouchers. Fully fund public schools and pay raises for teachers. Raise the \$\$ given to districts per student. Do these things WHILE voting NO TO VOUCHERS

Steve Dickerson

Self / craftsman

Katy, TX

Kill vouchers - it's a loser & can't pass & they are going to get many of you primaried. Independently fund schools & give teacher raises of \$15,000 backloaded to August 2023 with built in raises of \$5,000 more each year

Kim Jenschke

Self/teacher

Stephenville, TX

Say no to HB1. Our PUBLIC children deserve to have THEIR school fully funded and an education for ALL Texas youth.

Theresa S Neman

Self education

Spring, TX

Fully fund Texas Education at the same rate that you are willing to fund the educational savings accounts. Make parents declare their choice for the next school year by April. Default to local public schools.

Or, just say no to all vouchers!!!!!!

Anne Eadie
Self, public school teacher
League city, TX

No to vouchers!!! Public money should stay in public schools where ALL students can get an education regardless of behavior and special needs!

Alicia Smith
Self
Fairfield, TX

I am against ESA's /Vouchers. Public money should not be given to private entities with out accountability to the state on the funds and the entities should have accountability of student achievement equal to public schools.

Darrell Neman
Self educator
Spring, TX

Opportunities at the top leave everyone else behind. Vouchers do not solve any education problems. Instead, fully fund Texas Education.

Marcie Brewer
Self—retired educator
Cypress, TX

Vouchers by any name are a hard NO. Public taxpayer money should go to public schools only, not private schools. Any amount of money you say will be spent to help support school districts is not enough and not reliable. Parents have always had a choice of where their children should attend school, or in more recent years, homeschool. Our state should never be giving money to parents to help offset private school tuition. Private schools are not held to the same standards or have to offer special services. They can pick and choose their students and can kick out students while keeping the money they were paid. The governor should stop threatening those voting against it and stop holding public education and educators hostage over this. How many special sessions is it going to take for the governor to get the message?
No to vouchers in any form!!

Cindy Strode
Self
Fate, TX

Please continue to stand strong against school vouchers. Do not allow Governor Abbott to bully you and our public school system of Texas.

Mary Woodard
Self
Desoto, TX

Public money should go towards public schools that are overseen by duly elected local school boards. I encourage you to vote against this bill.

Brenda Mendoza
Self
Houston, TX

I strongly oppose school vouchers and urge my state representative to vote "no" on their implementation in the upcoming special session. Our public education system should be adequately funded and teachers should receive raises with the surplus in budget.

Ashley Bachmayer
Self - Public School Teacher
Temple, TX

Vouchers are no good for Texas public school students. Just say no.

Mary Franklin
Self Teacher
Llano, TX

Please support our public schools by voting against vouchers in all forms! It is unfair to give public money to private schools or individuals and have there be no accountability at all. Public schools must answer to the state and so should anyone who receives public funds! Give public schools the money they deserve and are legally entitled to!

Carol Berglund
Self/sales representative
Katy, TX

NO VOUCHERS! Public funds should remain designated for PUBLIC schools that offer education to ALL students. Schools receiving public funds should have the same requirements and standards and operate as public schools—educate students with disabilities, administer state testing, follow TEKS TEA guidelines, etc. Parents who CHOOSE to send their children to private schools should pay for it or apply for scholarships through the private foundations or religious organizations that operate such schools. Public funds do not belong in private schools. Please fund raises for our PUBLIC school teachers and keep public funds with our public schools!

Tina Burge
Certified Professional Educator
Montgomery, TX

No.

Melissa Pierce
Self - public educator
San Antonio, TX

I do NOT support ESA or vouchers.

Rachel Friedrich
Self
San Antonio, TX

NO VOUCHERS!!! It doesn't matter what you call them, they take much needed money away from public education. Public education services the vast majority of children to build a future for Texas. Please do not cave to the constant Special Session bullying trying to pass a political agenda. The children of Texas do not need vouchers.

Shelby Zarro
Self
Aubrey, TX

No vouchers! Support public schools!

Shirley Cash
Retired Teachers
San Angelo, TX

Please say NO to vouchers!!!

Jolynda McGrath, Mrs

Self

Montgomery, TX

ESA's have NO PLACE IN TEXAS! No matter how many special sessions you call! Texas is currently at the bottom of all 50 states in per pupil funding and teacher pay. Clearly as a state we struggle to finance 2 systems, charters and public schools. Now you want to fund another system with zero accountability or oversight? If private schools are going to accept state tax dollars, they need to also accept state accountability and testing; STAAR, A-F ratings, required transparency of every dollar earned and spent regardless of where it came from. Why Governor Abbott continues to push this is beyond me! Texas has said NO to vouchers over and over! And we will continue to say no over and over!

Ashley Hermann

Texans for Public Education

Anna, TX

Vouchers and educational savings accounts do not belong in Texas. Please support public schools and give teachers raises that are not tied to ESAs.

Sarah Nichols

Self

Ingram, TX

Please vote no to any form of education savings account program, aka vouchers. It will not help all students in Texas and will bring segregation back to the forefront of our society. Students receiving special education services will not see any benefit from this program. They will be left out and behind. Private schools get to pick and choose who they accept and have no accountability. Until they accept all students and are held to the same torturous accountability system as public schools, public dollars should not be handed to private schools. Please vote no to vouchers.

Nousheen Ahmed

Self

Spring, TX

I do not want tax dollars used for private education.

Amanda Melton

Self, Teacher

Bluff Dale, TX

Say NO to vouchers!!!!

Angela Groves

self/Teacher

Fort Worth, TX

No Voucher

No ESA

Fully fund public schools

Debra Haer

Self

Richardson, TX

You are holding the students and teachers hostage for your unwanted voucher bill, unwanted by any name. When you should be funding public education, raising teacher salaries and taking care of all the state's children instead of a privileged few with no accountability. You should be ashamed of yourselves. Separate funding public education from your voucher bill, if you have the guts.

Tonja Davis, Ms
Self
West Columbia, TX

No to vouchers or ESA or anything like it. NO. And teachers definitely deserve a fair salary for their education and training and experience and job duties.

James Payne
Self
Llano, TX

Educational Savings accounts are bad for Texas. If all the rules and the amount are exactly the same for public and private schools, then a conversation can occur. If you aren't going to make private schools follow the rules, then don't make the public schools follow those rules and vice versa.

Lisa Chambers
Self-- I am an educator!
Dublin, TX

Please please....help public schools!!! Say no to vouchers, educational savings accounts, or whatever name you deem them! I'm working my tail off to educate today's children..tomorrow's public workforce! Stand up for teachers, students, and public school!!!!!!

Tasha Yarbrough
Self
Channing, TX

No to vouchers or any education savings account! Public funds should not go to fund private schools with no accountability and no open enrollment policies. Vouchers/ESA further the divide between the haves and the have nots. Fund Public schools and fund teachers. Vouchers/ESA further the propaganda of the blame of teachers and public schools.

Kim Allen
Self
San Antonio, TX

No to vouchers

SUDI RANDOING, Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Susan D. Randoing, Psy.D.
Richardson, TX

I am opposed to vouchers (esa) in any form.

Shaleah Rose
Self
Flower Mound, TX

As a Christian School graduate, a Public School Retiree, and a current private school teacher, I feel that Public Tax dollars should remain in Public Schools. Over 90% of TX students depend on local Public Schools. Money without the same accountability is not a Conservative value. Please vote no to any form of ESA. Texas Public Schools should be fully funded. They are vital to the common good.

Katie Rojo

Self; parent, educational publishing professional

Round Rock, TX

Texans do not want public dollars diverted away from public schools. Texans do want to fund public schools and pay teachers well.

Lindsey Johnson

Self, teacher

New Braunfels, TX

Public funds do not belong in private schools. I strongly oppose vouchers and Education Savings Accounts in all forms. Vouchers will harm rural and low income schools.

Judy McMillan

Self/retired

San Antonio, TX

Read my lips! NO!!! N-O!!! Absolutely not, no way, move on!!!

The Texas Constitution calls for support and maintenance of an efficient system of free public schools. The US Constitution calls for separation of church and state. Moving public money to private schools (almost all of which in Texas are religious in nature) is a violation of the latter and weakens said public schools making the latter less efficient.

Furthermore, the proposal to give each child who leaves public schools \$10k is outrageous and could lead to a mass exodus for profit! Public school students each net their schools only \$6160, significantly less. Sounds like our governor is doing everything possible to violate the Texas Constitution by robbing our TX ISDs and turning the money over to parents and religious schools.

Shame shame shame!!!!

Mark Turner

Self

Katy, TX

36-year VETERAN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER here. I speak in agreement with thousands of Texas public school educators. NO VOUCHERS or EDUCATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS OF ANY KIND!!

Grace Williams, Mrs.

Parent- retired teacher- SLP working part time in public schools

New Boston, TX

No vouchers still means no vouchers! It will not change! Stop calling special sessions just because you don't get your way. This is crazy!

No vouchers- ever!

Julie Neyland

Self teacher

Thornton, TX

Please say no to vouchers!! Fully fund our public schools! Education savings accounts are only vouchers with a fancy name. Vouchers will destroy public schools especially in the rural areas.

Julie Neyland
Self teacher
Thornton, TX
Say no to vouchers.

Shanna Reynolds
Self
Sadler, TX

It's time to move on from vouchers/educational accounts, it does NOT benefit all or even most of Texas students. Fully funding public schools, including any and all past/present/future mandates set in motion. Furthermore, it's time to give all educators the pay raise they desperately need and deserve. You holding these two items hostage is absolutely ridiculous and hurting public students, teachers, and districts. DO BETTER FOR ALL STUDENTS AND STAFF!

Jennifer Bassier
Self
Lewisville, TX

No to vouchers, Yes to Public Schools!! Yes to funding public school teachers, staff and retirees! NO to vouchers!!! Texas should not be known as one of the lowest paying teacher salaries in the US! Texas should not be known for taking taxpayer money to fund private schools that most people can't afford! NO to vouchers for private schools! Keep our taxpayer money where it is needed in public schools!!!

Heather Beck
Self - teacher
Rusk, TX

ESAs/vouchers should not be up for discussion again. Taxpayer money has no business in private schools. Properly funding and supporting our public schools is in the best interest of all Texans. These ESAs are in the best interest of those who already have means to send their kids to private schools. We should want our public schools to thrive, yet it seems like the end goal is to destroy this constitutional right and privatize every aspect of education to make it profitable. That's not what education is or should be. I am a rural public school teacher and these ESAs will do nothing for our kids. There are no private schools around. People move to our district to be a part of our amazing public schools. Support public schools.

Andria Castillo, Ms
Self
Austin, TX

I am against any form of payment for private education whether it's called a voucher or a savings plan. We need to be investing in our public schools and innovating in our public schools. We need to pay our teachers a livable wage. We need support all students regardless of their income status and developing educational needs. Let those who can afford private schools pay for it on their own. They already do. Other states who have allowed savings accounts or vouchers are already saying it is starting to drain their states financial resources. If that is the future then it is fiscally irresponsible. Public schools are better investment for our future. Didn't most of the Texas legislators go to Texas public schools and now y'all want to gut them more. Make it make sense. I do not support school savings accounts or vouchers of any kind.

Paul Ahrens

Kids R Kids Seven Lakes

Katy, TX

I have been involved in childcare for the past 20 years. This fall is the first time my school enrollment has dropped from the previous spring. Our enrollment is down by 21% from May 2023 to September 2023. Mainly we are down in our Pre-k classes (ages 3-4 years old) and our after school care (ages 6-12 years old). The local ISD (Katy, TX) offers free Pre-K and discounted pricing on afterschool care. They have no mortgage payments and no property tax payments to cover.

Note that only 60% of children in the state enter kindergarten ready for school AND that less than 50% of our 3rd grade students can read at grade level AND when I hear Commissioner Morath of the Texas Education Agency tell our Legislature that less than 50% of all our Texas students can read at grade level, I am OUTRAGED at the thought of providing billions of additional dollars to the institution that is achieving these horrible results WITH NO CONNECTION TO IMPROVED STUDENT OUTCOMES!

Children that attend Pre-k programs at my school enter Katy ISD Kindergarten academically at a first grade, six month level and reading at a 3rd grade level. Many test successfully for Katy ISD Gifted and Talented program. This benefit is being crippled by the ISD's offering FREE Pre-K and their programs not being at the academic level as ours. How does this strategy help our state education program improve?

This bill will allow the public school districts to increase their pre-k enrollment by adding staff children. Many districts are already doing that. After the qualifying children are enrolled, the ISD's are opening the enrollment to staff children and non-qualifying children.. Private Early Learning Centers are being forced to compete with the ISD's PLUS having to pay the ISD's property taxes. This clearly is a pay to play system.

It is urgent for the education savings accounts in this bill to include Pre-K students (ages 3-4) to allow Private Pre-K programs to compete with the ISD's. This bill is overly favorable to the ISD's. I was born and raised in a small Texas town (population approx. 2800) where we had both a private catholic school and a Public ISD. The local ISD rating is very good every year. Families are not going to be transferring their children from a very highly rated public ISD to attend a private school, particularly in rural areas where school activities, such as sports and band, are a big part of the school and community.

In conclusion, I am requesting that the committee approves HB 1 and includes Pre-K level private programs as being eligible for the Education Savings Accounts PLUS encourage the iSD's to work in partnership with the local private learning centers. Thank you for your time.

Jimmy Griffith, Mr.

Self

Fort Worth, TX

As a proud Texan and property owner, I ask that you continue to vote to ensure zero public funding of private education in Texas. The evidence is clear: When public schools are strong, communities are strengthened and property values remain high, but when public schools are not strong, communities are weakened and property values suffer. Implementing a voucher program and/or approving ESAs will certainly pull necessary funding from public schools which benefit all Texans, and shift those funds to private schools which cannot, even with the best of intentions, benefit all Texas students. Such a transfer of funding will result in lower public school performance, will negatively impact the education of most Texans, will negatively impact our communities, and will ultimately erode the value of our properties in Texas. Please continue to ensure no public funding of private education in Texas.

Zack Ezer

Self, Manufacturer's Representative

La Grange, TX

My wife and I have two young children in elementary school in La Grange TX. While the school faculty is great, we have become increasingly alarmed by the content of the library books in addition to what substitute teachers are telling the students. I have been to several school board meetings and one thing has become abundantly clear; the public school system is a slow moving leviathan with many special interests at play. My wife and I have had many discussions about pulling our kids out of school to be home schooled. Many of our close friends already have. Please pass this bill to allow us to direct funds, the funds we have paid into the system, to follow our children, so we as their parents can create the best environment for their future outcomes.

Donna Stevens

Myself

North Richland Hills, TX

I am absolutely opposed to any bill that provides vouchers of Any kind. It basically will defund our public schools. We need to work to establish the best public schools in the world and to fully fund them! The workforce commission is opposed to this! Most Chamber of Commerce entities are opposed to this! Retired educators and active teachers are opposed to this! It will decimate our rural communities! There is Already a wide array of choices in the public schools! Let's fully fund our public schools and develop a workforce to be proud of! Please do not vote for any type of vouchers!

Larry Castleberry

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Teachers need more

Margaret Kanyusik

self retired

San Antonio, TX

NO to vouchers. Vouchers are tuition "percent off" coupons for rich people with healthy kids. You are scamming poor folks who don't realize that the private school won't reduce their tuition to the amount of the coupon, no free lunch, no free bus, no free educational assessment, no free special ed teacher, no free after school care. Fully fund public schools to reduce class size, pay teachers commensurate to the work they do and for all the extra time they put in to prepare their classrooms, pay out of pocket for school supplies etc. Put that voucher money into the schools and watch the teachers make magic. NO to vouchers.

Paz Family

Self/teacher

Boerne, TX

Please pass HB1. We want family choice.

Susan Trentham

Self - PTA Member in Flower Mound TX

Flower Mound, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. The vouchers and inadequate funding will impact Marcus High School campus as student-teacher ratios increase and programs are cut.

Miriam Schoenfield

self

Austin, TX

I am opposed to vouchers for private schools. Public money should go to public schools.

Jennifer Thomas Bass

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers are not the answer to education in our state. The answer lies in properly funding education for all through public school funding. This Bill will further divide the wealthy from the economically disadvantaged. It is one more strike at those who have not and money in the pockets of those who would choose private educate for their children, and can afford private education, without any funding from the state. Is the funding of private schools discrimination by a government entity? I can't wait for the Supreme Court to come knocking on the door of the Texas Legislature.

Don McGowan, Mr.

Self - Teacher

Friendswood, TX

Vouchers will drain much needed money and resources away from public education. There is no accountability for charter and private schools and they are failing to educate and close at a much faster pace than public schools.

As it is now many mandates to public education go unfunded.

Teachers need to know they are valued. Most of our best teachers are leaving the profession due to financial reasons. This will only get worse.

James Bridges, Rev.

self, retired certified school psychologist and retired clergyman

Fate, TX

H.B. 1: I am extremely opposed to the use of public tax dollars to support students attending private and parochial schools in Texas. I believe such is a violation of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. I do not object to students attending private schools, but their families need to be able to pay the tuition on their own, not with help from tax dollars which ought to be used to support public schools in Texas. I urge all state legislators to vote this bill down because of its proposed misuse of citizen tax dollars. Thank you.

Stefanie Sparks

Self

Katy, TX

No to HB1! Vouchers hurt the children of our educational system! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have equal access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Claire Early

Self, parent and CPA

Allen, TX

Please consider our children and the future of this state. Well-funded public education for ALL the children of Texas is so important for the well-being of our state.

Rachael Curry, Ms

Self/ Architecture

Plano, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and on behalf of my nephew who has nonverbal autism with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication.

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Rachael Curry

1120 Gordon Oaks Dr

Plano, TX 75023

214-274-8812

rthequeen@hotmail.com

Kaci Neukom

Self -- PTA Member of Hightower Elementary in Plano

Plano, TX

Vouchers will hurt our children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Add how vouchers and inadequate funding will impact your campus, district, and community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase, or programs be cut? YES -- all of these things are already happening in our area. I went to school here as a child and I am saddened to see how it has flipped.

Cassie Knapp

Parent

Buda, TX

I disagree with school vouchers, public education funding should stay in public education. Those monies should Not be used towards grant programs aka vouchers that can then be used towards private education, homeschool education, etc.

I believe that Texas needs to do a better job in funding their current public education system and NOT take money away from the current public education system. This takes away systems that are vital to our students. If we want our students to be successful and thrive we need to provide an environment where this can be done.

HB1 is an attempt to destroy the very foundation that the Texas Public Education system was built on.

Renee Rice

self

Houston, TX

Please do not let ESA's pass. How is it that you can want to fund private schools when our public schools are suffering? With all this surplus right now, PLEASE make the RIGHT decision and raise our basic allotment by \$1000. the measly \$75 raise is NOT ENOUGH! Do the right thing and fund our PUBLIC schools.

Janelle Boone

self -- secondary teacher

Mt. Pleasant, TX

As many teachers already have, I urge you to reject the voucher system. Quality education can be had in a public school with the proper funding and accountability. Many schools -- especially rural schools -- are already struggling to adequately fund classrooms and need every penny we can get. A voucher system will divert much-needed money from public schools, leaving the students who remain there in the lurch. The proposed amount for vouchers won't even cover 1 year of tuition for many private schools, so it will unnecessarily take money away from public schools that may never be used. I am a high school English teacher and I require critical reading, sophisticated writing, and higher-level thinking in my non-Honors public school classroom. My students read and analyze Thomas Jefferson, Henry David Thoreau, Arthur Miller, Lorraine Hansberry, N. Scott Momaday, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and more. They are exposed to the ideas that shaped our country and analyze the rhetoric used in seminal texts. They are being taught to be critical-thinking leaders of tomorrow, all with a public school education. Yet we are struggling; I have to buy paper, staplers, tape, post-its, and many other materials out of my own pocket. That is money out of my child's mouth (also a public school student) and into my classroom for my much-deserving students. I am not the only teacher who does this. Teachers all over Texas are sacrificing for their students because they love them and care about the future of our great state. Please don't make the situation worse by accepting the voucher system. We need your support to continue to educate our children. Thank you.

Carolyn Dower, Mrs

self

Austin, TX

Taxpayer money should NOT go to private schools. Our kids deserve public schools fully funded to help them thrive. Fund public schools. NO vouchers or "educational savings accounts." Please vote for Texas children. VOTE NO on HB 1.

Mary Kobdich

self / retired

Dallas, TX

Let parents decide what school is best for their child. Give them the financial ability to choose a private school or stick with their local public school.

Bernice Gonzalez

Self

Little elm, TX

Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Bethany Metzger

Self - IT analyst

Austin, TX

Public schools are already struggling financially and need so much more, and this takes more money from them! Please don't do this to our students and Texas' future

Laura Graham

Self

San Antonio, TX

I support this bill and want it to pass.

Misoran Yang

Self

Austin, TX

Please do not pass HB 1. This bill includes one time bonuses to educators and increases in per student allotment, but in the future, it will in turn decrease funding currently available in public schools by turning students away. Especially as being part of Austin ISD, we've suffered from our tax dollars going out of our district causing our public schools and teachers to be unable to keep with inflations in our city and pushing them to leave the district. This bill will worsen the situation and that will jeopardize the future of public schools in Austin as well as districts in rural areas.

OCEAN MIERZWA

Self - Parent with children in public school

AUSTIN, TX

Vouchers will divert funding away from public school programs for the benefit of an elite FEW - rather than supporting, investing, and improving existing public school programs that would benefit ALL children in Texas.

Public schools need full support and financial backing - need to invest in ALL children, not just a FEW

Kelsey Cornelius

Self - parent

Pflugerville, TX

Parents need to have the choice for where to send their kids to school! Their education can either open or close doors for the rest of their lives.

Jenneffier Parke

self

Humble, TX

Dear Rep. Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

I'm writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session. Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much-needed funds to go toward a voucher scheme. Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept. Let's work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement — not vouchers. We appreciate the support the committee has shown so far for public education and the over 5 million Texas public school students.

Erin Caffey

Self - PTA member at Deerpark Middle School and McNeil High School

Austin, TX

Vouchers are not a good plan! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

The teachers at my children's schools are struggling to make ends meet - within the classroom and in their personal life with their subpar salaries. I do not want to lose any of our great teachers to other states who can find better pay and a better cost of living elsewhere. Please stand up to our governor and remind him that the people of Texas want to keep our public schools strong.

Rosa Puga, Teacher Asst

SBISD

Houston, TX

Please consider my petition for HB1

Erin Thompson

Self/Public high school counselor

Houston, TX

I am asking that every house member vote against HB1. Any bill that diverts money away from public schools is harmful to our state. If the State is capable of giving money away to private school entities and homeschool families, then they are more than capable of FULLY funding public schools. How are we as a state comfortable with giving away our money to institutions that will not be held accountable for how the money is utilized? Testing the children who use the funds is not holding the private schools accountable for how the money is spent, it's only holding the children responsible. To say that HB 1 is an unfair and irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars is an understatement. Please vote against any bill that includes any form of ESA or vouchers.

Elisabeth Grimm

Self. Homemaker, educator and mom of six.

Irving, TX

Parents need better choices for education in our great state of Texas. As a mother of six children who has homeschooled, taught in the local Irving public school and made great financial sacrifices to pay for private school - I am asking that our representatives pass HB1. ESAs would give parents the freedom and ability to make the best educational choices for their kids.

Susan Rendon
Parent of students in Argyle ISD
Flower Mound, TX
November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Susan Rendon

Gregory Bosley
self university worker
Austin, TX

I am strongly opposed to HB1 and school vouchers. The way to fix Texas schools is by fully funding our public schools, and paying our teachers and school workers a decent wage.

Catarina Wylie
Self
PITTSBURG, TX

Texas Legislators, your constituents are becoming increasingly outraged that yet another special session is being called (costing taxpayers millions!) to try again to ram through a school voucher bill. Tweaks have been made in the new bill to make it more palatable to some, but the bottomline aim is the same: fund private schools with public school dollars. Rural school districts, especially, see the damage this will do to public education. Texas ranks in the bottom 10 states in per-student funding at just \$6,160 per student. Given state governmental leaders like to boast Texas is a business friendly state, how can we be so shortsighted? We need a well educated workforce to attract new business, especially in an increasingly tech-oriented work environment. With a \$30 billion surplus at the state level, there's no reason we can't give Texas teachers a cost-of-living raise and invest more in Texas students. Siphoning off money makes no sense and, at best, serves only a narrow sliver of students. We can do the math!

Access to a quality public education is in the best interests of our children, our state and our country. It's one of the bedrocks of America's ability to compete in a global economy. Stop treating public education like a political football. Your constituents, especially rural constituents, are SICK AND TIRED of it. Our children are not part of anyone's personal political agenda.

TJ Turner
Self; Attorney
Austin, TX

Providing tax dollars to private schools is unconstitutional. Providing those dollars while our own public schools are drastically underfunded is criminal. I applaud your efforts to include public Ed funding increase in the bill, but lament your decision to cave on vouchers. This is the toe in the door. Please consider stripping voucher program from this bill and standing firm on the issue.

Olivia Mayberry
PTA TX Congress 7764 - Spring Creek Elem
Dallas, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Our district (RISD in Dallas County) is currently operating in a budget deficit because our schools have not been properly funded. Our district is strong, engages and high achieving, however our budget committee is currently evaluating whether cuts need to be made that will certainly hurt children and their education. Our community is against cutting jobs of any educational professionals, and the idea that we'd have to do this is shameful and defies logic considering our states' budget surplus. Please fund our public schools!

Donnita Cunningham
Self
Big Spring, TX

As a former teacher and a strong supporter of public education, I am asking that no public funds or savings accounts be given for private education or home-schooling. All Texas students are eligible for public education at no cost. If students choose other settings such as private school or home-schooling, it should be their responsibility to fund their choices. Please vote against this bill as it is harmful to public education and to the state of Texas's financial stability.

Shelley Weber, Ms
Self- administration
San Antonio, TX

As a private and public school mama, DO NOT PASS anything that looks like a voucher. Public dollars for public schools ONLY.

Fully fund public schools and let the private schools deal with their own issues. NO VOUCHERS.

Cris Mullins
public school parent, lawyer
Houston, TX

Vouchers are not an effective use of my tax dollars! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. Texas ranks in the bottom 10 states for per-student funding of public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Due to rising costs per student and lack of adequate increases in funding per student, my district is cutting programs, freezing hiring, and considering closing several advanced academic as well as IB programs. Diverting funds directly affects the current education and future success of Texas students, putting us further behind in the hyper-competitive global job market.

Bryan Halmark, Dr
Sealy ISD
Sealy, TX

As a father of two public school students and the husband of a teacher, I am concerned about HB1. It does not create equal accountability for public schools and private schools. In my opinion, we should have no vouchers of any kind but vouchers without equal accountability is a non-conversation starter. Furthermore, HB funds vouchers at over \$10K while only increasing the basic allotment to \$6,650. This voucher conversation is growing old and people will be held accountable and I say that as a conservative. Be a champion for ALL kids and fully fund public education and forget about vouchers.

Samuel Graham
Self, Hotel General Manager
San Antonio, TX

I support this bill and would like to see it pass.

Courtney Stubblefield
Self
Fort Worth, TX

As a parent of two children in the public education system, as well as a PTA and booster club mom, I strongly oppose this bill. I believe a strong, robust public education system is important to grow a strong, functioning population. This bill would hurt public education in this state by further reducing funds. Furthermore, any entity receiving public education funds should be held to the same standards and accountability as public schools (testing, regulations, etc.).

Joshua Hebert

self

Austin, TX

I remain opposed to these expansive efforts to implement unworkable voucher programs across the state of Texas. Vouchers will make education separate and unequal: separate because it will promote a society in which parents are encouraged to send their kids to schools that align with their ideological, sectarian, or ethnic and cultural preferences, and unequal because it will subsidize those with means to pursue private schools, while leaving everyone else in the rump public schools, or dependent upon low-cost, low-quality private schools that will face only a fraction of public schools' accountability. Vouchers will make Texas a more angry, more polarized, and more unequal place, all while doing nothing to improve educational outcomes for the students who need it most.

Please do not impose this massive, ideological experiment statewide. If, nonetheless, you feel compelled to proceed, then I implore you to limit your efforts to a pilot program. Implementing this untested, poorly-designed scheme statewide is unbelievably reckless, and risks seriously undermining Texas' future.

Heather Washington

SELF

KELLER, TX

It's crucial to understand that vouchers have a detrimental impact on children's education. Before implementing programs such as ESAs or Vouchers, it's essential to provide adequate funding for public schools and support teachers. In my opinion, there is nothing more important than having strong public schools to help every child reach their potential. As a supporter of quality education, I endorse policies and policymakers that ensure all students have access to well-funded, high-quality, and appropriately regulated public schools.

If schools receive inadequate funding, the effects will be felt throughout the campus, district, and community. Schools may have to shut down, and student-teacher ratios could increase, leading to a decline in the quality of education. Additionally, essential programs may be cut, negatively affecting the overall academic performance of students.

PRIORITY #1 FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS, NOT VOUCHERS!

Rodney Penny, MAJ

Myself

San Antonio, TX

No school vouchers. Don't rob our public schools or public money for private schools.

Joanna Stonesifer

Self, homemaker

Boerne, TX

Dear Education Committee members,

I urge you to please pass HB 1. The parents of Texas need more support and freedom for the education of their children. This world has many problems, but parents are the solution. Thank you

Elizabeth Jordan

Self

San Antonio, TX

It is time to stop playing politics with the education of Texas students. It is time to fully fund the Texas constitutionally mandated public schools. Our schools are failing our students because of a lack of funding. There is no place for subsidies for private school education in our public school funding budget.

Stephanie Cantrell

TRTA, myself, many people

Arlington, TX

HB 1 house compromise voucher bill. Bringing vouchers into the states school districts will ruin public education. The smaller rural districts will lose much funding and won't be able to recover that money. Other districts will lose money that should be there to help maintain the schools as they are. Our schools are in deplorable shape, physically, and need updating. This session should be giving more money to update schools and pay teachers much better, not deconstruct their funding.

William Gooding

Self

Flower Mound, TX

This is going to decimate public schools and only benefit the wealthy who have already made the choice to send their children to private school.

Adeela Syeda

Self PTA mom

Plano, TX

Absolutely no vouchers!
public money belongs in public schools

Donna Landry, Mrs.

self--parent and guardian of a son with IDD (Intellectual and Developmental Disability)

Glen Rose, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Elizabeth Pacheco
Self Retail Manager
San Antonio, TX

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Sincerely,
Elizabeth A Pacheco
3614 Mohegan Dr
San Antonio Tx 78228

Wendy Sanders
Morgan Mill ISD
Stephenville, TX

I appreciate the fact that school funding and vouchers have been tied together in this one bill. I assume that is to prevent the passage of either one. As a public school superintendent, I am one of the biggest supporters of public education. However it is my hope that neither of these bills pass this session. Obviously a voucher bill is against everything I believe in. However I believe that the failure to pass any additional school funding will be the proverbial nail in the coffin for our governor who very obviously does NOT support public education. It is time to vote out anyone in our legislature who supports vouchers and therefore does not support public education, and that is exactly what I will be focusing on educating our community about between now and the March primaries.

Arif Rahman, Dr.

Self

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

We already see the potential effects of this bill with funding shortages, cutting GT programs for our children, and increasing school size to accommodate closure of other campuses. All of this will be worsened if HB1 is passed.

Abelardo Escobar

Self

Roma, TX

After being an Educator for 31 years and counting, I have seen how much public school setting has evolved into a more complex and challenging field for future educators and students. The evaluation process has begun to place stricter guidelines for teachers across Texas. College readiness for those looking to pursue teaching careers are facing much more difficult challenges while taking their certification exams. I strongly feel Teachers as whole are facing much more challenges such as cost of living, school funding per capita, and stressful managing circumstances such as student learning moral alongside state mandated college readiness requirements. I oppose private school vouchers for the reason being mainly based on accountability. While on the other hand, public schools must meet criteria or lose out on funding even more. Thank you.

Kathryn Mangum

Self- Hutto Elementary PTA Board Member

Hutto, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Christie Andrews

self, public school teacher

Graham, TX

Please vote NO on any bills containing vouchers. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private or religious institutions. Vouchers will hurt public schools, which need to be equipped to educate any student who walks through the door regardless of income, religious belief, language, ability or disability. Why have we stopped believing as a society that we are collectively at our best when we provide FREE, APPROPRIATE EDUCATION via taxpayer dollars TO ALL CHILDREN? Why are we considering taking money and diverting it to private schools, depriving needed funds to public schools where there are children who may not want or be eligible to attend private schools? I am incredibly frustrated that Governor Abbott is not listening to his legislators and is PUTTING WORDS IN THE MOUTHS OF HIS CONSTITUENTS. Many, many Texans do not want vouchers.

James Foreman

self

Friendswood, TX

If I, as a teacher, have to continue to tolerate an inadequate salary in order to keep school vouchers out of my state, then so be it. I wish I could say that I'm surprised the Governor would hold our funding hostage to get his way, but it seems like most of the Republican politicians have turned their back on the will of their constituents. Look at the election results in Ohio this week. Consider it a warning. Republican politicians forcing unpopular legislation down our throats will be the final straw that turns Texas blue next election. Ditch the school vouchers. Let the Governor suffer the consequences when 370,000 angry Texas teachers turn up at the polls next year.

Lori Bethancourt
Self - PTA member
Houston, TX

I am concerned about the funding for our wonderful public school system, Spring Branch ISD in Houston. Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. We are facing a huge deficit to our district budget for the next year. Vouchers and inadequate funding will directly impact my campus, district, and community. We are on the verge of schools closing, larger student-teacher ratios, and programs being cut.

Catherine Knight
Self - legal
Addison, TX

I am OPPOSED to school vouchers - including ESAs - in ANY FORM BY ANY NAME AND IN ANY FASHION WHATSOEVER.
I support public schools.

Ryan Buck
Self - PTA member at Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Vouchers are 100% wrong for the state of Texas and the Texas education system. We need more teachers in public schools, not diverting funds to help those who choose private schools. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers will drive good teachers away from public schools and children will continue to suffer. Lack of quality public school options will also make TX a much less attractive state for businesses and business leaders, thereby hurting local economies.

Shaun Wegscheid, Mr

self

Houston, TX

Vouchers make educational options worse. Vouchers make the future of the Texas workforce worse. The only guaranteed option for every family is public education. Public education is not being adequately funded. Texas schools are limited to around 10k per kid. Private schools can charge 20k, 30k, 40k, etc. Of the top 10 private schools in Texas, 8 of them are more than 30k per year. Of the top 60 private schools, only 3 of them are less than 12k per year. If 10k is adequate for education, why does private charge so much?

In 2016, our own supreme court said that the state's school funding system was Byzantine, ossified, and that our children deserve better. The concerns about the quality of public education in Texas are the failure of our politicians who craft the laws and policies that affect our public schools. I support policies and politicians who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded public schools. I will specifically vote against any policy and politician who is not interested in supporting the youth and future of every Texas child.

You are elected to work for Texas. So work for Texas; work for every Texas family and the future of our workforce. Pushing vouchers instead of public education shows ulterior motives and a failure of Texas leadership. Urban, suburban, and rural districts are already suffering under the choices our politicians have made. Alpine, Forst Davis, Marfa, Fort Bend, Spring Branch, Katy, and others have spoken out about how our politicians choices are hurting education. Districts are already looking at closing programs, campuses, increasing student/teacher ratio, etc, because of the inadequate funding of the past couple years and the current trajectory our state leadership is pushing.

You design and craft the policy that directly affects our schools.

So choose to craft policy that makes our future shine, instead of hurting our children and future workforce.

Many of us are watching and will adjust our choices accordingly at the voting box.

We care about our state, our children, and our future workforce.

The question is, do you?

Jason Oliver

self

Haslet, TX

HB 1 is in reference to so called "school choice" and includes references to producing an education savings account for all families with students in Texas. I DO NOT support this legislation and feel that any similar bill will negatively impact the educational well being of our communities. Also the notion that this type of language be tied to the "certification, compensation, and health coverage" of any school system employee is a pathetic and dastardly move by the writers of this legislation.

Janice Harris

Self

Rockwall, TX

Please oppose school vouchers. Please oppose hb1.

Regina Gutierrez-Garcia, Mrs.

Self

Houston, TX

Please represent all families and vote NO TO VOUCHERS!

My district, Spring Branch ISD is already seeing shocking effects of inadequate funding by the state. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers.

I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Vouchers steal money from already struggling districts and only serve to line the pockets of the people who already afford private education.

My family resides in one of the wealthier neighborhoods in the city and we have been proud to support our public schools for all children to develop. Please don't be a part of the legacy that destroys this! PLEASE DO NOT SUPPORT VOUCHERS.

Thank you

Teresa Farrow

none

KELLER, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Teresa Farrow

PO BOX 2135 Keller TX 76244

tjf9499@verizon.net

Michele Snyder

Self

Amarillo, TX

I strongly oppose school vouchers due to the lack of sufficient funding our public schools already face. Strong public schools are the right of every Texas child, and diverting funds to private schools who do not have to show any accountability is a reckless use of tax funds.

Bonnie Tuey, Mrs.

Retired teacher/counselor

Lufkin, TX

Vouchers/ ESA's are a political move by Abbott to destroy public education. Why is he so determined to hurt the children of Texas? He has made political promises to his rich donors. He will sacrifice our children for political gain and he doesn't care.

H Wooten-Marshall

Self / Psychologist

FLOWER MOUND, TX

Firmly a NO to vouchers per my perspective as a developmental psychologist seeing children who desperately need public education. The families of children with low income and special education disabilities cannot afford private schools no matter if you give them a voucher, as a voucher pays at most 1/3 of the cost. Therefore, HB 1 is an effort to make it seem like legislators care about these kids by saying it will be based on income and disability status, but the reality is, HB 1 is a political maneuver to try to make vouchers more palatable. HB 1 WILL NOT HELP DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN, so NO!

Daniel Dower

Self, educator

Longview, TX

I am 100% in favor of this bill as it expands parental choice (more choice is always better) and it protect public education. I encourage passage.

Jacqueline Jenvey, Mrs

Self

Houston, TX

I strongly oppose ESAs. Public funds should not go to private institutions not held to the same level of accountability as public schools. Their function is to siphon monies from the already underfunded public education system. It is atrocious that the state has a budget surplus, some of which are from recapture payments, and the state has not fully funded public education. It is the states constitutional duty to fund public education. Stop wasting time and money with special sessions when it is obvious ESAs are not what the public wants. Do your duty and fully fund public education.

Candice Goswick, RN, BSN

Self, Registered Nurse

Robinson, TX

As a Texas resident and parent, I support HB 1 and would like to see it passed.

Helena Dobay
All Texans
San Antonio, TX

The TX Constitution calls for the state of TX to provide an adequate public school system for all Texas students. Public schools do more at a lower cost. They offer transportation, sports, nurses, counselors, vocational training, after school programs, & accept special ed. and disadvantaged students. There are no private schools in most small towns. Local public schools also provide jobs. TX has a budget surplus, yet the school funding has dropped from about 69% to only 39%. This hurts workforce readiness. ESA's would not cover the cost of education in a private school and would cost millions to Texas. It would only benefit the wealthy and special interest groups. Private schools vouchers would take away from public schools. TX tanks 43rd in teacher pay. We are at the bottom of the country in many measures. Foster care & juvenile justice are also in dire straits. We must do what is best for all Texans, not the wealthy few. Our workforce competitiveness & civic engagement rely upon having a well educated populace. Save TX Public Schools. Don't turn us into a third world country. "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

Whitney Bolling
Self - mom of 3 school aged children
Houston, TX

NO VOUCHERS! SAVE THE CHILDREN! SAVE THE SCHOOLS! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers and inadequate funding will hurt our schools and communities. We are already feeling the pain in SBISD and it will only get worse. Low income schools are closing. Classrooms are getting overcrowded and **CHILDREN ARE SUFFERING.**

Karly Perkinson
Teacher/Self
Humble, TX

Dear Rep. Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,
I'm writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session. Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much-needed funds to go toward a voucher scheme. Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept. Let's work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement — not vouchers. We appreciate the support the committee has shown so far for public education and the over 5 million Texas public school students.

Reiko Takemasa
Self
Austin, TX

Oppose

J.T. Borah
Myself
Kyle, TX

I support HB 1 for three reasons: (1) because of the eligibility it provides is very broad so that almost any parent can have the freedom to move their child away from an underperforming school, (2) because it prioritizes poor and vulnerable children, and (3) because it increases public school funding and teacher's pay.

Fernanda Anzek

Self

Katy, TX

If you are sure what to write, consider this : "Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools."

Jenna Maynard, Mrs

Self- mom and volunteer

Plano, TX

I am a product of Plano ISD, I was a special education teacher in Plano ISD, and I am now raising my three children in Plano and they all attend PISD. I say this so that you know that I am deeply invested in this community and these schools. Vouchers will hurt public education in Texas and the vast majority of Texans DO NOT want this. Enough with this war on public education! Please fully fund our public schools in Texas and stop this voucher nonsense.

Carol Reames

Self

Grand Prairie, TX

The MAJORITY of constituents do not want money diverted from public schools into a voucher/savings program. The fact that our Governor has moved to extortion in order to push this agenda is even more troubling - tying teacher raises into this SCAM and also continuing to bleed your time with special sessions undermines your job to represent YOUR constituents. He's already abandoned his by pushing this, and he's dragging you along to do the same. Public funds are for public education - period. Private/tuition based schools are a CHOICE already. And if you CHOOSE to send your child to a private school - then YOU CHOOSE to pay for it. Those students in rural areas or other areas without direct access to private schools, would see funds slashed for their schools with NO CHOICES available to them - other than their now (more) underfunded school and educators. Now THAT is ELIMINATING school choice. He can call this program "SCHOOL CHOICE" all he wants - but a spade is a spade - this is an affront to public education. Parents ALREADY have a choice - and it's at their financial discretion. Do not allow yourselves to be bullied into abandoning your constituents - because this is a very, very hot issue - and your vote on this will determine the community's trust in you in the future.

Cheryl Glasser

Self - member of PTA and TRTA

Katy, TX

Public dollars belong in public schools. Vouchers should not be considered until public schools are adequately funded.

Karen MacIntyre

Green Space

Denton, TX

Please do not pass this bill, which would take much needed funding from public schools. A \$10,000. voucher will only partially cover tuition to private school, and homeschoolers do not get the same benefit. As a retired private school teacher, I never expected the state gov to pay my salary, or to pay for my daughters tuition. Private schools should be funded by private funds only. This bill gives advantage to those who can already afford tuition. It is WRONG!!! Don't pass it. I beg of you!

Michael Gilbert

Myself

White Oak, TX

I am opposed to any form of voucher that allocates taxpayer dollars to any educational application without the same level of accountability required of the Texas Public School System.

Kim Belew

Self

Austin, TX

Please vote NO to ESAs. Educational Savings Accounts would divert funds from already poorly funded public schools while not holding those schools to the same standards as public schools. Republicans in rural areas don't even support ESAs because they know it will be detrimental to the students in their area. It has been shown in other states that have ESAs that the vast majority of families who utilize ESAs were already sending their children to private schools, so ESAs do help most families have more choice. Prioritize public school funding by increasing the basic allotment, fund public schools based on enrollment not attendance (as almost every other state in does) and increase teacher pay.

Adeela Syeda

Self PTA mom

Plano, TX

At Plano, independent school district we believe Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Vicki Nees

Family

Keller, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Vicki Nees

Gvnees@gmail.com

2203 bayou ct

Keller tx 76248

8178005556

Colleen McKinney

Self - Citizen

Sugar Land, TX

I do not support voucher programs. Absolutely NOT. How many times have this FARCE been debated and VOTED DOWN? Educational funding and teacher pay should NOT be tied to vouchers. Also, HOW is a \$10,000+ voucher equitable to the measly ~\$6300 in public school funding? Are private and religious schools being prioritized over public education? That's super shady and I am not in agreement. We are already HEMMORHAGING teachers and educational staff in Texas, and we've ended up on international news as a state over it. STOP EMBARRASSING ME. I want to be proud to tell people I am from Texas. Right now, when they hear that, they say, "oh, the state which values specific religions and interest groups over the public desire?" I am watching who is voting for what, and it WILL affect my voting decisions come election time.

Mellany Lamb

self

Flower Mound, TX

HB-1 Please vote NO on school vouchers. This is not the solution to the broken public education system other than spreading more failed policies to the private and home school communities.

Janeva Wilson

Self

Austin, TX

I vehemently oppose the passing of any bill that establishes a voucher. Vouchers subsidize the wealthy and exacerbate school segregation. Texas should be focused on their constitutional obligation to fund public schools instead of worsening school finance inequality. Vouchers harm public schools and the communities in which they reside, especially for rural, low income, and racial minoritized communities. I want my tax paying dollars to fund an education for all students, not just those with access and privilege.

Brooke Wagen, Dr.

self, internal medicine physician and former teacher

Austin, TX

In a state known far and wide for the greatness of its innovation, Texan moms and dad with the means to do so have long been choosing how and where to educate their children. Those in our state whose income or life circumstances make their choices more limited are often not afforded the same opportunities for their children based on the cost of choices. Parents, as the primary shapers of their children, should be empowered to make choices to place their children in the best possible school environments based on their needs. Supporting HB1 supports parents, like me in the early 2000s, who needed a different option to best educate our son. Thank you for considering more support for all children in Texas, including the provision of more options for parents working to create bright futures for their children.

Larry Jason Bankhead, Pastor

Myself and thousands of students at our church and in our schools.

Waxahachie, TX

I am a lifelong Republican and am absolutely opposed to school vouchers/ESA's. The ultimate choice will belong to the Private Schools getting to pick who they let in while having zero educational or financial accountability. They also can exclude kids with special needs or certain demographics.

I am very proud of the Republican leaders that have not been bought by a few billionaires leading this charge.

This bill would benefit me and my kids as ours would probably be able to get into a private school; however, this bill is not about the greater good and every kid and family in Texas.

Please put this bill to bed. Texans don't want it and public education is being held hostage by a group with a lot of \$ on the line if they get it passed.

I am disgusted and disappointed by those being paid to keep this out there.

Melissa Flowers
PTA
North Richland Hills, TX

Please consider all of our Texas Students and the fact that this does not provide any choices for them.

Erica Martindale
Self, caregiver
AUSTIN, TX

Absolutely no to school vouchers! Fully fund public schools and stop wasting time and energy on school vouchers.

Jennifer Vincent
Myself
Round Rock, TX

Our public tax dollars need to support public schools. Funding private schools with public tax dollars is unethical and financially unsustainable.

Vouchers are bad for Texas. Strong public schools make a stronger Texas.

The only option is to fully fund our public schools AND oppose vouchers.

Brandea Battista
Self- Memorial Drive Elementary SBISD
Houston, TX

Fully fund Texas public schools. The state of Texas is hurting public school children by not releasing additional funds to public schools so they can address security and academic needs. The representatives and governor Abbott will find themselves out of office if they do not fully fund public schools. You have enough funds to give private school vouchers AND release additional funds to public schools, but people will NOT forget if you do only give private school vouchers. We will get the message out that our representatives and governor do not prioritize public school funding and believe me, it will not be a good look. As a registered republican, I have no problem changing my vote. Add public school funding to the agenda.

Jolie Willis
Self - PTSA McCallum HS
Austin, TX

Educational savings grants, vouchers, or whatever name you call them are bad for kids, a waste of taxpayer money, and a direct assault on public education.

Our future as a vibrant, thriving state depends on having a competent, educated workforce. Research shows that vouchers under deliver, doing nothing to enhance learning or contribute to student future readiness.

I oppose vouchers and ask you to do the same.

Instead, fully fund our public schools to ensure a bright economic future for Texas.

Kristen Long

self - member of Lamar Middle School PTA

FLOWER MOUND, TX

Please do not pass this. How can anyone in good conscience pass this without also having a measure to provide the same amount of funding to public schools. Public school students should receive the same allotment as voucher students. Look at what has happened in New Orleans with vouchers. There are one a few good schools and the only ones that benefit are the shady schools that popped up. Good private schools there have elected not to take vouchers. This smells bad. If I were to foretell the future, I would say that special interests that will create schools just for voucher students will pop up and provide no better education than what public schools already provide. Why should voucher students be entitled to more money than public school students. Vote No!!!!

Tara Thompson

Self - PTA Member and board member for Downing Middle School

Flower Mound, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Vouchers will make some of our programs be cut and I don't agree with that. Public money should not be used on vouchers that will allow kids go to private school which does not have to follow the rules of the public school system.

Jennifer Vasquez

Self-Flower Mound Marcus High School PTA

Double Oak, TX

I am completely against school vouchers. I pay property taxes for my kids public school education to be properly funded. If people want to send their kids to private school then that is their choice and they need to pay for it. Our schools are already not funded enough. Our teachers are not paid enough and our tax dollars need to go towards funding our public schools and giving our public school administrators the ability to recruit the best teachers and give our students the best education possible. Tax dollars should not go to private schools. They do not have the same standards and requirements and it's a choice.

Carrie Baker

Self, stay-at-home parent

Flower Mound, TX

I oppose any legislation that supports any kind of education savings account program, or any program that diverts public funding away to private organizations, especially those that are not subject to the same requirements as our public schools.

Allan Baker
self
Flower Mound, TX

No to vouchers. The State and society in general have a duty to full educate its population. Because the profit motive for a highly educated workforce, entrepreneurial force, and voter and leadership force, is on such a long timeline, there is no appropriate capitalistic cost model that helps to refine and improve the education system. The education system is best served as a non-profit model with a highly trained professional educator positions that commit to scientific based study in the improvement of the education tools needed to continuously update our education system into the continually evolving future of change and progress. The value of fairness and non-bias in this system is critical for the future of our State, our Country, and our Planet. Too much parental choice can lead to biased and unscientific based curriculum or options which rely on the manipulations of the marketplace to impose value on one curriculum or another.

Even for a voter population that is without children in the education system, the collective value of a well educated population is extremely important. Your neighbors make up your employees, your bosses and leadership, and your fellow citizens, and the people that provide you goods and services. To put their education to chance because politicians refuse to properly value and fund public education is short sighted. The conditions to make the public schools fail are being artificially constructed to make a voucher system which removes funding from the educational system and redistributes it to for-profit educational systems or educational systems with an agenda or that are exclusive and focus on the betterment of an individual class of people vs the betterment of society as a whole.

There are big problems to solve in the next generation's lifetime and we need to be accelerating our public contributions as a society to educating the future leaders, workers, scientists, engineers, and citizens to deal with these problems. Vouchers are a political distraction and a money game that is going to be rife with corruption and fraud at the long term expense of the next generation.

For those wishing to educate their children in their religious ideals, that is their choice, but it shouldn't excuse them from a minimum set of standards and it shouldn't detract from fully funding a system that is better than all of these alternative choices. And religion should not be publicly subsidized. Where there are huge disparities in the quality of educational performance due to poverty, nutrition, and crime independent of a school system, this problem should be solved with the synergistic contributions of local, state, and federal resources. The problem shouldn't be solved by just running away with a voucher to those that can afford to look away. Voucher's make the public education a marketplace, which is missing the long term collective advantage of keeping education unbiased and not-for-profit. Lift all boats.

Carmine Battista
Self- Memorial Drive Elementary SBISD
Houston, TX

Release funds to public schools so they can ensure our kids get top notch education. You have a huge budget surplus and need to give more funding to public schools. Add this to agenda.

Carmen Quiles
Self
San Antonio, TX

I support Parental Choice for education with priority to the families who can't afford to send their kids to their preferred school. I also support all families regardless of financial status to choose which institution their tax money goes towards tuition credit.

Patricia Koran
SELF, retired
Prosper, TX

I OPPOSE school vouchers; we need to support FUNDING for our PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

Jill Rhoden, Dr.

Self

Austin, TX

I do not support vouchers. I have 3 children in public schools which are underfunded. My daughter's school's theater bathrooms began leaking (again) during their fall performance, the bathrooms at one district football stadium had to be closed during a Homecoming game. Our schools are underfunded. Our teachers are overworked and underpaid. If public schools were properly funded AND all of the tax dollars collected for schools were kept in the schools, that would be a minimum start. Give public schools back their \$8 billion. Students wouldn't need a choice if public schools had the proper resources and funding.

Casey Pawelek

Self-Stone Oak Elementary School

SAN ANTONIO, TX

Hello,

I worry that the education savings account will hurt public schools. How will we hold homeschoolers accountable and prevent the government from just wasting money? If we don't have kids in school then we get less money. I am against educational savings accounts.

Sincerely,

Casey Pawelek

Stacie Lalendorff

Self - PTA member Memorial Drive Elementary and Bendwood School

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Without adequate and appropriate funding for public schools my child's gifted and talented school, Bendwood School, will have to close and not allow them the amazing opportunity to exercise their gifts. The way they are challenged at Bendwood School will help them to be productive members of society when they grow up.

Stephanie Turner

Self- Hospitality

Flower Mound, TX

As a graduate of Lewisville ISD, and as a parent of a special education kiddo in Lewisville ISD, I am firmly against vouchers/ESAs. Quit holding our community school funding and teacher raises hostage for the interest of the few. Fully fund public education and NO DEAL on funding private, special interest "education" entities. Follow the Texas Constitution.

Marcos Mata

Self and Family

San Angelo, TX

I am sure that you hear so many different pros & cons to the argument for parental choice, however, in the end it simply comes down to parents knowing what is best for their children. et the schools argue about the various intricacies of strategies and programs, the schools by definition have to formulate and implement these plans for the greatest number of students - which is what they are tasked with doing. In this environment it is the parents (AND ONLY THE PARENTS) that know what is best for their particular child. It is nothing personal to the various schools and the teachers, rather, it is a sincere and honest effort to do what is best for their children. In closing, if their particular public school is doing well, then there is no fear of losing their students and the accompanying funding.

Thank you for your service to the people of Texas.

Richard McNeal
Self/ Teacher
Brookston, TX

The business of government is compromise. Lets make government work for all Texans.

Cheryl Wegscheid
self- PTA member
Houston, TX

Public schools educate millions of Texas children; we invite businesses and industry to come set up shop in Texas yet the legislature doesn't seem willing to fund public schools which will be a crisis to deal with in the future.
Without public school funding this year, my district will close schools, cut teacher positions, increase class sizes, not upgrade facilities and more.
I have 12 and 13 year olds asking why they are not important enough to be represented fairly by our legislative bodies.
SUPPORT public education- fund it.

Kristin Pearce
Self/PTA
Irving, TX

Please vote NO to vouchers, voucher-like instruments in the form of state-controlled accounts, or anything of the like. Public schools need funds and help. We should not be paying for any private school not related to the public school districts. Again, NO to vouchers. Thanks,

Emily McKee
Self-PTA member at three public schools
Fort Worth, TX

Please do not pass school vouchers! This will greatly hurt our public school students. This will take away much needed funds from public schools when they are already under funded.

Shawn Walton

parent/school board member/teacher (I am all three)

Gause, TX

While I understand the possible reasoning behind vouchers, I do not agree with the philosophical reasons for it, nor do I agree with the negative rhetoric surrounding the reasons for creating a voucher program. This issue serves the purpose of demonizing a whole section of the Texas population, educators, who are college-educated and dedicated professionals, as well as undermining our whole system of a free and equal education for all. The rhetoric behind this bill disregards the fact that parents already have a choice, and also the RIGHT to determine their child's education. It lays the duty of raising children on the education system and not at the feet of the parent. Ask any educator and we will tell you, "Yes, please, parents, get involved!" Because, guess what, right now, what we are facing is a total LACK of involvement from parents, as well as a total lack of parents teaching their children how to behave and be responsible for their actions. Vouchers pander to a minority of parents already involved with their children. In the long run, vouchers will hurt those children who truly need this kind of support. I do not understand why the governor and other legislators are pushing this, except maybe because there is the potential monetary benefit to them personally to the creation of a voucher program. Take a look at what school districts are already doing, you will be amazed at the ingenuity and creativity of the programs being offered. If you must have vouchers, PLEASE LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD. Insist on total transparency, requires private schools to abide by the same accountability rules and TEKS that public schools must follow. It puzzles me how conservatives, normally tax hawks who are vocal about not using taxpayer dollars to fund private institutions would be ok with funding private schools. I just don't get it. In the end, this siphons needed funds from schools that struggle to support not only kids' educational needs, but also make sure they are fed, clothed, and cared for. Children can't cut off their private life from school life like adults do with private life and work. We must take them as they come - hungry, abused, broken - and lift them up. We must recognize abuse, we must counsel them. Will private schools do this? No. They won't accept these kids, so what will happen? They will fall back to public school, which will now be less funded, with fewer resources to help these kids. Instead, you are handing a 3% service fee to the Comptroller, and a 5% fee to every outside organization that will run this program. How much extra money is that going to "SERVICE FEES" that could, instead, be going to education? Look at the future you are creating. Maybe take the weight of the Texas government and look at passing a Parents Take Responsibility for Your Kids Act, and focus on good parenting instead. Thank you for your time. Shawn Walton, parent, teacher, and school board member.

AMANDA KELLEY

SELF MCBAY-SIMS PTA

Mexia, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in ALL public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers.

I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers will NOT help. They will take money away, especially from already struggling schools.

Samuel Cobb

Self - Systems Administrator

Longview, TX

As a Texas taxpayer and father, I strongly support HB 1 and the implementation of parental choice in education. My tax dollars, while they *should* help the community at large, *should* also allow me the choice of where I send my children to school, public or private. HB 1 will accomplish my goal of being able to support local public education while also being able to afford to choose where my children are educated. Please vote in favor of HB 1.

Susan Stewart

self

Pflugerville, TX

No Vouchers ever, fully fund our public schools so all children have access to a world class education. Release the \$32+ Billion dollars of our tax money that you all are hoarding and return it to our public schools. Truly be "for all children".

Emily Aguilar

Self

Beaumont, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Add how vouchers and inadequate funding will impact your campus, district, and community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase, or programs be cut?

Carina Galvan

Self

Dallas, TX

Add your comments:

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Renee Thomas

Self - Lively Middle School PTSA board member

Austin, TX

You are abandoning public schools with this bill. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Our public schools in Austin will suffer tremendously under vouchers. With less funding we will see staff cuts which directly harm our children. Please say no to vouchers.

Colleen Frerichs

Self

Austin, TX

Vote NO on ANY VOUCHER bill. When legislators stop pushing the governor's voucher schemes then you can legitimately address the issues Texans care about such as proper funding for our schools, teacher pay raises, and lower testing and accountability burdens! Public school teachers are required to hold a teaching certificate and are vetted through a strenuous process. Vouchers allow payments to teachers who are less qualified and not vetted. The governor is WRONG to demonize our public schools that he was elected to protect and support. Public schools MUST educate ALL children, but the private school vouchers do NOT guarantee a placement for a child. Vote NO on ANY VOUCHER bill

Sharon Jorolan

Self

The Colony, TX

This bill is bad, say NO to HB1. Unbelievable the damage that has been done to education as it is, no to vouchers. I don't agree with anything in this bill.

Paul Vollrath, Mr

Self

Sealy, TX

I am IN FAVOR of Education Savings Accounts. They will begin to level the playing field after one year as teachers and their administrators work ever more focused on quality education for their students so as to retain as much funding as their students will bring with them. Parents will send their children to the nearest quality school, public or private. Religious beliefs or lack of such will keep some parents from sending their children to certain church-associated schools regardless the ranking.

If need be, give the education savings acct. program an initial time limit of 4 or 5 years and only then make major adjustments as needed.

I taught 10 years at elementary and junior high levels. BS in Ed, Teacher Certificate in ESL.

Gloria Sanabria

Self Mother of 3 Autistic children

Texas City, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.

Sincerely,

Gloria Sanabria

2408 Emerald In

Texas City, TX

Casey Helmick

Self / Parent

Haslet, TX

This bill does not adequately increase funding for public schools. While a one-time bonus for teacher is great, what happens next year when schools are not able to keep that "bonus" up? The allotted increase per student is not enough to cover the teacher raise much less needs at a school district.

ESAs or vouchers are harmful to the public education of our state children. All students deserve a quality education that they can access close to their home. While we already have parent choice in many ways, this voucher program only benefits the families that are able to pay the additional fees for a private education. Most private school tuition is between \$15,000 and \$25,000 per year. The voucher covers a portion of that so this will only support families who already have enough money to pay for tuition AND can get their child to and from a private school.

Private schools are not required to meet the same standards of public schools in enrolling any child of school age, serving their educational needs, providing transportation or meals. The private schools can "pick and choose" their students through application and remove them when they don't meet the standards. Holding public schools to completely different standards than private schools, yet providing funding is irresponsible.

As a tax payer, my dollars should be going to support the greater good in my local area. I should see those benefits in road improvements and in an educated society. My tax dollars should not be spent to send some students to private school - especially those that are religious schools.

The great state of Texas is almost at the bottom in school funding and in quality of schools. We should be working to fully fund all public schools before we dismantle a system in support of a "Have and Have not" system.

Vote NO on HB 1- support ALL Texas kids, not just the ones who can already pay for private education.

Patricia Cordrey

Self/ Retired

Houston, TX

Education accounts or vouchers for private/religious schools should not be allowed using taxpayer money. I expect my public tax money to go to adequately fund all PUBLIC schools in Texas for the education of ALL students. A strong public school system creates a strong democracy. Giving away public money from public schools so only a small percentage of students can go to private schools that have no accountability is the opposite of that. I urge you to oppose educational savings accounts.

Candace Mullervy

Self - Memorial Drive Elementary PTA

Houston, TX

As a conservative public school supporter, I am very concerned on the the prospect of voucher programs and taking money away from our schools. I have been a Texan for 15 years and have enjoyed pouring into our public schools and the Texan community it creates. I was raised in California and remember vividly when California education started down this path in the late 90s. Funding was pulled from the schools and relocated. Services started to disappear for "charter schools". The communities started falling apart because of the weakness of the local school. Let California be a warning. There is a reason everyone started to leave 20 years ago and California started its decline. It took money from schools and stopped investing in its youth and communities. It made it easy to not be connected to each other and not have to work together. It created a space for extremist ideas of government and education because the lack of oversight.

I caution you to examine what the road forward looks like for Texas schools and our culture. If you do not fund public education, you will have a youth base that does not value being Texan. They won't raise their families here. They will move because the communities that they grew up in don't exist anymore. They will be replaced by disenfranchised homeschoolers and extremist private schools. Learn from California. It is so important to have the new influx of Texans to be educated in schools and assimilated into our culture, or you will look up in 20 years and not recognize anything about Texas.

Claire Kruse
Self
Houston, TX

Please don't hurt our public schools! Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure ALL children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Spring Branch ISD is a small, diverse district who is meeting the needs of ALL students but with this new voucher program, our district is forced to close schools and remove programs that are helping our students most in need! Please reconsider!!!!!!

Christine Jau
self
Fort Worth, TX

Why are private school and homeschool students receiving additional public funding but are not held to the same standards as public schools who are required by law to meet the needs of all students. This takes money and opportunity away from special populations (SPED, econ. disadvantaged, students with dyslexia and other 504 documentation)

A one-time pay raise for 60% of individuals is just that, enticing but not sustainable. Appropriable and well-deserved pay raises are being held ransom to very deserving individuals. Even if it does pass, there is no long-term benefit.

Voucher do not actually give meaningful choice to anyone new. It benefits the rich and able-bodied. The privileged remain so.

Lucy Gabrovic
Self
Brashear, TX

Parents should have the right to send their children to whatever school they choose. Please move this bill forward and get it passed. Thank you.

Angela Hankins

Self and my son with Down Syndrome Jackson Riley Hankins

Sugar land, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

Please reject the House Bill (HB 1). As a mother of a son with an intellectual disability and friend and ally of other adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

Education savings accounts are a massive waste of my Tax Dollars by taking money from public schools that need increased funding, not a decrease. Unless the provisions are modified only to be available to serve those with disabilities or children in poverty, this would be terrible for Texans! I have personal experience with my son not being allowed in a charter school due to his disability.

I am also greatly concerned about the state-supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental effect on these children and their families. Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur a significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes; children should grow up with their families whenever possible. The federal government acknowledges this principle through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

A comprehensive residential options brochure already exists, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to please oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring our public education system survives. And our tax dollars from waste in an unnecessary program.

Sincerely,

Angela Hankins - 281-980-1646

Kelsey Kubala

Self

Kerrville, TX

I believe that we should be allowed to have Parental Choice. I send my children to our local Private School and feel that my tax dollars should be able to go towards the school that my children attend.

Judy Murff, Ms.
Democratic Party
Austin, TX

I am against HB. Vouchers will take away too much from public schools.

Michael Wei
Self
Round Rock, TX

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to you to urge you to oppose the current version of HB1.

The allotment proposed in the bill is far from enough to compensate the inflation. At least an amount of \$7300 per student may be a better fit according to some research data.

The ESA is going to pull public fund into private use, which will be against the constitution and destroy the fundamental funding for public schools in rural areas.

The bottom line is to fully fund our public schools first, and then optimize the resources to provide ESA for special need students, such as special education and disabilities.

Current version of HB fails to do so. Therefore I urge you to vote No on this bill.

Sincerely,

Michael Wei

Jennifer Scull, Dr.
Self
Houston, TX

Until public schools are appropriately funded, taking tax dollars from these entities to allow parents to send children to private or pay for homeschool curriculum will cause more harm than good. Most voters across both parties oppose this bill because it hurts the future generations of Texans. Education savings accounts are antithetical to providing for the greater good in the form of properly funded public schools in Texas.

Everlyne Onduso
Self
Irving, TX

I support the parental education in our private schools. Especially in our catholic schools where students learn a lot. If it was possible, parents need to be supported with fee like other public schools due to the economy.

Jana Raymond
Limestone Christian Academy
Groesbeck, TX

Limestone Christian Academy is a start up classic, Christian school in rural Limestone County. The parents of our students sacrificially pay a minimum tuition so that their children may have a grounded, traditional, and faith-based education by means of a classical curriculum that is rigorous. Our parents are neither wealthy, nor urban but need to be recognized. Choice is a must for ALL rural students. Look at true poll numbers and the scores of rural ISD schools. Scores that the local ISD's will not make public, but yet scream against a choice. HEAR our plea, give rural parents an option. Our teachers make \$24,000 a year and do not complain because they see and know the benefit of these alternative schools. Put aside the lobbyists in your ear. Hear the voice of rural parents!

FRANCESCA RATHKE

Educators of Texas

HUMBLE, TX

Dear Rep. Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

I'm writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session. Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much-needed funds to go toward a voucher scheme. Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept. Let's work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement — not vouchers. We appreciate the support the committee has shown so far for public education and the over 5 million Texas public school students.

Rose McLean

Retired teacher and grandparent of school

League City, TX

Against any bill that supports ESA/vouchers

Alicia Smith

Self/ public school supporter

Fairfield, TX

I'm writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session.

Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much-needed funds to go toward a voucher scheme.

Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept.

Let's work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement — not vouchers

Vouchers of any name are bad for Texas rural public schools, active school employees, and Texas students. ESAs funds from this bill will encourage unaccredited private or charter schools to pop up in the rural communities which will take students and their funds from the local public schools that is needed to continue to fund a robust curriculum, teachers, support staff, electricity and every thing else it takes to keep a school open and successful.

These new charters will be glad to accept the taxpayers money/ESA but has no accountability over how it is spent. Without accountability over the funds the possibility of fraudulent uses of the money and having students working individually online with a monitor/ moderator overseeing students which is not the k-12 school experience that our children need to love learning and build community with others to become a successful part of society learning how to work with others.

Say “no”to vouchers! Say “no “ to making a deal that will be the down fall of Public schools. Your duty is to the words of the Texas Constitution to support public schools not give away funds.

Thank you for your consideration of my thoughts!

Alicia Smith

A Voter and supporter of Public Schools

Lauren Ellis
Self, homemaker
Irving, TX

Dear Committee Members, Parents are the primary educators of their children. Parents have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options. Currently, only those able to afford to live in the best public-school districts or to pay private school tuition enjoy a full range of educational options. However, through a well-designed parental choice program, families with fewer financial resources will no longer be limited to their local public school and will be able to consider additional educational opportunities. Additionally, I hope the legislation will include robust safeguards for the autonomy and religious liberty of private schools. Accreditation of participating private schools. Prioritization of low-income families for participation in an ESA program. Administration of norm-referenced assessments. Sincerely, Lauren Ellis

Theresa Morris
Self
Houston, TX

The funding needs to be increased for public schools. Majority of children attend public schools. There already is a public school teacher shortage and these vouchers for private schools/homeschooling are just going to cause even more of a teacher shortage in public schools. This is NOT good for teachers and students. These vouchers will definitely impact my child's campus, district and community, NOT in good way.

Yolanda Corral
Self
El paso, TX

It is a shame that teachers are dependent on grants in order to get a decent income. Teachers are highly educated and should be treated with respect, not challenge to earn extra pay through TIA. Other professionals are not asked to jump through hoops in order to earn their pay.

Aida Negrón
self - Manager
San Antonio, TX

Dear Congress Members,

I am a concerned parent of a 14 year old son.

Public schools are deteriorating in ethics, morals and basic education being taught to kids in their classrooms. It appears that a few years later, for those who do go to college... even they are not equipped with basic critical thinking skills, or writing skills.

Recent interns who have come to work for us are not prepared for the real world work environment, and they were all public school students.

Please pass HB 1 so kids in public schools will have a chance to learn in a private school setting where critical thinking skills and basic morals are fostered. Our future is in the hands of these young people, and my son will be working with them. Let's give them all a chance for a brighter future by educating them and giving them hope in God almighty. Thank you.

Jami Gigliotti
Self/Self
Canyon Lake, TX

NO to ANY form of a VOUCHER or ESA — “Public \$\$ Stay in Public Schools!” NO VOUCHERS! — Thank You!

Lauren Ellis
Self, homemaker
Irving, TX

Dear Committee Members, Parents are the primary educators of their children. Parents have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options. Currently, only those able to afford to live in the best public-school districts or to pay private school tuition enjoy a full range of educational options. However, through a well-designed parental choice program, families with fewer financial resources will no longer be limited to their local public school and will be able to consider additional educational opportunities. Additionally, I hope the legislation will include robust safeguards for the autonomy and religious liberty of private schools. Accreditation of participating private schools. Prioritization of low-income families for participation in an ESA program. Administration of norm-referenced assessments. Sincerely, Lauren Ellis

Daniel Douglas
Self
Cypress, TX
Support school choice

Kalynn Swinbank
Memorial Drive Elementary
Houston, TX

Private school is and should be a choice. The schools are funded by the members and or families that choose to attend these private schools. We live in a very good public school district that most move to the area for that specific reason. We have very high property taxes that in part goes towards our public school system. By taking away our high tax dollars to distribute them to well funded private schools is a slap in the face to the community and their residences. It's a disservice to our children and could eventually force us to leave the school district and send our children to private school if that is the only way to guarantee that they will receive an adequate education. An education they deserve. I really hope y'all fully consider ALL repercussions that could arise by passing HB1. What it could look like for the future of our districts?. This bill has the potential to completely tear down and destroy public schools. Everyone will leave public schools. Everyone, I mean everyone can afford private school in our zip code. This bill gets passed, y'all won't have a public school district to even worry about. It will be gone and we will all be in private schools because we were forced to make that decision!

Ingrid Morassini
Self
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Sara Moltenbrey

self

Keller, TX

I am writing in regard to ESAs. It seems that priority has been shifted to private education to help the upper middle class/wealthy. Even providing 10,000 dollars to a family would not cover the entire tuition. This will widen the poverty gap. Most upper/middle class families already live in thriving public schools, but choose private for other reasons (religious, smaller class sizes, etc.) What about those students in poor areas where the public schools are struggling? They will have no use for ESAs because they cannot cover the additional costs. Why give money without accountability? Public Ed is held to a higher standard, yet they will be given less per student than is allowable for ESAs. As a conservative voter I am disappointed in our governor for holding public funding hostage. I cannot in good conscience vote for any legislator that does not help our public schools. Please do what's right for all students and educators. Please don't pad the bill with raises that will only provide tax money for one year and then put the burden on the ISDs for the following year. This is an ethical thing, and it has become political because public schools have been vilified unfairly due to the transgressions of very few educators. Please consider supporting public schools with raises for educators and making sure that you increase the basic allotment.

Rachel Lee

Self

Hutto, TX

As a foster, soon to be adoptive mother, I support this bill. Our children have lived through trauma and will continue to deal with the aftermath of what has been done to them. Having the option to continue pursuing private education because of their needs is vital for them to continue to thrive. Having a choice of where to send my children, choosing the way they will be educated, and allowing for the financial burden to be taken off our household would be an amazing option for our family. Please vote yes, as many families in Texas would be blessed by this bill passing. Thank you for taking time to read my statement.

Lori Totty, Mrs.

self

Boyd, TX

Public dollars belong to public schools. The ESA program will cripple public schools much like the Robin Hood Act has hurt big school districts. By having the ESA program, you would be unlawfully taking public money to give to private schools. The low social economic students and the special education students are only served in public schools and by opening the ESA program, you will be taking away funds that public schools desperately need! Public schools do not have the right to refuse anyone like private and charter schools do. The ESA program will only aide the wealthy and higher middle class that do not need that money.

Anthony Kirchner

self

Fort Worth, TX

Any private school that receives public tax dollars should be required to follow the same laws and regulations that public schools follow. nd why can't Texans be given the opportunity to vote whether or not to approve public school vouchers? We were just asked to vote on 14 constitutional amendments on a variety of topics. Shouldn't voters have a say on a matter of this much significance?

Melodie Fryar
Self-Landscape Designer
New Braunfels, TX

I'm a fourth-generation Texan who still lives in the small town I grew up in. I went to public schools my entire life and paid taxes to further public education when I became an adult. I want my tax money to pay for only public education which is how it was intended to be used. The voucher program in Texas will continue the underfunding of our public schools. Abbott has lied about vouchers, calling them a "savings account" which is just ridiculous. The savings will be for those who already attend private schools and want taxpayers to help fund their private school education. That's a big NO! I think sending your kids to private school is great if you can afford it, but if you can't don't look to taxpayer money to help you out. Private schools have no oversight, and can turn away students for any reason. What about special needs kids? What about early college programs in our public schools? Let's fund all of our students and all of our public school programs and let private schools fund themselves. TEXANS DON'T WANT VOUCHERS!

Kara Tyler
Self - Paralegal
Arlington, TX

HB1 in its current form is the architect of the decimation of the Texas educational system. It will bring financial ruin to public education while providing none of the touted benefits to the average Texan, who with a median gross monthly income of \$4,775 and average monthly housing expenses of approximately \$1800 will not have the ability to send their children to even the least expensive private school in the State (average private school tuition in the D/FW metroplex where I reside is over \$13,000 for an average educational institution). These hard working citizens are barely able to meet their daily living expenses. \$10,500 towards private school tuition does nothing to benefit those among us who need the most assistance for their children. Not only will HB1 remove sorely needed funds from public schools, it provides no guardrails or restrictions that ensure that the private institutions accepting public taxpayer money will be required to admit all students on an equal and impartial basis. As a mother to a twice-exceptional child on the autism spectrum I spent years attempting to find an proper educational environment for my son. We were turned away from private schools (that we could never have afforded even with the funds provided by HB1), rejected at Magnet and Charter Schools, and learned that even had our child been accepted to these institutions, they were not required to provide him with the special education care he needed. Public schools took our brilliant child with all of his emotional and social deficits and helped him to excel so that he is now on track to graduate in 2026 with both an Associates Degree and a high school diploma. HB1 will take crucial funding away from public schools that do not discriminate against children like my son - and it will give my hard earned taxpayer dollars to the very institutions that denied him admittance, and which will continue to deny admittance to unique children with special needs. Adding further insult to absolute educational ruination is the blatant hypocrisy with which HB1 attempts to "increase" public school funding to \$6,700 per child, while paying \$10,500 per child to private schools. If a child's education is worth \$10,500/annum, that is the amount that should be paid to public schools as well. HB1 has no income restrictions on voucher eligibility to ensure access is first given to those most in need, and no educational requirements for private schools. Scrutinized honestly, HB1 only benefits individuals wealthy enough to pay private tuition without public funds. A vote in favor of HB1 is a vote against our children. Future voters, the public school children of today, will remember the day their public school couldn't afford computers, the day public band was canceled for lack of funds, the day public school sank into disrepair. If HB1 is passed, and they will carry those memories to the ballot boxes in the future. Protect our children, schools and future - Vote no for HB1.

Nancy Russell
Self
Houston, TX

I have 8 children. We have homeschooled and sent them to both public and private schools. The state of Texas should fully fund public schools, including paying teachers appropriately. The state of Texas has the money do this. Our school district will have to reduce teacher numbers and curtail pre-K opportunities because of a failure to fund. Why? Please don't play games with my children's education. I need my district and its resources focused on enhancing academics and supporting these young people.

Laura Vola
self, condo sales manager
Carrollton, TX

While the program is intended to benefit children from low-income families, studies have shown that is not the case. In fact, the majority of families who use the program already attend private schools. Our public schools are already underfunded. I'm failing to understand why you would give private schools \$10,500 per student, but public schools only \$6,700 per student. This is a time when we need to be investing in our public schools and providing additional resources for all children, not just those who are able to attend a private school. I love Texas, but our state is already one of the worst for public school funding and has been cited by the U.S. Department of Education for illegally cutting special education funding. Students with physical, mental, or learning disabilities may not have access to the services they need. All of these services are legally required at a public school, but will not be guaranteed at a private school. I have a child attending Kindergarten at a public school in Carrollton, and her teachers have to regularly ask for help for supplies and classroom items. I'm sincerely asking you to vote against HB 1 and invest in our public education instead.

Marissa Opper-Sutter
Self Medical Lab Technician
Irving, TX

As a parent and taxpayer I am opposed the diversion of taxpayer dollars to private institutions through school vouchers. These private institutions do not have the same level of accountability as public schools. They are havens for abuse, unqualified educators, and poor learning outcomes. Furthermore, diverting public funds to private institutions is a violation of the separation of church and state as outlined in the US Constitution. Public schools need more funding, and diverting public funds to private institutions that lack accountability will make public schools worse and harm children.

Scott Lalendorff
Self
Houston, TX

Public schools need more funding! The voucher program will not work. Accredited Private schools are already at capacity so where are these kids going to go? And what do you think will happen when more families receive money to home school their children? Do you honestly think that they will become better educated?

I'm a straight ticket republican voter but will no longer vote that way in local and state elections. Your policies have becoming embarrassingly comical.

Follow the money, be an adult and realize why the state is pushing the voucher program. Is it for the children or the lobbyists?

Please stop hurting my children. Fund the public schools adequately so our children can get a better education.

Our district is already cutting programs and increasing class sizes to manage the shortfall. Just wait until they cut high school football. That will wake up some voters.

Carlos Romo
Self
El Paso, TX

I support HB 1 it is extremely important to cover employees needs and health.

Kimberly Clinton

Self- PTA President, High Pointe Elementary

CEDAR HILL, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers and inadequate funding will impact High Pointe Elementary, Cedar Hill Independent School District, and the Cedar Hill community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase, or programs be cut?

Solange Hommel

self, retired

Killeen, TX

As a tax payer, a former teacher, a voter, a TX resident, and a constituent of Rep. Buckley, I OPPOSE this and ALL bills attempting to give public tax-payer money to private schools.

The filing and consideration of this bill seems to suggest that the chair of this committee believes that there is a magic set of numbers -- a certain increase in ADA, a level of salary, an amount of training, a set prioritization of rural districts, etc -- that will make it okay to use public money to benefit under-regulated private schools. There is no such amount.

Private schools have no accountability to the public when it comes to curriculum, staffing, employment, enrollment, or assessment standards. Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES should tax-payer money be taken used to subsidize them.

While I strongly believe that public schools deserve every penny allotted to them in this bill, AND SO MUCH MORE, it is obvious that this bill is simply an effort to silence public schools and public school educators/staff with a silver gag.

If this committee and the Texas legislature as a whole wish to improve the educational standing of our great state, they will stop playing games and commit to fully funding our public education system. They talk about giving choice, while they have spent the past several decades stripping every bit of funding for specialists, programs, and support out of public schools and then pointing fingers when bare-bones funding doesn't result in top-notch performance.

VOTE NO ON HB 1. FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH PUBLIC MONEY.

Jennifer Wilson

United Way of Lamar County

Paris, TX

As a former school board trustee in a school district that was 77% economically disadvantaged, and as the current Executive Director of the United Way of Lamar County, I am strongly opposed to school vouchers. In my role I work primarily with low income families. My biggest concern is that low income families will pull their children out of public education and "homeschool" them just to get the payment. Not only will these children miss out on any education, they will also not get the proper nutrition that they receive in school, will not have access to fine arts or sports, nor will they have the support system of school employees. Teachers are the primary reporters of child abuse and neglect, and these "homeschooled" children will be put in increased danger. If you think that parents won't pull their children from public education just to receive a check, you are kidding yourselves. Any voucher program that includes "homeschool" will result in a mass exodus from public schools and a generation of uneducated children.

Barbi Petty

Self

The Woodlands, TX

I'm asking the Education Committee to not advance the bill on vouchers/ ESA's my reasons are - 1) they will take much needed funds from public education, studies show that vouchers do not help low income families but mostly families already sending their children to private schools.

2) ESA's will destroy rural communities bc the local school district is usually the largest employer in the area & the hub of community activities.

3) Vouchers/ ESA's don't cover the full cost of private schools

4) Areas with the poorest schools (inner city & rural) don't have private school options

5) Private schools don't have to accept students with disabilities (even common conditions like asthma, allergies & diabetes)

6) Private schools are not required to provide transportation

7) Private schools do not provide free or reduced lunch.

8) Private schools do not have the same level of accountability or consequences as public schools.

I do not want my tax dollars subsidizing wealthy families private school tuition or propping up failing religious schools.

Texas ranks 43rd in funding public education why not adequately fund it as stated in the Texas Constitution so that ALL students can benefit? It would take \$15B to get back to where TX was in 2019 before inflation and it would take over \$40B (this biennium) to reach the national average in per student spending. We could fund the schools if our leaders wanted to. ESA's are a money grab for individuals wanting to profit off of our children, I say children aren't a for profit business. Please do not advance this bill & fully fund public schools. NO VOUCHERS/ ESA's!

Amy Bieberdorf, Parent / PTA member

Self/ PTA member

Austin, TX

Vouchers hurt public schools. Our children have the right to public education and vouchers hurt our schools and take money which can be used to educate our students.

Claudia Angulo-Pope, Dr

Self-NEISD PTA

San Antonio, TX

NO VOUCHERS! Vouchers are a collective denigration ALL TEXAS CHILDREN! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong PUBLIC schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure ALL children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools as promised to them. Generations of my family have spent their lives in service to PUBLIC education and the hopes and promises it fulfilled for all children equally. The cornerstone of public education was designed to engage and prepare CIVIC-minded individuals. PLEASE BE THAT example and continue your civic duty to ALL children across the great state of TEXAS!!

Mary Simpson

Self - PTA President at Scott Elementary, Frisco ISD

McKinney, TX

Please vote against vouchers/ESAs! Even if the theoretical idea of vouchers is sound, I do not believe a program including ESAs or Vouchers can succeed until Texas legislators have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Marina Stanaland

Self, Executive Director of a Foundation

MIDLAND, TX

Vouchers are bad for our kids and our state. Please vote against vouchers!

Tom Grissom
self
DALLAS, TX

Texas needs to fund schools and stop taking away money from public schools. Texas ranks the 3rd worst state in public school funding. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/failing-on-every-level-12-states-with-the-worst-education-in-the-nation/ss-AA1jwQOS?ocid=msedgdhp&pc=DCTS&cvid=a58a3efb9a534780b57f68632d02cd11&ei=55#image=4>

Charlotte Davidson
Self - Retired Special Education Teacher/Diagnostician
Spring Branch, TX

Please stop wasting time and money trying to push through a voucher bill. Vouchers do not benefit the majority of public school children and divert funds to people who are already well able to afford private school education. This bill is robbing the poor to help the wealthy. Private schools do not provide Free Appropriate Public Education for special education students which is unfair and biased against special needs students and their parents. Please say no to HB1!

Sharla Gilhome
self - Texas Teachers
Denton, TX

As a dedicated public school educator of 30+ years, I am deeply concerned about the current situation where it appears that the governor may not pass teacher raises unless vouchers are approved. This linkage raises significant ethical concerns and challenges the fundamental values of our educational system.

While I am a staunch advocate for enhancing primary and secondary education, including fair compensation for teachers, it is profoundly troubling that such vital improvements for our educators are being held hostage to the approval of vouchers. This practice is not only unethical but also jeopardizes the future of our public schools and the well-being of our students. Here's why:

1. Ethical Dilemma: Tying teacher raises to the approval of vouchers presents an ethical dilemma. It implies that the financial well-being of our educators is contingent on a policy that may divert resources away from our public schools.
2. Unfair Pressure: This approach exerts unfair pressure on teachers and their unions to accept a policy they may fundamentally disagree with, even if it could have negative consequences for public education.
3. Weakening Public Schools: The idea that teacher raises are dependent on voucher approval may weaken our public schools, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and instability in our educational system.
4. Diverse Needs of Educators: Our public school employees have diverse needs and circumstances. Linking their compensation to vouchers may not account for the unique financial situations of each teacher.
5. Discriminatory: These private schools that these hopeful vouchers go to do not have to follow any of the state educational requirements.

They DO NOT have to accept all students. The students with special needs will NOT have the same opportunities of the general population.

I firmly believe that improving teacher compensation and supporting public education should be independent endeavors, driven by our commitment to nurturing the next generation. It is crucial that our governor recognizes the ethical concerns associated with this linkage and considers alternative approaches to address teacher raises without compromising the integrity of our public education system.

Please do not scrap your human decency. Give ALL CHILDREN a chance to learn equally. We already have the elite segregated by using private schools.

Why do they need extra funds to do this???

Nolan Ross
Self - Substitute Teacher
Austin, TX

Vouchers, or education savings accounts, are a scheme to divert public funds to private schools, overwhelmingly benefiting wealthy families that could already afford to send their kids to private school. Furthermore, the last special session proved that both democrats and republicans don't want vouchers, but Greg Abbott insists on wasting taxpayer dollars trying to push it through anyway. If you truly believe every Texan deserves a high-quality education, give teachers a raise and increase the basic allotment without passing vouchers!

Rose Marie DeHoyos

Self

San Antonio, TX

Oppose school vouchers. Public money for public schools. Let's build a strong public school education in Texas. Our children are falling behind. Texas is #43 in the country. Enhance Texas education don't downgrade it.

Benita Nunn, Mrs.

Self

Wylie, TX

NO to Vouchers! Public tax dollars belong in public schools! Fully fund our public schools, raise pay for teachers, paras and staff! Do not use our public funds to go to private schools! SAY NO TO VOUCHERS!!!

Maria Ramirez

Self

Nacogdoches, TX

I firmly support parental choice in educating our children.

Josh Westrom, Attorney/Argyle ISD Board of Trustees

Argyle ISD

Argyle, TX

I would like the conservatives on the committee to explain how this \$500 million ESA/voucher bill is conservative, small government when it creates and pays \$25 million to new State agencies called Education Administration Offices and pays \$15 million to Texas Comptroller Office to administer and disburse the \$500 million dollars? That's \$40 million of the \$500 million going to increase the size government.

I would like to know how a bill like this is conservative when it allows a family with 4 kids to qualify for over \$42,000 in vouchers when they pay much less in school taxes? Govt handout?

I would like to know why this ESA/voucher bill is not limited to kids stuck in underperforming schools, and instead is given to all kids, including kids who already have choices and options to attend good schools and private schools? Try a pilot program to see if it works as intended before grow size of government and creates more govt dependency.

Please know that more kids rely on and need the \$400 million in Formula Transition Grant funds set to expire at the end of this year than will benefit from ESA/vouchers. Argyle ISD receives over \$3 million in FTG funds to offset the underfunding caused by the last school funding legislation in 2019. The loss of this funding will be catastrophic and result in a funding cliff for Argyle. Please extend or replace the \$400 million Formula Transition Grant. Any new funding in this bill will be offset by the loss of this grant. I've seen where an FTG school like Argyle is estimated to receive \$1.4 million in new funding under this bill but it does not take into account the \$3.5 million we will lose in FTG funds if not extended or replaced. That's an estimated loss of \$2.1 million. Please act and include an amendment to extend FTG funding!

Brian Wier

Self

Godley, TX

Please no.

Andrea Hern
Self - Draper PTA Treasurer
SACHSE, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Vouchers and inadequate funding will impact our campus, district, and community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase, or programs be cut?

Ana Tijerina
Self
San Antonio, TX

The public school system is not broken. It does not need to be replaced by a corporate school system. What the public school system needs is support and trust in the professionals trained to work the system. Vouchers or the "education savings account" will only deplete not only the already low resources but also the morale. Seeing the patterns at the TX political level, I feel that would be the hall: to destabilize the public school system until it is a broken system. My hope is that you politicians listen to the public and that your decisions reflect public opinion and desires. Stop the vouchers. Fund public schools.

Glenn Wayne Byrd
Public education
Odessa, TX

Two wrongs don't make a right! I lay the failures and weaknesses in public education at the feet of those who concluded that "anyone" can teach. We lowered our standard so that this prophesy might appear to be true. Not so. Not everyone can teach. When higher ed taught true pedagogy and child psych., we found out very quickly who could and who couldn't. When we put "qualified" educators back into the public education arena, we will see what we long to see again. Until then, keep doing what we are doing and we will continue to get the same results. Put the ESA monies where they should actually go and parents will be more than satisfied with public education. Address the real issue instead of creating another issue to go along with this one. Don't be "bought out" with monies that should have already gone to public education to start with. Please don't sell out! The majority wants a world class public education system, not a watered down combination/different band aids or whatever they want to "sell" us.

Jack Stremmer, Mr
Self
Pflugerville, TX

Frankly paying my tax dollars to help fund a private school education is unacceptable. If you want to do something like this why not use monies to help with college tuition or early college programs. All this will do is help some rich kid.

Connie Drake
Self
Whitney, TX

I say vote NO to vouchers!! Fully fund public schools!!

Shaunte Collins
Self
Frisco, TX

ALL children deserve to have a quality public education. Please ensure that they have equal opportunities to learn, grow, and thrive. Please vote NO on vouchers.

Delcie Thomas

Self, Teacher

Beaumont, TX

Please vote yes.

Mary Algya

Self-Homeschooler

Melissa, TX

I have homeschooled my children for 12 years, and I stand opposed to HB1 allowing for ESA's. First and foremost you can not legislate lack of motivation, lack of parental involvement, and varying student abilities. You can not come to the sole conclusion that lack of funding in underperforming schools and students is the driving factor to a highly complex issue. Other states have performed comprehensive studies looking at performance levels before and after ESA's or other programs were implemented showing that they in fact did not produce better outcomes. What it also showed was that misuse of funds then required auditing, more manpower and oversight. This increases cost. The argument can be made that we can opt out, but supply and demands shows us that costs will increase to homeschool families as the demand for supplies increases. This occurred in several states during Covid with the influx of homeschoolers. While I could go into in depth details of all the negatives of this particular bill, I will keep it brief. This is not the best way to support homeschoolers and freedom of school choice. There is no such thing as free money. I urge you to vote NO on HB1.

Mary Spradlin, Rev. Dr.

Pastors for Texas Children

Fort Worth, TX

I oppose this bill. While it is true that some children will do better outside of a traditional public school, it is not right to use taxpayer money to provide for this at the expense of those who remain in the public schools. It is well-documented that this push for ESAs is part of a national playbook. It is well-funded by wealthy people who desire to privatize public schools for a variety of reasons, including: financial gain, segregation, & Christian nationalism. Texas must not fall for this! We have an obligation to the students in our state to provide the very best education possible. It is a lie that "all schools are failing," just as it is a lie that "teachers are indoctrinating students" and "ESAs will only cost xxx." Don't deal in lies. It's easy to see how ESAs are costing states far more than promised. Do not pass this bill that harms the children and teachers of Texas.

Lars Kuslich

self

Dayton, TX

There is so much wrong with this bill that it must be rejected. It expands government red tape. It tries to expand and legitimize the disastrous "virtual education" concept by creating a grant program for school districts to create "virtual campuses." It expands the "Communities in Schools" program that's really a search for students with mental health problems, which is something schools have no business doing. Setting aside the problems with vouchers, even the voucher program is terrible because it discriminates against most parents who choose not to enroll their child in a public school. This is done by having a finite amount of money for the program itself such that only select people will ever get one. There are more and, perhaps, worse problems in this bill, but I'll keep this comment relatively short. Overall, this is an awful bill that doesn't seem to do anything good, and whoever wrote this is clearly up to no good. This bill must be rejected.

Gina Yetman

self

arlington, TX

I strongly oppose school vouchers and urge my state representative to vote "no" on their implementation in the upcoming special session. Our public education system should be adequately funded and teachers should receive raises with the surplus in budget.

Marie Arredondo

Self

FW, TX

Our schools are currently not adequately funded. Please do not bring school vouchers into the mix.

Lauren Jeffcoat

Texas Teachers

League City, TX

I am against HB1, using taxpayer dollars to fund the governor's agenda to defund public education is ludicrous.

Denise Wilkerson

Self, retired

Arlington, TX

Here are just a few of the countless reasons I have grave concerns about vouchers passing in Texas:

1 – Vouchers are expensive. We simply can't afford to fund three types of school systems (traditional ISDs, charter schools, and private schools funded by vouchers) that follow three different sets of rules. The state has already chosen to spend billions of taxpayer dollars each year on charter schools. That money comes directly out of neighborhood public schools. Funding a third system will no doubt significantly weaken local community schools and existing charters. Texas is already near the bottom in the country in public school funding. The last thing our state needs to do is provide "welfare checks" to wealthy families to attend selective private schools, and that is exactly what has occurred in many states that have enacted vouchers. In Arizona, 75% of voucher applicants are children who were already attending private school.

2 – School choice is not parent choice. Too often we see charter schools that do not serve all children. In those cases, it is the school that does the choosing, not the parents. There are some charters that are mission-driven and strive to serve all children, and they should be commended; but many have become profit factories that serve only children who are easy and cheap to educate. They are underrepresented by children in special education, those experiencing poverty, and children with behavioral and emotional needs. By law, they are required to be open to all children, but in reality, some charters put up all kinds of barriers to keep "those kids" from enrolling. That does not serve the public good and it even hurts the reputation of mission-driven charters.

3 – Vouchers erode our democracy. Local community schools have elected leaders who are required to live in the district, be accountable to all taxpayers, provide full transparency and have accountability. If you don't like their decisions, you can vote them out of office. If you want to encourage or discourage them from making a certain decision, you can speak at a board meeting. You can vote for or against tax increases and bond issues. You can even talk to them at church or at the grocery store or ball game. In other words, you have a lot of influence on how your taxes are spent. That is called democracy. Private schools are far removed from the electorate. Vouchers will tax everyone, but the average Texan will have no say on how their tax dollars are spent, what curriculum is used, whether certified teachers are hired, or what programs are offered. Private schools don't have to have a grievance policy, follow the Open Meetings Act, or show transparency about anything. It is ironic to me that while we are talking about giving parents more rights, we are actually inhibiting their rights by funding schools that can pick and choose whom to serve and how they serve without any input from the public.

john Leuck, Mr.

Self

Fort Worth, TX

We need to be strength if Texas public schools, not funneling public money into religious schools.

Amanda Winstel

Self

Garland, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Tammi Tysell, Dr.

self, retired

Frisco, TX

Creating a voucher system in Texas to divert public tax dollars away from public schools towards private institutions could have detrimental effects on the state's education system. Public schools serve as the backbone of communities, offering education to all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background or abilities. By redirecting funds to private schools, the already limited resources available to public schools could be further strained, leading to overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and diminished extracurricular opportunities.

Additionally, private schools often have selective admission criteria, meaning they may not accept all students, especially those with learning disabilities or special needs. This exclusionary approach can leave vulnerable children without suitable educational options, exacerbating inequality in the system. Furthermore, public schools are held accountable through standardized testing and transparent reporting, ensuring a certain level of quality and accountability. Private schools, on the other hand, may not be subject to the same rigorous standards, making it difficult to assess the quality of education provided.

A voucher system could also weaken the sense of community and shared responsibility for education. Public education is a collective investment in the future, fostering a sense of civic engagement and unity. Diverting funds away from public schools may erode this shared commitment, ultimately undermining the overall well-being and prosperity of Texas communities.

Renuka Ranjan

Hosp PTA Board Member

Frisco, TX

PLEASE SAY NO TO VOUCHERS. Using state funds to be used for private school tuition/other costs is NOT ACCEPTABLE, since they hurt the children of Texas by taking funds away from the public schools that are already underfunded.

Renuka Ranjan

Self

Frisco, TX

PLEASE SAY NO TO VOUCHERS. Using state funds to be used for private school tuition/other costs is NOT ACCEPTABLE, since they hurt the children of Texas by taking funds away from the public schools that are already underfunded.

Mary Misko

Self

Irving, TX

I am a resident of Irving, TX and my children are homeschooled and in Catholic private school. My husband is a public charter school teacher and as a former teacher myself, I think public education is important but I still believe parents should have more options available to them. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Sincerely,

Mary Misko

Adam shumaker

Self

Houston, TX

My family depends on our local schools. I don't appreciate my property taxes being taken away to fund initiative like vouchers that don't support my community.

Sandra Polkowski

N/A

Austin, TX

Please do not pass HB 1. As a former school psychologist and now a small business owner I strongly believe that educational savings accounts will not provide the solutions that lawmakers are looking for. Public schools are excellent at special education, but only when well funded. Difficulties that public schools are having now are largely due to the fact that their programs are underfunded. Providing special education services is very labor intensive and districts cannot afford to hire all the support that is needed to provide services appropriately. The majority of private schools do not know how to serve students with special needs. There are a few really excellent ones, but they are not located throughout the state and they are not big enough to serve all the students that this bill suggests. Many special education students are going to slip through the cracks when they are enrolled in private schools that do not provide research based methods for special education instruction and are not expected to document progress the way that special education in public schools do. As a small business owner I believe strongly in the public education of all Texans. We need a strong work force, but by neglecting the fund public schools we are creating workers who will be ill prepared for the workforce. Education in Texas needs change, but lawmakers need to focus on the way that resources are allocated and better fund schools and pay teachers. Giving away money to families to do whatever they want with it is very generous to a few citizens. But all Texans deserve a strong education and this bill would take away from all of them.

Karen Lewis
Argyle High School
Argyle, TX
November 9, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet today and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Karen Louann Lewis

Julie Espinosa-Orosco
PI Prep PTA
Dallas, TX

Please please stand up for students, teachers, and public schools!!! Don't let any voucher legislation pass!!!!
We need your leadership!!!!
Julie Espinosa Orosco
Dallas, TX

Jewell Stremmer
Self-grandmother
Pflugerville, TX

Please preserve and support public schools. Say no to vouchers. I want my tax dollars to provide quality education for my grandchildren and the children of their generation. Please fully fund public education and teacher pay raises. Do not allow tax dollars to be spent on private schools. Tax money should never go to schools that are not required to meet public education standards and should not go to provide support for schools that are run by churches. The constitution provides for separation of church and state. The voucher program violates this basic principle. This attack on public education will not be forgotten at election time.

Jennifer Pittsford
Self/Stay at home parent/community volunteer and lay leader
Houston, TX

Vouchers diverted from public schools to private schools are going to be such a detriment to the welfare of the state of Texas. We need to be serving the needs of all the children in Texas, not the ones who can already afford private schools. There are so many public schools lacking basic necessities such as working air conditioning (at my daughter's school) and these funds would drain the resources even further. We need to be serving the your general public, not the upper, wealthy class. Kids already have so many challenges nowadays, we need to offer as much support, in this case monetary, wherever we can.

Delcie Thomas
Self, Teacher
Beaumont, TX

We need to fully fund public schools. No to vouchers, no to
Yes to teacher pay raises, yes to para pay raises.

Sheila Wyatt, Mrs.
Self, homeschool teacher
Dallas, TX

We are a homeschool family. If the legislature really wants to help... \$1,000 isn't much compared to the ISD fee we pay plus our own school costs. Instead just knock down our property tax and do not create another layer of expensive bureaucracy (i.e. Comptroller database, an approved list of purchases and the man-power to create and maintain all that bureaucracy.) Save the bureaucracy \$ for the state of Texas. I also do not agree with a qualification test.

James Pope, Mr
Self-PTA
San Antonio, TX

NO VOUCHERS. Vouchers are a collective denigration ALL TEXAS CHILDREN. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong PUBLIC schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure ALL children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools as promised to them. The cornerstone of public education was designed to engage and prepare CIVIC-minded individuals. PLEASE BE THAT example and continue your civic duty to ALL children across the great state of TEXAS!!

Carla Scruggs
Self, homemaker
Round Rock, TX

I am the parent of two children who needed services from public schools, including speech therapy, occupational therapy, and content mastery. One of my children was served under IDEA. Private schools do not have to accept children with disabilities, and they are not required to provide these services. I am concerned a voucher bill will deflect money from public schools many of which are already struggling. Please vote no on any bills that include vouchers, also known as educational savings accounts. In addition, special education has been under funded in Texas for too many years. This is shameful in a state that has a budget surplus. All children deserve a fair and equitable education. The state of Texas can do better.

Thank you.
Carla Scruggs

Monica Overman
Self
Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Monica Overman

Jock Naponic

Self

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Vouchers and inadequate funding will impact our campus, district, and community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase, or programs will be forced to cut. A well functioning public school system is the backbone of our society.

Robert Stanaland, Dr.

Self, Dentist

MIDLAND, TX

Vouchers are bad for our students! Please vote NO to vouchers!

Renuka Ranjan

Pearson PTA Board Member

Frisco, TX

PLEASE SAY NO TO VOUCHERS. Using state funds to be used for private school tuition/other costs is NOT ACCEPTABLE, since they hurt the children of Texas by taking funds away from the public schools that are already underfunded.

Mary Brennan

Self

Eules, TX

I support HB 1! Please make ESAs available to all Texas children, including current homeschoolers and private schoolers. The fact that a child's parents have already made the decision to remove their child from public school should not prevent them from benefiting from this program. Please also support strong parental rights by ensuring the funds have no strings attached, so that we can continue to educate our children according to our beliefs and conscience.

Christy Skinner

Self

Lumberton, TX

I have been a Texas educator for 26 years. We need to decide if education is going to be a public service or not and fund it accordingly. For reasons not completely known to me, we continue to treat teachers unlike other public servants, who are compensated much more fairly with livable wages, benefits, triple time, paid holidays, and alluring pensions. Meanwhile, the public service position that requires a Bachelor's degree and hours of professional training including an up to date certification are not only severely lacking in compensation but also are allowed approximately 45 minutes a day to handle an ever-growing list of job responsibilities. Teachers are expected to plan engaging lessons and grade papers for a class load that in my veteran experience has grown from an average of 100 students to an average of 150. In addition, we must call parents to keep them informed, fill out massive amounts of paperwork for all of the special categories of students, and go to meetings on testing accountability. We are losing young teachers in droves because the demands of the job require them to spend at least one day of their weekend to make up for a broken system that has thrown more responsibility and "accountability" at them as quick fixes to a system that needs an overhaul. We must start by bringing the JOY back to being an educator. Instead of satisfying the giant testing industry's desire to sell products and calling that accountability, we need to properly train, compensate, and trust educators. Committees determining the future of education in our state should be directed by competent, caring, respected educators. They know what needs to be done. Start with these things: 1. Put money towards public education, not vouchers. 2. Create a compensation, benefits, and retirement plan that will attract and retain talent. 3. After fixing compensation, eliminate alternative certification programs. Teachers need to be properly trained in pedagogy, child development, methodology, and psychology. But they must be PAID if you expect this level of competence. 4. Reduce class loads and increase required planning time and FUND this. Education is one of the few things our constitution requires the state to fund, yet this is not happening. 5. Get rid of high stakes testing. Do not give more credence to one test than to the student's ongoing progress from trusted professionals. This would be a solid START to repairing a broken system. We also need to take a look at revamping the way students are promoted socially and replace it with a structure that focuses on expert teachers remediating basic skills repeatedly until students understand. This could look like a pull out program for remediating basics or it could be an entire restructuring of education focusing on skills instead of age and only advancing students to the next skill when they exhibit 90 percent competence in the first. Thank you for soliciting opinions.

Shemica Allen

Personalized Learning Solutions, LLC

Melissa, TX

Private schools are exempt from having to offer special education. Without needed supports, things fall apart quickly. Please vote NO, because vouchers weaken public schools including special education.

Michelle Lavin

Self

Waller, TX

I am very much in favor of HB 1!

Michelle Alvarez

Self - Childcare provider and former public education teacher

SAN ANTONIO, TX

As a mother of 3 children who attend (or will be attending) public school, a wife of a public high school teacher, and a former public high school teacher myself I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers.

We should be thinking about how ESAs and Vouchers will impact EVERYONE. Everyone who needs services and education. Everyone who teaches and helps support those who most need it. Everyone regardless of background, income, ability. Public schools support EVERYONE and ESAs and Vouchers will not.

Graydon Jones

Self - PTA Historian South Hills Elementary

Fort Worth, TX

I believe that vouchers and education savings accounts will do nothing but hurt Texas public education. Our public school system is already underfunded, and this proposed system will increase that gap. This bill does not help my kids or my neighbors kids. I believe that investment in local public schools is critical for the flourishing of our neighborhoods and cities, and I would hope that our elected officials believe that, too. If you do, please consider the damaging effect that this bill would have for families who cannot afford private education (even with vouchers). We will end up paying the price for this bill because we will stay in underfunded schools with underpaid teachers. How can our public schools thrive unless families stay and invest in their own communities? This bill will pad the pockets of the financially stable just as much as it will create opportunity. It will do so on the backs of low income families who are trying their best to give their children a good education without any other options. Please reject this bill for the sake of our kids.

Alicia Deegan

Self - Brentwood Elementary PTA Treasurer

Not Hispanic or Latino, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

By causing lower enrollment in public schools, vouchers will inevitably erode funds available to public schools, affecting teachers' jobs and programs available to students. For all of the talk about school accountability and standards, vouchers fly directly in the face of accountability. Public funds should not go to private institutions, where there will be little to no oversight of the quality of education being provided.

Joanna Klose

Self

Austin, TX

This has been voted down enough times that this **MUST END!** Vouchers are not what is best for TX schools and our students. There is virtually no accountability in this bill or understanding of where and how this money will be used. I stand against this bill and will keep fighting to the voices of Texans are heard over the political agendas of certain elected officials!

Jana Brown
The Arc and a parent
EARLY, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Jana Brown
1065 FM 2126
Early, TX 76802

Hollie West

Self, Spring Branch Middle School and Memorial Drive Elementary PTAs
Houston, TX 77024, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

In SBISD there are schools that will have to close, and the student/teacher ratio will increase in high schools, where it is already too large.

Kay Miller

self

Houston, TX

Please separate public school funding from voucher legislation. Public schools NEED more funding and it is an embarrassment to have a record surplus and still have some of the lowest funded schools in the nation. If vouchers really had enough public support, they would be able to pass as a standalone bill.

Sarah Swallow

Self, consultant

Austin, TX

School vouchers do not add any value to our state. Do not make a legacy for yourselves of chipping away at the quality of our public schools by siphoning away funding.

Sherylene Williams, Business Manager

Kelton ISD

Wheeler, TX

Thank you to all of the House of Representatives who have worked on the Education legislation this year. I know there has been a lot of hard work trying to come to a consensus regarding education because I have watched more house, senate, and committee discussions than ever before in my 23-year career. I have had every emotion possible during these legislative sessions as I know you all have had too. I do want you to know you are appreciated.

I realize there are some concessions that need to be made in order to pass a school funding bill. I beg you to keep in mind that Texas has one of the highest public education populations in the nation and one of the lowest in education. Is this acceptable? I don't think so. When I started my career, we were one of the top performing states. What has happened? Lack of teachers. A Texas Educator is one of the lowest paid professions in the Nation. It is embarrassing to me that our Governor is holding Texas Children hostage by refusing to pass a school voucher bill. Texas is one of the lowest funded schools in the Nation, but according to some of the discussion I've heard a private or homeschooled student is worth more money than a public educated student. Does this make sense? I think not! Let's level the playing field, raise the basic allotment to the same as the education savings account amount.

Teachers are leaving the profession in droves. Finding qualified good teachers that have class management skills, ability to teach and build respectful relationships is harder and harder. Being in a rural northwest Texas school it keeps getting harder and harder. Competing with other employment opportunities is near impossible. Teachers face so many obstacles, not only teaching, but their student's family structure, social economic status, emotional factors and the list could go on and on. What makes a good teacher, someone that cares deeply for their students, so they live on less and less adding to their stress.

I urge you to think about the 5-Million plus students in public education and their needs FIRST and foremost during this special session.

Miguel Larsen
Self-Retired Texas Peace Officer
Daingerfield, TX

I'm writing in opposition to the bill and oppose the use of public money for the support and maintenance of private schools. This sort of funding is specifically reserved for public schools per the Texas Constitution.

Therefore, rather than the legislature and governor deciding this issue because of lobby influence, use of taxpayer dollars to fund private schools should be decided by Texas voters in the form of a constitutional amendment.

Under no circumstance should private religious schools be considered for public funding.

Thank you.

Carey Handley, Mrs.

submitting as a parent; I'm a graphic designer, my husband is an attorney working with families like ours
RICHMOND, TX

As early as 1963, with the passage of the Mental Health Act, the federal government recognized that institutionalization was not optimal for the development, growth and happiness of individuals with disabilities. Section 29.0056 of HB 1 (88(4)) is clearly a step backwards in our society. Institutionalization as in state supported living centers can be seen as warehousing our children instead of keeping them in the family home where they can receive loving care that only families can bring. SSLCs are a huge financial drain on the state - significantly more than releasing more waiver slots. Instead of discussing SSLCs in ARDs, which, in my mind is wholly inappropriate, our family is the face behind HB4716 ("The Handley Bill") which would require schools to refer families to LIDDAs upon a child's diagnosis, rather than waiting until the transition meeting at age 14.

My understanding is that SLLCs cost Texans \$28,300 per month per resident in comparison to the \$6,600 per month per individual with the Home and Community-Based Services (HCS). How sad for our society that our government thinks the best option for our children is to remove them from home and be placed in an institution. As the parent of a young adult with disabilities, I'm shocked and saddened that this is even an issue. The fact that HB 1 proposes schools mention SLLCs in ARD meetings goes against the spirit behind the Mental Health Act of 1963 and reverts to institutionalization is disheartening. A preferable solution, in my mind, is to better fund the waiver programs which will allow families to stay together.

Having a child or young adult with disabilities can be challenging but also highly rewarding. They learn from us as we learn from them. They teach us kindness, innocence, and gratitude. Our daughter, who was with us as we testified in support of HB 4716, brings joy to those around her. I can't imagine how institutionalization would stifle the goodness in her. Our hope is that you will reconsider this portion of HB 1 and, instead, find a way to better fund the waiver programs.

We are grateful that HB 4716 passed the House in this session and sad that we weren't heard in the Senate. Please consider the affect that this portion of HB 1 would have on so many families. Thank you.

Julie Linker
Self/PTA Member Marcus High School
Flower Mound, TX

As an employee and parent with children in public schools and as a person who votes in all elections, I strongly oppose educational savings accounts or school vouchers and urge my state representative to vote "no" on their implementation in the upcoming special session. Our public education system should be adequately funded and teachers should receive raises with the surplus in budget. Educational savings accounts do not and will not benefit the majority of Texas students (especially students of low income or special needs). We need to support public education and its teachers. Give teachers pay raises and fund schools that are already hurting. Do NOT tie teacher pay raises to ESA's hidden in legislation. It's so disrespectful to these professionals to have them choose between getting more money and their moral convictions regarding their jobs as public educators.

Harry Miller 3, Dr

Self

Austin, TX

I'm one hundred percent against this! Keep religion out of politics! Our public schools need all the help they can get financially. I went to a private religious school from kindergarten to the 5th grade then transferred to a the public school system. It was the wisest decision my parents made and changed my life for the better! We have one of the most under financed public school systems in the nation add to this our stat government is telling our schools what books are allowed in school libraries. This is because our Texas government is catering to the evangelicals and not to public opinion. Instead of forcing Texans to fallow evangelical beliefs put this on the ballot so we the people can vote!

Salmina Tarek

Self-Marek Elementary School PTA

Pearland, TX

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Juliana Bihlet

Self- Memorial Drive Elementary

Houston, TX

Vouchers will hurt children that attend public schools. We cannot afford ESAs or Vouchers until we have better funded children and teachers in public schools. Strong public schools and good education is the best gift that we can give and public education gives this opportunity to all students. Vouchers and inadequate funding will impact my children personally and their school.

Sara Miller

Self

Houston, TX

As a parent of children that have attended both private and public school, I am strongly opposed to private school vouchers. I cannot believe we are even considering funneling public tax dollars into private institutions when the public school my children attend is unsure if they will even be able to stay open next year due to lack of funding. I pay a very high tax rate and want to use our public schools. I do NOT want my tax dollars to go to a voucher program that will not even offset the actual cost of most private schools for those that cannot afford it. I also grew up in a rural school district that will only be hurt by this bill. My small public school gave me an education that afforded me the chance to compete for jobs with people that attended the most elite private schools in Houston because our public schools can be wonderful when given the opportunity. My votes will be cast for those that support public school finance today and in the future.

Lisa Bray

Self

McKinney, TX

I am asking my representative to vote NO on school vouchers. Public education is important to me and I cannot support any measures that will defund it.

Elizabeth Bedell

Self

Dallas, TX

Please vote NO to vouchers! Until we have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. Our students and teachers, and those who support them, critically need additional funding. Our local school district has not received an increase in basic per-pupil funding since before the pandemic, while inflation and the costs to operate have risen dramatically since 2019. And while increases in property values have created higher property tax bills, it is the state that has benefited -- not our school districts and the children who attend them.

I support policies and policymakers who ensure ALL children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Public schools teach every single student that enters their doors, while private schools choose the children they want to attend their school, do not have to accept all students, nor do they have to maintain the same school safety requirements or follow the Texas curriculum. Private schools funded by public dollars are not accountable to taxpayers for the academic success of students or for financial transparency, ensuring the responsible use of tax dollars. Allowing public funds (our tax dollars!) to be used for private school tuition would be malfeasance.

Emily Porres

Self

Irving, TX

Please support parental choice in education and help pass the bill in the special session that allows families to have more options.

Ihma Quintanilla, Ms.

Self

San Antonio, TX

Your support of HB1 is you showing your voters that you value their kid's education and their family values, that you understand that we all want the same education opportunities for our kids regardless of economic position. Please support HB1 this legislation session and show all Texans and the rest of country that Texas values family and the education of our future leaders.

Sarah Chadha

Self - Management

Houston, TX

Please do not support vouchers. Public schools need the funding. My son's excellent gifted and talented Bendwood school in Spring Branch ISD may be shut down due to inadequate funding. A few elementary schools in our area will completely close.

Also, in this current climate, Islamophobia is on the rise and we have heard about many incidents facing our kids. The school curriculum needs to address Islamophobia and social studies curriculum needs to show positive influences from Muslims in science, math and arts. Texas is a diverse state and it needs to show in the curriculum. Thank you.

Briana Pollock

self, dyslexia educator

Highland Village, TX

Please do not pass the educational savings account. I am worried that an increase in teacher pay has been included to entice everyone to pass the educational savings account. This will hurt public schools tremendously, especially students with special needs/mental illness and of low poverty. Instead of taking more money away from public schools, we need to increase funds to work on teacher retention and supports for ALL students to be funded, and focus on ways to improve public education.

Mary Whittenberg

self/ teacher

Arlington, TX

Bottom line, taxpayer dollar should not be used to in private schools. Should a private school want to acquire state taxpayer funds then they should abide by all of the standards that all taxpayer funded schools have to abide by; examples accept all students who apply for the amount that the state funds, teach the curriculum set by the state (and no other), administer all state mandated testing, publish state grades, perform teacher evaluations according to state assessment guidelines yearly, and require students in class the same amount of minutes as public schools. Just to name a few. Not to mention all of the safety and security, financial, and other onus red tape things public districts get to deal with on a daily basis. If said private school does then want to meet all of the public criteria, only then, they should get the same pitiful funding that public schools get from the state and not be able to assess tuition from students (because at that point they are a public school). I should be able to audit the books of ANY private school that accepts taxpayer money. Will that be written into the bill? Will the private schools have to play by public school rules? If not, then we already have school choice, I don't need to pay for other people's choices. Thank you.

Kathy Jones-Hospod

Self

Cedar park, TX

You can rebrand vouchers over and over. It's a scam by any name. Public funds should never go to private schools. Every child in Texas deserves a free and equitable education and it's enshrined in our constitution. It's insulting to all taxpayers for the Legislature to continue over and over to strong arm Texans. If the Governor told you to jump off a cliff, would you do it? He's now told you 4 times to jump. Back away from the cliff.

Dorianne Hull

Self

Irving, TX

My husband and I live in Terry Meza's district in Irving and have discerned that a private religious Montessori school is best for our family. This is our fourth year paying private school tuition for three kids, and we anticipate continuing to pay when our fourth and fifth kids go to school and/or we'll need funds for homeschooling.

Texas parents deserve choices in education and we should make ALL kids eligible for Education Savings Accounts.

School choice will only make education better in our state and it will NOT harm public schools, in fact it would help them get better.

Not to mention that Texas families overwhelmingly support education freedom right now across the state.

In fact, nearly 90% of Republican primary voters last year supported school choice, voting in favor of this language in Prop. 9:

"Texas parents and guardians should have the right to select schools, whether public or private, for their children, and the funding should follow the student."

Please stand with kids and empower parents to give us options for the schools that best fit our children's needs.

Support HB 1, the universal school choice program in the special session. Thanks so much for all you do.

Jodi Crofford

self, teacher

Humble, TX

Dear Rep. Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

I'm writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session. Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much-needed funds to go toward a voucher scheme. Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept. Let's work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement — not vouchers. We appreciate the support the committee has shown so far for public education and the over 5 million Texas public school students.

GEETHA SRIRANGAPURI

SELF

NORTHLAKE, TX

NOVEMBER 8, 2023 UPDATE

TAKE ACTION ARGYLE

Written Testimony Script (copy and paste)
for the Texas Public Education Committee

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Your Name
Geetha Srirangapuri

Josine Corstens

self, PTA member at Westchester Academy for International Studies, Houston
Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Vouchers and inadequate funding will increase the student-teacher ratio and will possibly be the end for Westchester Academy for International Studies, the only International Baccalaureate School in the Spring Branch Independent School District in Houston, and the only public IB school in our area.

Weldon Bonner, Dr.

I have the great opportunity to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees in Lewisville ISD
Lewisville, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to share thoughts on these items facing the education committee. With the 88th Legislature's inability to address school funding via the Basic Allotment, I urge you all to do so now. The Basic Allotment is pinned to amounts provided by the Legislature in 2019 and lags terribly given the inflation since then. Index the Basic Allotment to an inflationary standard like the Consumer Price Index or another standard. I am also concerned with the desire to introduce a third publicly funded educational option for Texas children. Currently two options exist--tradition public education and charter schools--neither of which is adequately funded per my comments below. It is ironic the proposed amount for the educational savings account is approximately 1.7x larger than the current Basic Allotment. Fund the current iterations of public schooling prior to any new introductions. I have further grave concerns about the legislation proposed but am called to my job.

Maureen Nwajiobi

Catholic School
Baytown, TX

SUPPORT HB1

Good morning,

I am a Principal of a Catholic School at Baytown. Please help make school choice possible. Many parents want to register their child in our school but could not because they cannot afford it. Though our tuition is very cheap to help many parents yet many of them could not afford it. Please help help help. Please give them freedom to choose where their children will study. Thank you for your consideration and kindness! Have a great day!

Andrew Kinney

Self, Catholic school teacher and administrator
Coupland, TX

Having taught at public, public charter, and private schools, I believe with a firm conviction that certain private schools provide an attentiveness and education better suited, for many children, than what can be provided elsewhere. The good teachers in public schools are fine folks who work hard and have my utmost respect. But the small, communal atmosphere where I work at St. Mary's in Taylor allows for a familial bond and neighborly love beyond what I have experienced anywhere else. St. Mary's scrapes by on a small budget, with aging buildings and too low of pay, because we prioritize offering this education to all, regardless of income level. Our families are middle and lower-middle class, often with many children. The families and the teachers believe in this education, which is why our families are willing to sacrifice to pay what they can in tuition, and our teachers are willing to accept pay that is 20% less than what they would make at a public school. Passing HB 1 would mean more families could enjoy a school like ours, our current families would not be so heavily burdened with tuition, and schools like ours could pay their teachers closer to what the public school teachers make. We are educating well and forming good citizens; we are increasing the general welfare of our city, the great state of Texas, and the United States. State funds would be put to good use at places like St. Mary's.

Scott Kelly
Self--Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

This voucher plan is detrimental to our children and a misuse of tax payer money. Adequately funding our public schools most come first before any voucher plan is even considered. I have twin boys in fourth grade. They are very bright and, I hope, have a bright future. They have already been told, however, that the Gifted and Talented program that they love will be eliminated if their school district is not properly funded as a result of this voucher proposal. Schools in their district also are set to close and student teacher ratios are set to increase so large that teaching will suffer. These are only a few examples of negative consequences my kids, our school district, and thousands of others will suffer. And for no legitimate purpose. I do not support policy makers or policies that use our children as political pawns.

Corintha Hull
Self, as a parent and PTA member
Fort Worth, TX

I am writing to add my voice to the many constituents asking you to PLEASE not go through with education vouchers. These will not ensure that folks who cannot afford private school are able to do so. All that this ensures is that our already extremely underfunded public schools will lose even more funding. These vouchers do not give parents freedom to seek better education for their child--instead, they would take away opportunity for public schools to improve, further worsening the current public education system. In short, public dollars do not belong in private schools. Please keep them in the public education system and work to better what we already have so that a quality education is readily available to all Texas children. Thank you.

Aurora Nugent
Self
Austin, TX

This voucher system does not appear to help support or continue to support the best interest of the general public. It will take away from the public schools. This is not something I want for the community I live in. I have two children in the public school system and I would prefer public tax dollars go to public schools.

Jeanne Lehman
Self
Austin, TX

Please vote no on HB1, it is bad for children and bad for Texas. It won't provide all families with choice, it will end up costing the state billions in additional funds and it will destroy many communities that rely on their strong school system. I speak from experience as someone who moved to Texas from Indiana where vouchers passed in 2011. I don't know how a great state like Texas would want to follow in the same footsteps of lesser states with failed policies! Vote no! Thank you.

Karly Conroy
Self
Austin, TX

As a parent of a child served by IDEA, a former special education teacher, and an education policy student, I am against HB1 for many reasons. First, HB1 harms the protections for students with disabilities. Private schools are not required to provide appropriate services to students with disabilities, and are allowed to participate in discriminatory practices by not allowing students with IEPs into their schools. Currently, there are great laws in place to assure students with disabilities are being taught with their non disabled peers to the maximum extent possible, and HB 1 would not protect this right. This bill would lead to further segregation of students with disabilities that our country has worked so hard to prevent. In addition, when a student leaves a public school, the funds going to that public school will be lowered. This is problematic because many of our public schools are not reaching their full potential due to lack of efficient funding- leaving schools not staffed adequately, school buildings in poor shape, and classroom materials not up to appropriate standards. Instead of sending money to private entities, the government should be focusing on how to improve Texas public schools, so that all students are given equal opportunities. ALL students should be kept in mind when making this decision, and as it stands, many students are excluded from the possible benefits HB 1 might have. With all my heart, I do not stand for HB 1.

Leanne Nuyda, Mrs

Self -

Keller, TX

No school vouchers! Public schools need more funds, not less.

Jana Hinojosa, Teacher

Self

Flower Mound, TX

I do not support this bill. Education is in enough turmoil to support private education.

Donna Shelley

Self/ Homemaker

VICTORIA, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support of HB1. I believe that the opportunities for our children to flourish, excel, each at their own pace and in the environment that they can do so in, is vitally important to the future generations of Texas. Empowering parents again is an absolute game changer. Too often, our schools are more focused on teaching our children to pass a test and teaching Societal ideals. This most stop. This program, if implemented well, should be passed into law. But, it needs to address the BIG issue. That issue is the FACT, that Tx schools are more concerned about the Federal dollars they receive. So public school accountability is perhaps the most important factor of all. Without that, not much will change for those students who's parents cannot save due to poverty. Accountability must be real and extensive. Due to lack of accountability we are in this position.

Thank you for your time.

Erin Sears, Dr.

Self (pharmacist)/Robinson MS PTA;Jasper HS PTSA;Plano West Senior High PTSA

Plano, TX

Please focus on adequately funding our children and teachers in public schools. Nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. My family is full of educators and public servants. My children are entrenched in the educational structure that my family has helped build. Public education is central to a strong society. Vouchers and ESAs will erode public education - there is no denying that!

Ygnacia Capetillo
self
Universal City, TX

I am Ygnacia Capetillo, an educator of 14 years in the state of Texas. I am voicing my concern with the lack of Texas support for educators when it comes to financing our students education. The state has not adequately funded public education with the needs that our Texas students have and sadly we are the lowest when it comes to funding public school, when we are one of the top states that is populated. The money you provide into a savings account program is taking away from students currently in public education while school districts are running on fumes when it comes to funding, retention, and providing adequate programs. My concern is that the schools that could be receiving tax dollars to private schools are not held to the same standard when a public school receives funding from the state. Private school parents are left to foot the bill when it comes to special education programs (i.e. speech, dyslexia, OT therapy) and this cannot help low-income families. They are also able to expel a student for behavior, where as a public school cannot. Another concern is religious private schools. Why are tax dollars going to fund a religious private school, does this not go against separation of church and state? Why not pour the money back into our future of the majority of our Texas students? There has been no conversation about raising the student funds since 2019 while cost of living, supplies, and cost of keeping things running always going on the rise. Yes, parents deserve choice, but there are already choices out there (charter schools within school districts parents can participate in, specialty schools within the districts, i.e. performing arts, STEAM, technology, and agriculture programs. Parents have a choice. If parents need more choices, I would like to see an option given where parents can travel in between school districts, especially if they work in a different district than where they live. Yet again, that would require putting money back into our public school system that can create and provide those opportunities for students around each city. Texas needs to do better for our hundreds of thousands of students and educators who have given their careers for our Texas students. It is very heartbreaking to see and hear that educators can barely live off their salary and are required to get another job. Yes, some districts have given 1-3% raises, but in turn our health insurance goes up and our increase in pay goes towards that. Please think of the hundred thousands of students when it comes to funding public schools because in the end, it's what we need to do for the majority.

Jana Owen
Self
Garland, TX

Vouchers hurt children. Until you have adequately, funded public school children and teachers, there is no room for vouchers. I believe there is nothing more important than making every child's potential reality than string public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Please do not pass school vouchers.

Roxanne Horton
Self
Austin, TX

Please vote NO on HB 1

Kim Markle, Mrs.
self
Fort Worth, TX

I am completely against vouchers. Please stop this.

susmitha musunuru, ms

self

flower mound, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,

Susmitha

Sandra Licon

Self

San Elizario, TX

Please vote against vouchers... our public schools needs to be properly funded

Leslie Barkis, Dr.

Self

Temple, TX

I fully support HB1.

I have heard arguments against school choice funding that involve the risk that this will become another Government handout or welfare program. Arguments usually revolve around the risk that some may say they are going to educate their children or wards and receive the funds while not providing the quality education. Standardized testing can decrease this risk. I have also heard complaints that school choice will cause a mass exodus from the public schools.

The best prevention against this abuse and against a mass exodus from public schools is to give priority funding to those students who are already enrolled in home school or private schools for at least the past year. This proves the family's commitment to home schooling or private schooling not just something to do in order to receive money from the state.

Please consider amendments to the bill to prioritize students who have been enrolled in private schools or home schools for at least a year in order to safeguard Texas. Thank you.

Sincerely,

L. Allen Barkis, DO

Kristen Coles

Citizen

Katy, TX

This bill will weaken public schools. Use this money to give teachers raises and fully fund our public schools.

Alexander Nolte

Self and Attorney

Fulshear, TX

I am in support of parental choice/school choice, meaning I support a public policy that financially assists parents in choosing the best educational environment for their children by allowing at least a portion of their tax dollars to be used outside of the public school system.

Mary Carpenter

Myself

ADDISON, TX

I want to see this bill passed into law. It is long overdue that our elected officials allow the people who elected them a choice as to where and how their children are educated. An ESA is a step in that direction. Please do your public duty and vote for this bill. Texas is deplorably behind other states and that is shameful. I will be watching to see how my elected officials vote on this bill. Thank you, Mary Carpenter

Robert Sarpalius, Executive Director

Self

Arlington, TX

Vouchers is a way of sending public money to private institutions, taking that money away from our public schools. The public schools need support, not destructive attacks. Private schools are okay for those who wish to fund them. We need to provide the best public education system possible and vouchers do the opposite. I'm very much against taking public money to fund private schools.

Kathryn Nolte, Dr.

Self - Doctor

Fulshear, TX

I support parental choice/school choice, which I view as a public policy that financially assists parents in choosing the best educational environment for their children by allowing a portion of their tax dollars to be used outside of the public school system.

christopher coffey

Self

San Antonio, TX

This is a clear violation of church and state separation. My tax dollars should not go to schools ran for profit or by religious institutions.

Cynthia Sarpalius

Self/ Retired Teacher

Arlington, TX

I am absolutely opposed to any ESA or voucher program. Free public schools are a foundational principle of our nation. Pulling money from public schools to use for private schools where there is no accountability or oversight is a misuse of public funds!

Eric Winter

Self - PTA member at Memorial Drive Elementary (Spring Branch ISD)

Houston, TX

Providing vouchers or ESAs without properly funding public school should be a hard stop. The question of funding adequacy is already being answered even in our district with plans to close schools, increased pre-k fees, reduced funding for various supportive programs, among others due to the budget shortfall next year. This should not be acceptable for anyone especially during a time of record prosperity in the State of Texas. It is your constitutional obligation to your constituents and the millions of school children to provide them with a public school education opportunity they deserve, at very least provide basic needs. Passing HB1 without adequately funding public schools is fundamentally wrong - please do the latter first and consider the consequences this will have on our communities and school children. I appreciate your time.

susmitha musunuru, ms

self

flower mound, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

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As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

#TogetherWeSoar,
susmitha

Summer Fuselier, LDT, CALT

Self

Wylie, TX

When legislators stop pushing the governor's voucher schemes then they can legitimately address the issues Texans care about such as proper funding for our schools, teacher pay raises, and lower testing and accountability burdens! The fact that some legislators are trying to group vouchers with teacher pay and other important topics shows deception. Vouchers take money away from public school educators and students. charter and private schools should only get public money if their students also take state exams and they abide by all the other hoops public school educators have to face daily. Vouchers are just an example of the Mathew effect.

Connor Gully
SELF- Memorial Drive Elementary PTA member
Houston, TX

I'm a parent and member of the PTA at my children's public school.
Vouchers hurt children. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Vouchers and inadequate funding will impact your campus, district, and community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase, or programs be cut?

Megan LaBauve, Mrs
self
FRIENDSWOOD, TX

As a 26 year Texas public school teacher I feel that the Texas government has been using public education and teachers as pawns in a political fight for years. Citizens pay tax to support education for ALL not the few or the pillaged, but ALL. The State of Texas is letting down its children by not fully funding public education and I will not vote or support any government official who pushes for them. Your lack of funding for public education has continued to make the education system worse, which is what most teacher think you want. You want us to fail so you can push your agenda to send tax payer dollars to private for profit "schools". We see what you are doing and it is embarrassing that the Texas education system is ranked so low in this nation. We should be at the TOP!

Stop playing with our children's lives, stop holding your teachers and other public school workers hostage while you play games. Voucher are NOT the answer - FULLY FUNDING PUBLIC EDUCATION IS. Paying your teachers a actual living wage IS. Tax dollars are NOT to support PRIVATE for PROFIT businesses!!!!

Melissa Endicott, Dr
Parent/ PTA member
Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Our district currently faces a \$35 million dollar shortfall. This is leading to staff cuts, program cancellations and school closure, including my children's school. I am extremely disappointed in the inaction of this legislature and the petty tactics of our governor to fund his pet project. I vote for public education!

Carrie Holley-Hurt
Self
Austin, TX

This bill has failed in the regular and other special sessions. Clearly, the will of the state is that education dollars (as limited as they already are) not be diverted from public education. This bill would harm families, especially those working class and/or living in rural areas, while benefiting only a few that can afford the tuition at a private school. This bill also undermines any attempt we have to create equity through education as the public schools will receive even less funding impacting educational outcomes, while the children whose parents can afford to send them to private school will have a better-funded education. However, because there is no government oversight over private education, it will be impossible to know if those state dollars are going to quality programs. Finally, this bill threatens democracy in the education system as it removes state money from public schools with elected governing bodies and places it in the hands of private schools. Please listen to the will of the people and the needs of the state and act in the best interest of ALL of Texans.

Jocelyn Taylor

Self-stay at home mom

Houston, TX

Please separate the bills for funding Texas education and vouchers! Please fund Texas school districts first! Our district is at risk of cutting out gifted and talented programs, IB schools, firing teachers, etc if we are not funded! Please consider this first! We do not want vouchers!

Donna Gregory

Self - Retired

Dallas, TX

I think passage of this bill would greatly harm public schools which educate most Texas children. I don't want my taxes to be used to pay for private schools. They should be used instead to strengthen public education, including long overdue pay increases for teachers and increasing the basic per student allotment.

Julie Ottosen

St. John XXIII Prep School

Houston, TX

I urge you to please support this well-planned Bill that supports parental choice and supports families Romania's they educate their children

Emma Mayton

Austin Retired Teachers Assn

Austin, TX

Parents already have CHOICES in Texas charter schools and within school districts that have magnet schools. In rural communities, the school is the MAIN CENTER for the communities and their public schools are precious to them. STOP trying to push vouchers down Texas' voters' throats. WE DO NOT WANT THEM. Our public schools will suffer....and the Texas Legislature COULD have put more money into our public schools with the huge \$33 billion-dollar surplus PLUS THEY COULD HAVE VOTED A TEACHER PAY RAISE with that money!!! Now the governor is dangling more money for public schools over our heads just to get VOUCHERS passes....REPUBLICANS have been undermining and underfunding public education in Texas since the 1970s...STOP THEM ONCE AND FOR ALL.....NO VOUCHERS EVER!!!

Cherie Moeller

Self

Keller, TX

My children's schools are cutting programs, getting rid of electives and increasing class sizes right now. We don't need vouchers we need teachers raises, school funding to compensate for inflation and more funding for special ed and other at risk students.. Spending \$500 million on vouchers when public are struggling is ridiculously out of touch with the needs of Texas families.

Kara Koller

Myself

New Braunfels, TX

Teachers should be degreed professionals who are fairly compensated for their work. That includes proper healthcare and retirement.

Currently, all of those are a joke. Throw into the mix this ridiculous get rich scam to have vouchers and Texas is now a mere shadow of its former self.

We were once a state with great public schools and proudly supported public education in our state constitution.

My ancestor's portrait hangs in the Capitol and I am embarrassed by what has happened to our once proud state started by the incompetent Governor Perry and future Texas legislators who started our decline in public education. Abbott takes this failure and doubles down. Texas children deserve better. Vouchers are a get rich scam for Abbott's friends.

No vouchers, proper funding. Our future Texans deserve it.

Charles Lewis, Board President

Savoy ISD Board of Trustee

Savoy, TX

My remarks on this whole voucher bill is that the State Legislature hold the private schools responsible to the same standards as the Public schools are held to. If you can't, then I would never allow them the money that you are asking to help them. Second, this does not help with Rural schools that will not have the same choices. But that could be that the smaller rural schools seem to do the better job compared to the hugh and larger districts. We do that for the students with alot less money and our district constituents hold us to that. Our classes are small and this is probably the most important aspect in our district. The other thing is everyone has a school choice now, you can move to another district or transfer to a better district. Charles T. Lewis, President Savoy Board of Trustees, 28 years trustee

Rhondi Weathers

self - retired

Austin, TX

Statistics show that children do better in school in states that have implemented school choice. Please do what is right for our children's education.

Kurt Hutson

Self / Childcare Industry

Allen, TX

I am submitting testimony in support of HB1 and giving parents choice in their child's education. However, HB1 currently does not include PreK students (ages 3 and 4) in the list of eligible children. Sec 29.355 (1)(B) should be amended to INCLUDE PreK students, NOT start at only Kindergarten or First-grade students. This is critical to the childcare industry which continues to see governmental entities encroach on its private business. The childcare crisis is real and not giving accredited preschools the chance to compete with ISDs in this manner will cripple them further and have grave impacts across the state.

Nicole Bos

Curtsinger PTA

Frisco, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. This could cause school closing, higher student-teacher rations, and program cuts.

David Anderson

School teacher

San Antonio, TX

Texas needs to fund our public schools. Vouchers will hurt our most vulnerable students. Greater compensation is needed to fix the teacher and staff shortage.

Nadia Khan
Self, architect
Austin, TX
No vouchers!

Do not allow our public funds to be diverted to private schools through any means. Focus on the most vulnerable students, and fund the public system that pledges to serve them.

We need every dollar you have, every dollar in the coffers, every dollar offered to TX by the feds, to support our current public school system that is horrifically underserved by this “great” state.

Our students receiving special education services, our underserved communities that you never support to make the grade, our students experiencing homelessness, our mobile students who don't have time for applications and interviews, need you to support them in the public system that is specially made to find and serve them.

This Texas public system can be a model, rather than a point of shame, if you choose to care for the actual children who are here now, the teachers who are here now. Stop pandering to a few loud privileged voices who have no intention of converting their systems to serving our most vulnerable kids.

Jeffrey Haskovec
self
Grapevine, TX

I am strongly in favor of the educational savings accounts being proposed. Different children have different needs and there is no one size fits all for finding the best education for a given child. The funding for a student's education should follow the child and not automatically be allocated to one system. The ability to choose a different school to meet your child's needs shouldn't be something that only affluent families are able to do, but should be available to all Texas children.

Adriana Garza
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am against the education savings account program. This gives public school funds to people that already have their students in private schools. This means we will be paying for private schools.

Kelley Thomas
Self - Plano ISD
Richardson, TX

I believe nothing is more fundamental to realizing every child's potential than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. To that point, I strongly feel that public school funding must be the number one priority of this legislative session. Any additional state-funded education systems created block the flow of funding to our public schools. We mustn't ask schools to continue to do more with less. In 2019, in my district alone, over \$29 million of legislative mandates did not include full funding support. Since then, additional un and underfunded mandates have continued to be added to the load of public schools simultaneously as continual tax compression, no changes to the recapture system, and no increase to the basic allotment. There should be no discussion of how to fully fund the top-notch Texas Public School system that educates 90% of school-aged children statewide.

Vouchers by any name will ultimately add a burden to the Texas budget and hurt children! This is unacceptable. ESAs must be removed from this bill so that the other positive moves towards a truly fully funded public school system can be debated.

Let it be clear: I do not support any form of an educational savings account - basically, a voucher program wolf dressed in sheep's clothing.

Christine Cupp, Mrs.
Self, Registered Nurse
Plano, TX

I am writing to you today to express my strong opposition to the school voucher proposal that is currently being considered by the Texas Legislature.

School vouchers would allow parents to use taxpayer money to send their children to private schools. Proponents of vouchers argue that they would give parents more choice and allow students to attend schools that better meet their needs. However, I believe that vouchers would have a number of negative consequences for our public education system.

First, vouchers would siphon money away from public schools, which are already underfunded. This would make it more difficult for public schools to provide high-quality education to all students.

Second, vouchers would give private schools an incentive to cherry-pick students. Private schools could refuse to admit students with special needs or students from low-income families. This would further exacerbate the achievement gap between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. This could also increase racial segregation in our schools. Studies have shown that students who use vouchers are more likely to attend schools that are predominantly white and affluent. This is because private schools can use admissions criteria to select students.

Third, school vouchers would be particularly harmful to rural schools in Texas. These schools are already struggling to attract and retain teachers, and they would be even more disadvantaged if they had to compete with private schools for students and funding.

I urge you to stand up for our public schools and oppose the school voucher proposal. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Christine Cupp
75074
Christine.cupp@gmail.com

Tara Neal
self, Paramedic, special needs parent
Leander, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Tara Neal

773 Kingfisher Lane

Leander, TX 78641

Doug Harycki
Self
Flower Mound, TX

Opposition to Education Savings Accounts (Vouchers) and Repeated Special Sessions

Doug Harycki
4805 Timberview Court
Flower Mound, TX 75028
DHARYCKI@gmail.com
11/09/2023

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Education Savings Accounts (commonly known as vouchers) and to convey my deep concern regarding the frequent convening of special sessions to vote on this matter. As a concerned taxpayer and a dedicated advocate for quality public education, I believe it is imperative to address this issue.

I firmly believe that our public education system is the cornerstone of our society, providing equal opportunities for all children to learn, grow, and succeed. Education Savings Accounts, by diverting public funds to private institutions, undermine the very essence of public education. They threaten the accessibility, quality, and inclusivity of our schools, leading to a fragmented educational landscape that favors only a select few.

Moreover, the repeated calling of special sessions to vote on this issue is a waste of valuable taxpayer dollars and legislative resources. These resources could be better utilized to address pressing issues such as healthcare, infrastructure, and social welfare programs, which are fundamental to the well-being of our community.

I urge you to consider the long-term consequences of supporting Education Savings Accounts and to prioritize the strengthening of our public education system instead. By investing in our public schools, we can ensure that every child, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status, has access to a high-quality education that prepares them for a successful future.

Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

I kindly request that you represent the best interests of your constituents by opposing Education Savings Accounts and advocating for policies that support and enhance our public education system.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I appreciate your dedication to public service and look forward to your continued support for our community's education.

Sincerely,

Doug Harycki

Cooper Walker, Mr.
Self - Attorney
Irving, TX

Please vote FOR school choice!!!!

Lindsey Gray
Self, health education
Austin, TX

Please vote no on HB 1!

james and anita karney

self - retired

waco, TX

Hello,

My name is Anita Karney and I reside in Waco.

I oppose the "educational savings accounts", aka school vouchers.

Private schools aren't required to (1) admit children with intellectual/mental/physical disabilities or special needs or (2) comply with IDEA, ADA, or Section 504.

Also, most families even with a voucher couldnt access private schools.

(1) no school buses

(2) geographic inaccessibility

(3) income barrier, even with a voucher the tuition and other required costs are out of reach of most hard-working families which makes the voucher useless for the majority of the population.

Vote NO on school vouchers.

Anita Karney

9101 wolf creek

waco

76712

2147663260

akkarney@hotmail.com

Joanna Baleson

Texas PTA and Tx Association for the Gifted and Talented

Seabrook, TX

When the state of Texas fully funds public education, maybe then we can talk about vouchers. As long as Texas ranks near the bottom in the US for public education funding, we cannot blame teachers and administrators for any failures. It is up to the legislature to fund public education not private education. Do your job.

Adrian Barton

Self, secretary for plumbing company

Kerrville, TX

A universal ESA program will tremendously help my family. Education is one of my top priorities for my daughter. I am a single mother who works multiple jobs to make ends meet. My daughter started reading right at 3 years old and simple math before she turned 4. She is very bright and we work a great deal on many things she excels at. I knew that public school would not be an option for her, in fear that she would finish her work, get bored and become the distraction child in class. She started kindergarten this year, and I decided to make certain cut backs to our budget to be able to afford for her to go to Grace Academy. Grace Academy is a Christian private school with a self paced program. When she finishes her work, the teacher gives her more to do to keep her challenged. So far it has been the perfect place for her to be receiving the education I want for her. An ESA would greatly aid in allowing her to continue to go to this wonderful school without me worrying if we will make it from one paycheck to the next when unforeseeable costs arise, as they tend to. I am thankful that I am able to make things work so that I can afford for her to attend, but a universal ESA would definitely alleviate that financial stress.

Sergio Porres

self, software programmer

Irving, TX

I am commenting today because HB 1 is the #1 issue to me and my family. If we want Texas to have a bright future and well educated youth we have to empower parents to be able to select the best approach for their child. We cannot keep putting children into these one-size-fits all solutions that have clearly failed not only in Texas but nationwide.

We need to make the best education options affordable to all Texas, encourage and competition in the education system, and reward positive outcomes and results.

Mark Reeder
Self--auditor
Lewisville, TX

I like the fine arts allotment which is being proposed (having a partner who was in drill team and theatre, and her daughter who was in band). But I can't accept the ESA proposal. It bothers me that religious schools -- who claim that "God led us" to start the school -- now don't believe that their God will supply their needs through those voluntarily willing to support the school (whether they actually believe what the school teaches, or they simply want a tax deduction), so they have to force the unwilling to support it. (And everyone knows that once the first local mosque gets a publicly funded madrasa, they won't be so supportive of "school choice" then.)

Kayla Lain
Godley TX
Godley, TX

This bill has so many strings, 177 pages of strings. Increased spending which equates to more taxes. Lots of money going to vendors. And only special needs students or low income families will see voucher money. I'm a homeschool mom, we already have school choice. I pulled my kids out of government ed because I didn't like what was mandated to be taught. This bill would just place mandates on my homeschool and be no different than government ed. Government controlled education vouchers just extends government ed to private school and homeschool. We don't want your strings. I don't want the government in my homeschool. Get off my lawn! Just say no to this awful bill! Let us keep more of our money and have true choice for ourselves.

Stephanie Luper, Mrs
Self
Bullard, TX

I'm utterly appalled at the continued resurgence of vouchers (ESA's). The fact that now you've increased the amount of the voucher to \$10,400 for private schools and added \$1,000 for homeschool children is utterly mind blowing. If a homeschool child's instructor isn't capable of teaching a subject, maybe the student should try enrolling in the local public school. Tying ESA's to public school funding is also a major slap in the face to the educators who bore the lack of funding in 2011 when major cuts were made to public schools. With the largest budget surplus we've seen and Texas being the 8th largest economy in THE WORLD, the fact that public school funding ranks 43rd in the country is an absolute disgrace! Public school teachers have been treated so horribly by this governor and this legislature, and deserve better than what's happening. Funding for public schools should have been completely separate from vouchers. If you think so many people want vouchers, then make it a stand alone bill. In addition, the fact that vouchers require the creation of a new department in the comptroller's office and EAO's goes directly against the conservative ideal of smaller government!

Daniel Phalen
self - Financial Advisor
Sugar Land, TX

I am in favor of this bill.

Don Tkatch

self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

John MacFarlane

self-Daggett Montessori School PTA-Fort Worth, TX

Fort Worth, TX

Education Savings Accounts, AKA school vouchers are bad for public schools. You've heard from rural, urban, small, medium and large districts that a voucher program will hurt children's education. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Enrollment estimates show the district has 70,675 students. If that number holds, Fort Worth ISD will have lost 16,753 students since 2016, when enrollment hit a record 87,428 students. Put another way: Fort Worth ISD has lost roughly one in five students since 2016. FWISD is already discussing closing some schools. A public school system is vital to everyone, especially for low income families that can't afford private school tuition. Passing a voucher program will only allow families with the ability to pay the difference between the voucher amount and the actual cost of the private/religious school, thus, putting low income students at risk We all know that vouchers won't pay for the entire cost of tuition at a private or religious school. Plus, how is it legal to give state funds to religious schools? Please, think about the rural, urban, small, medium and large school districts and do not move HB1 forward.

Rebecca Schlegel-Leitko, Mrs.

Self- Texas PTA Lifetime Member, Keller ISD PTA Board Member

N Richland Hills, TX

Vouchers hurt public schools and our children! Until you have adequately funded teachers, children, and public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making EVERY child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who will ensure ALL children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Texas is struggling to retain quality teachers and hire new teachers because our educators are not properly paid nor are they supported by the Texas Legislature or the Governor. This year at my children's school, they were told they cannot take Spanish because they do not have enough teachers. Last year, my son with Autism, was forced to transfer to another school in our district because there were not enough Special Education Teachers to go around. Please stop trying to fund ESA's and starting properly funding our struggling schools!

Sincerely,

Becky Schlegel- Leitko

A concerned parent of two, one with Special Education needs

David Pate
self, CFO
Rowlett, TX

I am opposed to ESA's/school vouchers. Public funds should not be given to private school or home school families without the exact same financial and educational accountability that public schools are subject to. If the financial and educational accountability requirements are necessary for school districts with publicly elected boards then private schools and home schoolers should be subject to them as well.

Sincerely,
David Pate

Kate Greer
The Commit Partnership
Dallas, TX

Commit is grateful for HB 1's provisions of strategic, student-centered investments that stand to boost student performance.

This targeted approach is crucial. As of 2023, just 52% of students met grade level expectations in Reading and only 43% of students in Math. When placing this in context of the state's poor historical ability to catch students up it becomes imperative to increase investment in the education of our youngest learners. According to Commit's analysis of students who did not meet grade-level expectations in 3rd grade in 2019, by their 6th grade year, only 1 in 5 (18%) caught up to perform at grade level in Reading and just 1 in 10 (13%) in Math.

Recognizing that strong foundations are essential for later academic success, HB 1 would provide resources to better enable high-quality early childhood education and subsequent student outcomes:

- Modifying the Early Ed Allotment by adding PreK students to the formula calculations. This expansion would help ensure more LEAs can offer high-quality, full-day PreK for interested and eligible students as well as resource additional support for increased academic outcomes in the early grades.
- Establishing grants to PreK Partnerships to improve the financial viability of partnership between child care providers and LEAs by funding PreK students who fall in a current eligibility gap between Child Care Scholarships and free LEA PreK.
- Improving early literacy progress monitoring through evidence-based screening instruments and the provision of intervention practices to ensure reading gaps are identified and better addressed early on in a student's educational journey.

The increased weights for the Comp Ed Allotment and the adjustment to the ADSY Program base calendar requirement are also essential updates prioritized in HB 1 which will support the implementation of effective learning acceleration strategies.

Given that teachers are the number one in-school factor on student success, we also appreciate the evidence-based strategies included in HB 1 to recruit, train, and retain effective educators such as the expansion of and support for the Teacher Incentive Allotment, the establishment of the Teacher Residency Allotment, and the shift in the minimum salary scale.

Given that our state's assessment and accountability system is the best way to measure the return on all of investment in our school finance system, we remain concerned about the provision in HB 1 that repeals our state's assessment and accountability system without having an agreed-upon replacement. Texas must maintain a transparent and rigorous assessment and accountability system to comparably measure and improve student learning across the state.

Texas's 5.5 million students remain our state's greatest asset. Investing wisely in them and subsequently evaluating our impact in order to continuously improve policy can bolster student success rates and will reap benefits for our citizens and the economy for generations.

WILLIAM HANKS
Rosebriar Holdings
PLANO, TX

I support all three bills.

Loretta Castro
self/ Business Owner/ parent
Spring, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

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Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication.
[Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Loretta Castro
1514 N Plum Creek Dr
Spring, Tx 77386
Lorettacastro1@yahoo.c

Craig Blome

self

Austin, TX

Please vote no on HB 1

Meredith Bland

Self - Sales Representative/ Brand Consultant

Fulshear, TX

I am writing to PLEASE strongly consider this bill and the support the choice of parents. My personal experience is one of a single mother of three and the public school we are zoned to has experienced significant growth and poor planning. The school district faces detrimental overcrowding and the kids are suffering. This year 2023-2024 I have put all my kids in private school because I believe they only have this one shot a strong foundation of education. As a single parent/ widow this is a huge financial commitment and even with some tuition assistance, I must pull from various resources and saving to afford this. A ESA or voucher system would help families like mine tremendously. Many of us do not have the means for private school but we figure out a way to make it work because our kids deserve the opportunity. Faith based learning, smaller classes and more extracurricular opportunities is just the start of the positive attributes private school can provide. Please support this bill!

Melanie Bollands
self - Architectural Control Supervisor
Pearland, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Melanie Bollands
4902 Cloverfield Drive
Pearland TX

Adriana Escobedo

Self

Horizon City, TX

My household supports HB1 to give parents the option to select the school our taxes go to. My children's school never receives any of our tax monies because we do not live in the area and instead our money goes to a school district that does NOT provide any services to my children.

Lara Wilcox

self

Austin, TX

Texas's education savings account program diverts taxpayer dollars away from public schools, which are required to serve all students and redirect them to private schools that serve a very limited number of students and can discriminate against certain students based on factors such as ability and access. This undermines the public education system and violates the principle of equal opportunity for all students.

This leads to another issue with the program: it will not help with the affordability of private schools. The vast majority of people with kids in private can easily spend tens of thousands of dollars on private school education and do not need any assistance. The vouchers will not be enough money to allow a family that couldn't afford private school to now be able to afford it. The second likely outcome of the vouchers, like what we saw in Florida, will be that private schools will increase tuition rates. So, vouchers would not improve affordability.

Only 6% of kids attend private schools; please help improve our public schools, which educate the vast majority of Texas kids!

Thanks for your time

Jennifer Gee

Self, consultant

Houston, TX

I do NOT support this piece of legislation.

Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Jennifer Stevenson, Mrs.

Self

Boerne, TX

I am writing to you as a concerned constituent who believes that access to quality education is the cornerstone of a brighter future for our children and the prosperity of our great state of Texas. I am writing in support of the new bill filed by Education Committee Chairman Rep. Brad Buckley, HB 1, that will empower parents and kids with universal Education Savings Accounts. HB 1 has the potential to greatly benefit Texas children and families by increasing access to high-quality education options. Thank you for your time and for representing our interests in the state legislature.

Addae Kraba, Rev.

Self Clergy

Boerne, TX

I am not in support of school vouchers that take money from public schools.

Perry Jefferies, Mr
Self
Gatesville, TX

This terrible bill does little to support our students and state educators. Instead it is a give-away to already affluent people and the truly poor-performing charters and private schools. Our students (all of them) and Texas society deserve an educated, integrated, world-class set of students and a great public environment to thrive in. Isolating a few might benefit a handful but at great cost to Texas, other students, and communities, especially rural ones.

These bills are obviously against the will of the people and the leadership and must be put away like bad pencils on test day.

Chandra Villanueva
Every Texan
Austin, TX

All children in Texas have the right to quality public education; according to the Texas Constitution, our public education system must ensure all kids have access to an education that “enables them to achieve their potential and fully participate now and in the future in the social, economic, and educational opportunities of our state and nation.” To fulfill this requirement, the Constitution makes clear: “It shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.” Public schools must serve all children, regardless of their needs, backgrounds, neighborhoods, or abilities. Every student deserves to attend a well-funded public school – they’re the heart of our communities. Beyond the basics of education, students learn to be stewards of democracy and to interact and connect with people different from themselves. When we invest in public schools, we invest in the future of our state. State leadership is holding education funding hostage over private school vouchers that would only serve a handful of students. In doing so, they are denying every Texas child the rights guaranteed to them by the state constitution. Private school vouchers are a separate issue and should not be considered alongside public education funding. The Legislature must meet its constitutional obligation to provide for the 5.5 million Texas children who rely on public schools. Our children are worth it and the future of our state depends on it.

Gina Kahne
Children
Austin, TX

Please vote NO. This bill does not help our students.

Melani Brown
Aelf
Boerne, TX

I’m urging you to please support HB 1, which will give Texas broad school choice through universal Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). I respectfully ask that you make it a priority for the report to include universal school choice for ALL Texas students. We are asking that you stand with the will of your voters who overwhelmingly support parental choice in education. Please support parents and kids – you can be a real hero - that includes universal Education Savings Accounts in the special session.

Ava Camara
self, homeschooling parent
Houston, TX

Please keep homeschool families out of this legislation. Homeschooling families don't want increased regulation or restrictions or division between us. ESAs would necessarily involve increased government regulation for home educating families for the sake of funding accountability. Curriculum providers will raise their prices too. Please leave private home schools out of this legislation.

Shannon Hoffman

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
Austin, TX

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health was established in 1940 by the children of Texas Governor James Hogg through an endowment to UT-Austin. For 80 years, we have been working to improve the mental health and well-being of Texans through strategic grant making, research, and policy education. We want to start by thanking Chair Buckley, Vice Chair Gervin-Hawkins, and the committee members on their continued work in Austin. Over the next 30 days, you will be tasked with making a number of decisions impacting over 5 million Texan children in our public schools.

The majority of legislative conversations this special session on ESAs are not within our area of expertise and we will not be commenting on that policy issue. However, we would be remiss not to comment on portions of HB 1 relevant to youth mental health: schools' ability to create safe and supportive learning environments. We offer the following comments only on the below sections for your consideration:

The addition of Sec. 48.161 Communities in Schools (CIS) Expansion Allotment increases opportunities for CIS to be on more campuses. Access to CIS positively impacts student mental health and creates positive school cultures for both children and adults in the building. Further, this program collaborates with families and the community to offer appropriate and individualized support. During last school year, CIS provided over 500,000 hours of mental health services and provided trauma-informed interventions that alleviate behavioral challenges, enhance coping skills, improve well-being and, in turn, scholastic achievement. When students are mentally and emotionally well, they better engage in school. Of CIS-served students, 99 percent stayed in school, 97 percent advanced to the next grade, 89 percent improved academic measures, and 86 percent improved behavior. CIS is an opportunity for state investments to be leveraged for additional funding, providing more than three dollars in service for every dollar invested by the state. We recommend keeping this section and increasing the allowed amount to be appropriated for these allotments.

The addition of Sec. 29.0056 Information Regarding State Supported Living Centers (SSLCs) is an unnecessary inclusion. The state's Local Intellectual and Developmental Disability Authorities (LIDDAs) are the more appropriate entity to provide information about residential placement options. Further, creation of this information is a duplication of efforts as a residential options brochure is already in existence. Children with IDD should live within their families and communities in the least restrictive setting. Already existing community-based waiver programs can provide care in less restrictive settings, allowing children with mental health concerns and IDD to thrive. Research supports this, as children placed in residential centers, like SSLCs, developmental delays in comparison to children living at home. We recommend removing this section.

Jennifer Tominey

Self/Mother

San Antonio, TX

SAY NO TO VOUCHERS! Keep our tax dollars in public education! Our kids deserve better!

Genevieve Haggard

Public school educators

AUSTIN, TX

Please vote NO on HB1.

Nancy Rebarchik, Ms.

self, Dyslexia Therapist in public school

Fort Worth, TX

It doesn't matter what you tack on to a voucher bill to make it more palatable, it's still creates a way to siphon off much-needed PUBLIC money to be spent in the private education industry. The private schools in Texas are unwilling and unable to serve students with unique needs, including those with specific learning disabilities including dyslexia, ADHD and other neurodiverse students, children with physical or emotional disabilities. Families with children with special needs are often the SAME families who struggle to buy groceries and pay bills. FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITHOUT an entirely unnecessary VOUCHER scam attached.

Lisa Johnson, Mrs
Texas Children
Grand Prairie, TX

No to School Vouchers!!!! This compromise bill would continue the destruction of our public schools.

Bradley Ottosen
Self
Houston, TX

My wife and I pay isd taxes every year. We have been paying these taxes for 23 years. Our kids are 21 and 16. Neither have ever gone to public school. We chose to send our kids to private religious schools because we did not agree with the direction public education was going. My wife taught in public education for 10 years. This idea of allowing parents to choose the school that their children attend and recoup some of the money we spend every year is long overdue. My family is zoned to HISD in Houston. This isd was so poorly run the state took it over. No recourse for me however I continue to pay the isd taxes. Please make this bill a reality so those of us that value not only school choice but also value Christian principles and want our children taught with these principles in mind should be reimbursed at least a little of what we spend every year.

Garret Nick
self - AISD / Zilker Elementary PTA - parent
Austin, TX

in what world does it make sense that you require accountability for underfunded public schools that teach facts and then demand a voucher program that gives substantially MORE money per student to send your kid to a private religious school that teaches that Noah's arc was real and that has ZERO accountability????? you are the American version of the Taliban. Greg Abbott is a clown. Properly fund public education for the next decade and then we can talk about alternatives. Until then, you are a bunch of thieves that are stealing tax dollars from Texans to push your right wing, anti-science, "Christian" agenda. ps - you should also be sued for taxing home owners under the guise of education and then using recapture to take half of it and then diverting most of that to the general fund. that should be illegal. school districts that pay into recapture should be reimbursed whatever money is not spent. that is just more theft from you bunch of morally bankrupt insurrectionist supporting goons.

Xochitl Rivera
Holy Trinity Catholic High School
Temple, TX

Xochitl Rivera
Holy Trinity Catholic High School
6608 West Adams Avenue
Temple, Texas 76502

November 8, 2023
Mr. Hugh shine
Representative District 55
101 East Central Avenue, Suite 122
Belton, TX 76513

Dear Mr. Shine,

My name is Xochitl Rivera I am writing on behalf of my school to ask that you help pass HB-1bill. I have gone to Holy Trinity Catholic High School since my freshman year of high school. Holy Trinity Catholic High School stands out as an exceptional choice for parents seeking a well-rounded Catholic education that combines academic excellence, strong moral values, and a supportive family-like community that focuses on its student's education while also making it a safe catholic environment. The smaller class sizes allow more personalized attention, ensuring that each student's unique needs are met, this sense of community creates a safe and nurturing environment in which students can thrive academically and socially.

HB-1 will allow students in need who are stuck in their failing public schools to take the tax dollars given to them and put them toward public or private schools of their choice. The HB-1 will help our school because it will increase the number of students at our school while also giving them a safe environment. It will also help the existing students by giving us more sports opportunities and a diverse learning environment

Please consider approving this bill it will help not just private catholic schools like Holy Trinity but also other public schools and students in Texas.

Sincerely yours,
Xochitl Rivera
Holy Trinity Catholic High School Student, Class of 2025

Diana Walker
Self, stay at home parent
Irving, TX

We support this bill. Please vote YES.

Mark Caldwell
self
Austin, TX

Please allow us to use some of our hard earned tax dollars to fund private school education. The public schools do not represent or uphold our Christian values. I have experienced first-hand the detrimental impact from the immoral ideologies the public schools are pushing.

james matlock, mr.

self

hutto, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed voucher system being discussed in the upcoming 4th special session. While I understand the desire to address issues within our education system, I firmly believe that implementing vouchers is not the solution our public schools need.

Our public schools are already grappling with severe underfunding, leading to larger class sizes, outdated resources, and inadequate support for our dedicated teachers. The recent proposal to offer a carrot in the form of a small increase in teacher pay and basic allotment is, in my opinion, a band-aid solution that does not address the root cause of the problem.

Allowing any type of voucher system poses a serious threat to the future of public education. While it may seem like a short-term fix, the long-term consequences could be devastating. History has shown that without proper limitations on the number of vouchers issued, public education funding could be drained within a couple of years.

Our focus should be on strengthening and investing in our public schools rather than diverting resources away through vouchers. Instead of offering temporary relief in the form of pay increases, let's work towards a comprehensive and sustainable solution that addresses the systemic issues faced by our public education system.

I urge you to consider the long-term impact on our public schools and the students they serve. Let's prioritize the future of education by investing in our public schools, supporting our teachers, and ensuring that every child has access to a high-quality education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

James Matlock

Kevin Good

self - property owner

Austin, TX

I oppose HB1 and all other attempts to divert ANY funding from our public schools. Sending tax dollars to private schools is in violation of the founding principle of "no taxation without representation". I am happy to send my taxes to public schools, that are subject to public oversight, scrutiny and accountability through our democratic system. To use my taxes to fund private schools that are unaccountable financially and may be operated by untrustworthy organizations is unacceptable.

Jeff Jordan

Self

Dallas/, TX, TX

NO VOUCHERS-FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

Lindsey McClelland

self teacher

Justin, TX

Do not give tax payer dollars to private institutions that have no government oversight. This will be a stain on public education, that accepts everyone, regardless of disability. Private schools do not have to accept everyone, and can choose the students they want to serve. Giving my tax dollars to those schools is unacceptable.

Donna Ward, Mrs
Self and ATPE
Willis, TX

There should be a clear NO vouchers message sent. Quit pushing vouchers and do what is right for public schools. Funding needs to increase and teachers need a pay increase.
Please vote NO on any bill that includes vouchers. Stop pushing the Governor's voucher agenda and do what's best and right for Texas children.

Ashley Birmingham
self
League City, TX

I write to you today as an educator for 15 years. I have been a classroom teacher and am now in administration. We need more funding for our school that is not tied to vouchers. Vouchers are dangerous for public schools because it diverts money to charter schools and private schools that do not have the same requirements we do. For example, they do not have to meet STAAR requirements, HB 4545, or accept every special population. We need increased funding for our public schools with no strings attached. Our real wages have gone down every year and my health insurance has increased every year. We are dealing with new challenges since COVID and we need more support from the state. We have the money, let's use it to help our kids and retain excellent teachers. Please fund our public schools fully without attaching it to vouchers.
Thank you,

Amy Bruno

Upbring/Trinity Charter Schools

Austin, TX

Trinity Charter School (TCS), a 501C3 and TEA-approved Charter School operator in Texas, serves over 1,000 students each school year. Due to the omnibus nature of HB 1, TCS has taken a neutral position on the bill, but we thank Chairman Buckley for including the virtual education portion of the bill, which we heartily support. The Texas Commission on Virtual Education recommended permanently removing the remote learning enrollment cap for children in state care and implementing Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) requirements that align with current accountability measurements for schools serving foster care, treatment facilities, and the Texas Juvenile Justice Department.

According to a 2022 report by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), only 62% of Texas children in foster care earn their high school diplomas. In comparison, this report noted that 79% of Texas homeless children earn diplomas. TCS is an open-enrollment public charter throughout Texas, providing educational services to students in residential treatment who are referrals from CPS and TJJD. These youth are the most vulnerable and at the most significant risk of dropping out of school; 100% of TCS students are identified as at-risk. The virtual education portion of HB 1 would allow TCS to expand our high school virtual program through individualized services to students interested in completing their high school diplomas between the ages of 14 and 26. In 2022, TCS saw 26 of the 40 enrolled virtual students complete their high school diploma. Currently, TCS has over 100 students actively engaged through our virtual education program. The individualized services provided by TCS help close achievement gaps, reinforce student comprehension, and develop the academic competency and curriculum mastery necessary for college or vocational training. Permitting these youth to continue with TCS provides continuity of specialized education services (particularly important for students in state care) and a continuum of educational services, as well as transitional services, from educators who are known and trusted by the youth.

It is also worth noting that even though Governor Abbott issued an order to allow for the continued use of virtual education through the Texas Virtual School Network ("TXVSN"), challenges remain for our specialized population of students. TXVSN requires students to pass four courses per semester for the school to receive total funding from TEA. TCS expects only 20% of our 100 virtual students to keep pace with the required TXVSN four completed courses for 100% funding. Thus, TCS would only receive 20% of the potential funding, which equals a funding loss of \$700,000 (for a \$5M operating Public Charter School).

TCS continues to advocate for the Texas Commission on Virtual Education recommendations, which permanently remove the remote learning enrollment cap for children in state care and implement AEA for schools serving these children.

Thank you,
Dr. A. Benscoter

Roberto Carmona

Self

Pearland, TX

Honorable Texas House,

My name is Roberto F. Carmona and am a resident of Pearland, TX. Our family belongs to St. Helen Catholic Church and our children attend St. Helen Catholic School. I am writing to express my favor in this bill, and wish to respectfully request it continues to be supported throughout the session for the benefit of all Texas schools and children, allowing families to have more options for pursuing our children's educational opportunities.

As a Christian Catholic, I also believe those less favored should be first in line to benefit, which in the end, benefits all of our societies.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment and for your positive support of this bill.

Very respectfully,
R.F. Carmona

Alane Barnfield, Mrs.

Self - wife, homemaker, homeschool teacher

Houston, TX

I support HB 1. Parents, not the government are the primary educators of their children. Parents deserve to choose which educational institution is best suited for their child's educational needs and learning styles.

Rebekah Ozuna

Self

Austin, TX

I am a former public school teacher. We need raises and more funding for public schools and our educators. We don't want Education Savings Accounts or any type of vouchers in Texas. We must stop calling session after session for things Texans do not want. It is a waste of time and energy. Privatization of our educational system destroys public education. Public education should be the greatest public service in our state. Our national rankings prove we are putting our children and our future last. It's time we get this right for our kids and the people serving them.

Theodoric Bland

Self

Houston, TX

Passage of this bill recognizes the plight of parents who pay school taxes and receive no benefits.

Angela Hodges

Texas PTA

Fort Worth, TX

Note: Comments received by the committee reflect only the view of the individual(s) submitting the comment, who retain sole responsibility for the content of the comment. Neither the committee nor the Texas House of Representatives takes a position on the views expressed in any comment. The committee compiles the comments received for informational purposes only and does not exercise any editorial control over comments.

Hearing Date: November 10, 2023 9:00 AM - (continued from Thursday, November 9th)

Michelle Blount Self/teachers Seguin, TX

PLEASE SAY NO TO VOUCHERS!!!! Our students DESERVE better!!!

Angela Hodges Self

Fort Worth, TX

We need to fully fund public schools before we can even think about giving money to private schools. No to vouchers or education spending accounts, no to ESAs, yes to fully funding public education. Yes to fully funding special education. Yes to teacher pay raises, yes to para pay raises. Yes to virtual education. Yes to CTE funding.

Angela Hodges

Self- I am parent of FORT Worth ISD

Please please stand up for students, teachers, and public school!!! Don't let any voucher legislation pass!!!!

We need your leadership!!!!

Angela Hodges, Mrs Self

Fort Worth, TX

Absolutely no vouchers! Public tax dollars belong in public schools.

Cindy Samuelson

self

Dallas, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to vouchers or education savings plans or whatever name is used. Public schools build communities and teach us to work with our neighbors and learn from each other despite our differences. Private schools will not accept anyone and often don't have resources needed for students who excel or need more help. Tax payer funds should not go to religious schools. Let's put more money into public schools and continue to improve them. Texas needs community not segregation.

Jane Anne Sellars
Self, Precinct Chair 1026
Frisco, TX

School choice should not have governmental strings attached to it. Period. You guys need to figure out a way to make this work, as our public schools are failing us and we need competition to get our kids back on top! No money should be given to organizations that push DEI, wokeness, etc. We do not need to play into any globalist agenda. Let parents do what is best for their kids!

Carlos Guardado
Self
Farmers Branch, TX

I think our kids need to be teach the history of the USA and the world and everything else schools have been teaching in the past not sexual orientation.

Krista Erbe
Self
Fort Worth, TX

No funds should be redirected from our public schools! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality and adequately funded public schools.

LUCY FROST
Granite House
MANCHACA, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. Texas needs our hard-earned tax dollars in our public schools.

Maria Fernandez
Maria Fernandez
Katy, TX

I fully support HB1. Looking forward to see a positive outcomes.

Guadalupe Lynch
self
Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers help no one in public education. Not the districts, not the administration, not the teachers, NOT the students. Public dollars belong to public schools. Please vote no to HB 1.

Yi Breneman
Austin - Mills Elementary PTA
Austin, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Robert Lindley
self fishmonger
Plano, TX

The use of tax-payer money to finance private schools harms our public schools, violates our right to freedom of conscience, and undermines the separation of church and state.

Nadia Khan
Self, architect
Austin, TX

As a person who attended private school K-12 and for college, I can unequivocally say **DO NOT SEND MY TAX DOLLARS TO PRIVATE OR HOME SCHOOLS THROUGH ESAs or VOUCHERS!!!**

We have a public system to ensure every child access to great education and a future that's bright.

MAKE THIS PUBLIC SYSTEM AS GREAT AS ANY PRIVATE SCHOOL! There's no magic here. Reduce class sizes until you see results!!! Pay teachers until they can afford to stay and feel balance in their lives. Use the funds you have to serve our most vulnerable students, lifting all boats.

Julio Sanchez
Self- public school teacher
Pearland, TX

Mr.Buckley, I'm currently a public school teacher for over 30 years. I love what I do, and enjoy working with the future generations of tomorrow. I do feel that it is important to address the current items related to HB 1 with urgency. I believe what makes public school such an important tool for young students are the positive impacts teachers, such as I and many others, have in shaping and preparing these students for their futures. Please consider approving the measures which would include additional funding for students as well as additional compensation and benefits for all classroom teachers. Our communities deserve the best for their children and those who are shaping their futures. Thank you, respectfully submitted, Julio Sanchez

Janet Realini, Dr.
self
San Antonio, TX

As a person of faith, a parent, a grandparent, and a citizen of Texas, I strongly oppose HB1. This bill would establish a voucher for ESA program that would drain public funds from our intentionally underfunded Texas public schools. This is a terrible injury to children and families who rely on public schools. This is unconstitutional because it deliberately fails to adequately support public schools as required by the Texas Constitution. Moreover, shunting public tax dollars to religious schools is wrong and unconstitutional according to the US Constitution. This bill should be defeated. It should not get out of committee Please vote it down.

Cheryl Parker, Dr
Self
Carrollton, TX

I'm concerned about the proposed HB 1, particularly the voucher program. While it aims to provide opportunities, the unequal funding distribution between private and public schools raises questions. Allocating \$10,500 per student for private schools compared to \$6,700 for public schools seems disproportionate. With a substantial state surplus, why not fully fund public schools and address their needs directly? Additionally, the emphasis on standardized testing and potential expulsion for failing grades may disadvantage certain students. Let's prioritize fair and equitable education for all Texas students. Support Texas public education and keep Friday Night lights on!

Sincerely,
Cheryl D. Parker, PhD, RN

Hilda Arredondo
SELF, unemployed
San Antonio, TX

I SUPPORT school choice.
Parents should have the right to send their kids to whatever school they choose.

I want for parents and kids to be supported with universal Education Savings Accounts.

Thank you.

Hermelinda Montegut
Self - Memorial Drive Elementary PTA- Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Education Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

These vouchers and lack of funding are directly impacting Spring Branch ISD. The district is having to close down the schools, student-teacher ratios have already been increased for the 2024-2025 school year, GT services and programs are likely to end as well as other enrichment programs because the state is not fully funding Spring Branch ISD.

Michelle Evans
Independent Women's Network
Round Rock, TX

Students, parents, and educators in Texas deserve policies that allow a wide variety of education options to flourish, ultimately allowing students with all learning types to succeed. Currently, many Texas students are stuck in schools that do not address their needs and their families' values; private or home schooling are options that are not financially viable for many and the only "free" option is a public school system that relegates them to specific campuses based on their geography (which is disproportionately determined by their socioeconomic status).

Establishing an ESA system can ensure that parents have the flexibility they need to tailor their children's education to meet their unique needs, by giving them the freedom to customize their child's education. The current education model in Texas prioritizes systems, and the adults who are employed by these systems, not students and families. Alternatively, ESAs give parents and students who have been poorly served by the assigned government schools the freedom and control to find innovative and responsive education options.

ESAs can be particularly helpful for students with all types of disabilities who require customized learning opportunities.

At the end of the day, it is the parent who knows what is best for their child(ren), and the parents who are most accountable for educational outcomes. Parents want and deserve to make decisions that suit them and their individual needs. Texas needs policies that put the parents—not administrators or bureaucrats—in the driver's seat, as they are the ultimate stakeholder.

As education freedom expands across the country and alternatives to the traditional public school system are created, more students will have the opportunity to leave the public system and learn in environments where they can thrive.

Public schools reap the benefits of education freedom, too. As IWF's Education Freedom Center has covered extensively, studies show that when families have greater control over their children's education, public school performance improves, creating a more prosperous education system for all.

I urge you to vote yes on HB 1 to advance it to the full House for a robust debate and vote.

Christian Montegut

Self - Memorial Drive Elementary PTA- Spring Branch ISD

Houston, TX

Education Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

These vouchers and lack of funding are directly impacting Spring Branch ISD. The district is having to close down the schools, student-teacher ratios have already been increased for the 2024-2025 school year, GT services and programs are likely to end as well as other enrichment programs because the state is not fully funding Spring Branch ISD.

Teresa Manning

CSSM

San Marcos, TX

Hello Mr. Buckley,

I hope this message finds you well. As a Learning Specialist at the Cathedral School of Saint Mary, I strongly advocate for the passage of HB1. This bill is crucial in empowering parents to make informed decisions about their children's education.

As you may know, HB1 allows parents to choose the school that best suits their child's needs in their education and spiritual growth. This is especially important in today's world, where one-size-fits-all education models may not work for every child. By providing more choices, HB1 will help to ensure that every child has access to the education they deserve.

I urge you to support HB1 and ensure that all families have the freedom to choose the school that is right for their children.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Teresa Manning

Angela Cowan
Self, Parent, Special Educator, Adjunct Faculty
Belton, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state-supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. The federal government acknowledges this principle through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information. As a parent and educator, I strongly advocate empowering parents with knowledge that will improve the quality of life for individuals.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Angela Cowan, Ph.D.
2212 Red Rock Drive
Belton, Texas 76513
angela.cowan92@gmail.com

Stuart Joy
Self/ Account Manager
Cypress, TX

I hope this day finds you well. As a parent of 3 boys, I'm writing about the current status of HB-1. My kids have known nothing but private school since they were of an early age. My wife and I feel as if our kids are worth investing in. This allows them an opportunity for a great education, while finding their faith.

We struggle every year on how we can afford this. From taking from our 401k, sacrificing family outings, and living pay check to pay check. In the end seeing how my boy's are turning in great kids makes it all worth while.

My request is the Texas House finds a way for parents to decided what is best for their kids. CY-Fair has great schools and this is by no means a knock on them. We just feel its not best for our family.

Please allow parents make a decision on how our kids should be educated. Allowing this to happen will not only help my kids, but it will also help children who don't currently have a choice that are in sub-par schools. Charter schools have been doing amazing progress with children. Great educations allow kids to have hope for a better future. Support HB-1.

Your Constituent,

Stuart H. Joy

Cayla Ables
Self- Tyler, Tx
Tyler, TX

We need to fully fund public schools before we can even think about giving money to private schools. No to vouchers, no to ESAs, yes to fully funding public education. Yes to fully funding special education. Yes to teacher pay raises, yes to para pay raises. Yes to virtual education. Yes to CTE funding.

Susan Stalnaker, Mrs
Our family
Richardson, TX

We are very much in support of HB1. It supports the simple principle of the freedom of each family to choose the best path for their children unhindered. We homeschooled our children from the late 1980s to the late 1990s. It set them on the path of educational and financial success as adults. There is an outflux from the public schools today as parents observe the chaos and malaise of the average classroom. Discipline problems are at an all time high and create a major waste of the average school day. Please help those who want to choose the better outcome for Texas students - the future of our state. Thank you.

Gloria Beare, Retiree
None
Cibolo, TX

Totally opposed to the use of any funds for vouchers.

Chuck Byrn
Self
Abilene, TX

Good morning, I'm asking you to support HB1, to give every parent to be able to choose the best schools for their children.

Louisa Schmid
self veterinarian
Fort Worth, TX

Simply, no public funds for private education. Our public schools have been under-funded for years. Monies for a "voucher" program would find better use for more Texans by providing real substantial raises for our teachers and increasing the per student allotment to a level matching current costs. Parents already have an abundance of choices for their children's education within the public school system such as charter schools or magnet schools. Private schools are not held accountable to the public; nor are they required to meet state and federal guidelines. For this reason alone, public funds should not be used to support private schools. Vouchers would undeniably weaken our public school system and Texas needs the strongest public school system possible. Please hold firm against the paltry concessions being made for public schools in exchange for a voucher program.

Wendy Rosenthal
Self
Austin, TX

My family is completely opposed to this initiative. Public schools need support. Private education is great...my son was in private schools k-5 and while they also struggle, they do fine with their community support. Now that my son is in public school, I feel it is extremely important the teachers and schools receive all they need. I view school vouchers as a way to funnel funds away from them and the diversity that public schools offer. Unless the government can show clearly and transparently why this is a good thing I will vote against those who support it.

Jill Lamping

Self

Wylie, TX

Public tax dollars belong in public schools. They should not be used to subsidize private, religious schools that have the ability to set their own standards, their own testing regimen (or lack of), set their curriculum however they choose, select their student body from high performing students alone, and the ability to increase tuition every single year. The state's obligation is to provide for a public education alone.

In no situation at all should wealthy families get a subsidy for their high-priced private school tuition.

Priorities include:

- Providing exemplary opportunities for all students in public schools by providing funding to allow public schools not just to survive, but to thrive.
- To that end, an increase to the basic allotment of at LEAST \$1,000 per student is needed JUST to account for cost increases due to inflation since 2019.
- Fund schools based on ENROLLMENT, not attendance. Schools don't cost less to operate when a student is home sick or withheld by parents for an extended vacation, and penalizing schools for student absences is absurd. Texas is an outlier among states with this funding mechanism.
- Reduce to the bare MINIMUM state mandated testing so our teachers can teach and our students can learn, not spend their precious time learning how to take another useless standardized test.
- Fully fund state mandates, including school safety and security. Every new state mandate should have sufficient funding attached.
- If the Republicans continue to bully through the vouchers, as it seems they are intent on doing, they must under no circumstances subsidize wealthy families whose children already attend high priced private schools that have funding sources unavailable to public schools, including the ability to raise tuition every year.
- The ONLY justification for vouchers (euphemistically known as ESAs) is to give low income students who have a "failing" local public school an option to transfer to a higher performing school. Students whose families have the means to pay private school tuition, or who live in a high performing ISD, have no right to public subsidy for their private school. The idea that ANY wealthy families receives tax dollars to subsidize their tuition is outrageous.
- The double standards proposed are unacceptable. Will the voucher be reduced based on attendance? Will the voucher recipients be required to take all state mandated testing? Will voucher-accepting schools be required to use the same admissions standards as public schools? Will voucher-accepting schools be required to apply TEKS to their curriculum? How can the legislature even contemplate sending thousands of dollars to private schools whose standards and processes are completely different from public school mandates?

I implore the legislature to decouple public school funding from vouchers. Take care of our public schools, give them the financial resources needed to thrive, and keep private schools privately funded.

Elizabeth Diebold

Self

Argyle, TX

My husband and I are strongly against vouchers. The future for ALL Texans depends on a good public education for ALL children. Taking money away from public schools, especially in rural and small town areas to fund religious schools is egregious. If parents want to have their children attend private schools, that is their prerogative, but other children and families should not have to suffer educationally because other parents' religious beliefs. We need to focus on improving our public education, not penalizing the children in Texas' public education. These children are our future. Let's make sure they ALL have the opportunity for a quality public education. We never know who will be the one who finds a cure for cancer. We need to ADD, not lessen money to our public schools.

Sonya Schiferl
Self/care giver
San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication.
[Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Sonya Schiferl
143277 rose ct way
[SAN ANTONIO, TX. 78254]

Clifford Riley
Self (attorney)
Irving, TX

I strongly support the passage of school choice legislation. It is the highest priority political issue for my family, my community, and me, and the legislature's response to HB1 is how I will determine my political support-- through my vote, but also through my political donations and my political volunteering activities. It is imperative school choice is passed.

Donna Wright, The Rev.
Self - Lutheran pastor
Valley Mills, TX

Public money should go to public schools.

I am glad to pay taxes to fund the local schools that take every student and are responsible to the citizens. I do NOT want my tax dollars to fund any private schools.

Also, the per student amount for public schools should be increased by a large amount. If \$10,500 is an appropriate per student amount for private schools, that should be the amount spent for our public schools. It has been too long since there has been an increase in per student funding in Texas. Meanwhile, our educational ranking has gone down. Soon we will be vying with Mississippi for 50th among the 50 states. I support an increase in per student funding for Texas public schools over \$10,000.

NO vouchers.
INCREASE per student funding to over \$10,000.

Barbara Rush
Self, retired
Whitesboro, TX

Texas government has an obligation to spend taxes on public school education. Never should our tax money be diverted to private schools. It's that simple. Go home.

Donald Welch
Myself - Construction Project Manager
Alleyton, TX

I support HB 1 passage

Wesley Price
Self, Machinist
Somerville, TX

All public school educators deserve higher wages and improved benefits.

No tax money should be funneled to private or religious schools by a school voucher program. Please vote down any bill creating a school voucher program.

Do not let the governor bully you into passing legislation that would harm the public education system of the state of Texas.

Nancy Nicolas

self / Attorney and parent of school-aged children

Austin, TX

Please vote NO on HB1. Our children attend a public school that serves them well in some regards and needs improvement in others. Our family is in a position of privilege and could provide them with an expensive private education but believe they will grow to be stronger and more productive members of our community by attending school with the diverse members of our community, both in terms of socioeconomic categories and in relation to understanding everyone's different abilities and challenges. I strongly believe that this bill will expand the gap and be to detriment of many students by creating greater imbalances in access to quality public education.

Jennifer Hartfield

Self - HR Specialist

Garland, TX

These comments are for the portion of this bill relating to establishing educational savings accounts. Given that TEA just published their oversight report of public schools' financial stewardship, it occurs to me that there is zero oversight currently in place for private schools to ensure public tax dollars are used appropriately toward education, and even further in regards to home schools. How will oversight of the use of public funds work for these establishments? Will the government require individuals claiming they are home schooling to submit proof of educational outcomes and proper use of funds? I am absolutely not ok with my tax money being turned into a blank check for people who simply want to opt out of public school. I have seen plenty of parents who claim they "home school" who are just out running errands with their school aged children. How would this be ok for using my hard-earned money? What does the committee propose as far as requirements for standardized testing for both homeschool and private school students? Something similar to what TEA requires for public schools must be put in place, the STAAR test for example. How will the public have visibility to the effectiveness of this redistribution of public money to private recipients without standardized testing to prove effectiveness of the education provided by these private individuals and institutions? These are important questions and the tax-paying public being asked to turn our funds over deserve answers on oversight. Thank you for your time in reading my comments.

Sonja Tanguay

self

Houston, TX

NO NO NO to school vouchers! Our public schools are already underfunded!!!! Texas education already ranks at the bottom in the USA and I am sick and tired of Abbott robbing our children of a quality education! Over and over he continues to try and slide this in and refuses to listen to taxpayers! Texans deserve better than what you are providing!

Emily Devlin

Self

Austin, TX

Please vote no

taylor wagen

self (software developer)

Austin, TX

I am strongly in favor of the establishment of an education savings account program. My wife and I have raised 3 children in Austin, TX, and the choosing the best school option for them has meant so many different things over the years. We've had children in home school, private school, charter school, public school, and public magnet school over the years - diverse options have been important for their education, and making that easier on families is progress for education in Texas.

Katrina Hanson

Self, accountant, parent to AISD students

Austin, TX

Please vote no on HB 1.

Ashley McCurry

Self

Aledo, TX

I am against HB1. It is an expansion of government into private and homeschool education, which will eventually lead to the downfall of our education system and nationalize it across the board. Parents in Texas already have school choice. We do not want government funds, because what the government funds it runs. I do not want my homeschool or private schools to look like the failing public school system.

Stephanie Dean-Ehlers

The Momentum Academy

League City, TX

I am a successful Texas who is a product of the public school system. I SUPPORT SMy children both attended public school and private schools during their K-12 education. My son is an Honors Graduate from CCISD and attends UT Austin

Stacey Lincecum

Self

Houston, TX

When I hear about all of the above - I can attest that vouchers will hurt/ not only the taxes I have to pay to keep my children in good schools - if vouchers are allowed then my property value will decrease. Many people do not pay property taxes and then they get to choose to go to any school. If vouchers are allowed then ALL property taxes should go away. We pay high taxes to keep our property values up and vouchers will allow our property values to decrease. I am an educator as well and the vouchers will hurt students / the funding that is not being given per student - and the funds sitting in surplus and not being used is unfortunate. Teachers have not been given a raise / students do not receive an increase in amount per student and now textbooks and curriculum suffer. We are giving 90 million to robinhood in our district and now have to cut 43 million. My taxes continue to increase and the funding decrease. So how would vouchers help? Everyone deserves an education but why change something that was not broken . Robinhood needs to go away as my working conditions are terrible working in a 60 years old building/ paying highest taxes and all money send away. My property taxes continue to increase and funding decrease - and deplorable conditions .

Josh Posey

Self

Waller, TX

Please consider increasing the amount for homeschool students so they may be seen as equal by the state. Please pass the bill out of committee and help lead the nation with the largest and least regulated bill in the nation. Texas is here for you, are you with us?

Maria Addante, Mrs.

Self - sub teacher

Katy, TX

This is a wonderful proposal! Using our taxes and have the right to choose to send our kids to other schools systems different from public schools systems. The benefit for so many parents that just can afford public schools is amazing! The establishment of an education savings account program is a plus .

Kathryn Stigall

Self

Irving, TX

We, as parents, want the support to choose schools for our children!

Kristen Barron

Self -- Lubbock High School PTSA

Lubbock, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Gina Raab

Self

Irving, TX

Parents are the primary educators of their children. Parents have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options. Please vote YES on HB1.

Marion V Patterson, Mrs

Richmond

Richmond, TX

Please support this Bill for our children. Our public schools are a disgrace to our state

No matter how much money you give them they will waste it. Give money to the students to make a school choice.

Maria Benumea, PTA Treasurer

Self

Katy, TX

I truly beg of you to review the effects that will occur to the Public Education System and the students if you pass any vouchers. The public education is already struggling with the minimal funding that is received by the State and local government. If you take these funds away, it will cause further programs that assist our students growth from maintaining an active status in years to come. Private institutions already have a plan in place for further funding. They are also able to apply grants just as any other school in the state. The difference is that they have the advantage of receiving funds from the actual families enrolled as well as donors versus a public school doesn't have that available since the majority of families are below the median household income and greatly depend on the free public education like all of these Title 1 schools. Please don't take away from our students ability to grow and do something positive with their future!

Melina Espiritu-Azocar

Self-Union Organizer

SAN ANTONIO, TX

I am the parent of a child who receives special education services in the PUBLIC school system! A voucher is not what we want! A voucher would remove all legal protections children have under the special education umbrella. It would eliminate required IEPs and it would put our children with special needs in harm's way. What we want is fully funded schools, we want fully funded special education resources and we want staff that can provide proper services to our students. We don't want a voucher or an education savings account. Fund our schools and keep vouchers out of Texas.

Rijo Philip
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I strongly support the passage of school choice legislation. It is a high priority political issue for my family, my community, and me, and the legislature's response to HB1 is how I will determine my political support-- through my vote, but also through my political donations and my political volunteering activities. It is imperative school choice is passed.

Mitchell Miller, Dr.
Self
Houston, TX

No to Vouchers / ESAs.

Texas has not adequately funded its public education system. School district have already begun to cut programs, staff, and close schools because the basic allotment has not kept up with inflation. Inflation has taken its toll and insurance prices are sapping budgets. We are nowhere near the funding model from 2019 let alone improving it. Education is what drives Texas' strong economy and prepares its youngest citizens to be ready to contribute to out state. For our state to continue to compete on the National and International level and attract desired industries, we need a well educated workforce which starts with PUBLIC school finance.

Research has shows that Vouchers / ESAs do not benefit the public at large and tend to go to those who can already afford private schools. The funds cannot be enough to cover private school expenses for low income children and these private schools are not required to teach all who apply. Our public education system is what we need to support, not this social interest program that is not supported by the majority of Texans.

I pay attention to how members vote when I go to the ballot box! Vote NO to ESAs. Stop the special interest nonsense and Fund our public schools. Restore funding to at least the 2019 inflation adjusted amounts.

Julie Song
Self
AUSTIN, TX

I am a mother of 6. We attend 4 different schools as each of my kids have different learning styles, interests, and needs. They benefit immensely from doing so, and I am happy to drive them around town for many hours a day. I 100% support the establishment of an ESA. I am very fortunate to have the resources to send my children to the schools that work best for them, and are better than the public school that is assigned for them. I know that many families do not have the resources to do so, which is wrong and quite frankly, very sad.

Jenny Proznik
Lewisville ISD
Frisco, TX

On October 16, 2023 the Lewisville Independent School District Board adopted the following in a 7-0 vote: As a District we stand firmly against any funding mechanism that diverts public dollars from public education. We petition the state legislature to do its duty under the Texas state Constitution Article 7 section 1. You are called as a body to serve ALL not some and the current proposed legislation (HB1) only serves some.

I urge you to make a true impact for ALL teachers and ALL students with an increase to the basic allotment. I know you understand the inflationary costs every Texan is facing and urge you to support public schools across the state with an increase. The legislature has invested in TEA with additional staff and funding but left those on the front lines of education out. Teachers deserve more than a one-time payout and districts deserve the opportunity to plan and develop programs that benefit students.

ESAs are a third public school system that has little accountability and relies on the other public systems to fix gaps they leave behind with poorly appropriated tax dollars. Invest in what we have to make the system better do not try to build a new one.

If you will stand with public education, public education will stand with you . The over 48,000 students in Lewisville ISD and their families are counting on you.

With Appreciation,
Jenny Proznik
Lewisville ISD, Board President

Ana Karen Guzman
Self
Taylor, TX

I support parental choice in education and I support more education options for Texas kids. This is important to me and I am following your activity on this topic. We request your votes! Thank you

Wanda Longoria
Northside AFT
San Antonio, TX

Our governor isn't listening to Texas parents who have continued to voice opposition to vouchers. He called another special session, not addressing fully funding education, teacher shortages, increased compensation for public school employees, and school safety, the concerns of most Texas parents. Instead, he will push Education Savings Account (ESA) vouchers. There's a body of growing evidence showing voucher programs don't serve students well and may deepen educational and economic inequality.

There's an extensive body of research that finds voucher programs don't improve student achievement. Four states all showed voucher students experienced worse academic outcomes than their peers. A voucher program study in Milwaukee found voucher students performed better after transferring from private to public schools. Denying public schools proper funding directly harms student outcomes.

The Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (GBPI) produced research in response to numerous attempts to expand voucher programs in Georgia. GBPI's vouchers expert Stephen Owens explained how tax credit vouchers are overwhelmingly utilized by wealthy families and serve as tax shelters for businesses.

The Florida Policy Institute (FPI) has written several reports on the fiscal impacts of voucher expansion. A 2023 analysis found that HB 1 signed into law, will cost the state \$4 billion in its first year. FPI research found existing voucher programs in the state are siphoning public school funds to subsidize private school tuition. Recent reports out of Florida indicate the state is now having problems funding vouchers. An analysis of voucher programs in seven states found an unmistakable trend of decreased funding for public schools as a result of voucher expansion. Yet here in Texas we're told vouchers won't pull funds from public schools.

Vouchers mostly fund students already attending private school, and wealthy families are overwhelmingly the recipients of school voucher tax credits. The wealthy benefit at the expense of low-income and rural communities, which is why rural communities in Texas have fought vouchers.

A 2020 study found that only about half of states with voucher programs require teachers to have bachelor's degrees; even fewer require teachers to be licensed, and fewer still require private schools to report graduation rates. This shows a lack of accountability and oversight for voucher programs, unlike public schools.

Yet with all this evidence readily available to state officials, here we are again, fighting for one of the cornerstones of democracy: a free and appropriate public school education for all. When will our legislators listen? We need a minimum basic allotment increase of 1,100 just to keep up with inflation. Act on that!

Resource links: <https://www.epi.org/publication/school-vouchers-are-not-a-proven-strategy-for-improving-student-achievement/>

Amy Baugh
self/ teacher
Pottsboro, TX

No public tax money should be used to fund private schools who are not held to the same standards and requirements as public schools. When private schools have to accept ALL students no matter race, religion, disability, socioeconomic status, etc., take STAAR, provide transportation, provide meals, provide special education services, then they can have their hand in the school funding pot!

Martha Jimenez
Self
Weslaco, TX

I support parental choice in education and I support more education options for Texas kids. This is important to me and I am following your activity on this topic. We request your votes! Thank you

Eric Guzman
Self
Taylor, TX

I support parental choice in education and I support more education options for Texas kids. This is important to me and I am following your activity on this topic. We request your votes! Thank you

Virginia Greenberg, JD
Self - Lake Highlands High School PTA President
Dallas, TX

As a voter and a taxpayer, I want my tax dollars going to public education where I can elect school board members who must hold open meetings, show me their financials, and demonstrate that they are educating students. Oppose vouchers.

Olivia Mata
SMCS
Hutto, TX

pass

Cecile Pesek
myself
Bryan, TX

I am in favor of HB1. I strongly support school choice for our families in deciding what is best for their children.

Hannah Roundtree
Self - Student Accessibility Services Coordinator
Stephenville, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Hannah Roundtree

765 Maplewood

Stephenville, TX 76401

John Pereda
Self - grandparent
Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers are bad for the students and teachers in our public schools. They take away taxpayers \$s that are intended to benefit our communities and future.

SUSAN CONTRERAS
SELF, OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
Katy, TX

relieve crowding in public schools and give more families an opportunity to consider private school education is a good thing

Michael Hommel
self, video game developer
Killeen, TX

While I am in favor of giving more money to our public schools, this bill simply does so in an effort to get private school vouchers implemented. Vouchers are a terrible idea and incredibly harmful to the public education system. If we want our children to be well-educated, we need them in settings that receive scrutiny and management, not in private settings which have no rules over what they will be doing, and their own agendas. More money to public schools, no to vouchers. If there is disagreement over what public schools should be teaching, then that should be debated, don't bypass it and send the children to unregulated schools instead. Also, it's a giveaway to the rich - poor people, even with the vouchers, won't be able to afford private schools. This is just a way to take the tax money from the poor and use it to educate the rich at their private institutions. And of course it is harmful to the special needs students and any student who is falling behind - private schools can pick and choose, and aren't required to provide proper special education opportunities. NO ON HB1.

Bonita Larsen, Mrs
Self
Plano, TX

I am in favor of school choice for Texans.

Sarah Southward
Self
Garland, TX

Oppose vouchers. We want our tax dollars going to public education where I can elect school board members who must hold open meetings! Investing in public schools betters Texas

Hava Johnston
Self
Frisco, TX

There should be NO vouchers. Period.
None.
Keep public dollars in public schools. If you want to spend money, pay the teachers and admin more.

Please do not allow our public educatiin system to be dismantled.

Lauren Barker

Self, PTA member of Memorial Drive Elementary and Spring Branch Middle School
Houston, TX

This is bullshit Robinhood socialism. Stealing the taxes from our school district (Spring Branch) which operates the best public school system I have seen— so well run that most of our residents choose public school over private schools. Our dedicated educators sacrifice to buy school supplies with their own money while they can't even get a cost of living adjustment. You are forcing us to shutter GT and pre-k programs and fire educational specialists that help children with learning disabilities catch up. Our public schools are filled with good Christian souls doing Gods work for ALL the children. Shame on you for robbing the many to benefit the few. Our tax dollars should stay in our district to benefit our children. This socialist agenda is disgusting, harms our children, and I'm shocked that you pretend to be a Republican.

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Krisdee Donmoyer

Self, marketing assistant
Austin, TX

Please vote no on HB1. As a mother of three, I have homeschooled my children, done virtual school during lockdown, sent my boys to five Texas public schools over the years, and paid for two private schools. Public school is currently the right place for my two kids who are still in school, but it hasn't always been the best fit. Paying for private school was hard, especially on only my husband's salary. But never would we want help to pay for those private schools if it meant money that should fund public schools would not go to the vast majority of children. And in eight years when my boys have graduated, I'll still want my tax dollars going to public schools, because even without a child of mine in school I want the children being educated to have a *fully funded* education. They are the people my kids will one day work with, the people who will one day run this state and country. I don't want Texas skimping on their education just so a percentage of a chosen private school can be paid for with tax dollars. Please vote *against* school vouchers.

Anne Gerken

Self
Austin, TX

I am in support of HB one. ESA access and school choice for all would give all Texas students the best individual options !

LeeAnn Moore

Self/Teacher
Eules, TX

On the surface, a one-time \$4,000 bonus for 60% of school district employees sounds fantastic, but it is only once for this year. What happens to teachers after this? Vouchers are a joke. I have been in education for 29 years, Texas has treated us with disrespect and like second class citizens.

Desiree Thomas

PTA Treasurer
Mansfield, TX

Please adequately fund our Public Schools. Say no to vouchers, funding vouchers pulls from the general fund for Public Education and supports the majority of students that are already enrolled in private or home schools, this will just further deplete the fund for Public Schools. We need more funding for our Public Schools please fund them and say no to vouchers and ESAs.

Allison Lassahn
Lewisville ISD / Self
Highland Village, TX

I am pleased to see that the basic allotment for schools is being addressed in this bill, but it does not keep up with the inflationary costs that schools and families have dealt with since the allotment was last adjusted. I am also pleased to see a one time payment for teachers, but please make sure that this is fully funded. The public also needs to realize that it is not a raise for teachers, but a one time payment. I do believe in a parent's right to choose where and how their children are educated. However, I don't believe that vouchers are the way to go. This bill will only provide "vouchers" for approximately 40,000 students of the over 5 million students in Texas. That is less than 1%!! If you truly want to implement an education savings system, offer the same amount to ALL Texas students. School choice can also mean attending the public school of your choice. In Lewisville ISD, we are an open enrollment district, allowing any student to attend any school in our district. We also allow students outside our district to apply to attend our schools. This fosters healthy competition between schools.

In Lewisville ISD, we pride ourselves on the work we do with our spec ed students and many parents move to our district to take advantage of these services. Our spec ed population is currently around 20%. The students we are seeing now are more severe in their needs and this of course costs more.

I appreciate the efforts of the legislation to attempt to solve problems in public schools, but putting mandates on the schools without funding them properly or long-term helps no one. Please raise the basic allotment to keep pace with inflation. Please provide funding for safety and special ed legislation/programs.

Finally, school accountability in Texas is overly complicated and incredibly unfair. We recognize the need to be held accountable to parents and taxpayers, but the system needs major adjustments.

Thank you for your time and work on these important issues!

Lisa Rockett
Self
Katy, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB1. While I understand the desire to provide more choices for parents in education, I believe that this bill would have detrimental consequences for our public school system and the students it serves. Diverting public funds to private schools through vouchers will inevitably weaken our public education system. Public schools are the backbone of our society, serving a diverse group of students with various needs. Redirecting resources away from them risks further underfunding and undermining the quality of education for the majority of students.

Furthermore, private schools are not held to the same level of accountability and transparency as public schools. With public dollars going to private institutions, there is a risk of reduced oversight, which could lead to unequal access to education and potentially even discrimination based on factors such as race, socioeconomic status, or disability.

I also have concerns about the potential for religious institutions to benefit from these vouchers, which may violate the principle of the separation of church and state.

Instead of promoting school vouchers, I urge you to invest in strengthening our public school system by providing adequate funding, resources, and support for teachers and students. Education is a fundamental right, and we should be working to improve our public schools for the benefit of all children, rather than siphoning resources away from them.

Craig Lewis
Self
Austin, TX

Not in support of education savings accounts.

Kevin Simmons
Self, attorney
Irving, TX

I strongly support the passage of school choice legislation. It is a high priority political issue for my family, my community, and me, and the legislature's response to HB1 is how I will determine my political support-- through my vote, but also through my political donations and my political volunteering activities. It is imperative school choice is passed.

David Flora, Mr.

Self 42 year public school educator

Katy, TX

HB 1 as 42 year public school educator, I have always believed parents should be allowed to choose the type of education they desired for their children. If a parent wants their child to receive a Christian education, that is their right and I believe the taxes they pay should be off set to compensate. Since the State makes it impossible to get a Christian education in public school, this solution is only fair.

Michael Unger

Self

Houston, TX

I am in full support of HB 1

Brendan Kinney

Self - Estimator

Granger, TX

Strongly in favor of the ESA.

Stephanie Dean-Ehlers

The Momentum Academy

League City, TX

I SUPPORT School Choice! I am a product of Texas public school, from K-12, and graduated with honors from UTMB as an undergraduate student. My children both attended public and private schools. My son is an honors graduate from CCISD and is currently a freshman at UT Austin's McCombs school of Business. My 24 year old daughter attended public and private schools throughout her K-12 education. My daughter has special and educational needs and was not served equally in the public school system. In fact, we created a school for her, The Momentum Academy, and we are in our 10th year. She graduated in 2018 and we continue to serve students like her. We have 10 openings this Fall. Many parents need financial assistance to be able to send their children to private school, as their needs are not being fully met. Economics should not decide a child's best educational placement. The time to act is now.

Karen Scheinbaum, Dr.
Self, Parent, Guardian, advocate
Bellaire, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

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It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Karen Scheinbaum, M.D.

James Dickey
Self
Spicewood, TX

The ability to switch to a magnet school in the 10th grade permanently, changed my life for the better. Unfortunately, they are just not enough magnet and charter schools to go around, and they may not be the right answer for everyone. The past three years has shown that The educational model we have been following for the last hundred years is no longer meeting the needs of most Texas students. High strongly Arge the adoption of this bill. it will improve outcomes for those who choose anything other than the current baseline, but the competition of those options will also improve the outcomes for those who do not make the same choices.

Margaret Heinkel-Wolfe

self

DENTON, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

Some of this bill is a major step backward for the people we love and care for. Other provisions deepen segregation in our communities.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, profoundly affecting the opportunities for students with disabilities. Private schools lack accountability and specialized programs, and they can--and often do--deny admission or fail to provide adequate support.

The provision for state supported living centers (SSLCs) in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) is a major step backwards for students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

School district personnel or the ARD committee should have no role in providing parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Placing students with disabilities in an SSLC would create a significant financial burden to the state. Just three (!) additional students in an SSLCE would cost taxpayers over a million dollars each year.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Jarrad Toussant, SVP, Education & Workforce
Dallas Regional Chamber
Dallas, TX

Given the scope of the legislation, the DRC is pleased to provide testimony “on” House Bill 1 (HB 1).

The DRC is particularly grateful for HB 1’s sizable investment in Texas’ public schools and supports many of the bill’s funding provisions.

First, the DRC is glad to see a substantial increase in the basic allotment, particularly as Texas school districts have been significantly impacted by several years of high inflation.

While costs for resources and personnel have risen sharply, school districts are not easily able to generate additional revenue. To avoid cutting important programs and services, many school districts in North Texas adopted a deficit budget for the 2023-24 school year – as high as \$186 million in Dallas ISD – to fund critical budget items such as routine salary increases for teachers. Increasing the basic allotment will help to stabilize school district budgets, especially as federal COVID-19 relief funding expires at the end of the current school year.

The DRC is also appreciative of the continued investment in and refinement of reforms made by House Bill 3 (86R). Specifically, the DRC supports provisions to add pre-K students to the Early Education Allotment, expand the Teacher Incentive Allotment and provide for local design and implementation assistance, and increase funding weights associated with the Compensatory Education Allotment.

Finally, the DRC supports the creation of a new Teacher Residency Allotment to facilitate access to high-quality, rigorous teacher preparation programs.

These provisions all represent meaningful and warranted investments in Texas’ public schools. It is imperative, however, that the state is able to ensure a sufficient return on these investments in the form of improved student academic outcomes.

To that end, the DRC is concerned to see that HB 1 would sunset the A-F Accountability System by 2026. Since its original implementation in 2017, Texas has only administered one complete set of A-F campus and district ratings, in large part due to disruptions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the A-F System is the state’s best mechanism for measuring campus and district progress toward our state’s academic goals and the return on our sizable investment in public education.

Yet as filed, HB 1 will preclude the issuance of campus and district ratings for the 2022-23 school year, extending the gap since the last complete A-F ratings to four years and further obscuring policymakers’ ability to evaluate the success of Texas’ many recent investments and innovations in public education as well as academic and growth outcomes of students across the state. The DRC urges the legislature to stay the course on Texas’ rigorous assessment and accountability system.

We appreciate the legislature’s continued focus on Texas’ 5.5 million public school students, each of whom will comprise our state’s future workforce.

Sarah Kaushik
self
Richardson, TX

A voucher program will cost Texas billions of dollars that should be invested in public schools that serve all children. I support public schools and oppose any kind of voucher.

As a voter and a taxpayer, I want my tax dollars going to public education where I can elect school board members who must hold open meetings, show me their financials, and demonstrate that they are educating students. School voucher programs hurt public schools.

Savina Rikhilal
Self Assistant Controller
Garland, TX

Vouchers hurt children. There is no room for ESAs or Vouchers until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools. I believe strong public schools are very important to make every child's potential a reality. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Michelle Sortor
Self - Advocacy Chair for Birdville ISD Council of PTAs
Hurst, TX

The future of Texas is a robust and well-funded public school system - a system that serves and protects the educational needs of all children. A voucher system, in addition to diverting funds away from our public school system inadequately protects our most vulnerable children - those with special needs. Further, it will operate not as a system to serve underprivileged students and students who can benefit most from additional funds to public schools.

The success of students, promotion of Texas values, and a strong economy all lie within the success of our public school system. Empowering every child - not just a select few - by properly funding Texas public education moves our entire state forward. Together, we can provide a future that Texas children deserve - but only if we commit to our public education system.

Say Yes - to adequately funding our schools, raising pay for Teachers, Administrators, and every employee who works in our districts, promoting Texas values in our classroom by emphasizing the value of diversity, and to ensuring our future with a vibrant public education system.

Say No - to any voucher system, regardless of how it is presented, failing to protect Texas children's futures, and to taking power away from parents and local government.

Lorene Gates, Mrs.
Self
Austin, TX

Please vote NO.
For the betterment of our children's education. The quality of their education. Vote NO!

Yes for our students in cities... but my goodness for those student:
-in rural Texas... I come from a small town of 400+/- then.. maybe fewer now
-for our students with special needs - across the board

Let's not make this about politics, sigh, let's please make it out our children.

PLEASE VOTE NO!

Billie Sweeney
Self
Houston, TX

I am a parent of Spring Branch ISD in Houston. We are a niche in the big city. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. Our class sizes will balloon. The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS! I have been a lifelong Republican and am shocked our legislators are not funding this basic government service with the budget surplus. Public schools must be funded first.

Kate Reddy
Self, CRNA
Austin, TX
Opposed

Bett Butler
self, self-employed
San Antonio, TX

Public money should only support public schools. Period.

Evan Hall
Self
Austin, TX

I am vehemently opposed to this voucher bill, because it is nothing more than rich person welfare. We already have school choice in Texas and parents can elect to send their kids wherever they want, but they should pay their own way and not expect the public to pay for private school tuition. Instead, we should fully fund public schools and increase the basic allotment to account for inflation. No to vouchers, no to rich person welfare, no to corruption.

Lee Moses
Self
Little River, TX

I do not support educational saving accounts/vouchers without the same accountability public schools adhere to. According to the bill, the ESA's \$ would quadruple in one year's time. How is that going to be sustained? Also, \$4000 to teachers in a one-time payment seems a lot like hush money and not a substantial increase to their salary at a time when the shortage is at its worst.

Eric Guzman
Self
Taylor, TX

I support parental choice in education and I support more education options for Texas kids. This is important to me and I am following your activity on this topic. We request your votes! Thank you

Sholom Gorovitz
Self
Dallas, TX

Our family moved to Dallas, Texas a few months ago. We have eight precious children, all attending Jewish day school, where they study diligently with great individual attention in all important subjects to be great American successes, and just as importantly, learn our cherished values of how to be kind and loving fellow Americans.

This learning environment is not available at any public school, yet we pay our fair share of taxes that go to the public school system, and we are also paying high tuition, which is a heavy burden on our cost of living.

If we want Texas to flourish with amazing citizens who contribute to the great American way of life and who can also contribute the lessons of our beautiful faith, it is only just and fitting that we should not have to pay twice, and that we should be able to have a voucher system that enables us to apply it towards our children's education.

Our book of sages teaches us: Educate your child on their path. Every child has their own unique setting and path that works best for their education. Enabling us to have the choice of what is best for our child's path will prove to be a success story that Texas has never seen before.

Laura Minyard

Self - Parent in Spring Branch ISD

Houston, TX

Vouchers are not the solution for Texas education! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools

Clarence Dixon

Evant ISD

Evant, TX

As a Texas public school teacher I am opposed to school choice simply because it will mean most of our public school students that remain in public schools will be English Language Learners with little or no understanding of the English language! I already have 6 students out of 21 that are unable to perform grade level assignments even with severe modifications. This puts a strain on teachers who must attempt to cater to those students at the expense of other students not so burdened with having to learn a new language. The only viable solution would be to provide the ESL students with a separate classroom lead by a qualified teacher in their primary language to instruct them in the basic English language skills until such time as they can return to the regular classroom.

Lindsay Evans

Self- stay-home-mom

Houston, TX

Our public schools need to be fully funded. The allotment per student must be increased. I am a life-long conservative republican voter and the devastation that the refusal to increase the student allotment to \$1000 per student is going to cause our district (SBISD) is causing me to rethink the way I vote in the future. The spring branch area is a very conservative stronghold, and this will change of our schools are not fully funded. I have 2 children in private schools, and one on public, because he needed more support than the private school could provide. He is finally receiving the support he needs because of the public school system. School choice should be a completely independent issue from increasing the allotment per student to keep up with inflation in our public schools. Our children being served in public schools currently do not deserve to face school closures and services being taken away from them because of politics. The state has a surplus and they need to utilize it to fund public schools.

Margaret Ramey

Self

Houston, TX

ESA and public school funding need to be voted on in two separate bills. Our public schools are under funded, we and our children need this resolved immediately.

Sara Modgling

Self / Parent

Austin, TX

vote NO on school vouchers!!!!

Ramon Silvas

Self

Dallas, TX

I strongly support the passage of school choice legislation. It is a high priority political issue for my family, my community, and me, and the legislature's response to HB1 is how I will determine my political support-- through my vote, but also through my political donations and my political volunteering activities. It is imperative school choice is passed.

Victoria Villa
Self, engineer
Desoto, TX

No to school vouchers that drain public schools and teachers of desperately needed funds. This tiny bump in teacher pay is not enough to hide the glaring obvious of this scheme to funnel money away from our kids and into the pockets of private school organizations with no oversight or accountability. No no no from this public school kid who went on to graduate distinguished in the top 1% of my 5A TX high school and earn a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Texas A&M University. Public schools are essential - and their funding has been inadequate for too long. No to HB1!

Bryan Miller
Self
Houston, TX

We need school choice in Texas. Parents should be able to use their tax dollars for the school of their choice

Carrie Graham, Rev.
The Church Lab
Austin, TX

Constitutionally in Texas, and as neighbors not looking out for just ourselves but committed to our community well-being as a whole, we have a mandate to work on our public education offerings together. As neighbors who want to lift all up, who want to treat teachers well, who want to see the system change for the better rather than splinter into a few good options for solely those who can afford it, we need to stay away from vouchers. As a pastor, my Christian faith convicts me toward supporting practices which look out for not just myself but my neighbors, for my community as a whole. Public education systems desperately need investment for just this reason. It is time to rally toward support of improving public education, not distractions toward other options which are not ultimately open to all.

We need teacher pay raises not to be held hostage by the pressure to cling so tightly to vouchers.

I have spoken to concerned Republicans and Democrats alike who agree on this issue; I have lived and served in Central Texas since 2009, but I was raised and have family and lifelong friends in Southeast Texas. The conversations are remarkably and unusually similar when I'm in either region, which makes this voucher conversation's existence as a priority in special session confusing. Even if beyond my personal experience conversing on this topic, vouchers are not being discussed due to an apparent public outcry. I am aware of no critical mass of citizens in the state who is desperate to pass vouchers, other than specific politicians. As such, voucher programs do not feel like accurate representation of Texans' priorities. The unfortunate result of prioritizing this anyway is that this chips away at Texans' trust in our governing bodies.

I am in favor of keeping resources focused toward improving our public education system, including our charters. Vouchers don't keep church and state separate; a dangerous infringement to lean into. Voucher policies are not helpful to our rural areas, as I am grateful is being considered on some level. Additionally, vouchers generally don't look out for those who need services like SPED, and the private schools cost more than the amount of the voucher. Public money would be spent for private religious schools, whose curriculum is not vetted by the state. Our public systems have problems; they need our investment and help, not our draining yet more resources away from them.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Kristin Huffman
Friendswood ISD
Friendswood, TX

We as educators implore you to consider increasing funding for our schools and not the voucher program. We all know that the voucher program would hurt public schools and create a hierarchy in our education system which puts many children in our state at a disadvantage. Please consider increasing teacher salaries. We work so hard for your children. We use our own money to buy school supplies, work outside of contract hours, and take on second and sometimes third jobs just so we can pay our bills and continue to help kids. Many of us have to do things like drive for Uber or give plasma just to make ends meet. This should not be the case for someone in a profession that requires college degrees and multiple certifications. If you invest in us, pay us a competitive wage, you will see more teacher retention, less burnout and as a result, students leaving our education system stronger than they ever were before. We are highly trained, college educated individuals and yet we make wages that barely get us above the poverty line. Without us, there are no doctors, no lawyers and no politicians, no one to run the state. Treat us like the professionals we are. Invest in us, and you will see that Texas will be stronger as a result.

Jillian Griffin
Texas citizen, parent
Austin, TX

PLEASE VOTE NO ON HB1, the people don't want it.

Natalia Olivera
Self
Austin, TX

Please say NO to vouchers.

Whitney Koch
Self, Content Writer & Account Manager
Katy, TX

I urge you to vote NO on any legislation that would seek to take money from public education and give it to private schools instead.

Good, well-funded public education is necessary for our state (and our country) to be successful. Taking funds away from a public service would hold back countless children and would especially hurt students in rural areas and those receiving special education services.

Also, the history of school vouchers and "school choice" is steeped in racism. It's harmful rhetoric and policy that has no place in our state in 2023.

Melinda Smith
self, stay at home Mom, PTA volunteer, Keller ISD substitute
KELLER, TX

I'm a Mom and PTA volunteer in Keller, TX and would like to express my frustration in my representatives failing our public school students.

Please increase the basic allotment by at least \$1,000 per student to account for inflation, change funding from attendance based to enrollment and please vote no on vouchers.

We love our Keller schools and it's painful to watch them suffer despite a record surplus in our state. Our kids deserve much better.

Mallory Shaddix, Ms.

Self retired

Houston, TX

I strongly support fully funding our public schools with a minimum increase of \$1,000 per student in the basic allotment. Without this funding, districts will be forced to close schools, eliminate programs and reduce teaching staff, all to the detriment of students.

I oppose any and all vouchers. It is not conservative or responsible to give tax dollars to private schools with no academic or financial accountability. Any voucher program should be required to raise their own taxes. Ask us to vote on taxes to fund private schools if you think it is a good idea for TX.

Rachel Cumming, Mrs

Texas PTA/ Comal ISD

Spring Branch, TX

Vouchers for Texas is not a good idea. How can you give tax dollars to non profit private or charter schools? Those valuable dollars could be reinvested (as they should) into public schools where the majority of our children attend. Coming from private school - they are behind academically, athletically and mentally. They do not have appropriate programs in place to ready our children for after High School. They are not held accountable to the same standards as public schools. How will you ensure we are not going backwards in education? You cannot without the private sector calling for invasion. All for the current children attending private school will now use tax dollars to continue on their education pathway when tax dollars should not be constitutionally used for religious beliefs. You are mixing state and church. If you do not require private and charter schools to follow the same TEKS, testing and regulations then how will the kids be getting a better education? Private and charter schools do not welcome low income families and/or children with disabilities. Most are not equipped to teach those types of children. No point then to use a voucher program. Reinvest those public funds into more special education and programs for less fortunate kids. Those schools do not offer free lunch or help with childcare. Why not do the right thing and keep private- private and use funding to promote our public schools- give them a much needed face lift. We are a country of majority rule. Why are you trying to tailor to the few/minority.

Binyamin Goetz

Yeshiva Torat Emet

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

?

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Destiny Perez
Christian PReschool Centers
Lubbock, TX

Pre K needs to be included in ANY choice program

Morgan Scholl
Self - SBISD Parent
Houston, TX

Please know that vouchers will drastically hurt public education in Texas! I'm all for school choice and with properly funded public schools that can be accomplished. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Our schools are already struggling with the current funding. Our district has their hands tied and has or will be making horrible choices:

- no teacher raises, actually a cut because of the increase in health insurance
- taking away the block schedule, which has been proven to be the better learning method for children
- closing an elementary school
- closing a pre-k center, which with a joint partnership with other nonprofits and at no cost to the district provides ~\$800k of services a year to the most vulnerable in our district
- slashing admin expenses, that are already at 6.5% (2% less than the lowest level the state recommends)
- raising ratios in classrooms
- taking away planning periods from teachers
- taking teacher out of the classroom
- school choice taken away
- programs gone

Nathalie Herpin
Self
Houston, TX

Texas students need funding for public education to thrive, not governmental welfare programs for private schools. All the data on vouchers and ESAs showcase this is a failing system and Texans deserve better. Fully fund public education, stop this ridiculous voucher nonsense.

Mary Simmons
Self
Irving, TX

I strongly support the passage of school choice legislation. This is a high priority political issue for my family, my community, and I, and the legislature's response to HB1 is how I will determine my political support-- through my vote, but also through my political donations and my political volunteering activities. It is imperative school choice is passed.

Natalie Truax
Self
Garland, TX

I support public schools and the vouchers would hirt

Marion Mlotok

self

Austin, TX

I am absolutely against school vouchers (so-called education savings accounts) as they would decimate the public school system, which is already suffering enough from lack of funds.

Jaqueline Velasquez

Self/Accountant

Houston, TX

Tax dollars should go to public schools - when those are funded properly then we won't need vouchers. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. Public schools will close, student-teacher ratios will increase, and a lot of funding cut out. You say disadvantaged children will benefit but private schools cost upwards of \$30k a year - a middle class family cannot afford that (x multiple children) much less a low-income family. The voucher program will only hurt our children further!

Christina Wilson

Self

Georgetown, TX

There should not be a monopoly on public education in the state of Texas! 32 other states have some form of school choice and it's not defunded public schools yet. Please pass school choice so low income families like ours can finally have better options in education for our children. My boys are brilliant and deserve more than a failing school district (especially if it's my tax dollars on the table). We deserve better, we deserve options, we deserve CHOICE!

Kim Caston, Consultant

Self - Consultant

Dallas, TX

I am a lifelong Republican, suburban woman, and I DO NOT support vouchers, "ESAs" in any form. A fourth special session is ridiculous on this policy is a waste of time that could be utilized to focus on issues facing Texans.

Gov. Abbott and Lt. Gov. Patrick's threats to challenge my legislator if they don't support vouchers is reprehensible. My legislator is accountable to me and my fellow constituents. Additionally, tying teacher raises and increased funding to vouchers is disgusting and points out the futility of bad policy.

With Tuesday night election results in Ohio, Virginia and Kentucky, the Texas Republican Party needs to support the will of the people or it will suffer the consequences.

Support PUBLIC Education - not Gov. Abbott's personal political ambition.

Sarah Romo de Vivar, Ms.

Self

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Francisco Alamos

Self

Houston, TX

Texans do not want this!!!! Stop bending over for penetration by billionaires. Vouchers DO NOT WORK. Look at other cases of failed vouchers and how other states did not take their exams to hide their poor performance. NO VOUCHERS AT ALL EVER

Joshua Blake

Self

Bertram, TX

As an educator in public schools I am against funneling any public money into private schools. The reason for that is because there has been no evidence that any accountability or acceptance of ALL types of students. As a High School teacher on any given day I have many different levels of learners and learners with disability in my class. Most if not all private schools do not accept students with learning disability.

Also, as a public school we are held to higher standards that are mandated by the state of Texas and TEA. We must adhere to the TEKS and all students must take the STAAR test. School district are rated base off those scores. Private schools are not being asked to take the STAAR to be held accountable for learning.

I do not care what carrot the Governor is dangling in front of your faces to get you all to pass this ridiculous bill BUT our students are the most important thing and he is politicking with the get something passed. The Students are our the future of this great state and need to be treated as such. Not a pawn in a game.

Carrie Mays

Self and PTA member

Round Rock, TX

You have failed to fully fund public education so why would you divert money away from the children who need it most. Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Not ones that will cause more issues with student-teacher ratios. Public teachers are already stressed with the little bit of funding they receive. We should be increasing their funding, not cutting it!

Jeannette LaFontaine Mack

Wildflower Unitarian Universalist Church

Austin, TX

The voters have spoken, the teachers have spoken, even our Legislators have spoken in opposition to div eating Public School Funding to private schools. Please, do not further harm our public schools by giving vouchers to private schools. Instead, allocate sufficient funds to get our Public System and teachers pay elevated to a respectable level. This is abuse of power that Abbott continues to call Session after Session to get his way. Say NO!! This is a waste of funds, tax payer money that could be spent on our education system instead of Special Sessions!

Helen Galer, Mrs.

Self/Retired

Katy, TX

NO to vouchers and education savings account programs. YES to salary increases for teachers and better funding of our public schools.

Michael Danks

Sarah Danks DSSLC

Corinth, TX

All parties of special needs children should be given information about SSLC's

Lindsey Bheemarasetti

Self

Arlington, TX

I am in favor of HB1, as I believe that parents have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options.

Nissa Lind

Self/unemployed

Austin, TX

ESAs or School vouchers are a harmful policy that divert public funds from public schools to private schools, without improving student outcomes or accountability. Some of the reasons why I oppose school vouchers are:

- School vouchers weaken public education by reducing the resources and support available for public schools and students. Public schools serve all children, regardless of their background, ability, or need. They are the backbone of our democracy and our communities. Taking away public funds from public schools undermines their quality and equity. Texas should use budget surplus to fund public schools based on enrollment and at an increase of \$2000 per student. It's a shame that Texas is dead last in funding public education per pupil out of all the states.

- School vouchers do not guarantee better academic results for students. According to several studies, students who use vouchers to attend private schools do not perform better than their peers in public schools, and in some cases, they perform worse. School vouchers also do not improve graduation rates, college enrollment, or civic engagement. There is no data and no study to support that private schools provide a better or more thorough education than public schools. They are able to make sure more graduates attend colleges because they ALREADY have more per pupil resources than public schools.

- School vouchers lack accountability and transparency. Private schools that receive voucher funds are not subject to the same standards and regulations as public schools, such as STAAR and other academic testing, teacher qualifications, curriculum, health and safety, anti-discrimination, and special education. Private school teachers are not required to be certified to teach in a class room because private schools are not required to follow state laws. They can also deny admission or expel students based on their academic, behavioral, or religious criteria. Parents and taxpayers have little or no say in how voucher funds are spent or how private schools operate.

As a parent, I care deeply about the education and well-being of all children in our state. I believe that public funds should be invested in public schools, not in private schools that serve a select few. I ask you to stand with me and the majority of Texas residents who oppose school vouchers and support public education.

Please vote NO on HB1. Thank you for your service and your attention to this important issue.

Debbie Talley

PART and Brenham SSLC

Deer Park, TX

As a parent of a 36 year old, we had NO choice but to place him in a SSLC. We tried a community placement. He went to the hospital 3 times the one week he was there. He was dehydrated and seizing when we went to pick him up after 6 days. The SSLC was the only place he could live and be safe. Parents should know this is an option for their severely disabled child. It is not for everyone, but there are people who need and DESERVE this option.

Dana Jones

Self; Hurst Eules Bedford ISD

Bedford, TX

Vouchers do not benefit the overall education and wellbeing of our Texas children, who rightfully so depend upon public education. Removing funding from already underfunded schools will only stand to further diminish the quality and reliability of public education. Giving tax dollars to under regulated segments such as homeschooling and private charters is a disservice to every current and future taxpayer. Say no to vouchers/ESAs and say no to Governor Abbott's attempts to divert funds out of public education.

Sesna Rivera

Christian Preschool Centers Inc.

Lubbock, TX

Pre-K needs to be included in ANY choice program

Lorna Salgado, Dr.

self - education consultant

GARLAND, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people disabilities, I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with disabilities

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with disabilities as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Please do what is right for kids and not for political posturing!

David Fincher

Cotton Mill Learning Center, National Child Care Coalition, self

Mesquite, TX

I am testifying FOR HB1. However, there is a glaring problem with the eligibility of children for the Education Savings Account. **WE MUST INCLUDE ELIGIBLE PREKINDERGARTEN CHILDREN IN THIS PROGRAM!** When we note that only about 69% of prekindergarten children who attend public school prekindergarten classes are then assessed as kindergarten ready by the public schools. It is **AT LEAST** as important that we include prekindergarten as it is that we include kindergarten through 12th grade! TEA data tells us that prekindergarten children who attend community based prekindergarten programs are assessed as 85%+ kindergarten ready.

Mandi Kimball, Vice President and Director of Public Policy

CHILDREN AT RISK

Houston, TX

Checking the facts on school voucher programs:

CHILDREN AT RISK performed an analysis of the reported outcomes of voucher programs across the country and found that the data contradicts many of the myths advocated by the proponents of voucher programs. Data shows poor outcomes for students.

While voucher programs are touted by proponents as giving families additional choices for their children's education, they ultimately fail to offer real choices to families who need them the most-and undercut public schools in the process. While those favoring similar programs claim that vouchers will give kids a better-quality education with better outcomes for students, research shows that this is not the case—and in many ways, vouchers produce negative outcomes for both student success and parent choice.

Voucher Programs Lack Accountability.

Private schools are not subject to the same level of oversight as public schools, and therefore are not bound by curricular standards that can track student success in reaching critical benchmarks. They are not required to accommodate children with learning challenges or who may require special attention. With private schools not accountable to report critical learning benchmarks to the state, many students may fall behind without any system of checks and balances to ensure they are being supported in their learning goals.

Voucher Programs give private schools increased choices, rather than increasing options for families.

Private schools can elect who they'd like to admit, and many students simply won't make the cut. In some areas, particularly rural areas, private school options may simply not exist.

Private school voucher programs cost taxpayers more money.

Voucher programs often cost state taxpayers millions of dollars-and that spending is in addition to public school expenditures. Public schools are still required to maintain the capacity to offer every student a seat and those who leave public schools to attend voucher-subsidized private institution's typically do not do so in numbers large enough to cut back on public school spending.

Vouchers do not improve student achievement-in fact, they may worsen student outcomes.

There is no evidence to support the claim that voucher programs improve student achievement like test scores, especially when factors that typically correlate with poor performance, like family income, are accounted for. More recent research suggests that voucher programs actually have a negative effect on student achievement, and new evaluations of voucher programs in Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio, and Washington, D.C show significant drops in test scores: the learning loss demonstrated following the rollout of voucher programs parallels the dip in test scores observed following the pandemic. One year of participation in Louisiana's school voucher program increased the likelihood of a failing score in math, science, reading and social sciences by between 24 and 50 percent.

Rozalyn Stuckey

self lawyer

Houston, TX

The most important resource in Texas is its people. The Texas Legislature is responsible for ensuring that remains true by nurturing our children and their education. These Texans are the future leaders, innovators, and contributors to our great State, and we must ensure they have the resources and opportunities necessary to flourish.

Our public schools are woefully underfunded. School districts are cutting budgets and programs offered to children because of the lack of funding from Austin.

Even with an ESA, private schools are not an option for most Texans. Sending taxpayer money to private schools while not also fully funding a robust public education system is irresponsible and short-sighted.

Give all Texans the resources necessary to flourish by fully funding public education.

Pat Ivey
School Choice
Lometa, TX

I ask you to support HB 1

Elizabeth MacLean
Self / Texas PTA board member of Jess Harben Elementary
Dallas, TX

Dear State Representative,

My daughter attends one of the greatest schools in America, and it is a public school of the state of Texas. I believe that by placing tax dollars into this school and any other public school of Texas we are furthering the education of our children that will make America great. By placing funds into private schools we reduce the quality of education that all Texans have the right to. I grew up attending private and charter schools, the education quality was not regulated, I was not educated to the same standards that many of my peers at public schools received. This is why I now have placed my daughter in the public school system of Texas. However, if the state of Texas takes away funds from public schools that are already very low and gives it to private schools, I can imagine the amount of teachers that will leave the public school system to go where they will be paid a reasonable rate or salary. We need to pay our teachers so that they can afford decent housing, have supplies for their students, and the educational material they need in order to care for our students, our children, well. Please do not try something new and create a voucher system that will pull away funds from our public schools.

Personal story, my friend works a Liberty Jr High school in Richardson, TX. This school has not received the funds to be able to create a safe and secure environment for the students there. My daughter is zoned to attend this school, however due to the lack of funds and the lack of certified teachers at Liberty Jr High, I am looking elsewhere for my daughter to attend. If Texas took the tax dollars they are taking away from their residents and put it into the public schools, there would be an enormous turnaround in the quality of teaching and quality of care for our children.

I ask that you take the added tax dollars that have gone up dramatically in the last 3 years and put them in our Public Schools so that the next generation has a chance to make Texas an amazing and beautiful place to live.

Thank you,
Elizabeth MacLean

Brad Neff, HB1 Opposition
Self
Austin, TX

I am very much against HB1. I am a lifelong Austinite who went through the Austin public school system. My dad and granddad went through the Austin public schools, my kids are currently in AISD at Hill Elementary. HB1 is not in the best interest of our public school system, period. It's shocking and disappointing that this bill is still being discussed. Please do what is best for our public schools, not what is best for a certain few.

Cara Landers, JD
Self, Wife of Public School Teacher, Mother, Attorney
Go, TX

Please fully fund public schools before trying to hold them hostage to get vouchers passed.

Stacy Hock
self, homemaker
Austin, TX

Thank you for creating an adequately funded universal ESA for Texans! We desperately need this to drive better outcomes in K12 for all our students. A marketplace in K12 will drive productivity, innovation, and pluralism -- we will get much more for our precious tax dollars, and quality of life and education will go up!

Kesiel Friedman
Self
Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their children.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever-expanding list or risk being left behind.

R Adam Miller
Self
Houston, TX

i oppose vouchers and they will harm public schools

Ronald Bonnette
TSTA
Dickinson, TX

Vouchers are bad for Texas students and no good will come from spending public tax money to enrich private school operators.

Nancy Woods
Home
Houston, TX

This is a great bill!! We need to educate not indoctrinate our children!

Robert Webb, Dr

Self retired

Austin, TX

Please oppose this giveaway to the wealthy. It will only hurt our public schools and does not offer an expanded choice for anyone. It will not pay enough to allow poor people to afford private school, only subsidize the wealthy who are already attending private school. It will hurt rural Texas!

JD Kennedy, Dr.

Self/Retired Educator (40 years of service)

Harker Heights, TX

The only way that I would support vouchers would be if the money was given directly to a private schools and not to parents of children. The private school would have to provide the same special education services to the students that public schools provide, that they would have to meet the same school accountability that public school have, that their funding is tied to ADA and not direct funding not based on ADA. Deeply concerned with the impact this bill will have on public schools across the state, but especially concerned with the negative impact on rural public schools.

Vanessa Coleman, Mrs

Self

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

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Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

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Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Kathleen Kennedy

self - attorney

Plano, TX

I do not support school vouchers in any way, shape, or form. I do not want my tax monies going to support any type of religious or private school and if this happens, I will join and pay for any lawsuit to fight this. I want separation of church and state and all tax monies should be going to public, not private, education. As the nation's founders intended.

Lincoln Achilli

Self

DALLAS, TX

Based on my own review of the bill text, this is an alarming proposition. It proposes what is in essence a federalization of private and home school education. Federal initiatives are the primary reason in recent years for those choosing not to go to public schools. Dubious curricula and other strings attached for funding for public schools weigh down local communities and values from being taught, while the whimsy and agenda driven priorities of bureaucrats in Washington become the focus so as not to lose funding. State and county agencies already reliant on federal funds under-serve their constituencies simply to avoid putting federal funding that no voter asks for at risk. It breaks budgets in Washington, causes inflation and higher taxes for residents, and imposes criteria not sought or consented to by local communities.

Teaching to the test is another large portion of why some parents choose home or private schools as they have a pronounced deleterious effect on the quality of education and the basic skills being lacked upon graduation. To spread this to home schools and private schools assure a less prepared, less real world ready set of future leaders. Why not fix the test and the perverse incentives for taking them rather than spreading the problem to more students?

The data tracking conditions of students looks like nothing short of a gift to big tech, and big government surveillance. No one should have their access to education be reliant upon being surveilled digitally by for profit entities and nebulous, rights infringing public / private partnerships. Students speaking to counselors should be anonymous as well, not a source of data to be mined by whomever big tech chooses to share the data with outside the reach of the taxpayers funding the federal largess.

Another issue with this bill is that if the intended effect is to re-focus and drive up participation in public schools, than means or ability testing who vouchers are available to is also the wrong solution. The local taxpayer pays for public school. If they are trapped in a bad school or a bad district, reform should enable all equally can use their amount of student enrollment based funds equally, as they wish. They should not be assessed for the operation of their local school district annually only to have to pay additional fees to choose another school based on income or abilities.

In short, this looks like a special interest grab bag of funds that will neither improve enrollment or educational outcomes and should not be approved, especially in a legislature that regularly self proclaims itself as the most conservative ever.

Beth Buyse

Myself

AUSTIN, TX

I am against HB 1 because as a taxpayer, I believe public money belongs in public schools. I do not want public money funding private schools

John Price

self

Austin, TX

I fully support school choice because this is America! Freedom of choice is a fundamental right. In regards to how we can educate our children, it is paramount that as parents we should be able to afford to send out children to the schools that will best prepare them for their future.

Hilda Arredondo, Ms.

Self, unemployed

San Antonio, TX

Please SUPPORT school choice, HB 1.

Thank you.

Megan McLellan

Self/Attorney

Houston, TX

I am a parent of 2 students in Spring Branch ISD in Houston TX. Our District has thus far been able to provide an amazing education for our children. Unfortunately while this bill is a good start, it does not provide enough funding for our schools to continue providing the same education and services we have had. Our District is facing a \$35 million dollar shortfall due to lack of funding and will be forced to make major cuts which will strip us of its unique and wonderful programs. In this economy no one can be asked to try and keep pace with inflation without additional resources. We can't do it personally and the District shouldn't be expected to do it either. There has been no substantial increase in funding since 2019. In this economy it is crazy to think that any District can provide a decent education without additional money. The basic allotment needs to be raised by \$1000/student just to keep pace with the economy. While I don't necessarily oppose school vouchers, providing those at the expense of funding public school education is completely irresponsible. And to give more than the basic allotment is really troubling. If the Legislature can do both; fine. But if not our public schools need to be fully funded FIRST! Then talk about vouchers. In my area, a \$10,000 voucher isn't going to cover the cost of any private school so if families can't afford it now, they won't be able to afford it then. And the choice they will be left with is to keep their kids in public school which is not a whole lot worse because the District had to make major cuts. Amend this bill to provide for \$1000 increase in the basic allotment per student.

Linda Werlein

self

Kerrville, TX

I am writing in support of Parent Choice.

Jody Quimby

Self, Retired

Bryan, TX

Please support passage of HB 1 by Buckley.

Texans overwhelmingly support school choice and you should too!

Susan Getter

Self - Tejeda Middle School PTA, Johnson High School PTA

San Antonio, TX

- Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

My oldest daughter has a hard time fitting in but has finally found her place in a public school theater department. She is thriving! Public schools are important and deserve the chance to be not only a good educational system but have funding for opportunities like theater for those that desperately need it. I have read all of the arguments and can not disagree more with Gov. Abbott. ALL CHILDREN deserve the right to good schools.

Debbie Vest

self

Canyon, TX

pre-k needs to be included in any choice program

Kaitlyn smith
Creative Learning Center
Lubbock, TX

Pre-K needs to be included in any choice program.

Stephen Knapp
Self
Spring, TX

Please support this bill.....

Elizabeth Neff
Self
Austin, TX

This is harmful to students across the State of Texas. It is our responsibility to support public schools, which educate most of our children in Texas. Invest in public schools and give every Texas student an opportunity to learn and grown into an active and productive citizen. Texas can do more. Please do not pass this bill for the sake of our kids.

Joshua Eddy
self
Cypress, TX

We want more opportunities for educational excellence in Texas including a better ESA option for our children. Please get this done so we can have freedom of school choice which sets our children up for success!

Emily Hoppel
Self
The Woodlands, TX

We firmly oppose vouchers

Candace Leighton
CW Cline FRIENDSWOOD ISD
Friendswood, TX

I am a public school teacher who absolutely loves my job. I feel I am charged with the opportunity and responsibility to teach children how to read. The last few years, my job has required me to put in more than 15+ hours a day just to prepare lessons, paperwork, and parent and staff communication. With the economy as it stands, I never thought I would look to find a more financial job to support my health insurance and lifestyle. It makes me very sad that the thought of leaving my teaching profession enters my mind. I see too much money being spent on other aspects of education and not in the hands that are actually delivering the instruction. I am worried about my profession for all of my colleagues as well as our children.

Joe Maxwell
Self
Rio Vista, TX

Honorable Ladies and Gentlemen, I do employ you to consider the downside of this proposal as the landside of those that are already in private, and home schooled will cause an undue burden on the state expense line. There is no accountability for these schools as those in public schools, this is double jeopardy for the public schools. The added cost of controlling this system will escalate to a considerable amount of funds that will have to be accounted for by someone else that will have to be paid. I am not sure why the Governor is so set on this voucher program, and it makes one wonder why it has continued for so long. Your steadfast denial of this voucher program has not seemed to have gotten his attention as you have no doubted been bombarded with countless letters and phone calls asking you to vote NO on this subject. Please continue to vote NO as your public schools depend on your support.

Regards

Joe Maxwell

Ben Brigham
Self, Energy Entrepreneur
Austin, TX

Our legislative leaders are tragically behind much of the rest of the country. We must provide school choice in this session, for the sake of the poor and working class that are trapped in failing public schools. Asking that legislators set aside the relatively petty arguments and focus on the regressive immorality given the lack of access for too many students to a quality education. It is essential for our state and our countries future. Competition will elevate the public schools, there is plentiful empirical evidence from other states supporting that. Texas should be leading, not lagging.

Brittany Price
Christian Preschool Centers
Littlefield, TX

Pre-K needs to be included in ANY choice program!

Angela Mayer
Christian Preschool Centers
Lubbock, TX

Pre-K needs to be included in ANY choice program!

Chelsea Macias
Christian Preschool Centers Inc.
Abernathy, TX

Pre-k needs to be included in any choice program

Callie Johnson

Self

Houston, TX

My children attend Hunters Creek Elementary School in Spring Branch ISD in Houston, Texas. We love our school and are so thankful for the funding that makes a local public school an option for our children. Due to inflation, however, our public schools are largely underfunded, receiving only \$6,000 as the basic allotment per student. Our wonderful school district needs \$7,000 per student or they will be forced to make \$35 million dollars' worth of budget cuts for the upcoming school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to teachers (causing class sizes to balloon) and wonderful programs. My son is currently enrolled in an amazing GT program that is one of many being considered being cut due to lack of funding. PLEASE PLEASE don't do this to our children. PLEASE increase the basic allotment!

I understand the governor has a passion for ESAs - PLEASE vote on ESAs and public-school funding in separate bills! Please don't punish a majority of children in Texas (who attend public schools) over a stalemate regarding ESAs. PLEASE!!

Znobia Wootan

Self

Junction, TX

Every year my health insurance goes up more than my step increase. You need to act now to save the seasoned teachers that are still teaching and to Attract new teachers. HELP your rural schools. Our education system is on the verge of collapsing.

Ann Heuberger

Self / Retired educator

Austin, TX

I am so very opposed to any bill that contains vouchers/education savings account program so I am opposed to HB1. Any program providing money to private schools, including religious schools, will not benefit the state of Texas and the millions of students in our public schools. Texas woefully underfunds our public schools and diverting funds to private schools will only increase the underfunding of our public schools. Any adopted voucher program would most likely be forever while state funding comes and goes. So you can throw out money in this bill for schools and raises hoping to pass HB1 but it could be years before the state provides any increase in state funding for public schools. Our public schools are held to a high standard with increased accountability but the majority of Republicans, including the governor, seem to want to send tax dollars to private schools with no accountability. That makes absolutely no sense. No matter what promises are made about funding, VOUCHERS SHOULD BE A NONSTARTER. NO on HB1! Tell the Governor NO on HB1! Thank you.

Naomi Dalach

Self

Pflugerville, TX

Say no to vouchers. Stand up for the people against Abbott being a dictator trying to force his wants down people's throats. He's afraid to put it on the ballot cause he'd lose. If someone wants private education that's a choice they make and can choose to spend their own money on it.

Richard Wechtenhiser

Self, Manager

San Antonio, TX

No tax dollars should be directed to any program supporting private or religious schools. Public school funding should be increased and public school teachers and staff compensation should be increased, at a minimum, to cover cost of living increases since last adjustment.

Katherine Salgado
Christian Preschool Centers
Lubbock, TX

Pre-K needs to be included in any choice bill

Raymundo Garcia, Tech
TSTA
HOUSTON, TX

I do not see the benefit of our taxes going to a private school funding . Especially if we can't afford to send our kids to a private school. With cost of living still going up , let the rich pay for there own children's tuition. I am not paying taxes to fund private schools. Put the money where it can help better education, not cripple it. Like stop teaching for the Star test and actually teach for Collage SAT's . Texas was once the top on Education , and now Not so much. Thank you for your time . Have a Great Day.

Kim Valdez
Self
Conroe, TX

Please fully fund public education. School vouchers will take far too much money for public education which is vital to all children in the state of Texas. Rural areas will be hurt just as much as urban areas. Vouchers will eventually cause a decline the the quality of our great universities as well. NO VOUCHERS!

Elizabeth Knapp
Self
Spring, TX

I strongly support the passage of school choice legislation in Texas. This is a high priority political issue for my family, my community, and I, and the legislature's response to HB1 is how I will determine my political support moving into the future. It is imperative school choice is passed. Families need to have options on the education of their children. Families should be able to direct their finances where their children are being educated to help give them the most robust schooling.

Emily Prosch
Friendswood ISD Special Education
League City, TX

Teachers and staff, including school psychologists, educational diagnosticians, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, etc., are leaving school systems at an alarming rate due to lack of funding, competitive pay, and increasing student needs. Staff are overworked as positions remain unfilled because poor funding has led to increased workload and burnout. Early childhood programs are suffering despite the need, and desire, for early intervention. Early childhood programs are limited because of funding in lieu of increased need.

Aaron Jimenez
Self
Austin, TX

Please vote No on HB1

Allison Marshall, Dr

Self

Houston, TX

PUBLIC education available to all is one of the things the great state of Texas does well. Prioritize this. Allow it to continue to flourish. It makes us as a society better to have well educated citizens. Currently our district is facing a 35 million dollar deficit(spring branch isd) and facing cuts to amazing and innovative programming. PLEASE fund the public schools fully before considering anything else. I went to college at a competitive private school and my TEXAS PUBLIC education held up against my peers private East coast prep school education. My parents were both teachers and it's always been a source of great pride for me all things afforded to me by going to a public school. I learned about my community and my neighbors. This needs to be the biggest priority. I am a child psychiatrist. Many of my patients are only able to get an education and the appropriate supports in the public sector. It is very expensive to have the right staff and resources for certain learners, yet there are some schools and districts that have figured out how to do it well. The one were my daughters attend school included.

Casey Fisher

self, self-employed

Austin, TX

I oppose the creation of an expansive private school voucher program. This is a BAIT AND SWITCH bill with dangling carrots, designed to trick citizens. Additionally, it includes a harmful provision that has the potential to increase the numbers of children with disabilities institutionalized in state supported living centers

Lynne Crim

Alpine Middle School

Alpine, TX

I am 68 years old and have been teaching for 25 years. I make \$60,000 because I live in a rural school district that cannot afford better wages. When I retire, I will be bringing home less than 30,000 a year. I think my job is just as important as yours but I bet you will not be living on \$30,000 a year. What a shame that you cannot provide me with a decent wage both now and in retirement. Do what is best for our schools and our students. Take care of rural communities. Thank you.

Chris Leito

TCCB

Fort Worth, TX

Support of HB 1

Michael Walton, Mr.
Self, The Justice Foundation
Lubbock, TX

As a former teacher and public-school administrator who has a heart for children and an undying passion to see them learn how to read, I see clearly that the public education system in Texas is failing miserably.

First, Priorities for academic excellence have fallen into dis-array. While academic performance in math and reading continue to diminish, Teacher's Unions are pushing a radicalized political agenda for students that not only hinders academic development by introducing confusion, but also causes tremendous harm and damage. The child is not the priority in this context; they are being used. Instead of serving the child's needs, many schools are serving an agenda.

Secondly, centralized monopolies are by nature, self-serving. The loss of the child as the priority may not have been the intent, but it has happened on a grand scale. Over-bloated, unresponsive educational systems protected by monopoly mindsets aren't very willing to change. What motivation do they have? This is why we need the fresh wind of competition to wake them up. Our children deserve the best opportunity possible.

Third, a lack of accountability to families has thrust the issue of School Choice front and center in Texas. "Accountability" as it currently stands in Texas is fraudulent. There may be a lot of eyes on our schools, and a lot of 'fingers' on the purse strings, but there aren't a lot of real solutions to the problems are there? Asking for more money to "fix the problem" is a lazy excuse. Where are the solutions that need to be funded? The public schools have not provided them; but empirical data points to a solution: Competition. Competition is a real solution with a proven track record. Do any of our educational enrichment committee people read this far? If so, feel free to look over this empirical data assembled by edchoice.org: <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/fast-facts/>

Fourth, The public education system is looking more and more like an occultic establishment of religion. Public Schools are taking captive audiences of students and exposing them to this is in the proliferation of the "Amplify" curriculum all over Texas. I've seen samples of this curriculum. It encourages the embracing of major life-altering issues, and keeping them as secrets from parents.

Finally, in Section 1 of our state constitution, it says "...the maintenance of our free institutions and perpetuity of the Union depend upon the preservation of the right of local self-government." In Section 2 it states: "Texas stands pledged to the preservation of a republican form of government, and, subject to this limitation only, they have at all times the inalienable right to alter, reform or abolish their government in such manner as they may think expedient."

School Choice is our right as citizens to abolish the centralized governance of public education and to alter it by introducing competition, which has a proven track record.

Sincerely,
Michael Walton

Karen Harpold
self/business owner
Houston, TX

My husband and I are parents of three daughters - they all attended private school through 8th grade, and then two attended public high school and one attended private high school. **WE ARE UNEQUIVOCALLY AGAINST VOUCHERS.** They take funding away from public schools, which are open to all Texas children; private schools are completely unregulated; it is actually the private school that has the choice, not the parent; they are budget busters, which is abundantly clear from the data in other states; and vouchers do not improve educational outcomes. This is transparent Christian nationalism at its ugliest, and our governor is bullying Texas lawmakers and citizens as their proxy. I'm proud of the bipartisan group who has stood up to the bullying - they know that vouchers are a slippery slope, and once they get a foothold it's downhill from there.

Peter Danna

Self

Plano, TX

I fully support this Bill

Katherine mochel

PTA. RootEd. Self. Stay at home mom and volunteer.

San Antonio, TX

We DO NOT need more money invested in charter schools. Invest in Texas Public Schools. Increase the Basic Allotment per STUDENT. Give TEACHERS a raise. My PUBLIC schools do amazing things every day. All while meeting the needs of ALL children. Take care of Texas. Say no to vouchers. Sincerely, Mom of 3 well adjusted, athletic, and smart public school boys.

STEPHANIE ODell, McKinney School Board Trustee

self

McKinney, TX

All of you were elected to represent your constituents. You have heard from hundreds of people who do not want vouchers or ESAs. Please represent your constituents by voting NO for vouchers or ESAs. There are 5.5 million students who need your support. Increase the basic allotment and teacher pay.

Lane English

Self

Hutto, TX

I oppose any bill that takes taxpayer dollars and funnels them to private schools. Vouchers by any name are by design, intended to segregate those with means from those without. Taxpayer money is to be used to fund the public education system and until it is properly funded so teachers are set up to be successful, our state government is failing our children. If you truly care about the children of Texas, you will reduce the amount of oversight in public schools, raise the per student level of funding from the bottom of the rankings to the top, and you will pass laws that let teachers teach instead of forcing them to teach to a standardized test. In closing, just so it's transparently clear, I am against any form of welfare programs for private, for-profit schools, as well as any private religious schools in the state of Texas. Thank you your time in reading my comments.

Haley Gilliam

Self, mother of public school students

Houston, TX

Stop knee-capping public education by depriving us of our own tax dollar funding and hoarding it at the state level, not being used!

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Private schools are not required to educate all students and provide services for special-needs children, they don't have the same oversight as public schools. Vouchers subsidize wealthy children attending private school, poor children will not be magically able to afford private school with a voucher, and the private schools may choose not to accept them even if they could afford it. What are children in rural communities with no private schools supposed to do? Pay our public school teachers and FUND our public schools! Our state needs a well-educated population to compete for strong jobs.

Samantha Borek

Self — copy editor of Truthout

Cedar park, TX

School vouchers drain money from neighborhood public schools that educate most Texas students. Politicians should be fully funding our local neighborhood schools instead of diverting that money away from our communities. Texans do not want any voucher schemes disguised as attempts to take money away from our public education system; we want fully funded schools without negotiations. Neighborhood public schools accept all students, regardless of who they are or their background. But voucher schemes in all forms would divert public tax dollars to private and religious schools that can deny admission or educational services to any student, including students with disabilities, students from different religious faiths, or students from other diverse backgrounds, including students or parents who are LGBTQIA+. Legislators must not allow private and religious schools to discriminate while taking our tax dollars. Prepares every child for the future. Most Texans believe that children should have the freedom to pursue their dreams, so we must equip every public school with the resources to deliver quality education that prepares every child for the future, no matter their skin color, how much money their parents make or zip code. Any legislation that takes money away from our students in public schools will only create harm for us and future generations.

Sabrina Sha

Asian Texans for Justice

Austin, TX

Asian Texans for Justice is a statewide nonprofit that serves more than 1.9 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, or AAPIs, in Texas. Establishing an education savings account program can pose numerous risks for our AAPI students, making it more difficult to serve immigrant, low-income, and other underserved AAPI students.

AAPIs in Texas are more likely to be immigrants than the general Texas population with 44% of AAPIs identifying as an immigrant and 13% of AAPIs identifying as first generation Americans. AAPIs represent over 50 different ethnicities and speak over 100 languages. The most diverse racial group in Texas, AAPI students have a high need for English Language Learner support and private schools are not required to provide these programs to our community, putting our students at a disadvantage of having systems that meet their needs.

As proposed, private schools are not required to follow federal and state regulations around teacher certification, curriculum standards, serving special education populations, or administering standardized tests. In the U.S., only 2% of teachers identify as Asian American and less than 0.5% of teachers are Pacific Islanders. Studies have shown that having educators with similar lived experiences as their students can improve student academic outcomes. ESAs will make it more difficult to implement programs that recruit and attract qualified AAPI educators to the profession.

AAPI students tend to have wide achievement gaps when disaggregated by ethnic background. While East Asian students have reported high levels of educational attainment, Southeast Asian students have struggled. In Texas, advocates have been asking for more data transparency to help close this achievement gap. As private schools are not required to publicly report data on student performance, calls for disaggregated data will be more difficult to achieve – especially as it pertains to supporting AAPI students and families who are immigrants, English language learners, or have refugee status.

We ask that this committee consider all students and families as they consider how to best invest in Texas' education system and not leave AAPI students behind.

Cristy Densman

Self, stay-at-home mom

Celina, TX

Please vote no. Vouchers and inadequate funding will impact our local campus, district, and community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase, or programs be cut? These are very real possibilities when funding is diverted from public schools.

Taylor Lonsdale
Self - Homeschool Mom
Austin, TX

Allowing parents to choose the best school and programs for their children will dramatically improve educational outcomes in Texas. HB 1 is also a win for Texas public schools, increasing teacher compensation levels to keep pace with the rise in cost of living and allowing schools to retain great talent. Please guarantee the future human and economic flourishing of our state by passing HB 1.

William McLellan
Self/Attorney
Houston, TX

While this bill is a good start it does not go far enough to fully fund our public schools. We need a basic allotment of at least \$1000 more per student than it is now just to keep pace with inflation. We can't ask our public schools to keep doing more with less.

Colleen Rider
Self/Parent&Guardian of son with profound autism
Sherman, TX

SSLC's should be offered as an option for students with profound special needs. This option would not apply to every student but would greatly help parents with decision making.
Thank you so much, Colleen Rider Sherman, Texas 75092

Hilda Arredondo, Ms.
Self, unemployed
San Antonio, TX

I ask for your SUPPORT on HB 1.

Thank you.

Darion Garza
Self
Lubbock, TX

PreK needs to be included in ANY choice program!

Kali Culver
Self - Accountant
Midland, TX

Vouchers are a cop out. This will not create competition. There would need to be accountability with vouchers since the government is ultimately in charge of that money. Unfortunately that means the government being involved in private schooling and homeschooling. It kind of defeats the whole purpose. Then there are the private schools, like the ones in my town, that will not even accept the money, and good for them not wanting governments hand in their schools. This just doesn't fix the problem, please back up further and look at the things within the public schools that could actually be fixed. And while you're at it, remember that the love of money is the at the root of a heck of a lot of it.

Donna Kelly, Ssgt, U.S. Army

Self/Disabled, Retired

BELTON, TX

I believe the state of Texas will prosper by affirming parent's choice in the selection of schools for their children.

We can look at the data provided from Florida and the other 30 states, which implemented Education Savings Accounts in the past. These states report Improvements across all heading including: achievement scores, and standing, as a direct result of the "voucher" program.

Kalynn Quinn

Self

Austin, TX

Vouchers hurt public schools and students. Vouchers leave Texas students behind. Vouchers hurt public schools by diverting funds to private schools with little to no accountability. Voucher expansion results in more money diverted away from public schools. They do not help students in most need. They do not improve student achievement. They do not guarantee parental rights.

Krista Garcia

Self/Retired educator

San Antonio, TX

Please vote no on any support for sending public school funds for voucher programs. Voucher programs divert public funds away from already underfunded public schools. This can exacerbate resource shortages, leading to fewer opportunities and reduced quality of education in these institutions. Voucher programs lack the same level of accountability and transparency as public schools. Private and charter schools that accept vouchers may not be subject to the same standards or regulations as public schools, leading to potential disparities in quality and oversight. Private schools, enabled by voucher programs, can choose their students. This can result in segregation based on socioeconomic status, academic abilities, or even religious affiliations, creating disparities, and reducing diversity within the education system. Voucher programs may not require private schools to adhere to the same curriculum standards as public schools. This lack of uniformity could lead to inconsistencies in the quality and type of education provided. There's a lack of comprehensive and conclusive evidence showing that voucher programs significantly improve educational outcomes. The effectiveness of such programs is often debated and inconsistent. Private schools, not bound by the same labor laws or teacher certification requirements as public schools, might not offer the same job security, benefits, or professional standards for educators.

Neal Kohl

Self, Business Strategy

Austin, TX

Bill HB1 is a sham and a shame on our elected body. It is well established that vouchers for private schools (often held to lower performance standards) take away funds from public schools. Please invest in our public schools ensuring every student has a chance for a high quality education!

Sara Orchowski

Self; SAHM

Katy, TX

I am a mother of three children, all of whom are benefitting from a public education in Katy. I also am a product of parochial education. I VEHEMENTLY oppose this bill.

The United States was the first country to recognize the importance of public education for *everyone*, regardless of race or class, as being integral to the building of a strong nation. We MUST have a well educated citizenry. It is imperative that every child have access to a good education. But private, parochial and home based education is not for everyone. My youngest has autism. Private and parochial schools will NOT EDUCATE MY CHILD. Public schools, quite literally, take on the challenges of educating EVERY CHILD. Do I begrudge those who have the means and opportunity to send their children to private, parochial or provide home based education? Absolutely not. They should have the right to choose. But allowing parents those choices absolutely should not compete or come at the expense of public education.

Education is not a privilege. It is a human right. Are our public schools systems sorely needing better organization and guidance? Yes. But throwing the baby out with the bath water is not the solution.

Stace Jones, CEO

TLCCA and Christian Preschool Centers Inc.

Lubbock, TX

Any "choice" Bill needs to include Pre-K!

Parents that "qualify" should have the option to pick their Child Care provider as their educational option. By TEA's own data Child Care has proven to get students Kindergarten ready just as good, actually better, than public schools have.

For MANY reasons, that I would be glad to walk through with any legislator, Pre-K should be include in ANY choice options.

Darcy Walker, Ms

Self, nurse

San Antonio, TX

No to taking more money from public schools! Rural school districts don't usually have private schools anywhere near or have much money. Public schools are funded less now, and have to accept any child. Vouchers shift money from public to private schools. Vouchers don't always pay enough for the school's tuition and the additional fees. Private schools refuse students that they don't want. If we defund public schools too much, public education will close down, and private schools don't have to accept all the left-out students. Many private schools treat creationism like an alternative to science, and water down students understanding of science when we need more scientists.

Dierdre Pattillo
Self - Project Manager
San Antonio, TX

Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to HB 1. As a Texas citizen, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I see this bill as a grave disservice to all residents of our state - and our most vulnerable populations in particular. This bill reflects poor economic policy and misuse of tax dollars as well as a distinct lack of care and respect for Texas students. All Texans benefit from strong public education policies and support.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am particularly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children, their families and our communities.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>] No need for wasteful duplication. It is inappropriate for school district personnel/ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.02

Again, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives and supports ALL Texas students.

With great concern,
Dierdre Pattillo
111 Rhinestone Dr.
San Antonio, TX 78233

Kim Gokhale
Self, parent
Round Rock, TX

Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

I'm concerned that vouchers will further exacerbate inadequate funding to adversely impact our campus, district, and community. We don't want schools to run on a 4-day schedule or close. We don't want student-teacher ratios to increase, and we don't need programs for gifted or special needs kids or extracurricular science, technology, math, arts, sports, library and language programs to be cut, because public school funds were diverted.

Michelle Lunday
Self and parent
Trophy Club, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. As a parent of a child with a IDD, I have made the decision to enroll him in a private school at my cost. My decision to select private school should not be supplemented by other Texas residents. I also want to ensure that strong public schools are in place should we decide to return to public school.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Michelle Lunday
2810 Castlereach Street
Trophy Club, TX 76262

Susan Markus
Self
Austin, TX

No to vouchers in any form. As a taxpayer, I do not want my money to fund private schools that pick and choose who they accept. Support our public schools, teachers and students!

Emilia Bourland

Self, occupational therapist

Dallas, TX

Please vote NO on HB 1. The best way to ensure quality education for all Texas students is to fully fund our public schools. This bill increases the discrepancy between low, middle, and high income families in Texas, and undermines the success of public education in the following ways:

- 1) It provides more public money to private schools per student than it does for public schools.
- 2) Private schools can cost significantly more than \$10,500 per year. This bill gives a large sum of money to help families who can already afford private school tuition, but it does not necessarily enable middle or low income families to actually afford private schools. It's basically a subsidy for educating wealthy families.
- 3) Already underfunded public schools will lose students, but their expenses will stay largely the same. School vouchers will force districts to consolidate schools and close campuses. This will limit choice and increase the burden placed on families to get their children to school.

Healthy public education is vital to a strong workforce, a strong economy, and a strong democracy. Please vote no on this bill. Instead, fully fund our public education system with the 33 billion dollars of surplus public money.

Janice Kusin

Personal

Houston, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Johanna Hedges

self

Austin, TX

Vote NO on school vouchers! Vote NO on education savings accounts! A well-funded, public education system ensures that Texas has the skilled people it needs to maintain and expand its top-tiered work force. Public money should work to improve public schools. When you starve Texas's public education funding, you are wasting the time and talent of parents like me. I don't want to have to work around an under-funded education system. I want the Texas school system to lead the nation!

Nicole Teuelock

Public school graduate/parent of a child in public school

Austin, TX

Vote NO to HB 1. We have to keep public dollars in public schools. The future of Texas depends on you. Do the right thing and vote NO to HB 1.

Lorea Seidel
self
MURPHY, TX

I do not agree with implementing a voucher system in Texas. This results in the wealthy being enriched and public schools drained of needed funds. The lottery system doesn't work either. Instead, budget for public schools to be paid at the 10k or more per student (and stop basing that solely on attendance) and let's build our public system appropriately. Private schools do not have to adhere to the same guidelines as publics. It's not a level playing field. Let's stop the excessive testing and support our teacher training programs and pay teachers more appropriately so that we attract and can afford to retain great faculty and staff. Our system needs support, not dismantling. Stop the voucher movement and let's do what's right for Texas and that's support public schools!

Loretta Padgett
self/ retired
Canyon Lake, TX

Being a graduate of public schools myself. More resources should be given to Texas public schools. I am opposed to tax dollars going to private institutions. Employers benefit from good STEM education. Why are public schools getting only \$6000 and private schools being promised \$10,000? Why do a few big oil executives have more power than millions of Texans? Money. We see Texas leadership taking huge donations to influence Their activities.

Dick Humes
self
Kingwood, TX

I have been educated my whole life in Texas and want my child to be educated here as well. Please keep Texas a free state and follow others that have passed a school choice amendment. I am a regular voter. I just voted and will continue to vote. Help me help my child receive the education of ou choice.

Thanks
Dick Humes

Nick Musquiz
SELF
Houston, TX

Please pass and support ESA's. Please also consider expanding the homeschool allotment to be equal with other students in the program. Thanks

Mara LaViola

Texans for Special Education Reform

Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

Texans for Special Education Reform (TXSER) is part of a diverse coalition of disability rights advocates, organizations, and individuals committed to advancing the rights and well-being of disabled students in Texas who have come together to strongly voice our opposition to the proposed establishment of a school voucher program or an Education Savings program.

TXSER is deeply concerned about the negative consequences of such a program, which undoubtedly jeopardizes federal and state protections for disabled students and their families within private school. There is also already a mechanism within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to provide for placement in a private school, if one is needed, that would still afford the students and families placed in private schools through their school district without the loss of vital protections afforded them under various federal and state laws.

Key concerns are as follows:

1. **Loss of Protections:** Private Schools are not required to provide disabled students and their families with the guarantees and protections these students are entitled to under federal and state law. The loss of these safeguards and support systems will endanger these students educational and civil rights.
2. **Discrimination:** Private schools are allowed to deny admittance to students for any reason and the vast majority do not accept disabled students with moderate and significant educational challenges.
3. **Lack of Accountability:** Private schools receiving public money lack any rigorous accountability mechanisms as do public schools. Lack of oversight results in adverse educational outcomes.
4. **Increased Segregation:** A voucher program will lead to increased segregation of students with disabilities as they are not required to educate students in their least restrictive environment; causing further isolation and stigmatization.
5. **Insufficient Funds:** This will in essence serve to defund public schools, leaving the remaining students in public schools with far less resources due to shrinking funds. Texas already underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually, this will only exacerbate the situation.

Finally, we must express our deep concern regarding SSLC's inclusion as an appropriate educational placement for disabled students. Our SSLC's have an abhorrent history of abuse and even death for the residents placed there. No evidence has been provided that these settings produce any positive educational outcomes. Children should be served in their homes and if they cannot, IDEA has the mechanism to place them in far more appropriate settings.

Vouchers and SSLC's have no place in any authentic discussion of the educational needs of disabled students.

Sincerely,

Texans for Special Education Reform

Mara LaViola and Christine Broughal

Co-Chairs

Susan Burek, Ms.

Self

Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment:

I strongly oppose House Bill 1. I'm the parent of a child with disabilities and a member of Texas Parent to Parent, a non-profit that serves more than 14,000 families with children with disabilities.

The proposed creation of education savings accounts (ESAs) would divert crucial resources from public schools and negatively affect the education services provided for students with disabilities. HB 1 suggests that private schools can "fix the problem" of underfunded schools and special education (SE) services, but private schools lack accountability and don't provide the specialized programs that students with disabilities need. They can also deny admission or fail to provide adequate services to SE students, which would hinder the academic growth for already marginalized students with disabilities.

I'm also concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLC) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1 and the negative impact it could have on students with IDD and their families by increasing the number of institutionalized children with disabilities.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It's inappropriate for school district or ARD committee staff to provide information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options with parents. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

If SSLC enrollment increases by as few as 3 students with disabilities as a result of HB 1, these 3 new admissions would cost the state more than \$1 million per year and create a significant financial burden for the state. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, much more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs approximately \$6,600 per month per person. By highlighting SSLCs as an option, there's a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and most restrictive setting for their child.

Here's a link to the current brochure about residential options, which makes the creation of another brochure a duplication:
<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>

Please oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education from the public school system. Your rejection of HB 1 is vital to ensure that our public school system survives.

Thank you,

Susan Burek

8420 Bangor Bnd, Austin, TX 78758

sueburek@yahoo.com

512-470-7162

Carol Bertsch

self - lawyer

San Antonio, TX

I strongly oppose HB 1

Theresa Jud
Dentin State Supported Living Center
Dallas, TX

State supported living centers are so important. My daughter has resided at the DentonSSLC for over 10 years and has been taken such good care of. It is important that parents are made aware of this option and know they can choose it. My daughter was previously in 3 different community homes and was severely abused at all of them.

Miguel Orta
SELF - Canyon Creek Elementary PTA (Travis County)
Austin, TX

I strongly believe in the public school system and school vouchers undermine not only that system but the teachers, staff and students that make up the communities that our public schools support. We ask our schools and teachers to help shape our children into the young adults that will lead our state and country in the future. I oppose any measure that reduces funding or focus on empowering our public schools and their staffs.

Dustin Johnson
Self - AISD PTA
Austin, TX

This bill is bad for public schools. No voucher program should exist without corrections and improvements to the accuracy of School funding Recapture (Robinhood). Fix the existing funding scheme FIRST!.

Sarah Davee

self and Argyle ISD, business owner and mom

Argyle, TX

November 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

Every person that I highly respect in education, from my mother- a veteran teacher and multiple time teacher of the year in Mckinney ISD, my father- a former high school administrator, my sister- a GT teacher in Denton County, my sister-in-law -an elementary principal in Houston, and obviously Argyle teachers and administrators ALL agree with the statements above also.

Sincerely,
Sarah Davee
Argyle, TX

Jessica Farmer
Self
Clyde, TX

Teachers need a raise, cost of living especially

rod posey, Sales Manager

Freeport

Freeport, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard by a Representative and staff that I am supportive of HB1. It is time for legislation to catch up to the desire and the financial supply. of the voters in Texas. Your help in supporting this House Bill will ensure that all students in Texas have choice in their education. If the students are not performing well in a particular school district they may select a better outcome in a different school.

Diane Birdwell

Self/teacher

Dallas, TX

I urge all representatives in the legislature to vote AGAINST yet another attempt to divert public tax dollars for private school schemes. Private schools are not transparent in how they will spend this money, and there is no accountability on what kind of education the child would get.

I attended both public and parochial schools for grades 1-12, and I still do not agree with robbing public schools of needed funding to prop up questionable schools with no oversight by the public for how the money will be spent.

This is essentially “defunding Texas public schools.”

If it isn't okay for law enforcement, why is it okay for public schools? The amount parents would get is an insult to those working in public education. Why don't public schools get that much per student? We have to take any and every student who walks in the door, so why won't private schools? Do we really want public money going to religious schools- entities which may significantly differ from your faith?

Vouchers will kill small community schools in rural Texas, and all it takes is one fly-by-night entity to come in, set up a basic school, take all that money and ...? After all, again I say, there is NO accountability for how that money is spent.

Additionally, the amount that would be given would only help the ones who can already afford private schools. Poor families could never make up the difference and it becomes “welfare for the rich,” not help, for the poor.

Please do not give in to the anti-public school minority in this state. Texas schools should be funded better, more, not less. Public tax dollars belong to all of us, not just some parents. WE determine where that money goes.

Thank you.

CPT Diane Birdwell, MI, USAR

Teacher, Dallas ISD

Catherine Husted

Self / mother & teacher

Irving, TX

Wealthy families in Texas can choose the best school option for their children. School Choice would open up this privilege to *all* families. Texas legislators have the opportunity to disconnect this privilege from wealth- please do so!

David Perkins, Dr.

Self; Professor of Accounting; Abilene Christian University

Abilene, TX

Parents of intellectually disabled individuals are often in the dark about available resources. When our family decided we needed to find residential placement for our daughter, we were NOT informed about the campus of the state supported living center that is only 10 minutes from our home. We felt hopeless because none of the group homes were appropriate for her needs. Thankfully, a friend at church told us about the SSLC campus. We took a tour, and were so thankful to discover a campus-based community that was dedicated to individuals like our daughter. Most special education participants do not need residential care, but when residential care is appropriate, families should be informed of the campus-based services available at the Texas state-supported living centers (SSLC). This bill should include wording to ensure families are made aware of this vitally important option. Thank you.

Gary Stiles, Chief of Police

GISD Police

Gatesville, TX

I retired from the Department of Public Safety after 22 years. In retirement, I started working as a school resource officer. Working full time in a school district for the last five years has been an eye opening experience. I believe that the reason the Education Savings Accounts (school voucher program) has such an overwhelming negative view is that it appears to use public money to benefit private schools. We are allotted about \$6,000 per year per student based on attendance. The vouchers look to be about \$10,000 per student and are not based on attendance. Texas is one of three states left in the country that fund the public schools based off of attendance, and it looks like this will not apply to the private schools. Furthermore, if a child at a private school is worth investing \$10,000 in their education, why is the child in the public school not worthy of the \$10,000 investment? There are also rules that apply to public schools that do not apply to the private schools like: 1) they do not have to accept PASS, behavior, or disabled children, and 2) if a private school kicks a child out, the funding for the child remains with the private school for that year and the public school will have to educate that child with no funding for him or her. Thank you for allowing me to comment.

Brooks Jones

Christian Preschool Centers, Inc.

Lubbock, TX

PreK needs to be in any Choice Program.

Bonnie Parkman

Self, Marketing Manager

Austin, TX

The school voucher program the governor is trying to force through only benefits the wealthy who's children are already in private school, essentially giving them a discount. Private schools are typically \$20K or more so the \$8-\$10K stipend will not open up private school for those who can't currently afford it. The governor should be ashamed holding public school funding to benefit his rich donors. **REJECT THE VOUCHER PROGRAM AND FUND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS!**

Vivian Sarne

self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas. Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Marcie Salamone, Mrs.

Self/full time volunteer

Richardson, TX

As a taxpayer and Richardson ISD community member, I strongly oppose vouchers. Public schools educate the majority of students and they are accountable to the public. There is no accountability with private schools and taxpayer dollars should not be used to fund them.

Karen Roof

self/Educator

Austin, TX

Please vote NO on HB1-- keep public money out of private schools!

Michael Lowary

Self

Dallas, TX

This following is not only about immigration but school financing. So currently we don't have either the people nor the money for Texans with disabilities. There is a over 100 Year waiting list for home Medicaid services. Most states have closer to zero year waiting list. So if we do not have the people to take care of our most vulnerable Texans with disabilities what are we going to do as baby boomers hit the age of needing lots of services.... They do not exist.

Like many other nations already have, eg Germany, we should realize our shortfalls in labor due to demographics, and invite and train as many people as needed. We could also beef up our public schools especially our special ed which is experiencing a two billion dollar shortfall and also the same labor shortfall. Private schools do not have to & often do not include children with disabilities. Nor are they covered under the federal protections of the fed IDEA. They will tell you they cost too much and do not work in their economic model. According to the Huntsville prison study, 47% of inmates had dyslexia and 80% were illiterate. We defund our schools and thus have to costly fund our prisons. Adequate public schools funding is totally in our people's interest including economic well-being. Politics must be put aside.

Further more, we know, his is a matter of needing people, and not of money, as the United States has 30% of the wealth of the world with Texas being the third wealthiest state in the country but unfortunately is controlled by the 1% that has more wealth than the entire middle class, and by default, the lower class together. Google that.

Jesus, not only threw out the money changers (rich) from the temple, he fed, clothed, and healed and asked to do accordingly. This administration is doing the opposite. Any type of dog whistle to maintain their power and further hand back the wealth to the most campaign contributing affluent.

Brinnen Kent, Mr.
Christian Preschool Centers, Inc.
Lubbock, TX

Pre-K students should be included into this.

Angelica Herrera, Dr
Parent of two children in Texas public schools
Austin, TX

As a professional who has worked in Texas on education issues for 20 years and as a mother of two children in public schools in Texas, I oppose HB 1. The proposed voucher plan outlined in HB 1 poses a serious threat to our public schools. Vouchers divert essential funds from public education, undermining the ability of our schools to serve every child. This could lead to reduced resources, diminished educational quality, and wider gaps in student achievement. Private schools are not accountable to the public so they should not receive public dollars.

Jennifer Savery, Mrs
Frostwood Elementary
Houston, TX

We need funding for our schools and to think otherwise is to ignore the future of our state.

Leslie Wise
Self/Keller Middle School PTA
Keller, TX

PLEASE SAY NO TO VOUCHERS!! They hurt children! We must fund our Texas children and teachers in PUBLIC SCHOOLS; as such, there is no room for ESAs or vouchers. Many public schools in Texas are strong and others have great potential but not with vouchers!! Truly, nothing s more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, purposely funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Please support this goal!!!

Vanessa Correa, Principal
Christian Preschool Centers
Amarillo, TX

Please include private preschools for PreK programs

Karen Vonnegut
Self , physical therapist
Lucas, TX

Please stop pushing for vouchers. The people of Texas want you to instead fund the public schools and the hard working teachers in our state. Let's fund the public schools at the highest level in the country and give people a reason to move to our state. Our students will be at the top academically! Stop all voucher nonsense and fund the public schools,

Jon House
Self
Lubbock, TX

Pre K needs to be included in this

Timothy Fox, Mr
Self
Conroe, TX

It appears that you people, much like Slaton, struggle with the concept of the word "no". Vouchers are a scam and a means to pull school dollars to wealthy donors. Vote no on this garbage bill.

James Davis, Colonel
Cornerstone Christian Schools
San Antonio, TX
Education Committee --

Pls let us get this done NOW!! It is a must do!!!

Universal Education Savings Accounts. Yes, all of Texas' 6.2 million children are eligible for up to \$10,400 for each student – the biggest dollar amount in the nation
Strong protections for the autonomy of private schools.
Money for homeschoolers.
Pay raises for our teachers & improvements for their working conditions.
Immediate aid to people who need it most—especially families with children in special education or families below or near the federal poverty line.
This new bill would be the largest Education Savings Account program in the country. Texas would go from trailing behind the rest of the country to suddenly leading the charge. Everything is bigger in Texas – even school choice!

Diane Duesterhoeft, Ms.
Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry
San Antonio, TX

I am opposed to the education savings account program that allows students to attend private schools paid for by taxpayers. We need to bolster our public schools, rather than subsidizing private schools.

Sandra McKeag
self
Harlingen, TX

I do find taxation to be theft, but if the State is going to be taking money from residents I have no problem with it going to homeschool families. The money NEEDS to follow the children. If public schools can't retain students because they are inefficient then the money go where the children are educated. Competition is what's best for getting people to do their best and for far too long public schools get money by doing the minimum.

John Reed
public school teacher
El Paso, TX

Private schools just pick and choose students - how is that fair? They only want the good kids. How are you going to make sure that the public schools are only left with the trouble students??? You still have not addressed discipline in schools, increased workload for teachers and teacher pay?? How are you going to make sure that the private schools are accountable? With so many of them not requiring certified teachers, what do you threaten them with? Mr. Buckley does not understand what goes on in schools. Where have vouchers worked before? If the states has a bad budget year, will you stop the program or will public schools only suffer? Also if public schools lose money, what do they have to cut back on?

Deborah Cates

self - Registered Nurse and Conservator of an adult child with intellectual disability

Krum, TX

I agree and support Article 1 of HB1. I agree and support Article 2 of HB 1. I agree and support Article 3 of HB1. I agree and support Article 4 of HB1. I agree and support Article 5 of HB. It is absolutely necessary for materials to be developed and provided to certain students regarding educational residential placements to include the option of our publicly funded State Supported Living Centers when all efforts for own family and group home efforts have failed. I do not agree nor support Article 6 related to ESA program unless there is a clause added that states that charter schools and private schools which accept funding from ESA's must adopt a "zero reject" policy with regards to providing education to individuals with disabilities. Charter Schools and private schools receiving public funds must be mandated to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. They may not discriminate in any manner towards any child with disabilities if receiving any type of public funds. I am neutral on Articles 7 and 8. I support Article 9.

Elizabeth Ferry

Site Administrator/Self

Austin, TX

I am registering my strong opposition to House Bill 1. My child Henry is in 3rd grade in Austin ISD. Henry was born with a rare syndrome that impacts his hearing, vision, mobility, development, and health. Despite this, Henry is performing on or above grade level, loves his school community, and does everything he can to participate in all school events. My family has similarly done everything they can for years in Texas to contribute to our local community. We've paid housing cost increases for years to be able to stay in our community, and we spend our dollars locally, which should afford us access to quality education. Private schools do not have to offer special education services and are able to operate outside of IDEA. Funding an education system that is not held to IDEA weakens the special education system as a whole. This bill would take away our tax dollars and funnel them to private schools which could turn our son away for any reason they want - and they do not have to provide transportation or meals. Our family is happy with the special education services our son receives at a public school. We support funding the schools which we already pay to do, but we do not support funneling our money into ESAs which exclude vast populations of the most vulnerable learners within Texas. This is not a hypothetical, faceless student who may be excluded. This is kids like my son - kind, funny, smart kids who have to fight against their own bodies for every victory they gain. He deserves to benefit from the taxes we pay, and so do his teachers at public school.

JONATHAN Taylor

Self

North richland hills, TX

Why not give parents the choice with their own money?

Gennie Westbrook

self

Cooper, TX

No, no, no to vouchers under any pseudonym, disguise, or creative presentation. Legislators have a constitutional duty to "make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of the public free schools." If there is a constitutional provision supporting vouchers, I'd like to see it identified.

If my wealthy neighbor wants to eat steak every day, I have no objection to that. But I should not be required to contribute to his expense for expensive meals or private schools or any other personal choice while I'm trying to figure out how to stretch my TRS pension to pay my own bills.

Do your constitutional duty to provide for the public schools, which have received NO NEW FUNDING despite a record budget surplus. Legislators must address the constitutional mandate to support the public schools on its own - not held hostage to a dictatorial governor's demands. Texas parents already have school choice, with many options available to them. Any of the voucher bills proposed in recent sessions would remove, not increase school choice, because they would further starve the public schools without benefiting the vast majority of low-income families.

In addition to diverting public funds for private use, the SSLCs provision of HB1 does not even meet federal requirements and would have negative impact on students with IDD.

Legislation properly supporting public school funding according to the Texas Constitution must stand on its own.

Legislation supporting vouchers, having been repeatedly rejected by responsible legislators, must stand or fall on its own.

Natalya Bejar

Self

Houston, TX

We need to fully fund public schools before we can even think about giving money to private schools. No to vouchers, no to ESAs, yes to fully funding public education. Yes to fully funding special education. Yes to teacher pay raises, yes to para pay raises.

Bailey Ricord

Self

Devine, TX

I am a single mother raising my son alone. HB1 by Buckley would give my son the opportunity to enhance his education in a Christian based school where he can be led by Christian leaders of today. If I could choose where my son could be taught, I choose a private school where it's not only about education and creating future leaders of tomorrow, but also about building morals, character and values by using Faith based practices in a school environment based on Christian beliefs. Since God has been taken out of the public schools in our nation, & our state; our children have lost their morals, character and most of all... VALUES, which I find very important in everyday life. Especially, if my son is at school 5 days a week while I'm working a 40-hour work week myself. I do my best to teach my son morals, character and values at home... but it's not enough. Children need consistency and routine. If my son is in a public school where no bible, or word of God is to be spoken about... in fact, its condemned. Then my teaching as a parent isn't sufficient enough. HB 1 by Buckley, would a great start to our future generations.

Erin Reed, Mrs.

self

ARGYLE, TX

November 9, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are SEVERELY under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

Please protect and support our children!

#TogetherWeSoar,
Erin Reed

Subhiksha Shenoy
Self, pta member
Houston, TX

Please stand up for teachers, students and public schools.

Monica Sundbeck
Kids 'R' Kids Learning Academy of Fairfield
Cypress, TX

We want the 4yr olds that qualify for “public” school to have the option to use those same funds to attend our schools/Child Cares

Amy Ames

Self and Moore Middle School PTA and Tyler Legacy High School PTA

Tyler, TX

Vote no to vouchers!

I am against providing funding for the voucher program. The public school system and teachers require adequate funding for education, and I feel certain that the voucher provide will take funding from the public school system despite the propaganda for this bill.

I am very frustrated that Gov. Abbott called a 4th special session to bully and coax the Texas legislature to vote in favor of this bill and against the will of the majority of the constituents.

Luis Ruben Alarcon

Self

El Paso, TX

Public schools need to be fully funded. This bill has failed 4 times with bipartisan support for its defeat. Vouchers do not work and there is plenty of evidence of that across the country. Fund public school adequately first.

Allison Hanschen

Self, medical speech language pathologist

Austin, TX

Please do the most good for the general populace of Austin by supporting public education. Private schools get private funding. Most of us are in public schools. These are the people who will be our doctors and legislators in 30 years. Please put the lion's share of resources into public schooling and not vouchers.

Kristi House

Self

Lubbock, TX

Pre K and children under 4 need to be included in this bill.

Christina Say

self

Richmond, TX

Please support school choice. Parents have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options. Thank you!!

Kevin Doffing

Self

Houston, TX

Authorizing vouchers is a poor solution that only removes resources from districts. It is our public servants' job to serve our entire population and not abdicate responsibility for solutions without oversight. Allowing vouchers is going to create a separate, but not equal education system in Texas that will in the long run disadvantage our workforce and weaken Texas as a place to do business.

Lyndal T. Qaddy Waddy

PART and Self

Mineral Wells, TX

The Waddy family story is unique. Due to a genetic issue our boys have a 75% chance to suffer from IDD challenges. Our son, James Waddy, was born in 1964 -- a time when there was not much help available for him or his family. In 1975 our nephew, Aaron, was born with IDD challenges. In 1988 our grandson, Michael, was born with the same IDD challenges. We reluctantly placed our son in Lufkin State Supported Living Center in 1970. It was the first opening in the state. We thought we would have him transferred to Denton which was closer to home. Lufkin was such a fine place for him ... the staff was reliable and constant. It was a four-hour drive to visit him or bring him home, but his wonderful situation at Lufkin was absolutely worth a little inconvenience. Our James lived there for 47 years until he died from cancer in 2018. When his cancer was diagnosed, the Lufkin team joined forces and took such wonderful care of him and his family. They contacted us weekly, sometimes daily, to keep us informed of his care. James had so many opportunities. He had his own special family at Lufkin; he worked as a janitor and loved his job; he participated in Special Olympics. Why did we consider a State Supported Living Center? As many IDD persons do, he had started eloping ... even during the night. Our nephew Aaron, died at age 33 from complications from inadequate care at a privatized home. Our grandson, Michael remained at home until his twenties. He resided in 3 homes from 2 different providers. Michael's behaviors were the most difficult of the three boys. While residing at a resource center at Tarrant MHMR, he hit a worker who called the police and he was arrested and placed first in the Ft. Worth City Jail and then transferred to the Tarrant County Jail. All of the boys are non-verbal. The experience of getting him out of jail was a nightmare!! All this is to say WE ARE THE EXPERTS! With the help of Senator Kelly Hancock, Michael finally gained admission to Denton State Supported Living Center. Each county has a Local IDD Authority which is supposed to help families with obtaining services for IDD family members. My understanding is that HHS urges local authorities to steer consumers to "privatized group homes". Adequate privatized group homes are few and far between. They are, for the most part, "glorified babysitters" with an unstable staff. The State Supported Living Centers provide expertise in EVERY facet of life. The SSLCs provide excellent care for the consumer as well as the family. I see children every day in our county that could benefit greatly from residential care at a State Supported Living Center. Families are not informed of the opportunities available at State Supported Living Centers. Do not misunderstand: not every special needs child requires residential care ... but families MUST BE INFORMED AND EDUCATED AS TO WHAT IS AVAILABLE!!! School districts MUST BE A PLACE to obtain information.

Matthew Hull

self

Irving, TX

My wife and I live in Terry Meza's district in Irving and have discerned that a private religious Montessori school is best for our family. This is our fourth year paying private school tuition for three kids, and we anticipate continuing to pay when our fourth and fifth kids go to school and/or we'll need funds for homeschooling.

Texas parents deserve choices in education and we should make ALL kids eligible for Education Savings Accounts.

School choice will only make education better in our state and it will NOT harm public schools, in fact it would help them get better.

Not to mention that Texas families overwhelmingly support education freedom right now across the state.

In fact, nearly 90% of Republican primary voters last year supported school choice, voting in favor of this language in Prop. 9:

"Texas parents and guardians should have the right to select schools, whether public or private, for their children, and the funding should follow the student."

Please stand with kids and empower parents to give us options for the schools that best fit our children's needs.

Support HB 1, the universal school choice program in the special session. Thanks so much for all you do.

Sam Wells

Self/Leakey ISD, Nueces Canyon CISD

Leakey, TX

I believe public tax money belongs in public schools!

Sheri Allen, Cantor

Makom Shelanu Congregation

FT WORTH, TX

As a Texas Resident for over 30 years, as well as Jewish clergy, I value the role public schools play in shaping our future. I oppose private school subsidies/vouchers, and believe that they are wasteful, deceitful, inefficient, and unfair.

School vouchers are taxpayer-funded scholarships for private school tuition, most of which benefit religiously segregated schools. This is simply another assault to religious liberty – and violation of the separation of church/state. The Texas Constitution is clear that public funding is not to support religious schools or the teaching of any particular faith.

Public school dollars should go only to public schools. Public schools in Texas face enough challenges without funding being diverted elsewhere, leaving fewer resources for schools that serve the majority of our nation's students.

Public schools in Texas are underfunded by billions of dollars every year. Education funding should prioritize students of all faiths, identities, and abilities. Vouchers do not address the needs of low-income, at-risk students such as transportation, free and reduced lunches, textbooks, assessment of special needs, access to additional remediation programs, the full cost of tuition and more. Additionally, without elected boards or state oversight, vouchers give away tax dollars with no financial or academic accountability.

Public schools educate more than 90 percent of Texas students, serving all the students in their boundaries. They build the workforce that powers the Texas economy. We can't afford to underwrite a few special choices at the expense of our collective future.

Sara Stevenson

Self

Austin, TX

Preserving the Public Good in Public Schools

ESAs are indeed repurposed vouchers. The only difference is that with ESAs our taxpayer dollars will go directly to the parents to use toward a private school, private tutoring, or other education services.

Voucher bills usually begin by being offered to Special Education students and/or low-income students. Adherents argue that these kids are unfairly “trapped” in low-performing schools and need to be rescued.

Voucher bills state that children who qualify for Special Education services must actively waive their rights to accommodations and supplemental services, rights which are guaranteed under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) passed in 1975. How does this benefit Special Education students?

The CEC (Council for Exceptional Children) opposes voucher-type programs for all youth because if children with disabilities are “off the books,” they will return to the shadows and not receive the support that is their right in order to succeed.

On the other hand, advocates of ESAs argue that parents of poor children deserve the same freedom to choose a private school or other educational options that wealthy parents enjoy.

The bigger questions are: which children, which parents, who is choosing, and at what cost?

While advocates stress the idea of parental choice, it is the private schools that are doing the choosing. The proposed monetary award which goes directly to the parent can be used toward many forms of education with little or no accountability. The private schools can still accept or reject any student for any reason.

And then there’s the state budget. If ESAs go to families whose students already attend private schools, they essentially become a tax break for private school parents. It’s estimated that ESAs will cost at least \$3 billion in the first year to reimburse the parents of current private school children in Texas.

Not only do ESAs create a new middle-class entitlement, but they drain public schools of needed funds.

Perhaps if public schools in Texas had plenty of money to meet the needs of all their students and to provide competitive salaries for their teachers, the ESA position could be more persuasive. But as it stands, according to US News, in 2022 the state of Texas allotment for per pupil spending is lower than all but seven other states.

Only eight states pay teachers less than the average salary in Texas, according to the Comparable Wage Index which accounts for cost of living variations across the country.

Most importantly, if we’re going to radically change the way we fund education in Texas when our state constitution obliges us to adequately fund our public schools, what does the data say?

According to the Brookings Institution, “On average, students that use vouchers to attend private schools do less well on tests than similar students that do not attend private schools.”

Adequately fund public schools. No vouchers!

Quinn Gray

Christian Preschool Centers

Lubbock, TX

Pre-K needs to be included in ANY choice program!

Sami Winkler
Yeshiva Torat Emet
Houston, TX

We need school choice!!!

Rachel Wilcox
self - teacher
Houston, TX

Stop wasting money on these special sessions!!! I support public education for the future of my state.

NO to vouchers!!! Yes to Public Schools!! Yes to funding public school teachers, staff and retirees! Texas should not be known as one of the lowest paying teacher salaries in the US! Texas should not be known for taking taxpayer money to fund private schools that most people can't afford! Keep our taxpayer money where it is needed in public schools!!!!

Jonathan Ostrander, Mr.
self
Coppell, TX

It's time to give parents a choice about their children's education. Private school is cheaper and better than public school and all the politicians sending their children to private/Catholic schools already know this. Please give us the choice (and our tax dollars back!) so we can give our children the same private education that you've chosen for your own children.

Summer Broome
Self / Parent
San Antonio, TX

Dear Education Committee,

As a parent of 2 school aged children here in San Antonio, I very much support ESA's and school vouchers for us as taxpayers to determine where OUR hard earned money should be going. Please be thoughtful in your decisions and support parents! Let parents have the ability to decide what is best for their child.

Jose Martinez, Dr.
Self
Temple, TX

Vouchers do not benefit Texas public school students, only the declining enrollment of Catholic and other such schools. No to vouchers!

Sal Bejar
Self
Houston, TX

We need to fully fund public schools before we can even think about giving money to private schools. No to vouchers, no to ESAs, yes to fully funding public education. Yes to fully funding special education. Yes to teacher pay raises, yes to para pay raises.

TAYLOR GARRETT
SELF
TOMBALL, TX
SUPPORT IT!

Andrew Gant

self

Austin, TX

I believe that public education is a net benefit for society. I believe that in certain circumstances public education is not best for every child. I believe that flexibility with government funds is needed to best prepare students for future success and future contributions to society. Enabling parents to make the best decision to educate their child and best apply the resources of their tax dollars is what HB 1 enables. I support it.

Erin Thompson

Self and my children

Austin, TX

This bill cannot pass. This will cause undue harm to the well trusted public school system that serves all Texans. Private schools have no public oversight and no accountability and can discriminate which students can attend and who cannot. You have already harmed Texas farmers by not indexing their exemptions now you want to pull money from the education system that teaches ag/tech skills/job skills of all kinds to ALL students. This bill can not pass. You shall not pass!

Michelle Corder

Self - PTA member at Frostwood Elementary School

Houston, TX

I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. Every child has a right to a good education and public schools can provide that with the support of the teachers, schools, communities and the government. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Julie Cowan

self - homemaker

Austin, TX

I am opposed to ESAs and vouchers. I do not believe public tax dollars should be used to pay tuition at private schools. I truly believe the state of Texas should focus its efforts on improving ONE school system and that is of traditional ISDs. If the Governor, Lt. Governor, and those legislators who support ESAs and vouchers would put as much effort into supporting our public schools and funding them fully to reflect cost of living, cost of education, and cost of doing business in different areas of our state, then I know our public schools would be even more successful than they already are. The current leadership's efforts are demoralizing among teachers, families, and students. I would not want to be connected to that legacy and encourage legislators to rethink their alliance. Do they work for wealthy oilmen and organizations from outside of Texas or are they working for their constituents and Texas children? Please oppose HB 1. Thank you.

Brian Wise

self

Schertz, TX

To Whom It May Concern,

As a parent of 2 children who have attended a private Catholic institution for the last 9 years, I strongly support the ability to have a grant program to be able to pay for my children's education and to end year after year paying for a public education that I have never used. I should not be forced to pay for someone else's child(ren) for a service I do not use. To me that is socialism. I should be able to take those funds and apply it to an education system of my choosing. HB1 would be a welcome change as I would be able to not have to over sacrifice financially to send my children to the school of my choosing. I should not have to be penalized for my ability to send my children to a school that offers a better education despite limited resources. For those against HB1 they have had and used more financial/physical resources and other handouts and it has not made much of a difference. Please support this bill and give Texans this option. For other states that offer this they have seen the rewards and proponents who spoke of the decline of public education are now made to look like fools with their false doctrine.

Christine pieper-johnson
Self, Physical Therapist
baytown, TX

I support and would like to see this bill approved. I want the best education for my children. I feel that the essential elements I am looking for is not found in the public system. We have the right to choose and having the monetary support via ESA will go a long way.

Grace Yang, Category Advisor
Self- PTA member
Houston, TX

Please please stand up for students, teachers, and public school!!!
Don't let any voucher legislation pass!!!!
We need your leadership!!!!

Sharon Perry, Mrs
self
San Antonio, TX

Thank you for taking the time to review and consider the education saving accounts bill. I strongly believe in this bill and support it for various reasons. Firstly, it provides an opportunity for us to choose where our tax dollars are spent on education. We cannot rely on Independent School Districts (ISDs) alone to ensure our children are receiving a quality education. The current data shows that student performance in ISDs declines from Kindergarten to third grade. This is unacceptable, especially when less than 50% of third-grade students can read at grade level. It is alarming to hear that less than 50% of all Texas students can read at grade level, as reported by Commissioner Morath of the Texas Education Agency. We cannot continue to provide billions of additional dollars to institutions that are failing to improve student outcomes.

Charter schools are an option, but they are only available to certain qualifying classifications of children based on economic factors.

It would be beneficial to include PreK services in this bill. Our childcare centers are on a decline, and we need help to fund early learners who should not be placed in large ISD facilities. Young children are exposed to inappropriate things from older children in those settings. The TEA data has shown that the PreK children from private childcare centers are 90% prepared for First Grade vs only 50% prepare for the same child who attend public ISDs.

Brian O'Regan
Self
Colleyville, TX

We support school and parental choose. Please do the same.

Marcus Brooks, Owner/CEO
Oak Creek School and Lighthouse Academy
Garland, TX

Please consider adding Pre-K to this bill. Our childcare centers are in danger of being non-existent if we do t get some help. This is not a request for a handout, but a plea for help!

Joel Dixon, Mr.
Northstar School
Arlington, TX

The establishment of an ESA would enable more families to access the education we provide. We offer a small, home-school styled experience with a broad curriculum. We seek to provide a school that offers lots of generous scholarships so that we increase the diversity of our student population. If families could use an ESA to pay for our tuition, we would be able to offer more spots for low income families who don't fit into the public school or want at different option for their scholar.

Carl Jones, Mr
TDP Rural Caucus
Spicewood, TX

I am Carl Jones with Grandparents for Public Schools. I want Rep__Buckley __ to oppose the new version of House Bill 1. The real intent of this bill is to underfund and undermine our local public schools. Giving affluent families a \$10,500 voucher to subsidize unaccountable private schools is a violation of the Texas constitution, and the bill's overall impact will decrease much needed funding for currently cash-strapped public schools. Most Texans oppose voucher scams such as House Bill 1, and I think Rep Buckley____ should as well. Thank you for passing along this message to Rep_Buckley_ "

Timothy Gibson
Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry
Dallas, TX

I am strongly against the use or transfer of state monies to private schools or homeschools. The taking of public tax dollars and redirecting it to unregulated or uncertified schools is an invitation to corruption. Moreover, as a person of faith, I find this movement of public dollars to parochial schools a danger to religious freedom.

Daniel Campbell
Self - Software
Sugar Land, TX

I strongly support HB 1, and urge all representatives to vote in favor.

Taxes are paid by private school parents just the same as those who send their children to government schools. The state should not discriminate against those parents who choose not to send their children to government schools.

I will be coordinating with likeminded local parents to actively support politicians who support this, and will work to oppose politicians who oppose this.

Heather Arawn
Self
Magnolia, TX

I do not support the use of vouchers/educational savings account. Public school should be the beneficiary of public funds not private schools. We are already are underfunding public schools and need to put more money into them, not take them away

Tara Shikany
self
AUSTIN, TX

No vouchers, they hurt our children. Public schools need to be adequately funded, no room for ESAs or Vouchers. Public schools our the foundation and there is nothing more fundamental to making EVERY child successful by putting public schools first. I support ALL children to have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools and only support policies and policymakers who put this as top priority. Vouchers and inadequate funding will negatively impact my childs school in so many ways. NO vouches/ESAs

Elizabeth Harling
Self Non-profit leader
Garland, TX

Public schools are the last community institution standing. We ask alot of those schools and we must resource them to do so. We owe it to our children to make sure ALL are educated fairly and fully. Until you have adequately funded public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. We must have strong public schools and it is not time to change horse midstream. We can't do both strong schools and vouchers. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. My kids walked to their local elementary and stayed in Texas public schools through high school graduation. Their public school education prepared one for the practice of law in NYC and the other for a PHD program at U of Fl. Thats the preparation you need to support.

Ashish Shinde
Self
Austin, TX

I understand that this bill will divert precious resources and monies from public school towards private entities.

As an ardent Texan this goes against everything that we stand for.

Vouchers will hurt public schools and its funding and disintegrate public schooling

Grant Coates
Self - ceo
Fort Worth, TX

This is an important bill that will help make Texas better. I fully support HB1.

Sarah Harrelson
Self
Austin, TX

Please vote NO on HB1. We need to fully fund public schools before we divert public monies to private institutions. As a teacher, parent, and proud Texan I am begging you to stop creating barriers to funding public schools. Any strategy to use public money to fund private schools should ONLY be discussed after sufficient public school funding is secured.

Tim Kaminski, Director/Owner
Gingerbread Kids Academy
Missouri City, TX

HB 3 requires public schools to offer full day Pre-K for eligible 4 year olds. In HB1, Article 5, Section 5.01 Chapter 29, "Pre-K" is eliminated from the wording in item (A) which outlines a child's eligibility to participate of the ESA program. It also states that the child would have to be "enrolled in a public school in the state for at least 90% of the school year. This means that they would have to be in a 3 year old public school Pre-K if, "Pre-K" were added back into the wording for who qualifies for ESA. We are asking that the eligibility include the word "Pre-K" so it would read "Pre-K -12". Also modify the language to not require the "90% attendance in a public school for the "Pre-K category.

Debra Vaello, Mrs.

Self

Cypress, TX

I am a retired teacher who proudly devoted 36 years to teaching in Texas public schools & the parent of a special ed teacher in Texas. I stand in firm opposition to the establishment of education savings accounts for those who wish to send their children to private schools & I'm opposed to attaching this bill to certification, compensation, & health coverage of public school employees. This bill takes away needed funds from our public schools, and ties the financial compensation of public school employees to private school vouchers. Public schools stand to lose about \$10,000/student in local and state funding. ESAs wouldn't cover all the costs associated with attending private schools, and would restrict the ability of many low-income individuals to attend private schools. Private schools are not required to accept every student who applies, unlike public schools, which must educate ALL children. Private schools can discriminate against students based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, and any other criteria the private school stipulates. This bill also discriminates against those who live in areas in the state where there are no private schools within reasonable driving distance. Private schools have almost complete autonomy for how they operate, including how they manage finances and what they are required to disclose to parents and the public. Private schools are not required to administer the STAAR, to be rated under the state's accountability system, or transparently account for their funds and spending. In other states where similar bills have been passed, 70-80% of voucher recipients are students who already attend private schools. I do not want my tax dollars to support "welfare for the rich". Please provide the support and resources for the children in Texas who need it the most. I also implore you to give well-deserved compensation, without restrictions or any provisions, to those who educate the children of Texas. I greatly appreciate the COLA that I will be receiving and hope that critical funding for our students' public schools and employees will not be continue to be held hostage in an effort to pass a voucher scheme that will defund public schools down the road.

Tricia Kim

Self

Austin, TX

Honorable Committee Members,

This feels abusive. Why are we still discussing school vouchers? Why are you ignoring the wishes of Texans who have already opposed taking public dollars and giving them to private schools? Why are you abdicating your Constitutional duty to the public school system we already have?

Texas families already have choices about schools. The choice to attend a private school is a private choice and a private sector transaction. Public dollars are for public schools, until and unless we get to a point that our public schools are the very best in the country.

The administration of educational savings accounts is an expansion of government. So is parking public dollars in interest or dividend generating financial accounts, until families are ready to draw from them. So is policing vendors and families. So is adjudicating the performance of private schools.

Continuing to ignore those who have taken time to testify and communicate their opposition is insulting. Please do the job you already have, instead of expanding the State's responsibilities. Please fully fund the Texas public school system. Give teachers a pay raise. Help our communities recover from all of the work we did during COVID to contain a global pandemic. Please support the public school excellence Texas deserves. You do not have support for vouchers. Please go home.

Maegan Messick, Owner

Tiny Tots s U Learning Academy

Lubbock, TX

Represent the childcare community, if this bill passes we want to be included and considered to be able to provide care to the pre-k children who qualify in our facility.

Chelsea Streeter
Self
Wichita Falls, TX

Our rural counties will be negatively affected by school vouchers. Our focus should be on properly funding our public schools, not hand outs for private schools and the wealthy.

Dominique Jackson
The Momentum Academy
WEBSTER, TX

I am in support of HB1 for school choice for all families. Every family should have the right and opportunity to select his or her school of choice. Please give the power back to the family institution not to

Alyson Schneller
self / instructional designer
Frisco, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the school vouchers program currently under consideration. As a parent and voter, I believe it is essential to voice my concerns about this policy and its potential impact on our public education system.

Public education is the cornerstone of our society, providing equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background. It is a fundamental right that ensures every child receives a quality education, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility. The introduction of school vouchers threatens to undermine this foundation by diverting public funds away from public schools, which serve the majority of our students.

While the idea of school vouchers may sound appealing on the surface, it raises significant concerns about equity, accountability, and the overall quality of education. Voucher programs often lack proper oversight and accountability mechanisms, leading to potential misuse of taxpayer dollars and a lack of transparency in how these funds are utilized.

Furthermore, diverting funds to private schools through vouchers can exacerbate existing inequalities in our education system. Public schools are designed to accommodate students from diverse backgrounds and abilities, including those with special needs. Private schools, on the other hand, may not have the resources or expertise to provide adequate support for all students, potentially leaving vulnerable populations underserved.

Carl Jones, Mr
TDP Rural Caucus
Spicewood, TX

I am __carl jones __ with Grandparents for Public Schools. I want Rep_King ___ to oppose the new version of House Bill 1. The real intent of this bill is to underfund and undermine our local public schools. Giving affluent families a \$10,500 voucher to subsidize unaccountable private schools is a violation of the Texas constitution, and the bill's overall impact will decrease much needed funding for currently cash-strapped public schools. Most Texans oppose voucher scams such as House Bill 1, and I think Rep_King___ should as well. Thank you for passing along this message to Rep __King__.

Paul Streett
Selg
Irving, TX

Let's get it passed so parents can choose what's best for their kids.

Joni Minett

Self

Frisco, TX

I am a lifelong conservative. I usually support the efforts of our conservative leaders in Austin, but I don't support ESAs. Additionally, I don't understand why providing MUCH needed funding for public schools is being held up simply because the state legislature won't consider these issues separately. What a shame for our students.

Kassondra Camargo

Christian preschool centers

Lubbock, TX

This is a School Choice Bill. I am not voting for or against the Bill. However if it does Pass it Needs to include Pre-K. Currently it does not. If Choice passes then i want the 4yr olds that qualify for “public” school to have the option to use those same funds to attend our schools.

Deborah Whipple

Self

San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

?I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

?HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

?I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

?Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

?It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

?Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

?There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]?

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)?

Sincerely,

Deborah Whipple

524 Devine St.

San Antonio, TX 78210

whip26@gmail.com

210-677-4316

Kim Johnson

Self

Weatherford, TX

Parents are sick and tired of the government overstepping their boundaries in our children's lives. School vouchers are another layer of government interference in education. The government doesn't belong in homeschooling or private education. There's a reason why people leave public education and people don't want the government to be any part of private Ed.

Dann Kuhlmann
Self/retired educator
San Angelo, TX

Please continue to support public education and vote against vouchers. Public education, Educators and students need your full support. Monies should not be taken away where no accountability is required.

Felica Glass
Self
Belton, TX

As a tax payer, a mother, a voter, a TX resident, and a constituent of Rep. Buckley, I OPPOSE this and ALL bills attempting to give public tax-payer money to private schools.

My 9 year old daughter is Autistic and uses the supports of the Special Education program afforded her as she maneuvers the 3rd grade at a local Title 1 elementary school. Due to her diagnosis and requirements for staff support to reach her potential she would be ineligible for admission to charter or private schools near us. I know this because I have looked into these options myself. Pulling funding away from our public schools would leave not only my baby girl without an option for schooling but would affect thousands of other children in similar circumstances. This is unacceptable.

The filing and consideration of this bill seems to suggest that the chair of this committee believes that there is a magic set of numbers -- a certain increase in ADA, a level of salary, an amount of training, a set prioritization of rural districts, etc -- that will make it okay to use public money to benefit under-regulated private schools. There is no such amount.

Private schools have no accountability to the public when it comes to curriculum, staffing, employment, enrollment, or assessment standards. Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES should tax-payer money be taken used to subsidize them.

While I strongly believe that public schools deserve every penny allotted to them in this bill, AND SO MUCH MORE, it is obvious that this bill is simply an effort to silence public schools and public school educators/staff with a silver gag.

If this committee and the Texas legislature as a whole wish to improve the educational standing of our great state, they will stop playing games and commit to fully funding our public education system. They talk about giving choice, while they have spent the past several decades stripping every bit of funding for specialists, programs, and support out of public schools and then pointing fingers when bare-bones funding doesn't result in top-notch performance.

VOTE NO ON HB 1. FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH PUBLIC MONEY.

Donna Jo Hagar, Keller
self
Keller, TX

I'm a Mom and PTA volunteer in Keller, TX and would like to express my frustration in my representatives failing our public school students.

Please increase the basic allotment by at least \$1,000 per student to account for inflation, change funding from attendance based to enrollment and please vote no on vouchers. We love our Keller schools and it's painful to watch them suffer despite a record surplus in our state. Our kids deserve much better.

Tim Kaminski, Director of Operations
Gingerbread Kids Academy
Missouri City, TX

Overall there are many sections in this Bill, that are going to cause further damage to the childcare industry. The witnesses providing testimony today from the school districts that are against the Bill state that the ESA's will take monies away from the public schools. However, for years, the childcare industry in Texas has seen legislation passed that has moved 4 year old children out of our programs and into the public schools for "free full day Pre-K for year olds". This essentially took money away from our businesses that is necessary to sustain our businesses. There is language in this Bill that would require school districts to start providing "free full day Pre-K for 3 year olds. These initiatives would pull more funds away from the childcare programs and the result will be that they will not be able to remain open to take of the birth to 3 year old children. Please consider the other language in this Bill that will result in unintended consequences for the childcare industry in Texas. Families need choices. Please do not leave private childcare programs out of this discussion or consideration.

Lindzey Winter
Self
Houston, TX

Please read!!!

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

· Add how vouchers and inadequate funding will impact your campus, district, and community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase, or programs be cut?

Trace Brown
Self
Mesquite, TX

I have worked as an Educational Interpreter for 9 years, 6 of which have been working under a district as an employee. When it became apparent that the school system cannot pay adequately for the same job I can do as a contractor, I quit the district and became an independent contractor. I still work doing the same essential function, interpreting for students in a k-12 setting, but I am far better compensated as an independent contractor. Without a fair pay to reflect our skill as state/national certified interpreters, we rarely can live on the salary provided by school districts. To compensate for this lack of personnel, districts have to use a multitude of patchwork solutions including hiring uncertified and unqualified bilingual paraprofessionals who do not have the training to professionally interpret or outsourcing interpreting to outside entities such as interpreter agencies who are costing them much more in the long run. There are good interpreters out there who would love to work for a school district for a multitude of reasons, but the bottom line is that no matter how much we value childrens' education and providing quality interpretation and language enrichment for a historically language deprived demographic, we cannot do so when we cannot afford to live on the salary we are so often saddled with. We are trained specialized professionals and deserve to be paid as such so we can afford to do the valuable work of providing language and communication access for Deaf/Hard of Hearing students in Texas.

Maureen Johns

self

Frisco, TX

Chairman Buckley and Committee Members:

Business leaders are growing concerned about the quality of our future workforce supply. We know economic success for our state relies on the health of our public education system, which requires full funding and retention of taxpayer dollars in our schools. Chambers of Commerce across the state have joined to support public school funding with Grow Texas Talent. One of the greatest needs in Texas is a well-trained and highly skilled workforce both now and in the future. We want Texas to invest and enrich the excellent offerings existing in our local schools to train the next generations of doctors, engineers, chefs, and welders.

Grow Texas Talent is committed to fighting any voucher programs that will undercut our public schools. Schools are the heart of our communities, and our school systems and the men and women who spend their careers educating the next generation deserve support from our elected leaders in Austin. We believe there is no such thing as a small voucher program. If allowed, this program will grow and drain valuable resources from our public schools.

Grow Texas Talent Priorities:

- Spend public dollars to support public education rather than unaccountable private schools.
- Increase teacher pay to retain teachers and attract more men and women to the profession.
- Rather than vouchers, we need to increase the basic allotment in our public schools so that they can continue to achieve excellence in educating our next generation of workforce.

House Bill 1 includes several measures that strengthen public school funding, but we are concerned those reinforcements will be undermined in the long term by a voucher program that transfers public dollars away from public schools—hindering the ability of more than 1,200 Independent School Districts responsible for teaching and training 5.5 million Texas students. Without significant changes resulting in the removal of HB 1's voucher proposal, we cannot support this legislation.

We ask lawmakers to oppose Education Savings Account vouchers and focus solely on efforts that directly support public schools.

Respectfully,
Maureen Johns

Megan Brown

Self - Certified American Sign Language Interpreter for K-12

Dallas, TX

We have an opportunity to address the pay discrepancy for educational interpreters within our education system. By increasing the budget for certified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters to work at school districts with deaf education - special education programs, we can work to fight the language deprivation that is happening with our future generations. Certified ASL interpreters that work directly for a school district can provide clear language support in the classroom, become advocates for the students, and an ally for student, family, and Deaf Ed. However, due to lack of pay increases, requirements of certification, and lack of incentive for certification or continued education, school districts are limited to hiring interpreters that do not fit the qualifications for the students needs. Without oversight from administration personnel that are fluent in sign language and the processes of interpretation, no one at the school district level are able to truly see what uncertified and unqualified interpreters are doing in the classroom. Because of this, students are not able to use their full potential to pass their classes, teachers then bump the grades so the student can move on, and the student loses an opportunity to gain vocabulary foundations (elementary level), social skills (middle school level), or work readiness skills (high school level). Increasing pay for certified interpreters will not fix the problem overnight, but it will incentivize qualified interpreters to step into the field, provide the appropriate support and language needs and encourage retention to provide stability for the students and the school districts. Educational interpreters have more job duties than simply interpreting, but they are paid as a paraprofessional, which tends to be lower than interpreting for other fields, causing great (potential) interpreters to stay out of the school system completely. If this was happening to hearing students, parents would be outraged. No one would let a teacher who's 4th language is English, teach an English class with a substitute every other day. There would be no progress made and the students would be the ones who suffer. We have an opportunity to take a step in the right direction. Increase pay, prioritize certification and incentivize those that know what they're doing so that they can teach others how to foster growth and education with out next generation of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. Thank you.

Elizabeth Simmons

Self PTA member and mother of a student at Westchester Academy of International Studies

Houston, TX

School vouchers will only hurt our public schooling system. Spring Branch ISD is a fantastic district that is known for its great schools. My son was lucky enough to lottery in to an IB program that can have him graduating high school with college credits. Our district is facing budget shortfalls that could close this school and send him back to already high teacher student ratios in our zoned middle school. As an accountant, I cannot understand why our state is choosing to not fund schools appropriately when our surplus is so high. Our state receives a lot of money from oil and gas companies. Who will work at these new energy companies if we can't appropriately educate all children in public schools? Vouchers are not the answer. Fix the recapture problem and stop taking our school district tax dollars for the general fund. My children have attended a title 1 elementary school when I can pay for private school on my own without the help of a voucher because our schools are good. The PTA has funded specialists on top of the allotted budget from the district, and with vouchers the gap will be too large to fund through the PTA. Please take care of our public school children and not private organizations that will be funded by vouchers.

Angela Moss, Dr.

Self

Prosper, TX

Please say no to vouchers that will take money away from Texas public schools. Private schools are not held to the same standards as public schools, and they are not required to provide fair and equitable access to education for students with disabilities and diverse learning needs. Texas is already ranked among the worst states for public education funding and a voucher program will bring us even lower.

Abby Yarborough

Myself

Conroe, TX

I would like to begin by stating that I'm not a lobbyist, I am not testifying on behalf of a political PAC, nor am I in any way personally benefiting from my testimony on HB1 today. I am simply a parent, a taxpayer, and a native Texan who is completely exhausted and fed up with the current state of affairs in my local school district, and I do blame our legislators for the lack of oversight and continued problems that are ignored in our public school system. It seems we have more rules, regulations, and laws that are rarely, if ever enforced. Two years ago, I brought a valid complaint to my local school district. I was stonewalled, lied to, and publicly harassed by district leadership. Unfortunately for my local school district, I refused to stand down. Instead, I chose to stand up! Not only for myself and my children, but for all children, the community, and for the future of Texas. My original complaint led me to start attending school board meetings. This opened my eyes to a multitude of unlawful decisions and unethical behavior from our superintendent, central administrators, and the tenure school board members on our board. Willis ISD was blatantly taking advantage of taxpayers and operating to benefit, financially and politically, as were the adults placed in charge of educating our children. I encourage you to look into Willis ISD's student performance reports from recent years. I think you will see that our local school leadership epicly failed our children, and its tax paying community. We have financially and as a community paid a high price for these failures. Student underperformance remains at an all-time high in Willis as our district continues to lie to the public, because let's be honest- Public Information Request responses are an honor system controlled by dishonorable people. WISD will push another frivolous school bond on the public, marketed by half truths and unnecessary spending because the State of Texas does nothing while we the people are left without answers. School bonds absolutely have their place but they are managed with fiscal irresponsibility and no oversight according to rules and regulations, and this should not be the case. It creates public mistrust. It has been two years of fighting for some form of accountability and our superintendent has moved on unscathed, enabled to prey upon the next vulnerable community. The rogue school board members who have remained on the board, continue to lie to the public, retaliate and target parents who complain, accept no responsibility for the policies and procedures they have violated, and blatantly abuse their power. These people shouldn't hold public office, much less be the example set for our children. I can honestly say that after two years of fighting for accountability, that I have knocked on the door of every state agency I could think of in the State of Texas, and not a single one of them has cared to acknowledge even the smallest infraction from our district

John Reed

public school teacher

El Paso, TX

Private schools just pick and choose students - how is that fair? They only want the good kids. How are you going to make sure that the public schools are only left with the trouble students??? You still have not addressed discipline in schools, increased workload for teachers and teacher pay?? How are you going to make sure that the private schools are accountable? With so many of them not requiring certified teachers, what do you threaten them with? Mr. Buckley does not understand what goes on in schools. Where have vouchers worked before? If the states has a bad budget year, will you stop the program or will public schools only suffer? Also if public schools lose money, what do they have to cut back on?

Abby Yarborough

Self

Conroe, TX

I've exhausted all efforts and tried to hold my local ISD accountable in hopes of doing what is right for our children. The same can't be said for a single Texas state agency. TEA doesn't care, SBOE doesn't care, TX Ethics Commission doesn't care, Ken Paxton doesn't care, Brandon Creighton doesn't care, and it seems Brad Buckley failed to care with HB1. This bill isn't worth the paper it's written on! Shouldn't the focal point in education be our children? The ideological text surrounding accountability in this bill will hardly benefit children and completely omits parental empowerment. When at least 6 of the 14 members on this committee are backed by the Charter School NOW PAC, I can't help but wonder if this committee is serving the general public that elected them, or if they too have succumbed to the corporate greed corrupting Public Education in Texas. I suggest this committee get back to the drawing board and remember that WE THE PEOPLE are your BIGGEST donors. You need to create legislation that will benefit the taxpaying community, specifically for our kids, followed by addressing the systemic issue of dwindling classroom teachers, and overpaid top heavy administrative staff, half of which are moonlighting for district vendors- only then should you expect taxpayers to continue to fund this circus Stop taking advantage of children just because you assume the general public is not paying any attention. Start advocating for legislation that will actually educate our children and provide parents legislation that will encourage transparency, and a means to accountability. A parent shouldn't be expected to expend their personal finances, hire an attorney, and fight so hard for answers from our publicly funded schools. We certainly shouldn't be expected to do all of this while our local ISD's are remain protected by sovereign immunity, use attorneys funded by our tax dollars to intimidate us, and remain completely ignored by all of the state agencies that are supposed to be holding them accountable. I encourage this committee to please consider crafting educational legislation that will actually keep our state great! Anything less is unacceptable. If our legislators will not accept responsibility and write legislation that will actually trickle down to benefit our students, classroom teachers, communities, and taxpayers then go ahead and hand public education over to the federal government completely, because this is where TX Education seems to be headed. I see no need for TEA, SBOE, Local ISD's, Local School Boards, The Ethics Commission, or even the OAG when NONE of these agencies ever seem to have any jurisdiction to do a single thing when a complaint is made. These made up rules and regulations are meaningless and as far as I'm concerned, there's no need for any of them. Stop kicking the can down the road and politicizing education while you destroy a constitutional birthright.

Vickie Rabb-Wiggins

Mesquite ISD/ATPE

Forney, TX

I am a public school teacher, but have been a private school teacher as well. I strive to do what is best for students and educators. ALL kids deserve the best. Vouchers/ ESA is not the way to do what is best for ALL students and educators. I serve dyslexic students under the Special Ed umbrella. If these dyslexic students use a voucher and go to a non-public school, they are not at all guaranteed to receive the dyslexia intervention they need to be successful like they do receive in public school. Only when legislators stop pushing the governor's voucher schemes can they legitimately address the issues that educators care about such as proper funding for our schools, teacher pay raises, and lower testing and accountability burdens! Please stop trying to tie things like teacher pay raises to the voucher!!! Teachers deserve a raise!!! They shouldn't have to be "forced" into getting that raise by voting for a voucher they do not agree with.

Katherine Koeffler

PTA Leader

Tyler, TX

Vouchers take much-needed funding from public schools and put it into the private sector that does not adhere to the same standards or guidelines of public school. It takes resources from the disadvantaged and funds it into primarily white, upper-class students who already have enough resources to fund their education. We should be promoting public schools, not privatizing education to serve the elite.

mike bullard

Self / Self

zephyr, TX

No vouchers! Please support our public schools

John Reed
public school teacher
El Paso, TX

Private schools just pick and choose students - how is that fair? They only want the good kids. How are you going to make sure that the public schools are only left with the trouble students??? You still have not addressed discipline in schools, increased workload for teachers and teacher pay?? How are you going to make sure that the private schools are accountable? With so many of them not requiring certified teachers, what do you threaten them with? Mr. Buckley does not understand what goes on in schools. Where have vouchers worked before? If the states has a bad budget year, will you stop the program or will public schools only suffer? Also if public schools lose money, what do they have to cut back on?

Celice Goad
Self
Marble Falls, TX
VOTE NO

Emily Belcher, Mrs.
Self - teacher in Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

I am an educator and parent of Spring Branch ISD in Houston. We are a niche in the big city. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education, our district is preparing to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers, closings of elementary and PreK learning centers, and an increase in high school class sizes. All while the state sits on its largest surplus in history. It is inexcusable.

The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling, the PUBLIC school system, properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected.

Increase the basic allotment to \$1,000/student and FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!

Jessica Morrison
Self - I am also the President of the Lily B. Clayton Elementary PTA in Fort Worth ISD
Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers would offer choice only to a small minority of students and their families. Public schools, left to educate 9 out of 10 students remaining, would face only one choice: how to do more with less and less.

Public dollars should remain in public schools. Students, parents, communities, and businesses rely on public schools to provide high-quality education and ensure a bright future for Texas. Vouchers would lead to inadequate funding for my children's school and all of our public schools. Schools would be forced to close, student-teacher ratios would be forced to increase and decrease the quality of the educational experience, and important programs would be cut.

Alexa Higginbotham
Austin ISD
Austin, TX

School vouchers are a scam to defund public education and to subsidize private education for wealthy families.

Mary Myers
Self, Texas Realtor
PLANO, TX

How can Texas see continued growth if we have an inferior public school system! Vote NO to VOUCHERS, YES to PUBLIC SCHOOLS!! Yes to funding public school teachers, staff and retirees! NO to vouchers!!! Texas should not be known as one of the lowest paying teacher salaries in the US! Texas should not be known for taking taxpayer money to fund private schools that most people can't afford! NO to vouchers for private schools! Keep our taxpayer money where it is needed in public schools!!!

Brad Englert
Self
Austin, TX

No to vouchers/ESAs. Fully fund public schools as required by the Texas constitution.

Nancy Burke
self
Friendswood, TX

It is time to make changes to fund schools and teacher pay. I DO NOT support vouchers in any form. Vouchers only take away from schools that have been built and run on tax dollars. Unfunded mandates- and no increases in funding over the years have created this issue. We do not have a teacher shortage- we have plenty of educated teachers that are no longer willing to work for low pay. PLEASE make teachers your priority. The district of innovation is not working the way it is intended and needs overhaul as well.

Pedro Ortiz
Mexican American School Boards Association
Houston, TX

On behalf of the Mexican American School Boards Association, we would like to voice our members' strong opposition to HB 1, based primarily on the creation of an Education Savings Account program.

Latino students are a major constituency in our state's public education system, comprising a significant majority of enrollment. Their success is inextricably tied to the success of our public schools and ultimately the future of our state.

Many of our Latino students' major needs include: high-quality bilingual programs, certified educators, and comprehensive wraparound services. While research demonstrates how critical these initiatives are, they are especially difficult for lower-wealth districts to implement because of the cost. The fact that many Latino and other students of color are highly concentrated in these districts make it critical for policies regarding funding of public education to address this reality.

Further, we are concerned about the impact with regards to equity for Latino students in our public schools. Due to patterns of previous enrollment in private institutions seen in other states that pass vouchers, Texas may experience an acceleration of segregation along racial and socioeconomic lines.

Any careful observation of our public education system will reveal that schools across the state are in dire need of increased support. However, House Bill 1 presents many harmful implications to our funding directives, primarily including an ESA program that should instead be used to help schools meet the needs of their communities and our state's constitutional obligation.

We urge you to vote against House Bill 1 and similar attempts that will ultimately divert tax dollars from the public schools in the service of educating millions of Texas youth. To properly address the needs of the diverse, 5.5 million students in our schools, we recommend this body prioritize further increasing the basic allotment, updating the bilingual education weight, and finally moving forward with the changes needed in special education funding—with no vouchers attached.

Jessica Rensimer

Self

Houston, TX

I support fully funding Texas public schools. My school district, which I love and fully support, is facing drastic measures such as closing schools, shutting down programs, and more if additional funding is not approved. Private school is not an option for one of my children who has a 504 plan in place. We have previously been at a private school and they are not required or equipped to accommodate for learning differences. My children and all the children of Texas deserve better especially given the budget surplus!

I am vehemently opposed to the creation of education savings account! School vouchers hurt children and will have an adverse impact on education in Texas. All children deserve access to quality education. Please do not tie school vouchers to funding public schools!

Stephanie Holdren

self - PTA member of Vandegrift HS PTSA

AUSTIN, TX

Please do not rob our public school! Tax payer money should go to adequately fund our public schools which are provided for in the TX Constitution. Pay teachers like the professionals they are. If you were truly thinking about every child in TX, then you would ensure that our public schools were the best supported, most well funded in the country. Instead you are trying to steal from them in order to help a few of your friends have a lower bill for the private school to which they send their kids. Private schools do not have to accept every child, and do not meet every child's needs. Private schools do not have to meet the same testing requirements as public schools. Please do what is best for all of the 5.4 million students in TX, not just a few. If you pass vouchers or ESAs public schools and school children will suffer, and it will be your fault.

Thank you,

Stephanie Holdren

Audrey Ash, Dr

self

Burkburnett, TX

First, let me thank you for your time and dedication to the multiple special sessions to address education funding, as it is an important issue for our state. We have not adequately funded public education and I am a strong supporter of public education. I am staunchly against vouchers as a taxpayer. However, if vouchers are included in the bill, accountability measures MUST be tied to the vouchers. Public money going to private entities needs to be monitored for effectiveness and having the accountability of those students taking the STAAR or other norm-referenced tests should not be eliminated from the bill.

I am very in favor of raises to teachers, but I want there to be adequate funding to school districts to not only take care of those raises moving forward but also have extra left-over funding that allows for local control of individualized needs for every district. The current funding in the bill would be almost totally observed by taking care of the teacher raises moving forward.

Again, I appreciate your attention and time to helping to fund public education and financial support for our public school teachers.

Very respectfully,

Dr. Audrey Ash

Stacy Lashbrook, Mrs.

Texas Teachers

Marble Falls, TX

Please vote NO on HB 1 and any other bills that create a voucher program. I am fundamentally opposed to using public taxpayer money for private schools. Rather than funding our public schools and moving us up from 43rd in the nation, HB 1 shifts money to private schools without the same accountability for those dollars. The track record for vouchers in other states is largely unsuccessful. Public school funding and teacher pay raises should not be held hostage by vouchers!

Chad Mabry

self - PTA Treasurer at Memorial Drive Elementary School in Houston (SBISD)

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Our school and district cannot function adequately if funding is diverted to these bizarre initiatives that are clearly being pushed by your lobbyists!

Brittany Lara

Self

Lubbock, TX

PreK needs to be included in ANY choice program!

Rita Roberts

Self

Buda, TX

NO Vouchers, NO ESA's, NO additional support for Charter Schools! I want my money kept with my local neighborhood schools! We need to support our public schools and teachers!!

Ofelia Gonzalez

Self..retired teacher

Fort Worth, TX

NO TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS

More support for public education and teachers.

Too much interference by Governor has presented a mass exodus of qualified superintendents, teachers, security guards,nurses in Texas. Our profession is in trouble. Public education needs to be a priority in Texas. Not.Vouchers.

Anna Rangel

Self

Lubbock, TX

PreK needs to be included in ANY choice program!

Karla Moreno

Self

Floydada, TX

Pre-K needs to be included in any choice program.

Rebecca Fenn

Self

Houston, TX

I am a Houston resident, former teacher and certified administrator, have 2 kids in public school and 1 kid in private school. I am so upset by HB1 and the long term damage this will do to the Texas school system. If this goes through and Texas ranks as the 50th state in education (which will happen) - it will be the sole responsibility of Governor Abbott and every single legislator that voted on this bill. If vouchers pass, I will be one of the thousands of individuals (regardless of party) that will vote for ANY person running against the people that voted on this bill. Send it back and fix the system (yes - we know it is hard and nobody has an idea how to do it but vouchers are lazy and WON'T work in Texas. Figure out a solution and be bold- not lazy or just too ignorant to ask the right questions). The fact that we have more English Language Learners than every state and think we can serve every child with less money is example 523 why this won't work. If you don't know how the system works - don't trust your friends in the legislature that just tell you how to vote. Step down and get someone who is willing to listen to their constituents - not PACs. We expect and deserve better of our elected officials.

Anh Bui

Self/ nurse practitioner

Houston, TX

I support parental choice in education. Please assist parents in choosing the best educational environment for their children by allowing their tax dollars to be used outside of the public school system.

Thank you

Brittany Mares

Self

New Deal, TX

PreK needs to be included in ANY choice program!

Virginia Chambliss, Ms

Self. Retired Texas public school teacher

Dallas, TX

PPOSE PASSAGE of THIS BILL AS IT WILL SEVERELY AFFECT ALL THOSE SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN IN OUR SCHOOLS.

It is a MISTAKE to lump all these issues together that are in this bill.

PLEASE DO NOT PASS THIS LEGISLATION!

J ROMIG

self

Amarillo, TX

Vouchers steal funds from public education to pay for private schools. Vouchers do not cover the entire cost of private school fees. Vouchers are nothing more than state-funded discount coupons for high-income parents to send their kids to private school. Keep public money public. Shame on the Texas legislature. Shame on the Governor.

Stace Jones, CEO
West Texas Licensed Child Care Association
Lubbock, TX

Pre-K needs to be include in any school choice program.

Child Care has proven, according to TEA data, to get students kindergarten ready, better than public schools.

Child Care should be an option for eligible pre-k students.

The public school is having difficulty staffing and funding K-12. Why are we trying to get 3 and 4 yr olds into the public school system when you already have a system that works, and that specializes in these younger ages.

What public school teacher wants to change diapers?? and yet you have many students at those ages that need to be potty trained, or struggle with potty training. Child Care specializes in potty training AND early education as a whole.

Hannah Gibson
self
Houston, TX

Fully funding our public schools should be a top priority to give all Texas children access to the best education possible! It should be a crime to have the surplus that we do while individual school districts are left to make devastating cuts because they're underfunded. Y'all should be embarrassed.

Jessica Chacon
self, small business owner
Austin, TX

Strongly oppose this bill, it was already rejected before.

Laura Alvarado
self
Tyler, TX

Jena McKinzie, Mrs.
Self and children
New Braunfels, TX

As parents my husband and I CHOSE to relocate to Texas for access to better education for our children. Please do not destroy the public school system by supporting a voucher program which will diminish funding for incredible and meaningful services needed by all of Texas children.

Private schools are exempt from having to offer special education. Without needed supports, things fall apart quickly. Please vote NO, because vouchers weaken public schools including special education. Our youngest son requires PT, OT, ST and a cadre of special education supports that would not be available to him at most typical private schools. In NBISD and so many of Texas' rapidly growing school districts funding is already tight and staffing is an ongoing battle. Please don't add more challenges and barriers to our sons educational access by taking the much needed funding!

Desiree Ford, Director of Finance

Self

Mansfield, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Zeena Querbach

Self. Special needs parent, caretaker, non-profit board member

Austin, TX

This takes away from public schools, many of which provide services for children with special needs. As a parent with two children with special needs, public school is our family's only option for education and supplemental support services. Our teachers and therapists through the school work very hard, and we cannot support vouchers that take away from public schools, as many charter or private schools are not required to have a special education program. Please put yourselves in the position of parents who are struggling to care for their children with special needs, and vote no for HB 1.

Alicia Birdwell

self - proofreader

Allen, TX

Please fund our public schools before giving money to private. Our teachers and admins are dedicated professionals who sacrifice so much for our children. All Texas children deserve schools that are supported and where they are allowed to thrive. Fund all 5.5 million Texas children first. Please stop holding our kids hostage for something that clearly most Texans don't want.

Patricia Bravo
Self
San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Patricia Bravo
22715 Wichita Pass
San Antonio, TX 78258

Aubrey Lopez
Self- Teacher
Victoria, TX

Vouchers are a scam. Private schools can pick and choose their students. We shouldn't fund schools that don't guarantee an education to all and won't be held accountable for the funds they receive. Public schools should be fully funded so that all kids are afforded an opportunity to get a quality education.

Armondo Bilancione

Self - Nationally Certified ASL Interpreter

Aubrey, TX

The biggest factor that negatively impacts the quality & availability of ASL interpreting in the K-12 context is compensation. The highly qualified, seasoned, skilled, and credentialed interpreters cannot/will not work in the K-12 settings due to the drastic delta in hourly rate compensation. In the K-12 settings, interpreters often serve as "language models" [unfortunately] - as these interpreters are often times the *only* person that the Deaf students sees using their language (ASL); since 95% of the Deaf kiddos who go to school have hearing parents who either:

(a) don't learn ASL to communicate with their own children (a tragic story for a different time)

or

(b) start learning ASL, but have not learned ASL to a degree of fluency

The implications of this reality are vast - and the interpreters that are most qualified to work in these settings are the ones with: many yers of experience, near-native ASL fluency, likely a certification or two

and they simply cannot afford to work (either contracted an local agency or hired on part/full time by the ISD) in that environment - as the continual perpetual increase in costs of living, inflation due to irresponsible money printing, and skyrocketing costs of everyday goods and services; ASL interpreters (like many other Information Workers) are forced to find the higher/est earning jobs in order to make ends meet.

Rosalie Weisfeld

Self, retired

McAllen, TX

Opposed to bill. Keep state funds for public education!

Barbara Radovich

Self

Wimberley, TX

Fully fund public schools, the constitution of Texas requires this. No deals for vouchers. No money for vouchers.

This bill would suck everything from our valuable public schools.

I'm ashamed of Texas legislators to try to institute a segregated school system. You are betraying Texas children under your fake religious concerns.

Kim Gokhale

Self, parent

Round Rock, TX

Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

I'm concerned that vouchers and inadequate funding will adversely impact my campus, round rock school district, and title one schools and community services available through our campuses. Reduced funding has forced schools to become 4 days a week and some schools will close. Hiring qualified teachers has already been hard, with no additional funds and instead a diversion of much needed funds from public school, the student-teacher ratios will increase. When we need more mental health funds, social support services, academic supports for special needs and gifted kids in our public schools, the vouchers will divert the funds and likely cut the much needed programs and wraparound services that vulnerable families depend solely on.

Katie Houston

self

Austin, TX

Please vote no on HB1 -- taxpayer dollars should not go to private schools in any form. Please focus on getting Texas schools the money they need, not diverting what little is there elsewhere.

School vouchers primarily benefit wealthier students, families, and businesses. States with existing voucher programs have reported that most families who benefitted were already covering the costs of private schools and homeschooling prior to the voucher becoming available.

Vouchers can also increase the likelihood that students experience discrimination and harm. Private schools are not required to offer the same federal civil rights protections for students as public schools.

Further, vouchers do not necessarily expand opportunities for students with the greatest needs. Students from families with low incomes often face barriers to navigating the voucher application and private school admission processes. Smaller, rural areas often rely on their local public schools as community hubs and primary sources of employment. Private schools can more easily push students out without recourse.

Voucher costs often grow beyond what is projected and thus, reduce overall revenues for other state spending. A recent study of school voucher programs in seven states shows how state voucher spending from 2008 to 2019 increased by hundreds of millions of dollars annually, while K-12 spending for public education declined despite public school enrollment increases. Arizona became the first state to implement a universal voucher program in 2022, and as of mid-March 2023, the ESA program is expected to cost the state at least \$345 million more than initial projections for the first year. New Hampshire's voucher program was estimated to cost \$130,000 in 2021 and it now costs \$14.7 million. And a few private schools in Iowa are already raising tuition only a few months after the new voucher program passed in January of this year.

Some state lawmakers understood the great cost at the expense of public services and stopped multiple school voucher bills this year. For example, 16 House Republicans broke with their party to defeat Georgia's universal voucher proposal in the final hours of session. And Idaho Senate Republicans raised concerns about the long-term cost of a universal ESA bill, which also applied to subsequent voucher bills.

State lawmakers should understand that their actions now and in the future will have large fiscal and harmful consequences for public education and student opportunities.

Jessica Cain, The Rev.

Texas Impact

San Marcos, TX

Our public dollars belong in our public schools. As a pastor, I obviously support the faith community. However, taxpayer money should not be used to subsidize religious institutions, which includes most of private schools in Texas. As a school board member, I know how challenging it is already to provide for all the needs of our teachers, staff, and students with the limited funds we already receive. Taking funds away to subsidize private education will only further harm our students, especially the most vulnerable. Many claim that education savings funds will help poorer families have "school choice," but the truth is that these funds will in no way help our most disadvantaged students. The money does not even cover the cost of tuition, much less the many other services these families rely on: free/reduced breakfast and lunch, transportation, special needs services, school-purchased devices, and more. Voucher programs are a theft of taxpayer dollars at the expense of our students and communities.

Shelley Larkins

Shelby and Friends

Lubbock, TX

Pre k choice needs to be added; and parents choosing.

Teresa Federspiel

Self, Senior Director of Sports, PSA

Frisco, TX

I am for the bill being passed, but the bill needs to include Preschool. Parents want the choice to pick a all day program.

Alaina Webb

Self. BEI Certified Interpreter - IV, Master, Court. Department Chair at San Antonio College
San Antonio, TX

In LUNA PEREZ v. STURGIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS ET AL., the Supreme Court ruled that Mr. Perez had the right to seek compensatory damages against the school district who continually denied his right to a Free Appropriate Public Education by either withholding an ASL interpreter or by providing unqualified "signers" who were not interpreters at all. What a terrible state of affairs that the schools were more concerned that they not be held financially responsible for not providing effective communication than they were for the fact that they failed to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education to this young man. ASL interpreters are a critical part of the education of many Deaf children. Interpreters are required not only to have education to begin work, they are required to continually engage in training, education, and certification in order to be effective in the role of interpreter. Educational interpreters earn roughly the same as - or less than - school bus drivers who are not required to hold any special training. The Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities completed a study documenting this issue in November 2022 (<chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgiclfaindmkaj/https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/disabilities/2022EducationalInterpretersReport.pdf>). Despite their importance in the education process, interpreters aren't even paid a livable wage. Schools have consistently sought ways to circumvent the requirement to provide certified, qualified interpreters in K-12 settings by hiring those without certification and allowing them up to 3 years to gain certification - which was a practice deemed incongruent with State law, and more recently, by hiring "communication assistants" or "paraprofessionals" who function in the ROLE of interpreters, but who are not qualified to provide the accurate interpretation needed for these children to be linguistically present in the education process. Using a different label does not excuse schools from ensuring all students have equal access to learning. In order for Deaf children to have an education equivalent to their hearing peers, it is imperative that interpreters be recognized and compensated as the professionals they are. Part of this equation is that schools must be held responsible for trying to circumvent the expense related to providing this cost in the same way they would be held responsible for failing to provide a teacher in the classroom, installing wheelchair ramps, providing resources in Braille, etc. Rather than seeking to provide the appearance of accessibility, schools must genuinely value our children and employ the most qualified interpreters at even the lowest grade levels so that Deaf children have appropriate language models and linguistic access to their education. Please make educating ALL children a priority over trying to save a dollar here and there. They are our future.

Daniel Dawer
Educators in Solidarity
Austin, TX

I am presenting this testimony on HB 1 on behalf of Educators in Solidarity, or EIS. EIS is a group working to build our collective capacity as anti-racist educators through activism, advocacy, and outreach.

HB 1 is bad for Texas public schools. It will result in the continued defunding of our state's public education system, and will limit educational opportunities for many of the state's children.

HB 1 would result in billions of dollars in taxpayer money being drained from our state's public school to pay for private school tuition. Private schools are not accountable to the public. They are not required to administer standardized tests and have no financial reporting requirements, making it impossible for the public to know if taxpayer dollars are being spent efficiently.

Additionally, research consistently finds that ESAs negatively affect student achievement. Studies of voucher programs in Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana, and D.C. found that students who used vouchers experienced sharp declines in reading and math when compared to similar students who remained in public schools. In some states, these declines were greater than the detrimental effects of Hurricane Katrina and the COVID-19 pandemic.

HB 1 also makes it clear that students lose their civil rights when they enroll in a private school. Private schools that accept vouchers have no obligation to provide services to students with disabilities. Unlike public schools, which have to accept every student who walks through their doors, private schools can choose not to admit students because they deem them too expensive to educate or because they reject their identities. HB 1 makes it clear that private schools that accept vouchers do not need to modify their curriculum, practices, or policies in any way, meaning they can freely discriminate—particularly against LGBTQ+ students, which is exactly what happened in Indiana, where millions of dollars in vouchers have gone to schools with discriminatory anti-LGBTQ+ policies.

We cannot allow the Governor and certain legislators to continue holding Texas children enrolled in public schools hostage in exchange for ESAs. Texas's per-pupil funding for schools ranks 42nd in the country, and we are facing critical teacher shortages in areas like Bilingual and Special Education. It is shameful that the Legislature is failing to meet its Constitutional duty to adequately support and maintain a system of free public schools. I encourage you to separate the portions of HB 1 that increase public school funding from the section that establishes an ESA, and approve increased public school funding without setting up a system that will only drain money from and weaken our state's public education system.

Kelsey Kling
Self
Dripping Springs, TX

I am opposed to HB 1. I am firmly opposed to a voucher, ESA, or any other third-way system that takes the tax dollars from public institutions and funnels them to a private vendors. Texas must tie public education funding to the must needed dollars to more adequately fund the one system to which all students have access. It is my fervent hope that the Legislature will see fit to add much needed funding to our existng neighborhood school system without further entertaining a voucher scheme.

Randy Grothues
Self
San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

?I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). I am one of the many citizens of Texas who has loved one's with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

?HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

?I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

?Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

?It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

?Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

?There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication.

[Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]?

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)?

Sincerely,

Randy Grothues
San Antonio TX, 78210

Stephen Miller
self, retired
AUSTIN, TX

Vouchers are a scam. It's an effort to kill off public education by greedy grifters who don't care a hoot about the quality of education. They just want the money.

It's a ploy meant to siphon off some of those funds to the pockets of well-connected donors.

Sending public funds to private institutions is wrong.

What's the alternative? Make America's public schools the best in the world. Pay enough to lure the best teachers our country has. Why is this scheme never mentioned?

Susan Wilson

Self - member of Rush Elementary School PTA (Lubbock TX)

Lubbock, TX

It is time for Texas to support and improve the public school system rather than continue to divide this state!!! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, why spend additional, unnecessary funds for ESAs or Vouchers. If parents choose to send their child to an alternative school then they need to be personally responsible for that choice. If they are doing so because their public school is sub-standard SHAME ON THE TEXAS LEGISLATORS! I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

SUE TOMLINSON

Self/retired AAG 21 years

Houston, TX

Everyone is aware Abbott wants to destroy public education. Everyone is aware there is money to fund public schools. Everyone is aware Abbott is motivated by his political aspirations and has no concern for our children and grandchildren. For once, Texas, do the right thing and vote for the people and not Abbott's agenda.

Kyle Williams, Dr.

Austin Independent School District

Austin, TX

I agree with all of the proposed inclusions EXCEPT the educational savings account program stipulation - as a public educator, we should be investing in our public schools so that all students have free access to the quality education to which they're entitled. We should not be diverting funds towards voucher programs when charter schools are not required to employ certified, qualified staff or report what is happening with the money they are receiving. The voucher programs and charter schools that I have seen so far are creating a type of class warfare in which the wealthiest students with the most educated parents are making huge gains, while our students of color and low income families remain oppressed by the education system. Please vote to remove the ESA stipulation. Thank you.

John Mitchell, Mr

Self

Cypress, TX

No school vouchers. Find out public schools!

Samantha Grinsfelder

RISD

Dallas, TX

A voucher program will cost Texas billions of dollars that should be invested in public schools that serve all children, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND MENTAL ILLNESS. Support public schools and oppose any kind of voucher.

Katherine Conde

self

El Paso, TX

I support vouchers for students to attend the schools of their choice...

Maria Ibarra
Self - Surgical Coordinator
Lufkin, TX

Subject: Support for HB1 Legislature Bill

To whom it may concern],

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1, as I believe it is a crucial piece of legislation that will positively impact our community. The provisions outlined in the bill address key issues and contribute to the overall well-being of our constituents.

If passed, HB1 has the potential to allow children of all income levels to decide which school they want to go to, fostering a more inclusive & efficient environment for everyone. I urge you to consider the long-term benefits this legislation could bring and kindly request your support during the upcoming vote.

Personally I have 3 children and one went to public school the other two private. Sometimes it is hard making ends meet to make sure, to what I believe, is a more beneficial education. The easiest choice would be to place them in public school because of the financial burdens but in my heart I know that private school is the best option for me. I wouldn't have it any other way now that I have seen the outcome in both of my girls. I hope that in the future it would become available for all parents who currently have to face a choice of either public or private solely due to not having the income to do so.
Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Maria Ibarra

Darkrbe Workman, BSN nurse, wife, mother
Biblical Christians
Plano, TX

Do not sign HB 1, we will be watching!

Danielle Aldridge
Self
Red Rock, TX

I am pleading with our state representatives to vote Yes on school choice for all! There were multiple fights in Cedar Creek high school yesterday. There were multiple gunshots outside of the school yesterday, they had to bring the kids that ride buses back inside until they confirmed it was on private property. Aside from the growing violence inside public schools they are not teaching our kids what they need to know to live a successful life. Children should be learning our history so it isn't repeated, they should not be made confused by gender or being taught what gay is. That is a personal choice that a person should make as an adult. If we grant school choice to all families then public schools that aren't doing a good job will work harder to get students back!! They will see parents want a good education for their children and they will compete to make their education system better. Right now public school has a monopoly, most families can not afford private school. Why not let the schools compete for the money we pay with our taxes for our children's educations. Where are our children and grandchildren going to be in 10-20 years? 30-40 years? What will Texas look like if we don't stand up for our children now. I am asking Texas state representative stand up for our Great State of Texas and Vote YES on HB 1 and universal school choice for ALL Texas kids. Thank You and God Bless

Lisa Cauble

Self, retired

Austin, TX

Like most Texans, I oppose vouchers no matter what you call them. Vouchers cannot help every child (private schools choose their students) and do not provide for needed accountability. Further they don't fully cover the cost of private schools so only some students can benefit from them. Texas should spend more money on all public schools, instead of starving them for funds like the GOP has been doing for years. Public schools educate every child who shows up, no matter their disabilities or behavioral issues. They do so without violating the first amendment by spending my tax dollars for religious instruction. I am a Christian, a product of Texas public schools, mom of twins who went through public schools through college graduation, daughter of two public school teachers. Public schools are constitutionally required and should be fully funded. The legislature should say no to "education savings" accounts aka vouchers and put real money toward public schools.

Beverly Barrington

Austin SSLC Family Guardian Association

Austin, TX

I wholeheartedly support this bill (HB1) to give out information regarding our great SSLCs, specifically to the Special Ed students who are being referred to residential placement and services. Thank you.

Lourdes Vera

Self

Houston, TX

I support the idea of a public policy that financially assists me in choosing the best educational environment for my children by allowing my tax dollars to be used outside of the public school system

Michelle Alkhatib

Self

Highland Village, TX

Our two current systems in that are in place (traditional public schools and charter schools) are not adequately funded. This needs to be rectified or another system created prior to adding the system. There are numerous unfunded mandates that have been passed down to school districts in each legislative session. While this bill begins to require one of these mandates for those who would receive a voucher, all rules and laws passed by the Texas Legislature for 88 sessions should be required to apply to those receiving a voucher. If not followed, then the parents should have the same freedom from these laws for public schools.

The \$2.4B put towards the Golden Penny yield and not toward the Basic Allotment does not benefit all schools. An increase to the basic allotment is needed for addressing inflationary costs and a statewide educator shortage. The increase to the BA beginning in 2024-25 is a step in the right direction, to address inflation the BA should be raised to \$7,060, which is still well below any dollar amount that has been proposed for an education savings account/voucher. Funding, laws, and rules should be applied the same to any education system funded by taxpayer dollars. The additional funding for Special Education, Fine Arts, and other identified areas is important and was needed to be passed in the regular session. Money that is being used to increase the Teacher Incentive Allotment should be put towards the Basic Allotment, as pay for ALL teachers in Texas beyond a one time increase needs to be addressed first and foremost. The increase to the BA will help with salary increases to also help offset the increased cost of healthcare to staff. Between HB 1605 and HB 3 passed during the legislative session, the fiscal notes indicated TEA could be adding 100 staff, while there are no staff funding provisions for LEAs. Any additional requirements for TEA that would require them to add additional staff should not be enacted at this time. TEA continues to increase staffing levels, when local school districts are reducing staffing levels while the data requests and paperwork burden on school districts from TEA only continues to grow with fewer and fewer staff to meet these demands.

The Texas Commission on Assessment and Accountability should consist of members who are experts in assessment and accountability - these members should not be limited to appointees only.

Christine Doan

Self

Houston, TX

I support hb1 My comment:

I support parental choice in education. Please assist parents in choosing the best educational environment for their children by allowing their tax dollars to be used outside of the public school system.

Thank you

Abigail Wylie

Self- Adapted Physical Education Teacher, Special Olympics Coach, Parent
Brookshire, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a teacher in Katy ISD, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Abigail Wylie

30226 Willow Chase Ln
Brookshire, TX 77423

Anastasia Bowley

Self

Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Anastasia Bowley

4603 Finley Dr

Austin, TX 78731

Tyson Kirksey

self

Plano, TX

Texas is near the bottom in per-student funding for education. Our public school teachers and administrators and dealing with repeated unfunded mandates (like security) and many districts including my own have been forced to run deficits just to keep their teachers. Please reject any voucher program that would direct public money to private institutions that can pick and choose which students to accept and are unaccountable to voters who would be providing any such funding. This would only further disadvantage our public school systems in Texas. **FUND AND SUPPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

Jaime Dimmick-Frame

self-teacher

Haslet, TX

I am in opposition of this bill. It is an irresponsible use of state funds and not sustainable.

Desiree Velasquez

self

Slaton, TX

PreK needs to be included in ANY choice program!

Shira Goldberg

self, educator

AUSTIN, TX

Voucher programs benefit the wealthy and those with the means and time to choose a school and exclude their child from the diversity of public education. Voucher programs ensure that public schools will become a place for the poor kids and the kids with special needs. It is unfair and immoral to take the opportunity away from all of our kids to be exposed to different types of students, and it is especially wrong to take the benefits of inclusion away from our kids with special needs. They don't have to be served by any private school, who may or may not even have the staff needed to support the student, and this bill will force them to go to lower performing schools without actually giving them a choice at all. Do not institutionalize our kids with special needs. Do not take advantage of the poor families who are not even always able to advocate for themselves by protesting this disgusting bill. You should be ashamed for victimizing poor families and children with disabilities in this way, our most vulnerable citizens.

Lorie Robles

Alien TSTA

Houston, TX

Please help public education.

Ashlie Simon

Self

Houston, TX

Public school finance issues should take priority over any talk of voucher systems. Basic allotment per student in public schools should be significantly raised. These issues should be voted on separately and not lumped together.

John Paul Higgins

Self

Houston, TX

In full support of HB 1!

Amanda Latham

self

Gatesville, TX

Dear Committee Members:

Teachers need a permanent raise during this time of inflation. Teachers are the only State employees who didn't receive a raise this past year. Teacher salaries should not be based on ESA's, they should be voted on separately.

Educational Savings account funds should require accountability and State testing. All other government funded programs and grants require proof that money is being used sufficiently!

Emily Moon
Self - designer
Argyle, TX
Nov. 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

This is an URGENT message as we know the Public Education Committee meets tomorrow at 9:00 am! As a member of Argyle ISD, this is my personal written testimony regarding HB1 and how it might best meet the needs of public schools and Argyle ISD.

As you meet tomorrow and in the days ahead, we urge you to adequately address the following as you consider public school finance needs:

Please provide an increase to the basic allotment to match inflation. \$6,700 is a great start, but is not enough to offset the impact of significantly-rising costs. Rising fuel and utility costs, competitively compensating highly-qualified teaching staff, managing fast-growth, and the cost to fund award winning programs for students have put a critical strain on our school finances and ability to effectively operate.

Reconsideration of an ESA program. As a public school advocate, I cannot support a program with such significant administrative costs which will be coming from taxpayer dollars that could be supporting our public schools at a time when they are severely under-funded. Not only that, but the currently-proposed \$10,400 in ESAs is significantly more than the proposed increase to \$6,700 in basic allotment, which is foundationally inequitable.

Additionally, we need solutions for districts impacted by the expiring Formula Transition Grant. While this was a solution in 2019 for some districts that did not receive additional funding by the school finance reform, the FTG expires this year and several school districts, including Argyle ISD, face a major funding cliff. For Argyle ISD, this is 6% of our operating budget and as it currently stands, there is no solution for extending or replacing the FTG. There are less than 100 districts impacted by the FTG, however, it is significant for all of us and must be addressed!

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to compensate our teachers fairly. Texas lags behind the national average in teacher pay. We need an increase in funding to give our teachers much-deserved raises. As you consider teacher stipends, please revise these provisions to be permanent rather than one-time payments, as a lack of continuing support will leave our schools unable to sustain fair compensation for our teachers.

As you take these needs into consideration, we hope you will recognize that these challenges are affecting all Texas schools, including high-performing, highly-rated districts like Argyle ISD.

Emily Moon

Brandy Boza
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Teachers can barely make ends meet, our insurance coverage is poor, does not take into consideration the importance of getting mental help (reimbursement issues), and we are now facing budget cuts that will render positions in the district null and void.

Erica McNally
Self---mother of 2 children: one in public school and one who homeschools
Highland Village, TX

Every parent deserves the freedom I have---to determine and provide the education best suited to each child. I'm a former public school teacher and now I'm the mother of a public school kid AND I homeschool one kid. My perspectives are many! Let every kid get the education he/she deserves.

Amber Hawk
Self, Principal
Beaumont, TX

As a Texas elementary public education school principal, I have so many thoughts on HB 1. I'm going to try and sum them up here.

To begin with, I am fundamentally against HB 1 or any other bill that creates a voucher program. We should not be using taxpayer money for private schools! Tax dollars for education should remain in public schools. Using public funds to fund private schools is bad for kids and harmful to our rural communities.

Secondly, rather than funding our public schools and moving us up from 43rd in the nation, HB 1 shifts money to private schools without the same accountability for those dollars. Accountability is a huge issue right now with our public school system as it is. TEA has yet to release the standards from last year! Adding in a whole set of schools that aren't held to the same standards but yet get the public school funds does not help our education system at all. We need to focus on fixing what is already going on with our education system, not adding more mess. It sickens me that we are 43rd in the nation! We can do better!

Next, the track record for vouchers in other states is largely unsuccessful. I have yet to see research that shows a successful voucher program in other states. Additionally, we have so many things that need to be fixed within our public education system with funding. We are already underfunded! Diversifying the money to private schools is only going to hurt public schools more. Additionally, I believe the voucher plan is discriminatory in nature. Taxpayer money would fund private schools that will discriminate against certain students based on disabilities, disciplinary challenges, and intellectual deficiencies. I don't know how anyone can think that this is good for ALL students, and it will be extremely harmful to our communities.

Continuing, the fact that teacher salaries are being tied to vouchers is disgusting and disrespectful. We should be celebrating the hard work of our educators and paying them well because they are investing in our future. This should not be tied to the political game of vouchers.

Finally, I believe that if HB 1 passes, it will be detrimental to public schools in Texas. We are already underfunded and understaffed, and this will just compound issues. We can create situations through HB 1 where families can take students to a private school, if they are accepted, but still bring the students back to the public school to receive the federally required special education services. We are already understaffed with our growing special education population, and if we don't get the funding to support students who are attending private schools with vouchers, we will have even more staffing and funding issues.

I urge you to listen to the educators of Texas who firmly stand against HB 1 and ask that you see the future of education in Texas as a priority apart from any voucher bill.

Please feel free to reach out if I can be of further assistance.

Amber Hawk
409-781-1474

Robyn Jones
Self
Benbrook, TX

I do not support education savings accounts. They hurt the population as a whole. We need a strong public school system with a range of students from different socioeconomic groups. This bill would only help middle income people that are already on the edge of being able to send their kids to private schools because most of the private schools are way more expensive than the amount allotted in this bill. Our society will be worse off for further dividing up the low income kids from middle and upper income kids and this is the only thing this voucher system will achieve.

Alex Gurman

Self

Plano, TX

Yesterday, Governor Abbott called a 4th special session with school choice on the agenda.

The House immediately filed HB1 which contains their version of an Education Savings Account program.

This is the best school choice proposal to come out of the Texas House of Representatives.

The bill will be heard in committee tomorrow Thursday November 9th.

We are urging all Texas residents to submit a comment urging committee members to support the bill.

Please click on the link below to submit a comment.

Select HB1 (there may be two HB1's listed, you can select either).

This is a sample comment you can submit. Please feel free to edit and personalize.

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,

Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Alex Gurman

LaTosha Bennett, Special Education Coordinator

Alvin ISD

Alvin, TX

No Deal!!!! NO Voucher!!!!

Richard Lopchinsky

Richard A. Lopchinsky, MD

Plano, TX

Please vote yes for school choice. Unfortunately, there are teachers and board members throughout the state (and country) who dont support the moral values that I support and school choice gives the parents the ability to make sure the education their children get meets their moral code. Thank you

Cassandra Lomas

Self

Slaton, TX

PreK needs to be included in ANY choice program!

Jill Melancon

Self- public school teacher

Houston, TX

I am a product and parent of Spring Branch ISD in Houston. I am also a teacher in this amazing district. We are a niche in the big city. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. Our class sizes will balloon. The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. FULLY FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!

Courtney Gagnon

self-Educator

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers and inadequate funding will impact my campus, district, and community. It will force schools to close, student-teacher ratios increase, and programs will be cut.

Lindsey Courtemanche

Self

Sachse, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Meghan Gale

Austin ISD

Austin, TX

School vouchers will be to the detriment of the public school sector. The amount of public funding will be reduced to the public schools and then more students will be requesting vouchers. This is a very poorly organized plan.

Aaron Martini

Self

Dallas, TX

I am writing today as a father to two kids currently in Texas public schools. I am asking for you to support the 5.5 million kids in Texas public schools and the teachers and support staff that put their hearts into educating our kids. The basic allotment has not increased since 2019 despite double digit inflation. It is time to fix that. While the state may be paying a larger share of the education funding in order to lower property taxes, the schools haven't seen an increase in 4 years. We all know that a lot of changed in 4 years.

I am vehemently opposed to school vouchers and ESAs. Have you looked at the results from Florida, Arizona, or any of the other states that have passed universal school choice? They're not good. These programs cost billions of dollars, take much needed money away from already struggling public schools, and don't really improve outcomes. Often new schools will pop up, take all the state money, and then fold halfway through the school year resulting in kids going back to the public schools despite the public schools getting no money because the voucher has already been cashed. In an effort at accountability, the newest bill states that after if a student doesn't meet testing requirements after two years, he will be kicked out of the program, and my guess is, sent back to public schools. How will this count against the public school who is now responsible for catching this kid back up on 2 years of education? Private schools get to choose which students to serve and often don't serve special needs kids or kids that may be struggling. Texas parents don't want to have to leave their neighborhood schools and drive across town to a private school, if they even have that option. This is not even an option in rural areas where the public schools are the heart of the community, and the only schools around. Vouchers are a coupon for the wealthy that are already paying for private schools. They won't help lower income families because many families don't have the means to pay the difference or have access to transportation to get kids to different schools. It's not true competition if the rules aren't the same.

Texas parents want well funded, well run public schools in their neighborhoods. That starts with respecting the teachers and staff that run these schools. The time is now to show your support of Texas public schools through your actions, not just your words. Giving public tax dollars to schools with no accountability measures or standards is about as unconservative as you can get. Increase the basic allotment and say no to vouchers/ESAs. Texans have spoken time and time again about this issue. You were elected to represent all the constituents of your district, not the Governor, and definitely not the GOP.

Bonnie Latham

Gatesville ISD

Gatesville, TX

As a 17 year veteran public educator in a rural school district, PLEASE DO NOT compromise on vouchers. Continue to say NO! Voucher programs in other states have NOT been proven to help students. Fund public education appropriately! Listen to your TEACHERS and trust us as the professionals we are! We need teacher pay raises and per pupil raises as well. Most teachers want to see reform and this is NOT the answer! This is a politically and economically driven cause, this is NOT helping the children of Texas or our future as a state. 91% of students in Texas are enrolled in public education. Ask yourself, who is this benefitting?

Charlene Shafer

Self

Cypress, TX

I am opposed to HB 1. I'm opposed to public funds being used for private or parochial schools currently being called educational Grant programs. These private schools are not accountable for student performance & are not required to admit or provide services for students with disabilities. I'm also concerned about the State Supported Learning centers. These will increase the number of students with Intellectual Disabilities being 'warehoused' instead of being cared for by their families. In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1, education Grant programs and to protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives.

Margaret Ann Gardner, Ph.D.

Margaret Ann (Bonny) Gardner Psychologist

Austin, TX

Please reconsider funding for vouchers for private religious schools. This action will drain needed money away from our public school systems which are able to offer so many more programs to students, including sports activities, as well as school based health services. Also, public schools, especially in rural and small town Texas are centers of community social and economic life. They knit the community together and also offer much needed jobs locally. They are essential to local pride and identity. I worry that private and religious schools will not be subject to needed oversight to ensure children's safety. I also worry about potential violations of religious freedom in these settings. The voucher system will seriously antagonize members of rural Texas communities and fragment our system of education. There will be less standardization of learning. Many Texans, both rural and urban, take this as an assault on our educational systems and will make their voices heard in upcoming elections.

REBECCA JAPKO

PART

BRENTHAM, TX

Dear Texas Representatives and Members of the Educational Opportunity & Enrichment Select Committee,

Families should be provided with the information regarding the option of a State Supported Living Center (SSLC) placement
ONLY IF

the school district has determined that a special education student, as part of the IEP (Individualized Education Program) process, requires residential placement.

The student's condition must also satisfy the strict criteria for SSLC admittance.

The multi-disciplinary services provided by a SSLC is vital to those children with complicated behavioral health needs that require residential treatment.

Many families cannot safely care for their child at home.

School districts should inform parents of these children that a SSLC placement is one option of residential placement.

An SSLC is often closer to the family, especially for those students who are only offered out of state placement.

Let us keep Texas' children in Texas and give families a lifesaving choice.

Let us ensure ensure PARENTAL FREEDOM for parents to determine the appropriate setting for their child.

Thank you for allowing me to comment.

Rebecca Japko, President of Parents & Allies for Remarkable Texans living in Texas SSLCs

Ryan HODGES

self

Arlington, TX

I'm writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session.

Almost a year ago, my wife and I had triplets here in Arlington. Three boys! My wife and I had a great experience in Texas public schools and we are excited to shepherd our boys through the public school system. For us, it was a fantastic combination of educational and social development. However, vouchers would weaken the Texas public schools we are sending our boys to by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept. We want to make our public schools the best, not just good enough for our sons. Vouchers would unduly hamper the potential of public schools.

Separately, my wife and I are committed baptists. A historic Baptist distinctive is the friendly separation between church and state. Vouchers would send public money to religious institutions. This is something that is theologically opposed to basic Baptist theology. Whether it's a private, baptist school, an islamic school or anything in-between, plain Baptist theology opposes public money to these institutions. The BGCT (the largest association of Baptist churches in the state) opposes vouchers partially because it stands against who baptists are. The SBTC (another large Baptist association that is more conservative than the BGCT) has notably remained silent on the issue.

Please stand for our public schools financially, continue the school choice program that we already enjoy (ability to go to any public school), and represent the views of many baptists across the state.

Finally, thank you for your work as a state representative. It is difficult, tireless and is an act of service. I hope that you do not support vouchers for the reasons above; however, I will pray for you and your family regardless of your final position.

Thanks,
Ryan Hodges
1806 Woodridge Drive
Arlington, TX

Janet Harrison, NBCT
self - National Board Certified Teacher
Roanoke, TX

As a member of the Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching, a 501(c)(3), I urge you to continue to designate National Board Certified Teachers as “recognized” or to designate them as “exemplary” under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA).

House Bill 1 proposes that, under the Teachers Incentive Allotment (TIA), National Board Certified Teachers automatically earn a “nationally board certified” designation, equivalent to a new, fourth level of designation, “acknowledged.” Under HB 1, National Board Certified Teachers would continue to generate \$3,000-\$9,000 in allotment funding.

This is concerning because, currently, National Board Certified Teachers earn a “recognized” designation, which is the third level of designation. Under HB 1, the “recognized” designation would have an increased allotment of \$5000 - \$15,000. This change would devalue the incentive that seeks to reward and retain Texas educators who demonstrate exemplary teaching practices and increased student outcomes.

The House Committee on Public Education’s 2022 Interim Report recommended that National Board Certified Teachers be designated as “exemplary.” This esteemed group recognized that the upper levels of the TIA designations are more aligned with the high level of teaching National Board Certified Teachers have demonstrated.

National Board Certified Teachers have met the “gold standard” for teaching. Research shows that National Board Certified Teachers produce 1-2 months of additional learning for their students compared to their peers. To earn National Board Certification, teachers undergo a rigorous process where they demonstrate their content knowledge through an assessment, submit samples of student work and videos of their teaching, and analyze their own instruction. I personally spent in excess of 400 hours outside of my teaching responsibilities to earn my National Board Certification.

Designating NBCTs as “Recognized” or “Exemplary” is the best way to reward and retain outstanding Texas teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools.

I would be happy to address this issue further at any public hearings over this matter.

Leigh Straughn
Self- Talented and Gifted Magnet PTSA, W.B. Travis TAG Vanguard & Academy PTA, Woodrow Wilson HS PTA
Dallas, TX

PLEASE fully fund our public schools! Our tax dollars should go to the institutions that serve the PUBLIC because ALL children deserve a shot at the best education they can possibly receive. This is possible with full financial support of our PUBLIC schools. ESAs will draw available funds away from public schools while benefitting private institutions that (a) are not held to the same accountability standards and (b) can selectively admit the students of their choosing. ESAs will also benefit individuals who already have the means to choose private school for their children while providing *insufficient financial support* for low-income families to access private school. If you want to help students in struggling public schools, FULLY FUND those schools and provide the resources they need to educate every child! If you have the will, there is a way. We can stand up FOR CHILDREN and our state's future and AGAINST political pandering to the self-interested big money that is trying to control the direction of our state! The concept of ESAs should not even be considered until our public schools and public school educators receive all of the funding they need!

Elizabeth Lewis
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Stop depriving Texas residents of their right to quality public education. We need to fully fund public schools before we can even think about giving money to private schools. No to vouchers, no to ESAs, yes to fully funding public education. Yes to fully funding special education. Yes to teacher pay raises, yes to para pay raises. Yes to virtual education. Yes to CTE funding.

michael williams

Self

SAN ANTONIO, TX

I support this bill and agree with it to move Texas to the front of education in the country.

Ashley Dutchover

self

Lubbock, TX

PreK needs to be included in ANY choice program!

Meredith Bowman

Myself and education (teacher & parent)HB1

Fort Worth, TX

I am against this bill! As a teacher I see you enforcing teacher to be let go of and allow AI to teach then hire someone to “facilitate” the classes. Also did you invite any teachers, parents, or principals in to speak? No you didn’t. I just spoke on a campus to future educators and they said the downfall of education is technology. Watching kindergartners on a screen for 45 minutes plus in one sitting was very disappointing to them. Also we already have school choice in Texas. One of the students in this college class said they attended a private school and he participated in their workstudy program. Working all the after school activities to earn the income to pay for the tuition difference the family couldn’t afford. This bill does not represent real school choice. It attaches all the same assessments to every entity of education and that is NOT school choice. Furthermore are those assessments going to be “global” assessments? You are calling it “universal school choice” right? Stop with all of this nonsense. Please help public education get back to paper, pencil and reading and writing. We need technology out of k-8th. Students should only be using technology as a resource not as the education. You are taking autonomy away from the teachers. You are creating the workforce instead of allowing our future generations to create the future workforce. Stop funding all your vendor friends!

Cheryl Tunnell

Self, psychotherapist

Heath, TX

ESA program is a transfer of public funds to private schools, without accountability or transparency. As a counselor, i know the private schools do not have to provide needed services for students- such as counseling, and special education of all types.

This is a travesty for students.

Instead, please fully fund public schools, including much needed increases in counselors and psychologists.

Jlyne Hanback

Self - Realtor and business owner

Frisco, TX

In Texas, where public education has historically battled for adequate funding, school voucher programs could exacerbate existing challenges. Vouchers would divert Texas's state revenues from public to private schools, potentially diminishing the quality and accessibility of education for the majority who rely on public schools. As public schools contend with budget constraints for teacher pay, textbooks, and essential programs, vouchers could deepen inequalities, drawing funds away from students in greatest need. Texas policymakers should reject voucher bills, focusing instead on strengthening the state's commitment to an equitable public education system for all children.

Brent Kilpatrick

self Teacher/Coach

Cisco, TX

I am against school vouchers. Vouchers will re-segregate schools in Texas. I am for teacher raises. I will never vote for Greg Abbott or any of his backers again. It's time for our reps. to get a clue what we the people actually want.

Matthew Taylor
self
Grapevine, TX

We're not even close to funding public schools. It would take \$15 billion to get back to where Texas was in 2019 because of inflation. And it would take over \$40 billion (this biennium) to reach the national average in per student spending. Governor Abbott admitted he's offering a small increase in school funding as 'a carrot' to pass his voucher scam. This will take more money out of our schools than it puts in, shortchanging our children and their futures that will ultimately defund public schools. Texans deserve a clean school finance bill that fully funds our public schools and invests in all our students, not just the wealthy few. This voucher scam is just like the first voucher was proposed in 1957, it didn't work then and it doesn't work now.

Brent Hawkins, Superintendent
Livingston ISD
Livingston, TX

I would beg those voting on this bill to understand the impact that could possibly become law. This bill in my professional opinion is radical and will have damaging repercussions. Please pull this bill apart and vote on these items individually. Paying students to homeschool will motivate some parents to take money for their household survival at the expense of their child's education. The vouchers have little impact at this time on our district, but I believe that all funds must be tied to accountability. If those that want competition with public schools are determined this bill should pass then make the same playing field for accountability a prerequisite for accepting the funds for all schools. We have the lowest number of future teachers per capita ever to enroll in teacher prep programs this year so we must enact the recommendations from Gov. Abbott's committee to improve the profession. Thanks, for your consideration of my opposition to HB1.

Amber Lewis
self- PTA member
Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Justin Adams
Self - business owner
Grapevine, TX

I do not support creation of education savings accounts

Rhonda Anderson
self
Longview, TX

it's time for Texas to pass School choice for our students and parents. I fully support HB1 and stop letting our public schools hold kids hostage that need alternative choices.

Julianna Fernandez
Spring Branch ISD
HOUSTON, TX

After reading through HB 1, I think it is extremely disingenous to the public to say that this house bill will help solve the finance issue with public schools today. Proposing to spend tax dollars on educational savings accounts that will not benefit ALL Texans is taking money from the public school system that educates the majority of children in this state that are our future. As a tax payer who bought a home in an area where schools were highly rated, we are facing a \$35 million dollar shortfall which is causing our district to close many programs and offerings that make the district stand out. As a tax payer who pays a LOT in school taxes, it is just wrong that the state is taking most of the monies paid in by hard working Texans, only to spend on recapture and to put into non-educational places. Our school districts need to be FULLY FUNDED. Texas is one of the poorest at funding public schools in the nation and allotting less than \$600 for students will NOT solve any issues. Allowing ESA's to pay for private school tuition where teachers, students, institutions are NOT held to the same standards (or any for that matter) for public schools is just wrong. Please think about ALL kids (not just the socioeconomically disadvantaged or disabled) when you make decision. We do not live in a socialist state/country. Please wake up and stop making these bandaid solutions....please consider revamping school finance as a whole. Our children depend on it.

Courtney Adkins
self/Special Education teacher
Friendswood, TX

We need you to hear that schools and teachers are struggling. Special Education numbers are growing and they are cutting our support. GREAT Teachers are leaving the field because they cannot afford to teach. Help us!

Nicole Hobson
Self
Houston, TX

I am a product and parent of Spring Branch ISD in Houston. We are a niche in the big city. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. Our class sizes will balloon. The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!

Jennifer Gracia
self
Corpus Christi, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication.

[Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/.../residential-options...>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Jennifer Marie Gracia
1118 Crescent Drive
Corpus Christi, Texas 78412
jmgracia361@yahoo.com

Mike Jones
Self
Chico, TX

I am opposed to vouchers and esa's. Public funds should be used to support Public Education.

Kellye Morton
Self, educator
Nevada, TX

I am strongly opposed to private school vouchers. Until the private sector is held accountable and are required to educate ALL students, I will NEVER support private school vouchers.

Mike Grammer, Dr.

Self; Self employed

Garland, TX

I am a resident of Garland with 4 kids in public schools (Hillside, Austin and GHS). I support the idea of public schools, however, in our experience, particularly in High School, public schools have become strongly partisan on issues related to sex and religion. I can cite examples of high school TEACHERS stating or otherwise communicating that religion is foolish/stupid, homosexuality is good, transsexuality is better, you get to pick your gender, Gov. Abbott is a Nazi, men are bad and women are good, men oppress women, pre-marital sex is ok, divorce is ok and the US is bad. Educators are able to convey judgments on topics explicitly and more subtly. If public education were less biased in this particular direction I might be less concerned. Reflecting upon my high school education, I can only confidently state the political party of one of my teachers. I would strongly prefer if public school policy were reviewed and corrected in these matters. In lieu of this, I would appreciate the opportunity to apply a portion of my taxes toward the education of my children in an environment that was not at odds with our beliefs in these matters. Otherwise, I am coerced to fund the teaching of doctrines which I oppose. Thank you for the opportunity to express my views.

Melissa Schroer, Mrs

self/ mother at home

Sugar Land, TX

I would like to see this bill pass because it will make public schools accountable for the work they do. Texas citizens believe in liberty and we would like to have the freedom to send our money where it best serves our children. Please help schools improve education for children by approving this bill.

Lori Kelley

Self

Dripping Springs, TX

I am completely opposed to spending tax payer dollars on private school vouchers. It is appalling that Governor Abbott and many Republican leaders refuse to fully fund public education when there is a 40 billion dollar surplus available to do so. I have been a Republican my entire life, but will definitely be voting for different representation for future elections. Calling a 4th special session just for vouchers is wasting time and tax payer money as the people have spoken - we don't want vouchers!!!

Andrea Grapko

Self - Lecturer

Austin, TX

Public money should not be drained from public education and applied toward private education, this bill will significantly negatively impact public education in the state. Rural districts are already barely surviving, requiring money to be redistributed from urban districts to operate, creating budget deficits for urban districts. Additionally, the teacher shortage is already significantly impacting education, and adding vouchers will only make that worse; please DON'T vote for vouchers!

Anna Brindley

self

Dallas, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Anna Brindley
6614 Aintree Circle
Dallas TX 75214

Bethany Gabbard

Self, data analyst

Austin, TX

Public schools are woefully underfunded. A well educated population is good for all Texans. Tax money needs to stay in the public schools. Vouchers are bad for kids and bad for Texas. Please say no to the attempt to further degrade our public schools.

Beverly Cherry, Sister and Guardian

BSSLC

Houston, TX

I support this bill

Pamela DeVoll

Self, Watson MST PTA Treasurer and Sr Dir of Marketing and NPD

Garland, TX

Vouchers hurt children! I hope you continue the fight to avoid passing legislation supporting vouchers. There is no room for ESAs or Vouchers without harm to our public schools. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Adaobi Elekwachi

Self

Katy, TX

I support this bill

Magdalena Mata, National Board Certified Teacher

Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching

Boerne, TX

As a member of the Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching, a 501(c)(3), I urge you to continue to designate National Board Certified Teachers as "recognized" or to designate them as "exemplary" under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA).

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Designating NBCTs as "Recognized" or "Exemplary" is the best way to reward and retain outstanding Texas teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools.

Jennifer Mayfield

Self

Austin, TX

I'm against education savings accounts. Our taxes are sky high in Austin which is supposed to fund public schools. This bill takes funding away from public schools into a system of private schools which most of us cannot afford in the Austin area. As a product of public school please fund and fix the public schools system. Those who are in private schools are able to afford it and it is their choice. I'm against taking public tax dollars to fund unregulated private schools.

Tiffany Braymen

Self - PTA RRISD

Round Rock, TX

Vouchers serve as nothing more than to give a discount to wealthy families who could most likely afford to send children to private schools regardless of their availability. The voucher is inadequate to actually fund the full tuition of needy students - so instead they hurt the funding of the education available to those children. You are creating a system where you're telling people they should "bootstrap" while simultaneously undermining the systems available to them to give them the education and resources they need to pull themselves up - then you stand over them saying "why can't you do better?" You should be ashamed.

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Todd Ratliff

Self

Richardson, TX

Support

Mary Fields

self/retired teacher

Mineral Wells, TX

HB 1: I support the creation of education savings accounts, giving parents the opportunity to send their children to the school of their choice.

HB 2: I support the school safety grant program and the school safety plan implementation. I do not see a need for transferring money to the economic stabilization fund, nor to the state highway fund.

HJR 1: I am opposed to creating another constitutional amendment.

I do not see any more required things to fill in.

Amanda McCarver

Gatesville High School

GATESVILLE, TX

School Vouchers are NOT the way to go. The money that has been originally put into public schools is now getting taken away from the public education and would have the option of going into private institutions. Plus, most if not all of the private institutions that would receive these vouchers are not held to the same regulations or expectations as the public schools.

William Rattan, PA-C
Self - physician assistant
Farmers Branch, TX

To the esteemed members of the House Committee,

I oppose the creation of the "Education Savings Account Program" described in Article 6. Such a program would divert much needed funds from public schools. I am also concerned that this program would increase segregation in Texas's education system along class and racial lines.

More specifically, I am concerned about the language in Sec. 29. 359 (9). If this Program were to pass, I think the funds should provide meals to students regardless of the type of school they attend.

I am also concerned about Sec. 29. 0475 (b) (2) (A) regarding provider's religious beliefs. I think this language is unnecessary and could encourage the religious indoctrination of children using taxpayer funds.

I generally support the aspects of Article 7 which would include charter schools in requirements for "benchmark assessments" and "reading instruments." Charter schools should be held to the same standards as public schools.

I support Sec. 48.160 (a)(3). Texas's education system should do more to develop trade skills and get students ready to find a job that works for them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Isabella Onofrei
self
Keller, TX

I am trying to get certified for a couple of years now and I have difficulty passing the Speaking part of the TOEFL test. Not because I don't know English but because the TOEFL is designed primely for young students who are interested to study abroad. The algorithm and the speed of the test does not take into consideration the speed reaction of an older brain. That being said, it's frustrating that TEA is asking a set score of 24 for the speaking part, although the TOEFL scoring is done by levels. 24 is part of High-Intermediate (20–24). I wish TEA would take the whole level into consideration, or the higher part (for example, a score between 22-24). This would give a chance to a lot of people interested in the out of country certification. Moreover, I've been living in USA for the past 20 years and in the last 5 years I've been working in education (Keller ISD, Special Education). In the past weeks I've been working with substitutes that do not speak (nor understand) English almost at all. It's beyond frustrating that I want to be a SpEd teacher (and help with the shortage) but I'm not allowed due to this TOEFL test. It feels discriminatory and I am really sad that TEA is not willing to help me as much as I am willing to help the shortage.

Thank you for reading my comment!

Ruth Hoffman Lach, Dr.
self School Psychologist
Houston, TX

I began working in public schools in 1992, as a high school English teacher in Houston ISD. I completed a Master's in School Psychology in 2006, and a PhD in 2013. I have worked in three Houston area public districts and have done contract work for several Houston area charter schools of various sizes. What I saw in every charter schools' Special Education department was appalling, and at times outright illegal. It takes a great deal of funding to provide the services that federal law guarantees for Special Education students, and when that funding is not provided, children suffer.

While I have seen shortcomings in public schools' provision of services, what I saw in charters was so egregious that I contacted TEA about filing formal complaints. Unfortunately, the only way to do that was to breach confidentiality of my students, which would not only be a violation of FERPA, but also of professional ethics.

I observed two main weaknesses in the charter schools' SpEd programs: poor quality staff, and lack of financial resources. Even the best staff cannot do their best work if they are limited to providing services in sub-standard settings. Examples of sub-standard settings I witnessed are 1) placing the SpEd director's "office" in a classroom so that students not only had access to unsecured private files, but also regularly overheard private conversations between the director and staff, parents, etc. 2) having no established private room or office where services (speech, counseling, adaptive PE, OT, etc.) could be provided. Services were provided wherever room could be found - including closets - often with several interruptions occurring (more FERPA violations) and limiting the material resources and equipment that providers could use - simply because nobody can haul an entire office of resources around with them to different campuses.

It costs money to purchase and install adaptive PE, physical therapy, and occupational therapy equipment, much of which is not portable. It costs money to build up professional resource collections and equip Life Skills classrooms. These are one-time costs – exactly the kind that private and charter schools cannot afford.

What really happens when we take money from public schools for vouchers is segregation. Homeschoolers and wealthy parents who have enough disposable income for private school tuition receive a taxpayer-funded supplement for pulling their kids out of public schools, while parents who have less income, must work outside of the home, or whose children's needs can only be met in public schools get nothing, and their children's schools are even more underfunded. The wealthy kids are segregated from everyone else. That's what vouchers are all about, and that is not what tax payers' dollars should be supporting.

Alyssa Garrett
Self
Tomball, TX
Support it

Guy Baird, Mr.
Self/Retired with many grand and great grand children
Sugar Land, TX

For school choice and public school and teacher accountability. Public teachers and administrative staff and administrators need to be tested for knowledge of subject matter, civics and general knowledge of math, English, history, science and values and ethics. Need to eliminate teachers who are not qualified to teach or try to indoctrinate our children. Need for accountability. Need to empower our parents to be parents of their children.

Jeanne Ryan
self, retired physician
AUSTIN, TX

I vehemently oppose any of my taxes going to private schools! We need to increase, not decrease funding for public schools.

Michelle Wilde

self

Allen, TX

Vouchers are not helpful and will serve to give money to wealthy families with children already in private schools. This has been proven by looking at the historical evidence from other states that have implemented vouchers where 75+ percent of the voucher money is going to wealthy families and taking money away from important public school programs. Vouchers do not serve poor kids or kids with disabilities. Vouchers will redirect money from poor families to wealthy families. Public schools in Texas are severely under-funded and most districts are now operating in a deficit-budget. Texas ranks in the bottom when it comes to educational funding and we are way behind in the basic allotment for students. Voucher funding is proposed at \$10,500 which is significantly higher than the current basic allotment. We need to raise the basic allotment by at least \$2000 per student to come anywhere close to the national average of funding for students so Texans can be a leader in education and not a laggard. Thank you for listening and please VOTE FOR OUR KIDS and do not support a private agenda that Texans overwhelmingly do not want. Separate vouchers from HB 1 and do not hold public school funding hostage over the few wealthy billionaires that are pushing vouchers. Thank you.

Patricia Suggs

Self retired and. Raising grandchild

League City, TX

Appropriate money should be allotted to special needs, private schools for children who are unable to function in regular classes.

Thomas Garrett

Self, Property Tax Payer

Bedford, TX

Texas has very high property taxes, largely because we have no state income tax. I pay these property taxes happily because they support my local public schools, which are quite excellent. I do not have children, but I live in Texas, where the Constitution requires a public school system.

This bill will distribute my property tax dollars to people to put their children into private, unaccountable private schools and church schools, and parents that want to home school their children.

Texas already has school choice. Any parent that want can put their children in a private school today without this bill. This bill is an enormous shift of taxpayer money to people who do not need it.

I should be given voucher for the full amount of my property taxes should this bill pass.

Jade Chan Chevalier

Self

Houston, TX

Vouchers only hurt the children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Rebekah Palmer-Conway, RN

Self -Elementary School Nurse and Parent

Garland, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Suzy Moore

Self

Austin, TX

Texas needs strong public schools, not privatized education. For Texas to continue to thrive, every Texan a quality public education. No to vouchers (ESA's)!

Mercedes Guevara, NRCMA

Self

Garland, TX

Please find public school teachers and students.

Jaylyn Sprinkel, Mrs

Wylie ISD PTA

Wylie, TX

I do not support vouchers

Adrienne Conyer

Wylie ISD

Wylie, TX

I do not support vouchers

Alice Troy

self

San Antonio, TX

I am strongly opposed to vouchers for private school education. It will constitute a violation of the separation of church and state, and will greatly reduce the quality of public school education.

Eric Engelskirchen

Self

Jersey Village, TX

School vouchers will ruin the public education system and deprive Texans of the right to education. The majority of Texans do not want vouchers.

Stephanie Wehner, Mrs.

PTA

Wylie, TX

I'm against vouchers.

Laura Seifert

FRIENDSWOOD ISD

Friendswood, TX

Texas public schools are operating on deficit budgets, struggling to recruit and retain teachers, and trying to pay for school safety needs. I urge you, please support public schools and say NO to vouchers. Thank you.

Sara Russell

Wylie isd

Wylie, TX

I am against vouchers

Kamie Herrera

self

Longview, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. I am embarrassed our legislators think it is ok to have Texas be in the bottom 10 in the nation when it comes to Public School Funding. The vast majority of our workforce comes from public schools and it is our duty to fund them to the fullest potential to give them the best future possible as they will be who are in your shoes one day. I encourage you to keep your focus on funding and supporting our public schools.

Neil Jones

Self

Benbrook, TX

Firmly against this Bill. I do not want to take money from public schools and give it to rich people to spend on private schools!

Ester Flores, PhD

Self

San Antonio, TX

It is time for parents to exercise their right to choice their children's education. Please hear our voices. We must stand united to reform the current education system.

Erica Chin
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Erica Denamur
7211 La Sobrina Dr 75248
469 855-9398

Lynn Boswell
Austin ISD Board of Trustees
Austin, TX

I am submitting these comments on behalf of Austin ISD, in alignment with our board-adopted legislative priorities. We are against this bill.

The proposed ESA is just one reason we oppose this bill. While the full list of concerns about this very large bill is too long to list, I do wish to highlight a few of our additional concerns. The proposed increases in public school funding are inadequate. The choice to direct an increasing portion of public education funds through prescriptive allotments rather than increases to the basic allotment reduces the ability of districts to respond to unique local needs in state that is so varied. The proposed expansion of virtual options without clear and narrow guardrails is concerning. The proposed modifications to the accountability system fall far short of what is needed and of what our priorities call for.

We are committed to standing strong against even a small voucher, since history in other states has shown these programs are often expanded to consume larger and larger share of education dollars. The Governor has stated that “now is the time to expand ESAs to every child in the state.” It is disingenuous to accept any claims that the goal is a small program that will remain small, especially in light of the rapid expansion of vouchers in states that have approved them. Data show that most of those public dollars go to families already in private schools. And data about improved outcomes for students is, at best, mixed.

In a state that chooses to underfund our public schools, and that has shortchanged special education services by billions each biennium, a bill that continues to underfund public schools, blame those schools and our state’s educators for underserving students, and offer a third system as an answer is not one we can support.

The proposed increase to the basic allotment is inadequate in many ways. Currently, it would take more than \$1100 to simply match the rate of inflation since 2019 when HB3 was passed. By offering a much smaller increase, this bill would establish a new baseline that continues to shortchange our schools and students. That concern is amplified by the delay in adding an inflationary adjustment – a longtime goal of many advocates. This creates the risk of Texas schools and students falling even farther behind.

We also have significant concerns about the expansion of virtual options. Any legislation that removes current restrictions on virtual education creates the possibility of “virtual vouchers.” While virtual options with significant guardrails could be used to benefit students – for example, by expanding access to a language other than English or a high-level math course – that does not appear to be the intent of this bill.

While this bill does get some things right – like access to free Pre-K for Texas teachers, increased funding for community support in our schools, and greater access to mentoring and teacher residency – it fails in too many ways.

Bradley Conway
Self-Litigation Attorney
Garland, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child’s potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Teresa Norton

Self- Retired

Dallas, TX

House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

REASONS TO OPPOSE HB1

*Stop the diversion of critical resources from public schools, higher impact on rural/small school districts

*Cost savings in the millions of dollars

As a member of The Arc of Texas, and a parent and guardian of a person with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I am deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students and adults living with IDD.

Diversion of Funds: HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Rural and small school districts will especially feel the burden. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

Cost Savings for Home and Community-based vs Institutional Care: I am also deeply concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R). Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information. There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/reside>]

Sincerely

Teresa Norton

Michelle Taylor, Mrs.

Self

Austin, TX

I highly support the creation of ESAs in Texas to provide students with the best educational opportunities that are tailored to their needs. And to give parents more control over their child's education.

Donna White

None

Mesquite, TX

I want my taxes to go to funding public schools and public school teachers. I'm against funding private schools and giving my tax dollars to private schools. Thank you.

Kimberlee Hawkins

self

Plano, TX

Every parent, regardless of household income, should have the right, and the opportunity to send their child to the best school, that's right for them. HB 1 could provide that opportunity for tens of thousands of child Texans. An opportunity for a better education than what they may otherwise receive in their public schools. An opportunity to be surrounded by like-minded students and parents. An opportunity for a brighter future. And if it's a brighter future for them, it's a brighter future for us all. Thank you for your consideration.

Fredrick Jones

Self & family

Gatesville, TX

I don't support this bill. It takes local control away. We would fund private schools without any of the requirements imposed on public schools: no state testing & selective student enrollment.

I don't understand how we can suddenly increase funding for education with the voucher but not without a.

Teachers need a state supported base pay not a state controlled funding.

DO NOT PASS!

Stephanie Gaston

Self

Duncanville, TX

I am against this bill as we do not need state testing standards and intervention on private schools. There is a reason they are private and receiving state vouchers to attend private schools will mix the two.

Niki Hawkins

self

Plano, TX

Every parent, regardless of household income, should have the right, and the opportunity to send their child to the best school, that's right for them. HB 1 could provide that opportunity for tens of thousands of child Texans. An opportunity for a better education than what they may otherwise receive in their public schools. An opportunity to be surrounded by like-minded students and parents. An opportunity for a brighter future. And if it's a brighter future for them, it's a brighter future for us all. Thank you for your consideration.

Jennifer Brown, Mrs.

Self- PTA Member at Frostwood Elementary and Memorial Middle School

Houston, TX

OUR district is facing a projected \$35 million budget shortfall for the 2024-25 school year. As a parent of 4 children in this district, I am very concerned about the education of our next generation. The state of Texas has billions of dollars in surplus, yet they are unwilling to address the lack of funding to our public schools. We pay higher taxes to live in this area, so our kids can go to these public schools. We have an incredible community that goes above and beyond to support special programs and additional learning opportunities for our students. As a result of the state's lack of funding, our district is facing losing these special programs, staffing, and schools!

Jeff Schiefelbein

self

Irving, TX

I strongly support the passage of school choice legislation. It is a high priority political issue for my family, my community, and me, and the legislature's response to HB1 is how I will determine my political support-- through my vote, but also through my political donations and my political volunteering activities. It is imperative school choice is passed.

Shirley Mount
self/retired
Austin, TX

Public school education is the corner stone of American democracy. Support and strengthen both by not setting up a voucher system.

Mayra Miranda
Teacher-SBISD
Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.
By adding vouchers, schools will close and student to teacher ratios will increase. No vouchers.

Brenda Deneault
Wylie PTA
Wylie, TX

I do not support this bill!!!

Bethany Ashlock
Representing Day Nursery of Abilene
Abilene, TX

as a Board member for a nonprofit early childhood program, I ask that HB 1 include Pre-K

Glenn Goodrich
self
Austin, TX

This isn't the right call for Texans, and especially not for our youth. Public schools are the backbones of our communities and diverting resources from them will cause long term damage and increase economic disparities.

Sallye Norris
Martin Elementary, Celina ISD
McKinney, TX

Please vote NO on HB 1 and any other bills that create a voucher program.
I am fundamentally opposed to using public taxpayer money for private schools.
Rather than funding our public schools and moving us up from 43rd in the nation, HB 1 shifts money to private schools without the same accountability for those dollars.
The track record for vouchers in other states is largely unsuccessful.
Public school funding and teacher pay raises should not be held hostage by vouchers!

Jennifer Kirsch
Shepherd Them All
Austin, TX

As a parent and educator I ask that you support HB 1 to provide parental choice and greater special education services in our public schools. Students are each unique and have differing learning styles and some may need more support than others.

I previously testified for SB1. I am sorry I cannot be there in person today.

I hope you will support HB1.

Jennifer Kirsch
AUSTIN TX

Christopher Smith
self / educator
Lubbock, TX

Adamantly opposed to vouchers. This is a rip off which seeks to channel taxpayer funds to unaccountable private educators at the behest of billionaires who do not represent Texans fairly.

Aaron James
Self
White Settlement, TX

Hi, I'm writing in opposition to HB1. Vouchers are not good for Texas students. Vouchers only work if the student has access to transportation and they do not correct any issue that is happening within the district. Thank you!

For liberty, Aaron James

Jerri Dawn Ponder Duty
self
Round Rock, TX

I am a public school teacher in a Title 1 elementary school in Texas. I oppose the the education savings account program. It may seem like a good idea for some individuals in the here and now, but in the long run it will expand the gap between the "haves" and "have nots", both economically and academically, which will leave us with a very divided society.

On the issue of high stakes standardized testing, I implore you to remove it from the elementary schools. In the elementary schools, we implement Universal Screenings in the beginning, middle, and end of the school year to every student on campus. These screeners give us individualized data comparing students to national norms. We respond to this data planning and providing interventions for those students who are below grade level and enrichments for those students above grade level. We monitor students' progress throughout the school year. In addition, our district provides Curriculum Based Assessments for each unit of study, based on the state TEKS. When you add STAAR assessments, the practice tests and training and security hoops that we have to jump through to be in compliance, much of our time is spent testing students and very little time is left actually providing instruction and practice for the students. I understand End of Course Exams and some practice leading up that, but the testing of students in elementary schools is out of control.

Jacqueline Rawson
self
Friendswood, TX

Teachers need raises. a **BIG RAISE!** no vouchers of any kind should be considered. Teachers need to be certified and given the raise that has not happened for years. Public schools need to be funded fully. Pay the teachers what they are worth - Please support public education- I do not want my tax dollars going to private schools.

Rebecca Isaacson

Self

Allen, TX

The proposed basic allotment per student is significantly lower than the national average. We need at least an \$1100 increase to address inflation. Lovejoy ISD is lacking in funding! I'm completely against vouchers. Please start valuing public school education and educators! Separate all of these important issues: basic allotment, teacher salaries and vouchers into separate bills! They should not be all combined.

Jason Seifert

FRIENDSWOOD ISD

Friendswood, TX

Texas public schools are operating on deficit budgets, struggling to recruit and retain teachers, and trying to pay for school safety needs. Please, I urge you, support public schools and say NO to vouchers.

Thank you.

James Wylie
Self
Brookshire, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

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In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

James Wylie

Franklin Raines

Self

Austin, TX

Using Texas tax dollars to fund private country school education is a complete abdication of the states role in promoting general quality education to all Texans. Texas should use every tax dollar it can afford to fund only public education systems. Do not pass or support any voucher/savings account/or other scheme which diverts collective tax dollars towards privately run education. Thank you.

Sara Lindsay

self - engineer

Houston, TX

No thank you. Instead of proposing education vouchers, please use the significantly simpler option of fully funding public education in the state of Texas. My daughter's are currently enrolled in Spring Branch ISD (Houston) and our district is facing a \$35MM budget shortfall. We're forced to consider school closures and the closure of our award winning gifted and talented program as well as our charter schools. Please use the record setting surplus budget to fully fund education. Don't simply use vouchers as a bandaid.

Respectfully and hopefully,

Sara Lindsay

Sarah Goshman

Self, mom and school band volunteer

Weatherford, TX

A high quality PUBLIC education is of paramount importance for a well rounded, intelligent and functioning society. School vouchers are absolutely detrimental to the effective operations of OUR schools. Parents my choose to privately educate their children, but that should not take money and resources away from the schools of our community where the majority of our kids are educated and prepared for adulthood.

Bill Howard, Trustee

Self

Sachse, TX

Against the voucher system. The voucher system will ruin public education, and I will not vote for anybody in the future that supports the voucher system. Thank you.

Maria Isabel Fernandez

Self Coding Analyst

San Antonio, TX

Vote yes!! School of choice

Laura Tovar

Self - Mom

Sachse, TX

I don't like vouchers. They hurt public education.

Elizabeth Eggleston, Mrs.

Self- SBISD teacher AND mother of 2 elementary aged children who deserve a robust PUBLIC education
Houston, TX

Educational savings accounts do not and will not benefit the majority of Texas students. Public schools willingly teach every single student that enter its doors. Until private and religious institutions are willing to do the same it will never be a level playing field. Support public education and its teachers. Give teachers pay raises and fund schools that are already hurting and even more so since inflation. Do NOT tie teacher pay raises to ESA's hidden in legislation. It's so disrespectful to think this is even being considered. Public teachers come to work every day and do their very best to support, nurture, and prepare students for the future. Public schools NEED funding- not ESAs! This will ruin the entire system. Please push to fully fund Texas schools! Consider the future- teachers are leaving the profession at a faster rate than ever before with fewer trying to enter it- ESA's will not help turn this trend around- it will make it worse. Do what is best for the STUDENTS and CHILDREN who deserve a robust and notable education!

monica casady

Self-homemaker
san antonio, TX

I live in Shavano Park and belong to St Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church and my child attends Antonian College Preparatory Catholic School and St. George Episcopal School. I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. When all parents are permitted to send their children to the school of their choice, this is not an endorsement of religion but the free exercise of a parent to choose their school. Most students will continue to benefit from a public-school education, because the many advantages offered by public schools, such as sports and other extra-curricular activities, are attractive to families. This is not a zero-sum game where private schools win, and public schools lose. It is a win-win for communities when all kids can flourish in the educational setting best suited for them.

Kelsey Hobbs

self
Fairview, TX

Current allotment is at \$6160. The current suggestion of \$6700 is still significantly less than a \$10,500 voucher and still very behind the national average.

Lucy VanderLaan

Self - Nonprofit Operations
Cedar Park, TX

HB 1 would be a big win for parents and students! It's about time that Texas take the lead nationally on education.

The Texas Legislature has a historic opportunity to empower parents and improve the quality of education for students by supporting Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). ESAs would allow all parents to customize their child's education for their unique needs.

It's time for Texas to put parents and students first. Education savings accounts and teacher funding are a win-win! I urge you to empower parents with ESAs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Self Self
Self
Texas, TX

Thank you for what you are trying to do with this bill with public education and special education. Public schools must be fully funded before the ESA discussion continues.

Article 8 of this bill describes virtual education and I appreciate that the state is recognizing this growing field of K-12 education. As is currently the case, the State Board for Educator Certification does not allow a potential teacher to earn their certification teaching virtually. Can that be added to the bill?

I disagree with Section 29.371. Standardized testing should be reduced, not expanded. It has many unintended consequences and I would not want it spread to private schools.

sharon inbody
myself/ educator
Oglesby, TX

Dear Committee Members:

Teachers need a permanent raise during this time of inflation. Teachers are the only State employees who didn't receive a raise this past year.

Teacher salaries should not be based on ESA's, they should be voted on separately.

Educational Savings account funds should require accountability and State testing. All other government funded programs and grants require proof that money is being used sufficiently!

Julie Westerman

self, homeschool child with multiple disabilities

Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

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There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication.

[Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/.../residential-options...>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Julie Westerman

6213 Boxcar Run

Austin, TX 78745

512 348 1044

Anna Killebrew

Self, CPA

Plano, TX

I do not believe an education savings account would provide any benefit to Texas education. Taxpayer funds need to be utilized for the public school education system that all residents of the state of Texas have access to. The best way to support education in the state of Texas is to ensure equitable funding of all public school districts. Private education institutions are not required to admit all students, have the ability to discriminate and are not held to the same educational standards as public education institutions. Allowing individuals to funnel taxpayer dollars into any institution other than our public schools would be a complete and total disservice to students and parents in the state of Texas. I am vehemently opposed to educational savings accounts.

Julie Jensen

Self - PTA member of 2 Katy ISD schools

Katy, TX

I am a parent of 2 children in the Texas public education system. Please Vote NO to Vouchers. I believe in public schools and adequate funding to make them the best for our children. Diverting money away from public schools for vouchers will lessen the amount of money available to fund the various school districts. I am proud that my kids go to Katy ISD and the district does an excellent job of providing quality education to children, to all children no matter what learning disability or extra help is needed. Vouchers can impact the resources available to the public schools to provide equal learning opportunities to every student. Less funding can impact teacher's pay or the number of teachers able to work at a school which can increase classroom sizes. Keep the funding for public schools within the public school system. Vote no for vouchers. Thanks.

Stephanie Davis

Self

Temple, TX

While this bill appears to be for the good of the education system as a whole and certainly has some admirable components, make no mistake this is the voucher bill clothed with supposed public school benefits. As a former public educator, mother to public school children and a home/private schooled child, I am adamantly opposed to this bill even though it would benefit me on the grounds that it does not and will not benefit the common good. It will not spring open the door of quality privatized education to those previously denied because of financial reasons. It will simply further the gap by supplementing the "haves" with an unnecessary voucher to the detriment of the "have nots." Quite frankly, I am appalled that Mr. Buckley would author such a bill given his wife's life-long service to the public education sector and his years of vocal support to it as well. Fully funded public education is in the interest of the common good of our communities, state and country. Do not compromise the defense of the many for the luxury of the few.

Julie Ross

Self

Dallas, TX

I'm the proud parent of Niko, an 11 year old girl with Down syndrome. I am stating my opposition to this bill because it poses the most dangerous threat to disabled kids so far. I oppose it for two reasons: first, my daughter attends Norte Dame, a private Catholic school for kids with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It's not what we want: my family and I are not Catholic, I was raised evangelical Christian. Norte Dame isn't integrated with non-disabled kids and Niko has no student mentors, only teachers. I hate that because Niko should be able to attend public school with her sister and her neighbors. But my local public school is underfunded and understaffed without a full time special ed teacher and so I had to find an alternative. I oppose vouchers because I want strong public schools where my child's civil right to access and accommodations for education as a disabled student are guaranteed. I oppose funding private schools and "qualified" segregation - fund our underfunded integrated public schools! My second reason to oppose this bill: buried in the school voucher bill is a provision that would INCREASE the number of kids being institutionalized at SSLCs, State Supported Living Centers (we have 13 btw). Basically, the language in the voucher bill has a provision would require the school district personnel to provide parents of students with disabilities with information about state supported living centers (SSLCs) when discussing possible residential options. Can you imagine your child's sped teacher saying, "your kid is obviously struggling; maybe you should consider sending them to an institution"?! - This bill is the nightmare that keeps me awake at night and it is becoming reality. Listen to those who would be impacted by this bill: families like mine with disabled kids, disabled people themselves, and even SpEd teachers who know how to support our kids, not institutionalize them. We already have information and the proper channels in place to provide this information. Having educators and staff present it will create the veil of authority and recommendation for institutionalization and it is beyond reprehensible. It sends us back to the time when babies like mine, born with Down syndrome or other developmental disabilities or intellectual disability were funneled into institutions rife with abuse and neglect. And at the encouragement of the state and medical professionals. Don't send us back there. Don't suggest or refer disabled children there again. In TX, as across the nation, kids with disabilities deserve a public education, beside their non-disabled peers, with the support and accommodations they are legally entitled to. We say we stand for freedom, what about my parental freedoms for families of disabled kids to know their child is treated just like no disabled children and not a risk an education denied? What about the threat of my child's freedom if funneled into an institution for disabled kids? Hell no. Oppose.

Brian Killebrew
Self, Building Inspector
Plano, TX

I do not believe an education savings account would provide any benefit to Texas education. Taxpayer funds need to be utilized for the public school education system that all residents of the state of Texas have access to. The best way to support education in the state of Texas is to ensure equitable funding of all public school districts. Private education institutions are not required to admit all students, have the ability to discriminate and are not held to the same educational standards as public education institutions. Allowing individuals to funnel taxpayer dollars into any institution other than our public schools would be a complete and total disservice to students and parents in the state of Texas.

Shayna Brown
Citizen
Austin, TX

I want my rep to oppose the new version of House Bill 1. The real intent of this bill is to underfund and undermine our local public schools. Giving affluent families a \$10,500 voucher to subsidize unaccountable private schools is a violation of the Texas constitution, and the bill's overall impact will decrease much needed funding for currently cash-strapped public schools. Most Texans oppose voucher scams such as House Bill 1

Yvonne Kleypas
Self
San Antonio, TX

As a homeowner for the last 40 years I have gladly paid taxes to support all the children in public schools. I DO NOT want our tax dollars going to a select few families who are already sending their kids to private unregulated schools. Every child in Texas would love to see their school supported with 10k per student. This is misguided, supported by Texas theocratic billionaires to cram religious thought down kid's throats and recreate segregation in our state.

Not now and not ever.

Barbara Kvale
Self - Retired
Plano, TX

I do not believe an education savings account would provide any benefit to Texas education. Taxpayer funds need to be utilized for the public school education system that all residents of the state of Texas have access to. The best way to support education in the state of Texas is to ensure equitable funding of all public school districts. Private education institutions are not required to admit all students, have the ability to discriminate and are not held to the same educational standards as public education institutions. Allowing individuals to funnel taxpayer dollars into any institution other than our public schools would be a complete and total disservice to students and parents in the state of Texas.

Justin Moss
Self - Education Entrepreneur
Austin, TX

Increasing pay for teachers will improve academic outcomes. Increasing funding and grant programs will provide more access to more types of programs for young people. One size does not fit all and with additional grant programs, more students will have a higher likelihood of finding a school or program that serves them best.

Mariel Gingrich bc
Self
Austin, TX

A fully funded public education system is vital to our democracy and way of life. I strongly oppose school vouchers.

Caroline Ruez

Self

Houston, TX

We support HB1 and vouchers!

Lisa Hermes

McKinney Chamber of Commerce

McKinney, TX

The McKinney Chamber of Commerce opposes the ESA component of HB 1. We applaud the aspects of the bill that increases funding for public schools, but firmly OPPOSE including any type of diversion of public funding to private entities for educational purposes.

We recognize the important role a strong school district plays in creating a thriving community. Not only is there a correlation between strong public schools and a safe, vibrant community, there are long term implications to a skilled and educated workforce in the future. Creating a talent pipeline starts as early Pre-Kindergarten as a child's brain is developing and acquiring the necessary building blocks to lifelong learning. In a recent analysis we conducted of our business community – workforce was their number one issue. Across the board – small, medium, and large businesses said recruiting and retaining a talented workforce was their top challenge. While supporting our local ISDs may not solve the problem overnight, we know it is crucial to properly fund and support public education as a system that will continue to educate the future workforce.

There are immediate benefits as well. It's not a secret that strong public schools aid in economic development. When companies are looking to relocate or expand their operations, they first look at the health of a community with the success of public schools as a major factor. Texas has benefited from the investments of the past in infrastructure and education that has led to our explosive growth and strong economy. Let's keep that going by doing the things that we know will keep us prospering into the future.

The data shows vouchers do not improve student achievement...

We can look to other states that have implemented vouchers and measure outcomes. The research shows student achievement doesn't improve after vouchers have been implemented.

Even with vouchers, private schools will still be out of reach for most Texas families.

- Vouchers have been proven to subsidize wealthy families whose children already attend private schools.
- Almost every parent who wants to switch to a private school will have to supplement the vouchers with thousands of dollars every year.
- Your tax dollars should not support private schools that can pick and choose whom to admit, and whom to exclude (special education students), and have no accountability to the public, TEA, or any other entity responsible to taxpayers.
- Pegged as a solution for financially struggling families to get their students into private schools, the real beneficiaries of such programs in other states are students who already attend private schools. In states like Arizona, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin, anywhere from 75% to 89% of the students using vouchers already attended a private school, showcasing that the parents who could already afford private schools are the primary beneficiaries of the programs.

Richard Blair

Self

College Station, TX

This bill is an affront to public schools and educators. This is only a special interest bill which doesn't assist most parents in obtaining educational benefits for their children. This is only for elite people of the state. This bill undermines the constitutional responsibility to provide education to students in our state. You are going to turn Texas into a state with similar educational outcomes as Louisiana and Mississippi. Take the money and spend it on public schools, teachers, facilities, programs. Stop taking from public education, and fully fund it!

Mariel Gingrich

Self

Austin, TX

A fully funded public education system is vital to the functioning of our democracy and society. I strongly oppose school voucher programs.

Jacqueline Goetz

Self, physical therapist

Keller, TX

I strongly support the passage of school choice legislation. It is a high priority political issue for my family, my community, and me, and the legislature's response to HB1 is how I will determine my political support-- through my vote, but also through my political donations and my political volunteering activities. It is imperative school choice is passed.

Marti Elliott

My family and the future of public education

Houston, TX

NO! I fully support funding public schools. How can we expect them to be any better if we divert money away? Big no to vouchers. Do better.

Michelle Martin

self truancy and community outreach

gatesville, TX

HB1 would put \$6.4B into public schools primarily through a host of new or expanded allotments; an additional \$1.1B will be set aside for school safety but through the form of a constitutional amendment that will go to voters.

Initially there would be a \$4000 bonus for all full time teachers; after the first year, any additional money for teachers would come from an increase to the basic allotment. To maintain any teacher raise, the entire increase to the BA would be absorbed.

HB 1 funding for public Ed primarily comes through a large number of specified allotments. So there is a lack of flexible funding increases for schools in this time of inflation.

How will any of this help our public schools? You are just pushing off until tomorrow what should be done today. Kill the voucher plan and raise the allotment per student. Help us to help our next generation of citizens. Public school has checks and balances in the form of oversight by way of teachers, admins and standardized testing. What checks and balance does homeschooling or private have?

Yancey Sanderson

Self

Gatesville, TX

It is clear you all are determined to pass vouchers. Since you are giving vouchers \$10,500 you need to give public school the same amount. Raise the basic allotment to \$10,500 so everything is truly equal.

Carye Edelman, Ms.

Self

Austin, TX

I am a 45-year career public school special educator born and raised in Texas. I am very concerned that any voucher system will unduly burden our public schools, which have never been fully financially supported in this state as seen in our national standing among public school (PS) systems. Our PSs take in ALL students and meet ALL their needs. That includes students with disabilities, for whom federal funding has never been complete either. Not only do we serve our students with disabilities, but ALL students who enter our classrooms, and we do it many times without resources and basic classroom materials. The PSs are also tasked with providing evaluation services and some related services to private schools that do not have to provide all the needed services for their students. This pulls resources from PS students. I am perplexed as to how these "savings accounts" will allow ANY student, no matter their needs to choose the best school for them, meet the tuition requirements, and be served adequately. Also, will our private schools be allowed to deny a student access because they may not provide a needed service? Where is the equity in that? I would urge the legislatures to put their energy and money into making Texas the number one state in the provision and success of the Public School System and ensure that EVERY child gets an equal and robust education surrounded by any services they may need to be successful. The issue with our schools is not parental choice, but that we do not fully fund or support the efforts of our schools to provide ALL children with an appropriate and rigorous education that will ensure they can be successful adults. We can have a very strong PS system that we can all be proud of. I believe in the idea of public schools that ensure all students have access to a free and proper education. Taking money away from our PSs IS NOT THE ANSWER. Our schools should not be political pawns in a game of who can outdo who without looking at the real issue. **STRONG SCHOOLS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS!** Thank you for your consideration.

kevin kilgore

Childcare

Kingwood, TX

Pre-K needs to be included in any parent choice bill. Schools must partner with private providers such as childcare centers.

Edna Hill, Mrs.

ATPE

Tyler, TX

I taught in the Tyler Independent School system for 41 years and am very proud of that part of my life. Yes, there are children that might do better in private schools, but not all private schools will accept children with "issues". I welcomed ALL students into my room. Some were definitely harder to have in my class than others, but they were ALL welcome. I did my best to teach each child and give them love and support they might not have been receiving at home. Public schools have a LOT facing them with so much negativity concerning test scores, safety concerns, student behaviors, etc. Please keep the money for public education where it belongs--in the PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM! Money is always needed for technology demands, proper counseling with so many students needing the right people to help them through their thoughts and actions, good food services, adults who are able to stay in the education field with proper pay and support, and so much more. Vouchers are NOT the answer! Vouchers will never be the answer! Please do not "waste" Texas' educational funds to "see if they will" or to put money in someone else's pocket.

Esmeralda Perez-Gonzalez, Dr.

Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching / self

Kyle, TX

Dear Sirs,

As a member of the Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching, a 501(c)(3), I urge you to continue to designate National Board Certified Teachers as “recognized” or to designate them as “exemplary” under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA).

House Bill 1 proposes that, under the Teachers Incentive Allotment (TIA), National Board Certified Teachers automatically earn a “nationally board certified” designation, equivalent to a new, fourth level of designation, “acknowledged.” Under HB 1, National Board Certified Teachers would continue to generate \$3,000-\$9,000 in allotment funding.

This is concerning because, currently, National Board Certified Teachers earn a “recognized” designation, which is the third level of designation. Under HB 1, the “recognized” designation would have an increased allotment of \$5000 - \$15,000. This change would devalue the incentive that seeks to reward and retain Texas educators who demonstrate exemplary teaching practices and increased student outcomes. As a retired National Board Certified Teacher, who has renewed her certification and plans on maintaining her certification in 2026 I am truly disappointed that the importance of being an NBCT does not equate with a higher designation. You truly need to do some research on what a teacher does to achieve this certification. It is our choice to do so and trust me because of my NBCT certification my bilingual students excelled in all they did because my instructional practices were all research based and intentionally crafted to meet the needs of each bilingual student.

The House Committee on Public Education’s 2022 Interim Report recommended that National Board Certified Teachers be designated as “exemplary.” This esteemed group recognized that the upper levels of the TIA designations are more aligned with the high level of teaching National Board Certified Teachers have demonstrated.

National Board Certified Teachers have met the “gold standard” for teaching. Research shows that National Board Certified Teachers produce 1-2 months of additional learning for their students compared to their peers. To earn National Board Certification, teachers undergo a rigorous process where they demonstrate their content knowledge through an assessment, submit samples of student work and videos of their teaching, and analyze their own instruction.

Designating NBCTs as “Recognized” or “Exemplary” is the best way to reward and retain outstanding Texas teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools. Please reconsider changing the NBCT designation. It is truly not fair to those that have worked and continue to work towards NB certification, instead you should acknowledge Texas Educators wanting to excel to the next level while impacting student learning.

Ana Sanchez

Spring Branch ISD

Houston, TX

Pleased full fund the school system.

Carl Jones, Mr

TDP Rural Caucus

Spicewood, TX

I am Carl Jones_ with Grandparents for Public Schools. I want Rep Bell_ to oppose the new version of House Bill 1. The real intent of this bill is to underfund and undermine our local public schools. Giving affluent families a \$10,500 voucher to subsidize unaccountable private schools is a violation of the Texas constitution, and the bill's overall impact will decrease much needed funding for currently cash-strapped public schools. Most Texans oppose voucher scams such as House Bill 1, and I think Rep Bell should as well. Thank you for passing along this message to Rep Bell__."

Tori Dismuke Eudy

Self

Garland, TX

I do agree not support this bill. Public schools need better funding for resources such as exemplary and highly qualified educators, better salaries for educators and school staff, textbooks and new technology, safe and inclusive playgrounds, etc. This bill does not support our children and their current needs. Please vote no to bill HB1.

Anne Duke

Self

Austin, TX

Please vote no on HB1, thank you.

Amanda Heeneman

Self

Georgetown, TX

Vote NO to HB1. No ESA programs/school vouchers. This would be detrimental to our education systems and can be exploited by creating a for-profit industry with a number of disadvantages and inequalities that do not serve the best interest of families and our youth. The voucher program would face the same abuses that have plagued higher education (runaway tuition prices) as well as for-profit prisons (compromising quality for profit). Instead of creating solutions to public school problems unique to each community, the bill would incentivize people to neglect public education altogether; while taking the resources needed to effect change with them. Consequentially, this allows for classism and inequalities in education that would have disastrous effects on many, while only benefitting a few.

Karen Collins

Self/educator

Roanoke, TX

Against. No need to raise taxes for this!

Brianna Rodriguez, BSW

NASW-TX

Austin, TX

We are writing to provide a professional testimony in support of Section 48.161 of House Bill 1, and its provisions related to the annual allotment of \$50,000 for each campus in a school district participating in the Communities in Schools (CIS) program. This testimony represents the combined support of two National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter (NASW-TX) interns who previously interned with Communities in Schools and reflects NASW-TX's broader endorsement of this section of the bill.

Our experience as interns allowed us to witness the challenges that program managers face when expected to serve a high caseload of 75-100 students per year, often working in isolation due to limited support and funding. This is especially true in rural areas that have minimal access to the wide range of stakeholder support offered in urban parts of the state. We wish to emphasize the critical role that interns play in aiding program managers, whose reliance on interns is a direct result of the program's limited resources.

The Communities in Schools program is a proven and effective approach to addressing the diverse needs of students and their families, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds facing various socio-economic barriers. The funding proposed in House Bill 1, Section 48.161, would significantly benefit the following key aspects of the Communities in Schools program:

Mental Health Support: CIS program managers often serve as a primary point of contact for students facing emotional and psychological challenges. With increased funding, they can better support students in accessing mental health services, including counseling and crisis intervention.

Academic Support: A considerable portion of CIS work involves assisting students with academic needs. Additional funding would allow for the expansion of tutoring, mentoring, and other academic support services that directly impact a student's success in the classroom.

Family and Community Engagement: CIS excels at engaging families and communities to create a support network for students through family and community events such as movie nights, field trips, and lunch buddy programs. An increase in funding would facilitate the organization of family events, community partnerships, and resources that foster a holistic approach to student success.

Basic Needs Assistance: For many at-risk students, basic needs like food, clothing, hygienic and toiletry supplies, and housing stability are significant concerns. Increased funding would enable CIS to provide more comprehensive support for these students, helping to alleviate barriers to their academic and personal development.

NASW-TX firmly endorses Section 48.161 of House Bill 1 and its commitment to investing in the future of our students. By passing this section of the bill, you will not only strengthen the Communities in Schools program but also demonstrate a commitment to the success of Texas's most vulnerable students.

Ricardo Castilleja

Spring Branch ISD

Houston, TX

Please full fund the school systems.

Carl Jones, Mr

TDP Rural Caucus

Spicewood, TX

I am Carl Jones with Grandparents for Public Schools. I want Rep VsnDeaver to oppose the new version of House Bill 1. The real intent of this bill is to underfund and undermine our local public schools. Giving affluent families a \$10,500 voucher to subsidize unaccountable private schools is a violation of the Texas constitution, and the bill's overall impact will decrease much needed funding for currently cash-strapped public schools. Most Texans oppose voucher scams such as House Bill 1, and I think Rep VanDeaver should as well. Thank you for passing along this message to Rep VanDeaver. "

Blanche Johnson

PTA

Garland, TX

Not in favor of vouchers!! Anything that takes away the good teachers and the public schools in which they teach is not good for our students. Freedom of choice to be able to attend any ISD should be the option. Taking away our tax money to private schools only hurts the children and teachers in our ISD's!

Paula Wilder

Self retired teacher

Dickinson, TX

No to vouchers! How many times must that be said. Listen to your constituents.

Steve Forsythe

Self retired AgSCIENCE TEACHER- STUDENT TEACHER SUPERVISOR AGSCIENCE- Texas A&M and Texas Tech University

Lampasas, TX

I oppose the EDUCATIONAL Savings account program. The Texas Constitution guarantees a free- and PUBLIC, -PUBLIC education- for all! Use spending initiatives to strengthen PUBLIC SCHOOLS with particular focus on children with Autism and other special needs.

Jason Foitek

Self

Prosper, TX

Let's please reject vouchers, or at least separate out public and private schools funding. The best thing we can do as parents and citizens is to ensure that we provide the best possible education to future generations. This bill seems to deliberately make it difficult for public schools in Texas, where the funding is most needed and will go the furthest.

JoAnn McKenzie, Ms.

Grandparents for Public Schools

Austin, TX

As a grandparent of 5 kids, 2 who matriculated through private schools, and 3 who are in public schools. I know the value of school choice -- and HB 1 does NOT provide school choice. It takes public taxpayer money and gives it to unaccountable private schools. Our children and grandchildren are our future, and public schools are critical to having a competent work force, engaged citizens, and a civil society. I ask that you vote against the new HB 1 and for public schools and Texas families, communities, and future.

Kathryn Panasci, Dr.

self

LUBBOCK, TX

Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Kara Brown

Self, stay at home parent

Conroe, TX

As a parent with children in public school, I'd ask that funding for public schools be separated from undesirable voucher funding. Our teachers should be paid fairly and our schools funded appropriately at a level that at least keeps up with inflation. Instead public school funding is being held hostage in an attempt to pass legislation on vouchers.

Johnnie Mikeska, Mr

Self Parent

Round Rick, TX

I strongly support school choice!!!

Deb Lowery

Self

McKinney, TX

On behalf of myself, a Texas-certified educator with ten years of education experience, and the 5.5 million Texas schoolchildren who attend TX public schools, I implore you to fully fund Texas public schools. The basic student allotment of \$6160 has not been raised since 2019, and the cost of doing business has increased significantly. Many Texas public school districts are running budget deficits since government mandates, particularly related to security, have not been fully funded. Being 42nd in public school funding is concerning and embarrassing, considering how much value our local public schools add to our communities across the state.

For every dollar that is provided to our Texas public schools, our Texas economy sees a \$57 return on investment. Our Texas public school teachers and staff deserve raises for the dedication to Texas public school students - our leaders of today and the future - education as a whole, their districts, and their schools.

In addition, I implore you to separate the items related to funding Texas public schools from the bills for education savings accounts. These are two different things, and they should not be tied together.

Finally, I believe that the people and honorable elected officials across our state have spoken over the last four Texas legislative sessions. Texas does not need education savings accounts. In fact, reputable private schools have endowment funds, tuition scholarships, and ongoing fundraising efforts to assist the families who are a good fit for their private schools. I believe that reputable, established private schools don't want or need Texas taxpayer money. They are independent and prefer independence. The state of Texas can't give some parents \$10,400 or \$8,000 for their kids to attend private schools and then expect parents of Texas public schoolchildren to be OK with \$6160 or \$6190. Please don't vote for that. Just say no to vouchers/education savings accounts, and say YES - vote YES - for Texas public schools.

Carl Jones, Mr

TDP Rural Caucus

Spicewood, TX

I am Carl Jones with Grandparents for Public Schools. I want Rep Ashby to oppose the new version of House Bill 1. The real intent of this bill is to underfund and undermine our local public schools. Giving affluent families a \$10,500 voucher to subsidize unaccountable private schools is a violation of the Texas constitution, and the bill's overall impact will decrease much needed funding for currently cash-strapped public schools. Most Texans oppose voucher scams such as House Bill 1, and I think Rep Ashby should as well. Thank you for passing along this message to Rep Ashby"

Hollis Lowery-Moore

Self-retired

Austin, TX

I urge all legislators to vote against this bill which will harm our public schools and our students. The ESA will only assist those already attending private schools. Abbott's efforts to get his way are reprehensible and he needs to know this is not governing .

Stephanie Jackson

Self

Wylie, TX

I do not approve of vouchers.

Suzanne Potts, LMSW, MPH

Self/nonprofit staff

Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Suzanne Potts, LMSW, MPH
619-994-1871

Pamela Rickel
self
Hutto, TX

I'm against this bill. This bill will harm our public schools. Public schools are the core of our communities. I'm extremely upset that this topic is now in an unprecedented 4th session at the expense of taxpayers. Texans, both republican & democrat have made it abundantly clear to their respective representatives that they don't want ESA's. Listen to your constituents and kill this bill once and for all. Fully fund our public schools and give our teachers a substantial cost of living raise. Enough already!

Milton Lorenz
self
Corpus Christi, TX

I oppose the establishment of an education savings account program - it will harm the public school system and promote the establishment of religious education in violation of the intent of the framers of the constitution to ban the establishment of religion. The public school system is vital to maintaining a healthy democracy, and this bill harms that system for no valid public purpose. Thank you.

Niloufar Hafizi
Self, nonprofit policy associate
Katy, TX

I urge you to vote "no" on HB 1 due to the public funds it makes available for students in private schools. What Texas needs is not a program that will overwhelmingly help parents who already have placed their kids in private schools. Private schools are by definition more exclusive and less accountable than public schools.

Texas needs investments in public school teachers, facilities, and students -- but not with a poison pill of private school funding attached. Please vote no on HB 1 and any other proposals that will benefit private schools at the expense of public schools.

Paul Van Allen, Rev.
Pioneers
Pflugerville, TX

As a parent of two children with significant disability (Down Syndrome and an unnamed syndrome) and as a pastor and minister in Texas (born and raised) who is deeply involved in the lives of the vulnerable including the poor and the disabled I would like to point out a couple of key reasons there needs to be more parental empowerment to have dollars move flexibly with their children. 1) neuro-plasticity: the brain changes more when a child is younger than in the later ages. This means these early days are critical for children. More money should be spent on the early years than the college years. For the disabled this means you need to spend your college money now not later. 2) where does that come from? Parents of small children with disabilities have not been wage earners long enough to have extra funding to spend at this critical ages. 3) the success of the charter school system proves the underlying principal that flexibility does not only help the privileged. There are many examples but the IDEA schools are turning out thousands of first generation college graduates from minority communities. The charter school behind my house (Basis in Pflugerville) is about 3% white. NYOS, Harmony and other great schools are the result of this flexibility. There would be demand for more excellence if there was more supply (money). 4) Flexibility and innovation is at its core a Texas thing. Don't box Texas parents in...let them get creative and solve problems. 5) There is infinite diversity in the special needs world. Even inside of a Down Syndrome diagnosis there is profound diversity. Lets loosen up the monopoly and let the incredibly motivated parents do what's best for their kids. ** I want to note that I am not a partisan voter...I am an independent and will be watching closely to see who is using common sense and not held hostage by lobbyists and special interest groups. I will vote for my kids and the kids of Texas.

Scott Collins
Self
Roanoke, TX
Reject vouchers

Julie Grohman
Day Nursery Of Abilene
Tuscola, TX

As a member of a non-profit early childhood program, please include pre-K in HB1. Thank you for your consideration.

Tyser Robertson
Day Nursery of Abilene
Tuscola, TX

Hello. I am a Board Member for a nonprofit early childhood program in Abilene, TX; I would request that HB1 include Pre-K.

Tave Kelly
day nursery
abilene, TX

As a Board member for a nonprofit early childhood program, I see a real benefit that HB 1 include Pre-K. Thank you for your consideration.

Carrol Johnson
Self - retired
Magnolia, TX

Regarding HB 1, Section 29.0056

I fully support this section which would require school districts to provide information regarding the SSLC's to the parent(s) or guardian(s) when residential placement of a student is being contemplated or discussed. The SSLC's are part of a continuum of care that provide essential (and in some cases) lifesaving services to the intellectually disabled and those with severe behavioral challenges. It is my view that there is no good reason not to provide the full spectrum of options to those charged with making decisions for the most vulnerable Texans.

My brother and brother-in-law were both residents of SSLC's for most of their adult lives. In the case of my brother-in-law, he had multiple health issues as well as severe behavior problems. He was a resident of the SSLC's for more than 40 years and lived to be 72 years of age. In my opinion, he achieved that age only because he was afforded comprehensive health and behavioral care there.

Many may be able to live in a community setting or at home, but there are those who absolutely cannot. It is dangerous for them and may be dangerous for their family members if, for example, the client is autistic with violent and/or self harming behaviors. Others who have severe health issues like my brother-in-law need to have medical and nursing professionals onsite. He required specialized care regarding his diagnosis of quadriplegia, diabetes, infection with a multidrug resistant organism, feeding through a peg tube, incontinence of bowel and bladder and other issues. The SSIC's have physical and occupational therapists, speech therapists, behavioral specialists, as well as doctors and nurses onsite. They are indispensable to those who need their services most. There is no substitute in the community.

chaya Gansbourg
self
dallas, TX

i support this bill

Regina Smith
self
Fort Worth, TX

HB1 - Parental choice in education

I live in Fort Worth and I am writing to ask you to support parental choice in education and help pass a bill in the special session that allows families to have more options. If funding is limited, as a Catholic/Christian, I believe those who need it most should be first in line.

Tiffani Nelson
Self/PTA Leader
Katy, TX

Vouchers have a negative impact on children! SAY NO TO VOUCHERS! Before considering ESAs or Vouchers, it's crucial to ensure that children and teachers in public schools receive the necessary funding. In my view, nothing is more essential for unlocking every child's potential than having robust public schools. I stand behind policies and leaders who work to guarantee that every child can access well-funded and properly regulated public schools of high quality. SAY NO TO VOUCHERS!

Alisha Reyes
The Arc of San Antonio
San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication.
[Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Alisha Reyes
225 Carolwood Dr
San Antonio, TX 78213

Karen Thurman

Self

Emory, TX

No vouchers!! Save our public schools. If you want to send your child to a private/parochial school, go for it but leave the rest of us depending on public education as is. Or better yet, increase basic allotment to make education more equitable.

Ryan Weber

Self

San Antonio, TX

No vouchers! Support public education. Public schools create community.

Sunil Anand

Self

Katy, TX

Taxpayers funds must not be used to subsidize families that want to send their kids to private schools. Please do not shroud this subsidy bill under the guise of "Choice".

Dale Thomas

Retired Educator (40 years) Myself

Jacksboro, TX

I support funding to all public schools with a county-district number. I also support increased salaries for public education teachers, counselors, administrators and those that are educational aides but not on teacher contractors (at-will) employees.. I do not support the Governors initiatives such as ESA/Vouchers or any method of using public funds for private or parochial education system.

Dale Thomas

Jacksboro, Texas

Nancy Smith

Self

San Antonio, TX

I'm for it

Avraham Jaspan

self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the House Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment,
Please support HB1 and the Education Savings Account program.

Every child deserves access to the best educational opportunities, including our children here in Texas.

Education is not one-size-fits-all; not every school can serve the needs of every student. Those that need or desire an educational setting other than their assigned district school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

This bill will empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers.

Nearly half the states in the country have some form of a school choice program, it is time for Texas to join the ever expanding list or risk being left behind.

Dennis Borel, Executive Director
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
Austin, TX

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As the executive director of the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, a statewide cross-disability organization founded in 1978, I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with disabilities.

No school--public, public charter or private--should be able to accept public dollars then deny education to eligible students. HB1 would authorize public dollars to go to private schools that have testified they would not comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) or practice open enrollment. Further, private schools would retain the ability to charge families tuition in excess of the ESA amount.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

It is unacceptable for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information and other required information on comprehensive residential options. Texas law already requires the IDD Authorities to provide all, not some, residential options.

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Morgan
Self
Rowlett, TX

This bill hurts our children. Our job is to provide a free and appropriate education to all children. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for vouchers or education savings accounts that take money away from public school funding. Parents can choose to send their kids to private schools, but that choice is their responsibility, not the taxpayers'. Diluting the pool of funds available to support the public education system, you ensure its demise. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Jody Johnson
Claude ISD
Claude, TX

Say "NO" to all voucher proposals. WE have school choice in Texas. If this is so big of an issue, put it on the May ballot and let every Texan vote for it.

Mayela Orrantia
Self
Houston, TX

I fully support the increase of the allocation per child in public schools by at least \$1,000. I oppose to the vouchers for private schools. Fully fund our public schools that provide access to every child! And approve an annual inflation increase/adjustment.

Jeremy Janda
Parent
La Grange, TX

Parental choice is a must for Texas
Our current system is and has been broken for too long and our state performance proves that.
Texas has to stop being prideful and give parents control and the resources needed to best educate their children

Heather Quimby
Self, educator
Austin, TX

As an educator and parent of a child with disabilities, I must express concern and frustration regarding Section 29.0056 of HB 1. This section would require a student's IEP team to provide parents with information about state-supported living centers if "residential placement is discussed," a statement without any meaningful parameters.

This provision has questionable utility and may influence parents to make uninformed and potentially harmful choices on behalf of their children, and will contribute to the hostile environment children with disabilities often face. I urge you to recognize that between historical context and persistent ableism, providing information about SSLCs will not improve the lives of children with disabilities in Texas.

People with disabilities live in a reality where exclusion and segregation, whether explicit or implicit, are still accepted. They feel the burden, even as children, of their inclusion because their parents and loved ones must fight for basic accommodations and quality transition services from their schools. Making sure my child has access to services they are promised under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has been a constant battle. These hard-fought-and-won laws promise children equal access to education. This provision does not support that.

In cases when a district and school's team of educators ignore or push against every effort you make to ensure your child's inclusion, education, and overall happiness, hands you information about an SSLC... Place yourself in our shoes and consider the sense of rejection. An IEP team, the people tasked with supporting your child and believing in their potential - and every child has potential - instead provides information about sending your child away. That is not a choice. That is a message.

"You're too much."

"We can't help."

"You're not welcome."

As a parent, I don't want these messages, and I certainly do not want my child to encounter them from the people who are supposed to be their advocates.

If you are striving to improve parent choice, please listen to the parents asking for increased funding for public education and special education services. Ensure families are getting information already required in state and federal law, like resources on alternatives to guardianship.

In HB 1 or any future legislation, please don't attempt to require schools to provide information about SSLCs.

Heather Michelann Quimby, PhD

Lisa Langston
Self
Colleyville, TX

Against!
NO Vouchers
Fix government Ed
Stop spending
Stop unfunded mandates

Repeal BILLS stop writing them
Stop wasting tax payer money by calling special session for something only the Governor wants.

Stop growing the failed TEA

David Daniels
PKD
Boerne, TX

NO public funds should be used to subsidize Charter Schools.

Stephanie Barr
Self
Leander, TX

Fund our public schools. Private schools should not get public funds. Our children and their teacher are being shortchanged by the state government which seems intent on using excess funds for everything but our children. Do your job.

Michael Molina
self
Lufkin, TX

I am enthusiastic about the prospect of our family and fellow Texas residents benefiting from financial support for education. I believe this support aligns well with the Education Department's mission, which aims to enhance student achievement and readiness for global competitiveness by promoting educational excellence and ensuring equal access. Recognizing the diversity among local schools, I appreciate the importance of parents having the flexibility to choose the educational option they believe is best suited for each child. I believe that HB 1 can play a crucial role in making this possibility a reality. Thank you for considering HB 1.

Debra Temple
Self - Medical Administrator
Granbury, TX

I am against using public tax dollars for private schools.

James Thomas, Maintenance coordinator
Day Nursery of Abilene
CLYDE, TX

As a staff member for a nonprofit early childhood program, I'm asking that HB 1 include Pre-K .

Laura Hermes
Self
SACHSE, TX

I am against school vouchers.

Sara Feutz
Self, retired
Austin, TX

As guardian of my intellectually and developmentally disabled nephew, I support the bill to assure parental freedom for parents to determine the appropriate setting for their child. My nephew has lived at the Austin State Supported Living Center for 31 years and has been lovingly and well cared for. He is happy there, in the Living Center community. Parents and family members, who know their loved ones' capabilities and needs, must be allowed to determine the best home for them.

Sally Truitt
Hallcraft School Studio
Austin, TX

I submit this statement in support of HB 1. I speak as an educator, a school administrator, and Texan. These experiences have shown me a wide breadth of diverse student needs and the varying availability of resources for school professionals to help support those students. Education savings account programs will increase the quality of life for students across the state, as well as empower parents to make feasible and responsible choices in support of their child.

Parent Empowerment: Allowing families choice outside of their financial means, you put parents at the helm of developing and supporting their child into adulthood. Providing choices to a parent creates investment in solving problems, finding resources to support their student, and creates partnerships with a group of professionals no longer burdened to be all things to every student. The responsibility of growing up a responsible and healthy student is both shifted to a parent, but shared across a better resourced group of professionals - in both private and public schools.

Choice: Equal access of choice should be afforded to families of all backgrounds. High quality education is not an experience for the affluent.

Accountability: The public school system should be held to high standards of accountability on how they spend dollars.

Janet Huey
Self
Hockley, TX

Parents considering residential placement of a special needs child should be aware of state schools and not just because their tax dollars help pay for them.

Civilians need to know what high quality care their children would receive.

My non biological ward lived at Brenham State School from 1975 until her death from cancer last month. I taught her there in 1977; since then I have observed the excellence in not only training and family life but also medical care, including 5 months of hospice.

Her schedule was full of both on and off campus activities, more than I could have provided.

I was pressured for MANY years to move her out to a group home. I'm so grateful I was able to keep her there.

The numerous comments against allowing parents full access to residential options should raise red flags. Who doesn't want the best option for their special needs child

Shara Lorimier
Teacher
Nederland, TX

Reject vouchers!

Meghan Baker

Self - Frostwood Elementary PTA member

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Katrina Gray

Self - PTA member of Richardson ISD Richardson High School

Richardson, TX

I am thrilled to see the state finally considering increasing the compensation provided to our teachers and updating the public school financing system.

However, it is absurd that you are being forced to continue to look at providing educational savings account programs. There is not widespread support for this in Texas - from either party. Our public schools are already under-funded. No funds should be allowed to be pulled away from public schools to be given to parents or private schools. None of the variations suggested for doing this include a way to hold the recipient parent or private school accountable for what they do with those public dollars, or address the lack of requirements or protections given to students in private school settings.

If you are concerned about improving the public education system, direct more dollars and support into public education.

I have serious concerns for the damage this decreased funding will cause for public schools across the state.

Aren't you noticing that some of the groups that are advocating for the ESAs have objectives that do not put the children of Texas first? Catholic schools want vouchers but it is because they have seen declining enrollment - is this because parents can't afford their schools or because parents today do not have the same blind trust in these schools and their ability to protect and teach students?

Of course home-school families would want to claim some money from the state to keep their students at home, but how are they providing proof that their students are thriving and becoming productive future citizens? There is no accountability to the state.

Please do not be foolish with the critically important education of our children - our future workforce.

Scott Ofczarzak

Scott Ofczarzak

Caldwell, TX

I have been a teacher for 9 years. I oppose school Vouchers entirely. It would completely decimate the school system and create a divide of students who attend schools that would not be beneficial to Texas or society as a whole.

The fact that teachers raises have been tied to the sinking ship that is vouchers is completely and utterly disgusting. Teachers deserve a raise as well as all support staff (cafeteria workers, Bus drivers, custodial staff). Show teachers they are respected and valued by paying them more money!

Grace DiMarco

Self - mother

Austin, TX

As a mother of school-aged children in Texas, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed legislation advocating for school vouchers. This bill threatens to exacerbate the already existing disparities in our education system, undermining the very foundation of equal opportunity for all students.

School vouchers, while seemingly offering choice, primarily benefit privileged families, leaving behind those already marginalized by socio-economic constraints. By diverting crucial funds from public schools to private institutions, this legislation perpetuates the cycle of underfunding in public education, depriving the most vulnerable students of vital resources and support.

Moreover, the implementation of school vouchers would further fragment our education system, creating a tiered structure that segregates students based on socioeconomic status. This division only serves to deepen the existing inequalities, perpetuating a system where access to quality education is contingent upon financial means rather than academic potential.

In a diverse state like Texas, it is imperative that we prioritize the collective well-being of all our children. Instead of siphoning funds away from public schools, we should be investing in measures that strengthen and uplift our public education system, ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, has access to a high-quality, equitable education.

I urge our esteemed legislators to consider the long-term implications of this legislation and to stand in defense of a fair, inclusive, and well-funded public education system that serves all students, irrespective of their economic circumstances. Let us not forsake the promise of a bright future for all Texas children. Please oppose the damaging effects of school vouchers and work towards creating a more equitable educational landscape for our state.

Caroline Robbins

Self - PTA member at I.M. Terrell Academy PTA

Fort Worth, TX

I strongly oppose school vouchers. In other states that currently have vouchers research shows they cause more harm when written the way these bills are written for Texas (private schools won't be required to test students the same as public schools, funding to private schools is not contingent upon attendance the way it is for public schools, private schools are not required to accept every student but can pick and choose who they educate unlike public schools, etc.).

It is a grossly unfair attempt to destroy our public schools and as a voter I, and my family, pay attention to our representatives and their votes.

The children of Texas deserve better - fully fund public schools so every child's potential can be realized.

Kristen McConnell

self

Austin, TX

I am against this bill. Don't divert funds that should be used to fully fund the public education system.

Denise Di Paolo

self - flight attendant

irving, TX

STAND WITH PARENTS AND KIDS. Vote YES on HB 1 and universal school choice for ALL Texas kids.

Give parents the FREEDOM to choose the school that best fits their own kids' needs and values!

Mary Katherine Brown, Mrs.

Self--I am a board member on the NEISD Council of PTAs

San Antonio, TX

Public education is the greatest public good we can offer as a society. The state of Texas does not adequately fund public education, so diverting money away for vouchers/education savings account will only hurt our public education students and schools.

Niyati Shah

Self

Roanoke, TX

We oppose the private vouchers.

Nathan Harris

Self

Kyle, TX

Students, not institutions, should receive funding and parents know best where to send their kids. Their education shouldn't be limited based on their zip code - which was the argument in favor of bussing kids in the 60s

As long as the vouchers are applied to everyone, and not limited or restricted to particular classes - demographic or economic - I am IN FAVOR.

Vanessa Pacheco, School Board Trustee

Self

Richardson, TX

Please prioritize teachers before considering any type of voucher program.

FIRST, invest in our public schools that serve millions. Consider vouchers AFTER you fund schools and teachers.

Randy Nelson

Self/PTA

Katy, TX

I am firmly against the implementation of school vouchers and I encourage my state representative to vote against them in the upcoming special session. It's crucial that our public education system receives proper funding, and teachers should be given salary increases with the surplus in the budget.

Justin Carrier

Self - Vice President of Competition Experience

Murphy, TX

I oppose school vouchers.

David Massman

self

Austin, TX

Before focusing on school choice lets lead the country and move from one of the lowest states when it comes to school funding and actually fund our schools. One issue that could actually be fixed is how the state continues to use recapture to fund other districts. This is outdated and no longer provides proper funding for all students. Our state and governor created an educational task force to look at what would actually work for positive change. Maybe look at those findings and start there.

Michael Beck
Self
Blue Ridge, TX

We have been promised by candidates for decades that we would finally get some semblance of liberty, and freedom, in the decisions of how our children are educated in Texas. Why freedom, choice, and personal responsibility for our children's education is so difficult to comprehend and achieve is beyond me. Every child learns differently. Every child has their own strength and weaknesses. The Corporate/Government public school behemoth systems cannot do all things for all children. They can spend massive amounts of money, ridiculously expensive football stadiums, and they can tax with near complete immunity. At the same time, the UIL and teacher union contract restrictions as constructed actually prohibit schools from employing the best and most qualified individuals to work and participate with the school programs. Abject insanity. Parents must be given the opportunity, which they should have always had, to get the best education as they deem appropriate for their own children. This is long, long, overdue.

Amy Staab
Self
Lucas, TX

As republican voter with child in public school, I strongly oppose any voucher or educational savings account that has a dollar value higher than the basic allotment per student in public schools. Our students are getting the short end of the stick because public schools simply cannot financially support the day to day basic programs due to unfunded state mandates, disproportionate recapture payment , and the rapidly increase in teacher shortages. I respectfully request a minimum increase to cover inflation and cost of goods/services. Any program funding for private schools should NOT be more than public allotment. Thank you.

Annie Donovan
Self, educator
Maxwell, TX

Dear Representatives,

I urge you to vote no, against HB 1. This bill will direct public tax dollars coming out of hardworking Texan's paychecks and divert them to funding private schools. We don't need more of our tax dollars benefiting private entities. Our public tax dollars should continue to fund public entities.

Thank you,
Annie D

Julie Payne, Mrs
Pta
New Braunfels, TX

Absolutely no vouchers!

Dorothy Ann Compton
self
Austin, TX

Please do NOT allow Voucher bills [ANY voucher bill] to pass ...the descriptive term that comes to mind is HOSTAGE...the Texas public schools and our Texas students are being held HOSTAGE to Gov Abbott's HB1 . I do not approve of Public Money going to fund private schools

Thank You .

Keegan Webb
self / Elementary Principal
Gatesville, TX

I am a Texas resident, an active voter, and a strong advocate for public education. I thank the house members who have stood by the children of Texas and voted NO to all education savings plans (aka vouchers). I strongly ask that you continue to stand firm in support of the students, teachers, and communities of Texas and vote NO to all bills containing educational savings plans and start providing adequate funding for our Texas public schools. Texas has one of the strongest economies in the nation and yet we rank 43rd in public education funding. We serve all students regardless of disability, language, and behavioral needs of the student.

I respectfully ask that you please stop holding school funding and teacher raises hostage as an attempt to pass voucher legislation. Please vote no to house bill 1 and all voucher legislation and do what is right for ALL children of Texas!

Catherine McCaffity, Dr.
self
Dallas, TX

As a property tax payer, a parent, a product of Dallas public education, and the wife of an educator, I vehemently oppose this bill. I will vote against anyone who supports this bill. Focus on fixing public education, if that's the concern. Do not siphon money from tax payers to support private schools.

James Mcaclenegen
Self
Trophy Club, TX

I strongly support the passage of school choice legislation. It is a high priority political issue for my family, my community, and me, and the legislature's response to HB1 is how I will determine my political support-- through my vote, but also through my political donations and my political volunteering activities. It is imperative school choice is passed.

Lauren Fortner
Self
Wylie, TX

I OPPOSE vouchers and support public education.

Ruth Roberts
Self-Parent
Austin, TX

I am a parent of 2 kids who are school aged. They have both attended public schools and the public school system failed them. They were diagnosed with dyslexia and were not given proper intervention in public school, so we had no choice to pull them in order to give them the services they needed. This has created financial hardships for our family and to be able to get some of the tutoring covered would be beneficial to our kids and our family. We support school choice as we were not served properly in public schools. My child was labeled with emotional issues rather than given the proper reading intervention she needed to learn to read. Since removing her from public school, she has been happy and is now reading and thriving. That would not have been the case if she had stayed in public school. The school system failed our kids and consequently we do not trust public schools to educate them in the future. Parents deserve to choose a school where their child will thrive, which in some cases needs to be outside the public school system.

Jane Samford
JANE D SAMFORD
Rowlett, TX

“Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child’s potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.”

Andreina Ponciano Guevara
Self Quality Assurance Coach
Dallas, TX

Hello, my name is Andreina Ponciano Guevara and I oppose school vouchers. School vouchers will not help our public school systems and teachers and staff that work so hard to educate our children. As a product of public school DallasISD, I'm incredibly grateful for the great education I received and for the amazing teachers I had. As a first generation Mexican American my teachers encouraged me and helped mold me into who I am today. Because of them, I am Degreed professional, who is able to pour back into the community and serve on the PTA and SBDM committees at my child's school. They supported me and believed in me. I was the first in my family to graduate high school and obtain a Bachelor's degree. My daughter is now a student at a magnet school in DallasISD and I see the need in our schools for more funding. The voucher program is taking funds away from public school and is going to put schools in a very difficult position. Our teachers need more support. Our students who are on the low socio-economic scale are going to suffer tremendously from the loss of funding in their neighborhood schools. Additionally, how is it fiscally responsible to had our thousands of dollars to schools who have no state oversight or accountability. It's not responsible spending. Please do not pass school vouchers or school choice in Texas.

Bryan Allen, Mr.
Self
Breckenridge, TX

I respectfully oppose this piece of legislation, which combines two separate issues into one bill. Public schools are in desperate need of additional funds. Public school employees are in need of significant pay increases. Please separate the ESA proposal from school funding and allow both issue to move forward on their own merit.

Norma Meyers
Self
Fort Worth, TX

This bill is using measures that would help public education while masking the deficit funding private education would give to our public schools. Our constitution mandates that we provide education to every student in the state. I strongly disagree that this course of action would live up to our constitution. Vote no to move this bill forward.

Emily Vandenberg
Self/SBISD PTA Member
Houston, TX

Please say no to HB 1! Vouchers hurt the children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESA's or vouchers. Our district is suffering because the state has kept revenues flat for 4 years, while costs have sky rocketed (19% inflation!). Our teachers essentially took a pay cut this year because they did not receive an increase and insurance costs went up, so now they make less per paycheck. We are having to cut services and close schools to make up for a \$35 million shortfall, all the while the state takes \$87 million in local taxpayer funds from the district this year alone (that is 21% of all local taxes paid by SBISD taxpayers for public education in SBISD). Passing HB 1 will only increase our recapture payments and further damage our district! As a lifelong republican, I am very disappointed with the party's push for this bill. Our focus should be on funding and helping to fix the problems within the public school system first! We are sitting on a historic surplus, and we need to focus on adding to the basic allotment and teacher raises before wasting taxpayer dollars on vouchers. Frankly, I find it very disturbing that you are holding public school finance and teacher raises hostage to force through your ESA/voucher bill. The Texas school children deserve better!

Miriah Sachs

Self/Northwest Houston Freedom Schoolers

Houston, TX

This bill erodes the freedom and sanctity of homeschool laws we enjoy here in Texas by placing strings on homeschoolers who access the ESAs. We do not need nor want the strings attached to this bill. School choice already exists here and this only permits the lazy and unmotivated to seek out educational opportunities for their children that the thousands of homeschool families have already done. It will take away or limit the freedom to educate our children as we choose that we sacrificed greatly to access. While it just ultimately gives money to wealthy families to use private schools they already access. Public schools will not improve as they have zero incentive to do so and those children will fall further and further behind. The special needs children will not be able to get to the schools needed to utilize this, nor will the rural or underprivileged. What good is an ESA with nowhere to use it? This is nothing but a money laundering scheme for the wealthy.

Please kill this bill. Again, homeschooling families DO NOT WANT this nor will we stand for erosion of homeschooling freedom here in Texas with this Tojan Horse.

Roger Bhakta, Parents

Self

Brownwood, TX

We support the bill (HB-1)

Jonathan Hurley

Self / Educational Technology

Austin, TX

I believe that every parent should have the choice to decide what kind of education their child receives. And, Education Savings Accounts would provide more options for our community.

Tanya Holland, Mother

Self

CEDAR PARK, TX

I am a native Texan, a tax payer, a godmother to a student with a disability and a mother to 2 little boys, one of whom is entering kindergarten next year. I am against HB 1 primarily because education savings accounts (ESAs) will not address the real problems facing Texas' public education system which include, but are not limited to, massive underfunding, low teacher pay and low staffing.

As a tax payer, I am against HB 1. The primary component of HB 1 is the establishment of ESAs, more appropriately known as vouchers. These private school vouchers will take my tax dollars away from public schools and send them to religious private schools. There are case studies across dozens of states showing that, despite being touted as a tool to give low income families the choice to send their children to private schools, voucher funds go to families who are either already enrolled in private schools, or who are able to afford the tuition without financial assistance. My tax dollars should be used for the betterment of all children: I want them invested in public schools, not inequitable private schools.

As godmother to a high school student with a disability, I am against HB 1. Per federal law, students with disabilities must be granted an equal education to their peers without disabilities. Despite the rhetoric around this bill, ESAs do nothing to help students with disabilities. Private schools are free to reject children with special education needs, which means that, should ESAs come to fruition, more children with special needs will require services in public school at a time when SPED services are grossly underfunded. HB 1 provides no more than half of the funding necessary to make up the gap in SPED services that exists in our public school system. It is critical that Texas prioritize serving children with disabilities before serving wealthy families and private schools.

Most importantly, as the parent of a school-aged child, I am against HB 1. ESAs are packaged as parent choice, and put my rights as a parent above my son's rights to receive a quality education. I already have a choice when it comes to my son's education. I could send him to a public school, I could send him to a charter school, I could send him to a magnet school, or I could send him to a private school. My family is lucky enough to be 1 block away from our public elementary school and I am thrilled to send him there. My choice is to have him learn alongside his peers with diverse backgrounds, incomes and housing arrangements, things he would not be exposed to should we enroll him in private school. The state is required to provide a high quality education to every child, and school policies should not put my "rights" as a parent before the educational needs of Texas children.

It is for all of these reasons that I am against HB 1.

Tala Nimri

self

Austin, TX

I oppose HB 1

Gena Alvarez

Self

Universal Cty, TX

No vouchers. This will most definitely hurt all students and give priority to rich parents. Support public schools for all and make the state better not worse. No voucher system.

Katrina French

Self - PTA member

Flower Mound, TX

Having lived in another state where vouchers were implemented, I can say that they hurt children - and ultimately, the state economy. Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Toni Camp
Self
Murphy, TX

I do not approve of my tax dollars going towards school vouchers.

Tracy Hanes
Self and Families Engaged
Victoria, TX

I am OPPOSED/AGAINST this expansion of government. Virtual education is harming the children. It is well documented. Research all the peer reviewed studies on the harms of technology on children. Public school accountability assessments should be outlawed. This is the instrument the weaponized TEA has used for decades to destroy the teaching profession and prevents children from thriving in their classrooms. Ask any teacher and parent. And those same accountability measures will be implemented in private schools and homeschools if this bill or any government mandated voucher/ESA bill passes. Most Education grant programs are millions of dollars in bribes with strings attached to further dumb down our children. They are not properly being vetted and researched. Research “Key Policy Letters Signed by the Education Secretary or Deputy Secretary” “Redesign STEM courses and learning experiences to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in STEM.” —DEI baked in STEM from The Department of Education.

A little information before the House tries to impose more funding on NGO “communities in schools” HB1-(4) by Rep. Brad Buckley. His HB1605 was 2.44billion- supposedly for parents rights.

CIS - DEI & LGBTQ+ <https://www.youtube.com/live/TR7jHFY>

The bill promotes and will fund huge unvetted vendors which drive political agendas and ideologies of indoctrination. Globalists like Gov. Abbott have infiltrated our state, playing for keeps and playing the long game. Research the playbooks of communists whose goal it is to hijack the education system.

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This bill is a massive government takeover of our sovereignty. This voucher scam does not help our lower economic families. Our hard earned tax dollars will now flow through another arm of government, the comptroller’s office. This is a SCAM! This bill expands the TEA and the power of APPOINTED commissioner.

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And anyone who votes for this globalist one world government bill should think long and hard on the punishment for crimes against children. Think Nuremberg trials. Research it!

Sonia Melendez Reyes

self- Parent and Stone Oak Elementary School PTA member

San Antonio, TX

As a mother of two children currently attending Stone Oak Elementary School and Bush Middle School, I express strong opposition to State Representative Brad Buckley's HB1 legislation, which poses a threat to the funding and resources of nearby schools. In a recent 2023 WalletHub study, Texas found itself among the ten states with lower educational rankings. This raises the important question: Why is State Rep. Buckley championing an initiative that could divert resources away from our public school students through the proposed voucher program?

Given his role as the Chair of the Educational Opportunity & Enrichment Committee, it's puzzling why he would risk the education of public school children by advocating for a selective system that primarily benefits a few schools, rather than focusing on enhancing the educational system for the entire state. Perhaps a committee led by a parent with school-age children would be better equipped to oversee such matters. I urge you to reconsider and pay heed to the overwhelming majority of constituents in the state who support policies and lawmakers dedicated to ensuring that every child has access to well-funded and properly supervised high-quality public schools.

simcha friedman

self/rabbi

houston, TX

I just moved to the great state of Texas. I strongly support school choice. I am religious and the private school provides values that I want to impart to my children. Please be bold and do the best thing for all Texas residents. Thanks

Jessica Paige Black

Self - Parent

Dallas, TX

I believe the public school system is the foundation of our democracy and that we should be increasing the amount of resources it receives. Meanwhile, HB1's creation of ESAs seems to be against the spirit of our state's constitutional duty to "establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools" because such a program would decrease educational opportunities - especially for those who need it most. Please do not pass HB 1. Thank you for your time.

Graham Frey
Hallcraft School Studio
Austin, TX

My name is Graham Frey, and I am a career educator. Today, I support school choice – allowing families to use their Education Savings Account or state funding dollars to choose a pathway for their children.

During my career, I've served children as a history teacher, a football coach, and a school leader. I've led schools in several states, including IMG Academy in Florida and CEO of Alpha here in Texas. My career is distinguished by innovation and developing programs that dramatically improve academic outcomes. The programs I've created and led have improved math and reading scores by several multiples within two academic years. We've enabled marginalized students to go to college.

Currently, I am the Founder and CEO of Hallcraft School Studio. Hallcraft builds high-quality schools that reimagine education. We primarily focus on building low-cost middle school programs, serving 5th through 8th-grade students. We use a combination of teaching, software, and project-based learning to bring students to a grade level and prepare them to succeed in high school. Students that cannot perform at or above grade level in 9th grade are at significant risk.

Whether urban, suburban, or rural, a family has very few choices, if any, where their children are educated. The barriers for a family to change schools are beyond difficult: moving, attempting to afford private school (if one exists), or hoping to get lucky in a charter school lottery. The first step towards innovation is choice. Providing choice allows families to serve their children better. Is there anything more Texan than enabling a mother and a father to make choices for their children?

School choice is uniquely personal for me. I am a single father with two boys, one of whom graduated from a public school in Texas, and his younger brother will do the same. But, my younger son was three grade levels behind when he came to live with me in Texas. I was able to get him into an innovative school that I led. As a result of that program, my son excelled, moving into the top twenty percent of his grade level in three years. That work prepared him for success in a Texas high school where he earns straight A's and starts on the basketball team. These results would not have been possible without a choice in where I sent my son. Why not enable every family to do the same?

Trista Bishop-Watt
Good Reason Houston
Houston, TX

We appreciate the careful thought that has gone into HB 1 and strongly support the inclusion of supports for educators and the focus on early education. We also respectfully submit our concerns with proposed changes to academic accountability outlined in Article 9.

Texas schools must be able to recruit and retain highly effective teachers. We greatly appreciate the focus on recommendations made by the Texas Teacher Vacancy Task Force in HB 1, including implementing the Texas Teacher Residency Program and, in addition to other compensation adjustments, expanding the Teacher Incentive Allotment to compensate even more effective educators.

We also support the inclusion of early literacy interventions previously outlined in HB 2162 (88R) and expanding the Early Literacy Allotment to include pre-K. Early intervention when students are falling behind in reading can be critical for their future in education. Students who are not reading on grade level by 3rd grade are substantially less likely to catch up with their peers. Further, research shows that investing in high-quality pre-K programs equates to a 7-10% return on investment per child per year, having impacts on students' achievement in school and long-term life outcomes.

Parents deserve transparent information about public school systems so they can make meaningful decisions about their child's education. The A-F system provides them with easy-to-navigate information aligned to academic outcomes, which empowers them to advocate for much needed resources and hold systems accountable for student learning.

This year, we surveyed 1,500 parents in the Houston region. A majority, nearly 3 in 5, of Houston parents consider the TEA A-F rating system a valuable resource for assessing school quality, citing the ability to see how well campuses are meeting student academic needs and which campuses would best support academic growth as the main factors. Also worth noting, only 66% of parents are satisfied with the quality of their child's school. These results make it very clear that parents care deeply about the quality of their child's education and rely on A-F accountability ratings to provide needed insight into the public school system.

Now is not the time to undermine rigorous, fair, and transparent academic accountability. Due to disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, Texas has only had one year of full data from the A-F Accountability system. Considering the continued impact of learning loss, now more than ever the state needs year-over-year data to be able to effectively monitor school performance, financial investments, and policy implementation.

We wholeheartedly support the provisions in HB 1 that strategically invest in public education, but oppose Art. 9, which would remove transparency for families, taxpayers, and policy makers. We recommend eliminating the expiration of Ch. 39 and forgoing a Commission on Assessment and Accountability at this time. Thank you for your consideration.

Heather Young
Parent, PTA, Public Educator, Speech Pathologist
Frisco, TX

Please make two separate bills... one to address public education & funding and one to address school vouchers. If not, please vote NO for HB1!!!

Katharine Carroll
self, Product Manager
Austin, TX

Vote no on HB1. Fund our public schools and pay our teachers more. We need a well educated public.

Sheila Taylor, LISD Board Trustee

Lewisville ISD

Highland Village, TX

I am a product of public education. I grew up with a legal guardian after my adoptive mom passed away. No family and living in the poorest county in America (Tunica, MS). My public school teachers gave me hope. They inspired and motivated me. They helped me to see my current situation did not determine my future. I went to college on a full scholarship and became a CPA. Public ed is for everybody. We need it to be fully funded so our students can realize their dreams. Please don't take away money that can be used for public school resources to funnel it to ESAa. Private schools will not take everybody, will not be accountable and will not have STAAR testing. Let's fix what we have instead of creating a parallel system. I am happy to advocate for our kids. All kids. Please join me by saying no to vouchers and yes to public education!

Carole Reich

Arc of Greater Beuamont

Vidor, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an op

Beth Milligan

Self

Spring, TX

I am in support of this bill as this empowers parents.

Matthew Rooer

Self

Houston, TX

No thanks on the vouchers and make it \$1k allotment per child. Thanks!

Kevin Wooten
self
Livingston, TX

I see and understand the power of good that public schools do for kids, especially at-risk kids.

Taking tax dollars out of public schools for harms these children the most. These kids don't have the support system to navigate the voucher program and private school systems.

Please fully fund public schools. Public schools are what makes our state and nation great. It is what creates opportunity for ALL children.

There is already "school choice." Parents can send their children to private schools or home-school right now. That is the very definition of "choice."

Tiffany Anderson Ahmad
Hartman Elementary PTA
WYLIE, TX

Keep public dollars in public schools. I opposed HB 1. Vouchers hurt children.

Julie Jumes
Self, 25+ yr Home Educator
Fredericksburg, TX

Thank you for taking online comments as it allows me to continue caring for my parents, who both have Alzheimer's, and educating my 17 year old daughter, the only one of our six children yet to graduate from our home school.

Don't we already have "school choice"? How does any ESA program fit the state constitutional mandate to "provide an efficient system of public free schools." Wouldn't it require a constitutional amendment? Wasn't the Texas legislature strongly warned by the SCOT not too long ago to assess TEA code for inefficiencies in order to strike them? I do have a couple of ESA ideas which might meet the Governor's requirement more outside of the regular allotment to public schools.

First, concerning the opportunities we already have: My husband and I first chose to home educate when our oldest was in kindergarten. We had recently moved from Richardson, where half day kindergarten was the norm, to Vernon, where the only public school option was full day. There was a private half day kindergarten, but we were told that he would have needed to be on a waiting list from before birth to have gotten in. When we decided to home educate, my husband, from Chicago, asked me, "Do you realize that if we do this we will be 100% responsible for our son's education?" My, native Texan, reply: "Aren't we anyway?" Since then, it has been a yearly decision, one which often required creativity and tightening the belt to continue as our family grew.

Through the years we met others who were home schooling, trailblazers from every race and socio economic background. I will never forget a family who lived and worked on the Mahard Egg Farm in Chillicothe. Their youngest was a large, deaf, melato young man the same age as my oldest. At first they criticized home schooling but gradually started asking questions and speaking of how the schools lacked special ed resources for their son, who had just received a cochlear implant. They decided to home school and this young man and my son grew to be close friends. He came over one day per week for years and my son talked to him like a normal boy during a season when his family was having trouble transitioning from signing. His mother volunteered at our town's pregnancy help center while these two built things, played outside and took a break from normal book work to just be boys. Today, they are 30yo men successfully providing for families of their own.

The first ESA idea is not really money/credit but a low cost (\$10) book, called Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons, which is scripted such that most any caring adult could teach a child to read in less time than involvement in a pee wee football or little league baseball season would require.

Last, what if districts had to track extra curricular expenses. Every dollar spent on extra curricular this year, no matter the source, gets divided among every student, public or private, in the district next year? Boom ESA account for Gov Abbott

James White, Dr
Self; executive a management
Woodville, TX

This is a great bill that robustly funds our local classrooms and enhances parental choice throughout Texas and in particular, strengthens parental choice for parents of children receiving special educational services. Parental choice is strengthened when parents have the information. Therefore, bill language requiring parents to receive information about SSLCs is a parental choice multiplier and must remain in this bill. LET THE PARENTS CHOOSE!!!

Harpreet Benipal, Mrs
Self- Daycare owner
Sugarland, TX
Requesting inclusion of Pre-K

Catherine Parsley
self
Dallas, TX

I am against HB 1.

Even though this version of a voucher scheme contains some much-needed public school funding, it is still a voucher scheme and is therefore unacceptable. Vouchers will take funding from public schools, essentially making the two parts of this bill at odds. Vouchers are bad for education, bad for schools, bad for teachers, and will not work. There has not been a successful voucher system anywhere, and ours would be no different. I do not want my tax dollars to be used for vouchers or "school choice" - I want them to be used to actually improve the public education systems we already have in place.

It is important to me that we fully fund public education and do not implement harmful vouchers, and I urge the committee to vote no on HB 1. Thank you.

Resa Harrison, Ms.
Self
Aubrey, TX

SSLCs provide essential residential services for many students and persons with severe and profound disabilities. They are a vital and much needed option for individuals like my brother who has lived at the Brenham State School for 40 years where is is living and thriving to his fullest potential. All families should be informed of and provided with information regarding SSLCs as a viable option when residential placement decisions are being made by school districts for individuals with complicated behavioral and or health needs who may be needing this level of care.

Many families cannot safely care for their child at home. School districts should inform parents that a SSLC placement is one option. An SSLC is often closer to the family, especially those who are offered out of state placement.

Let us keep Texas' children in Texas and give families a lifesaving choice.

Tracy Hanes
Self and Families Engaged
Victoria, TX

I am OPPOSED/AGAINST this expansion and over reach of government. Virtual education is harming the children. It is well documented. Research all the peer reviewed studies on the harms of technology on children. Public school accountability assessments should be outlawed. This is the instrument the weaponized TEA has used for decades to destroy the teaching profession and prevents children from thriving in their classrooms. Ask any teacher and parent. And those same accountability measures will be implemented in private schools and homeschools if this bill or any government mandated voucher/ESA bill passes. Most Education grant programs are millions of dollars in bribes with strings attached to further dumb down our children. They are not properly being vetted and researched. Research “Key Policy Letters Signed by the Education Secretary or Deputy Secretary” “Redesign STEM courses and learning experiences to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in STEM.” —DEI baked into STEM from The Department of Education.

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60. | CIS - DEI & LGBTQ+

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Catherine Little

Self

Jarrell, TX

I DO NOT SUPPORT VOUCHERS/ESAs that will take away funding from our students in public education. If Governor Abbott or any other elected state official actually took the time to visit our public schools since at least the pandemic, they would see the need for more funding, and continued support ---not just financially but verbally as well. Every educator I know works BEYOND their time at work to take care of and educate their students...educate them in the way that TEA, our education commissioner, and the State Board of Education has mandated...DO NOT PENALIZE our public schools, public school students, and educators by continuing to underfund public schools while using tax dollars to fund private schools.

Nenna Nwazota

Self

Dallas, TX

Please know that I oppose the proposed student voucher legislation despite Gov. Abbott's attempts to push this agenda through. I hope you vote in support of your constituents and the people most affected, Texas public school students, on this issue.

Gregory Palmer

Self

Spring, TX

I do not want my Tax Dollars going to support funding so people can send their children to a Private School, if they wish to send their Children to a Private School then they need to pay for it not the Tax Payers. I think you should cut School Taxes for Seniors over the age of 65 with no children in the Public School System in HALF not expect them to pay for Private Schools for People who are already getting to much given to them.

ALLISON LANZA, Rev

myself, pastor and non profit executive director.

Fort Worth, TX

As a pastor and parent in Fort Worth I am against the establishment of an education savings account program. Public dollars need to stay in public schools so all children can benefit and learn. The ESA's would serve to only provide a discount on private school education to those who can already afford it. It would not help the most vulnerable kids in our communities. We need to spend our money to ensure that every child can have access to a great education. This is best for our communities, our state and our kids

James Glathar

Self

AUSTIN, TX

Vouchers are not the answer to the public education downward spiral created by Perry, Abbott, and TEA. Vouchers are merely a smoke screen to divert attention away from our poor public education system. The House earlier this year held hearings concerning TX public education and published their conclusions - some 30-50 positive steps/recommendations. Abbot, TEA, and Republicans have ignored these hearing results. No plan has been developed nor any indications that TEA, Abbott, or Republicans have any intention to develop a plan for improving TX public education. Such a plan is a first step solution to reverse this downward spiral of TX public education. For this failure, the chief officer of TEA was given a 50% salary increase - does not seem logical. The voucher proposals I have noticed are lacking any logic or common sense, all are half-baked.

Jennifer Savery

Frostwood Elementary

Houston, TX

Our schools need support. One of the greatest gifts we give to our future selves is well educated children. Vouchers, lack of funding, and removing valuable support in our schools is detrimental to our children and children's children. As a mom and a former educator I implore you to think of the future!

Christopher Bier, Mr.

Self, unemployed

Mansfield, TX

I write to oppose HB 1. The education savings accounts HB 1 would establish threaten quality, public education, and democratically influenced education standards for Texas. The education savings accounts funnel public dollars into private schools. Public schools must meet standards set by the Texas Board of Education, a mostly elected body. Self-governed, private schools are exempt from those standards. HB 1 would publicly fund schools exempt from state standards.

Angela Payne

self

Prosper, TX

The message should be loud and clear now. Public school parents in Texas do not want vouchers. I am a graduate of a Texas public school and have 3 children that will be educated by them. Fully fund public schools and stop attacking them. They are all doing the best they can with the resources they are given. They will be even more incredible once all the funding is given back to them. Stop holding the children, teachers, and their salaries hostage for the Governors selfish intentions. It becomes more and more clear to people the intentions of Gov. Abbott and he doesn't seem to be listening to the people.

Tracy Duchouquette

Self

Plano, TX

SAY NO TO VOUCHERS! Why not support the public schools we have instead of funneling taxpayer money to private schools? If parents want school choice, they can send their kids to private school--on their dime, not mine.

Stop trying to tie teacher raises and district funding to vouchers or "school choice". Our district is already stretched to the limit with the amount of recapture payments we have to send to Austin each year, and now we are hearing that some great programs may have to be cut because we don't have the funds. Fund our public schools and pay our teachers!

Abbott and his cronies need to listen to their constituents and start serving Texas schoolchildren and teachers instead of pandering to special interests from outsiders.

Phillip Moore

Self

Killeen, TX

I am opposed to HB1 because there are not enough checks & balances or accountability.

I do not support vouchers using tax payer money period.

Respectfully,

Phillip Moore

Ross Schumann

self

Midland, TX

It is time we give our students and parents equal opportunity to a great education.

We have seen public education be used to prevent rural, minority, and economically disadvantaged students from the same quality of education as others.

School choice will allow our students better opportunities in their future.

Brenda Bryan

Myself

Hale Center, TX

Absolutely positively No vouchers in any way ,shape or form by ANY name!!

Elizabeth Newsome

self

Irving, TX

No to school vouchers! It will hurt our public schools!

Tracey Bergfield
Texas PTA
Garland, TX

I am a parent of a special education dependent student and am 100% against vouchers. Most families like mine depend on services available in public schools. I believe that fully funding public schools is a responsibility of the state of Texas and any form of voucher goes against that duty.

Natosha Daniels
Self; Educator
Round Rock, TX

I have spent the last 17 years in public education and I find the unveiled attempts to consistently defund public education appealing and unacceptable. This bill is harmful to the residents of this state and it does not represent the will of the majority of the people. I implore you to stop this constant voucher campaign and instead focus on fully funding the public schools that already exist.

Layne Childs
Self - Frostwood PTA
Houston, TX

I'm writing to voice my views and concerns regarding vouchers. Vouchers do not help all children! Until you have adequately funded public school children and teachers, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I strongly believe that every child deserves the potential to succeed. I support policies and policymakers who ensure ALL children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. We stand to lose many of our support staff, the possible closure of Bendwood school for GT students, special education, and care for teacher's small children that provides incredible opportunities that would not be available in our home school. Our classes need the extra staff as we are already over 20 in a class. Please pay attention and fund public education; these children are our future!

Charles Conley, Mr.
Self, Teacher
Gatesville, TX

You're doing a good job pushing for school reform. Keep it up. Revamping of the state standardized testing system is needed. There needs to be an accountability system for the ESAs, but the STAAR tests are not a good system for that. Using SATs or similar college-level testing would be a better idea. Giving parents real choices for their children's education is an important step for education reform.

Susan Perez

Citizens for Education Reform/ self

Lubbock, TX

Please Support ESAs and School Choice

With over 40 years in education, I never thought I would be in favor of school choice. Now with all the woke indoctrination that has crept into the school curriculum and the dirty library books, I think school choice is the only way to create some competition. This will cause public schools to listen to parent concerns and clean up the curriculum and get the dirty books out of the libraries.

Many other states have successfully implemented School Choice. It did not reduce the funding per student. The academic scores improved!

There are a lot of great teachers in the schools doing their best to teach the children every day , but it's an uphill battle because of the watered down and indoctrinated curriculum that is being produced for schools.

Most businesses have competition, which makes them do a better and more effecient job. It is time for schools to measure up and be accountable by losing students if they don't.

Good schools don't have anything to worry about. Students will stay and the schools will continue to improve.

Please support Education Savings Accounts for every student and don't hamper these efforts to improve education with a lot of restrictions. The money you are releasing is our tax dollars. Let the parents be responsible for the students' education by choosing the school that is best for their own child!

Donna Sanders, Mrs

75-1399992

Abilene, TX

I am the Financial Manager for Day Nursery of Abilene in Abilene, Texas. As a Non-Profit Origination, our Mission is "Providing affordable quality child care for a diverse community". We believe in the education for young children to be one of the most important functions that we provide. We have partnered with Abilene ISD in the past and are currently partnered with Baird ISD in their early childhood education program. I am asking the HB1 include Pre-K learning in state's education of children.

Mary Jane Williams

Family to Family Network

Houston, TX

Family to Family Network opposes this bill due to the provision of educational savings account programs. Our current educational system must be fully funded, including special education programs. Thank you very much!

Richard Anter

Self

Irving, TX

Our child attends All Saints Catholic School. We are writing to ask you to please support HB 1 with the option for ESA students to take a norm-referenced assessment, with the removal of the caps on the number of students participating, and with the removal of the program's expiration date.

We advocate for the removal of the caps in HB 1 on the number of participating students, or at least to have the caps expire in two years.

We also strongly advocate for the removal of the STAAR test. The bishops support requiring the administration of a norm-referenced assessment for ESA students because this is common practice in most private schools. The STAAR is aligned to the public-school curriculum which is not necessarily taught in private schools.

Finally, we are opposed to the program terminating in three years as the opportunities provided to families by an ESA should not arbitrarily be taken away.

William Gibula

Self- Father

Sugar Land, TX

I strongly support school choice. As a father of 4, I pay a lot of taxes to the public schools and don't benefit from it at all. My wife and I do not feel that the public school system is a good fit for our children. However, private schools are very expensive especially for a family our size. Texas needs to empower its citizens to educate their children in the way they deem most appropriate. This would be a pro-family policy and Texas needs it NOW.

Maggie Stern

Children's Defense Fund of Texas

Austin, TX

Educational Opportunity & Freedom to Obtain a Quality Education

CDF-Texas is a nonpartisan children's advocacy organization with the mission to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. Caring communities require fully funded public schools that teach the truth and support students of all backgrounds and identities. For this reason, we oppose any attempts to impose educational savings accounts on Texans and urge you to pass a clean school funding bill that actually meets the needs of the millions of public school students this state serves.

Public schools are fundamental to the success of Texas children and to the health of our democracy. School voucher programs threaten public education by redirecting public funding into private institutions that fail our most vulnerable children. According to the National Education Policy Center, vouchers have no clear effect on math and reading scores, and no positive impact on college enrollment rates for low-income and first-generation students. While public schools offer free and reduced cost lunch, after-school care, services for students with disabilities and more, private institutions often don't offer these supports. Voucher programs siphon taxpayer dollars away from institutions that serve all students regardless of class, race, or disability. We must continue to fully fund our public schools if we want each one of our Texas students to have access to quality education.

We urge you to oppose any form of vouchers and focus on fully funding and supporting public education, as required by the Texas Constitution.

Michael Strong

Self

Dale, TX

I have 35 years experience in K12 education, starting out in public schools then creating high performing charter and private schools. I created a charter school ranked the 36th best public school in the US. But the regulations on charters and public prevent true customization and excellence. I am now providing a virtual private education that was \$50K in person but which I will be able to offer for free with TX ESAs. Our program is already free for AZ students. We provide a customized experience for entrepreneurial, creative, and intellectual students. Many of our students have learning differences and are extremely grateful for our program that allows them to focus on their entrepreneurial or creative genius without the endless remediation that is typical in public schools. Finally, I have known hundreds of students who were anxious, depressed, or suicidal at conventional schools, public or private. Alternative schools are a lifeline for such students (which now, sadly, make up a growing percentage of adolescent populations). ESAs will be a lifesaving path for thousands, and eventually millions, of teens in the coming decade.

Nicole Sewell

Public schools in San Antonio Texas

San Antonio, TX

Hi, my name is Nicole Sewell, and all three of our children are in the public school system in San Antonio, Texas. I am here to voice my opposition against taxpayer dollars being used for private school vouchers. Our public schools are already grossly underfunded and taking this away, would just make it matters worse. Please, I employ you to vote against this and do the right things for our schools, teachers and most importantly, our children!

Brent McFarland

Self/Teacher

Abernathy, TX

Regarding ESA: Why not make the ESA value equal to what the school funding amount would be? If it is because the amount is not adequate to fund student education in a private school setting, then how is it justified to be adequate for public school funding? Make it a level playing field for both. Either reduce the ESA funding to public levels or vice versa.

Regarding teacher pay:

1. While the one time bonus of \$4000 would be nice, it is still just a ONE TIME bonus. This does not help much in future. Seems like a treat to make teacher feel good, but I don't see this as Congress actually caring about teachers.
2. Increasing the basic allotment for public schools will not show much of an increase in teacher salaries. The bump will not allow for much of a monthly increase especially after taxes, insurance, retirement, etc are taken out.

I think the TIA is just smoke and mirrors. I am in the process of trying to get TIA. It takes 2 years to see any additional money from this and is only good for 5 years after which, to my understanding, I will have to reapply with the possibility of losing the funding at that time. Also, since the school is reevaluated annually, it seems to be a sliding scale with no guarantees that the funding will be the same from year to year(it could be reduced). This isn't how "raises" work in the business world and anyone who would try to implement this kind of system would have a difficult time finding employees. The system is also rigged to work against teachers from attaining the highest amount allowed. With criteria that says "Consistently does ..." is virtually impossible to prove since evaluators are not in the classroom enough to witness something being consistently done. So to say teachers can achieve 6 figure salaries is quite dishonest. While they "can", the likelihood is not very real.

The proposed plan is also quite vague with the broad range of possible money in each designation. While it has for example, 9k-25k for exemplary designation, it does not narrow the amount to know what the teacher could truly receive. My opinion is that it would likely be the lower end of the scale with the higher end just a pipe dream for teachers to get excited about but will never actually see.

With the TRS rule of not allowing for a greater than 10% or \$10,000 increase in the last 3-5 years before retirement, the upper level TIA doesn't do much for older teachers. It seems that this is in place to keep teachers from retiring at a reasonable age to be able to enjoy retirement. It is not fair to achieve the highest level of compensation just to have it not matter in the end.

My feeling is, if your true goal is to increase teacher retention and moral in public education, stop with the rhetoric of teacher pay raises through systems that are not made to increase teacher pay and actually provide money to actually increase teacher pay.

Perla Hopkins

Self: Public School Mom & TX certified Teacher, USAF Veteran, Parental Rights & Education Advocate

Leander, TX

Relating to the educational opportunity and public school accountability of serving military-connected students, an update to Education Code Chapter 162 is a must.

During the Regular 88th Session, proponents of the Military Children's Compact asked for the following updates:

1. Place an "MIC3" tab on TEA and every School Districts' website's "Main Menu"
2. Provide the Compact for 4 years to "deceased" & "retired" SM's status

e.g.

ONLY INFO that should be linked under an "MIC3" TAB at TEA and [C]ISDs:

<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.162.htm>

SECTION 1.____. Subchapter Z, Chapter 25, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 25.906 to read as follows:

Sec. 25.906. PROTECTIONS FOR CERTAIN MILITARY DEPENDENTS. (a) In this section:

(1) "Compact" means the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children executed under Section 162.002.

(2) "Uniformed services" means:

(A) the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard;

(B) the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; or

(C) the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service.

(b) The provisions of Articles IV, V, VI, and VII of the compact apply to the following children as if those children were children described by Article III of the compact:

(1) a child of a veteran of the uniformed services who was discharged or released through retirement, for a period of four years after the date of the veteran's retirement, if the veteran returns to the veteran's home of record on military orders; and

(2) a child of a member of the uniformed services who dies on active duty or as a result of injuries sustained on active duty, for a period of four years after the member's death.

(c) Each school district and open-enrollment charter school that maintains an Internet website shall post on the district's or school's Internet website an easily accessible link to information regarding the compact and the additional protections provided by this section.

TEA and the State of Texas must comply with equal opportunity for our military children. You have been given all the pertinent studies, research and documents that conclude TX must do more for the 2,000,000 TX veterans' children. The MIC3 2023 Annual Business Meeting has convened this week, with Gov Abbott's appointed commissioner front and center, it is time that this TEA/MIC3 representative stop the mistakes that hinder our children's educational opportunity.

They serve too!

William McWhorter

Self

Longview, TX

Good afternoon, I respectfully urge the members of the committee to pass HB 1 by Chairman Buckley. We have an opportunity to truly address school choice here in Texas, while also making sure the public school system and Teachers have the financial resources, they need to be successful. School choice will give students a chance to access educational tools that can build a solid foundation for them to be successful citizens in our society. We will also make sure that Texas is once again leading the charge on important policy decisions across the country as we have done on so many other priorities over the years. Thank you for your consideration, and hopeful passage of this key legislation. Sincerely, William B. McWhorter. [HD 7 Constituent - Rep. Dean].

Stephen Luce
Self
Southlake, TX

No to ESA's! No public money for Christian nationalist home schoolers or private schools!

Ban assault rifles, universal background checks, raise age, limit clip size,,,,you know, com,o sense gun laws.

Lewis Lepore
Self / Teacher
Sugar Land, TX

I am for recruiting, retaining, and rewarding the best teachers in Texas.

Margaret Eggleston
Self- Retired teacher
Houston, TX

I am strongly opposed to school vouchers/ESAs! I believe the way to insure that all students receive a quality education is to fund public schools adequately and not divert much needed tax money to an ill-conceived plan that would not achieve its stated goals.

Keri Thomas
Self, Advertising
Cedar Park, TX

As a mom, I am against this bill because I believe in the power of public education for all children. The state should not be funding children to go to private schools, which ultimately affects the funding that public schools receive. Public schools in Texas are already massively underfunded to the detriment of our children especially those who are from poorer families.

Please vote against this bill.

Claire O'Neal
Mothers for Democracy Institute
Austin, TX

Representative of the House Select Committee. I am a mother with two young children. One is a kindergartener in Del Valle ISD and my other son is 2. I have seen firsthand how dedicated the educators are in our district and in other Texas ISDs. What I have heard time and time again is that public schools in Texas desperately need more school funding, not a voucher bill. In fact, I have spent the past five months deep-diving into this issue. I created a podcast along with my co-host to explore the truth about vouchers. We unequivocally concluded that vouchers are a scam. We say that because they do not and cannot deliver on what they promise. I encourage you to listen to our series where we make the case that vouchers are a scam. We even discuss the history of this issue and spoiler alert - it's rooted in racism. Please do not advance this bill. This will not help Texas children. Here is the podcast - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-voucher-scam/id1709907074>

Kristen Sullins
self
Gatesville, TX

I am a Texas resident, an active voter, and a strong advocate for public education. I thank the house members who have stood by the children of Texas and voted NO to all education savings plans (aka vouchers). I strongly ask that you continue to stand firm in support of the students, teachers, and communities of Texas and vote NO to all bills containing educational savings plans and start providing adequate funding for our Texas public schools. Texas has one of the strongest economies in the nation and yet we rank 43rd in public education funding. We serve all students regardless of disability, language, and behavioral needs of the student.

I respectfully ask that you please stop holding school funding and teacher raises hostage as an attempt to pass voucher legislation. Please vote no to house bill 1 and all voucher legislation and do what is right for ALL children of Texas!

Mae Ozeri, Ms.

self, teacher

Dallas, TX

To the Esteemed Members of the Committee,

I am a classroom teacher in my 15th year of education. In this time, I have witnessed time and again the suffering of children whose needs could not be met. Even with the most well meaning teachers, some children were not successful in the standard classroom. Because of what we know about the brain, we understand now that the vast majority of kids who used to be written off as "stupid" are actually quite intelligent, but need a specialized educational setting. In North Texas, I know of three superb private schools, Shelton, Oakhill, and Fairhill. Shelton in particular is well known and educators come from all over the country to study their methods. Over the years, some parents took the financial plunge and sent their children to these schools. The results were astonishing and consistent. Within two days the children were happy to go to school. Within two weeks, they were producing work and making education progress that made up for years of lost time. The absolute fallacy that every child can be educated the same needs to end. There are so many brilliant, kind, capable children that would shine if only they were with teachers who knew how to tap into their potential. Children with dyslexia, dysgraphia, autism, processing disorders, severe ADHD, and more are thriving in schools that are made for them. Public school simply shoots down the middle and hopes that most kids fall in line. But we know that the human brain is not standard, so why should our education be?

With educational savings accounts, these schools could expand and make sure that every child in Texas is having their needs met. Think of this as an investment in our future. If we have less children failing out of public schools that simply can not meet their need, we will almost certainly slow the "school to prison pipeline" to a trickle. Our citizens will be better educated and so much untapped potential will be used to better society. Please, for the sake of these brilliant children, say yes to education which can meet their needs and unlock their futures.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mae Ozer, MA. Teaching

Rebecca Meyer

myself

Brookshire, TX

Someone once said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expected a different outcome. At this point, Greg Abbott and the "representatives" that are pushing for vouchers, sorry excuse me....ESA's, are wasting tax payer money and time. A rose by any other name is still but a rose, while an ESA's is still a voucher it does not matter how you wrap it up and present it to the people and representatives of Texas. We are still discussing defunding the public education system to steal money out of our pockets for people who are far richer and far less needy so that their children can attend whatever school they want to. All the while whining and crying that parents of Texas need school choice. I hate to break it to you but we have school choice. I as much as any other Texan has the ability to choose where I want to send my child. I can send my child to my working district, where we live, or if I wanted I could homeschool or charter. Now we start to see that this isn't about choice at all, but about money. Stop trying to cram vouchers, or sorry ESA's, down the throat of Texas taxpayers.

Taylor Brown

self

Gatesville, TX

I am a Texas resident, an active voter, and a strong advocate for public education. I thank the house members who have stood by the children of Texas and voted NO to all education savings plans (aka vouchers). I strongly ask that you continue to stand firm in support of the students, teachers, and communities of Texas and vote NO to all bills containing educational savings plans and start providing adequate funding for our Texas public schools. Texas has one of the strongest economies in the nation and yet we rank 43rd in public education funding. We serve all students regardless of disability, language, and behavioral needs of the student.

I respectfully ask that you please stop holding school funding and teacher raises hostage as an attempt to pass voucher legislation. Please vote no to house bill 1 and all voucher legislation and do what is right for ALL children of Texas!

Candace Blake
Self, retired teacher
Buda, TX

Public money should stay with public schools. Please do not support this bill. Support our Texas public schools! Separate vouchers out from other needed school funding, please.

Holly Parsons
Self
Fairview, TX

Please raise the per child allotment by more than \$1,000. Why should the voucher program give students over \$10,000 but my student is only granted \$6,000 to go to their zoned school? Right now Texas is \$4,000 below the average of other states. Please raise the allotment to be in line with other states. We need our kids educated and the way of doing that is by allowing the billions of funds sitting at the state level appropriately allocated to students, specially in Lovejoy ISD.

Lewis Lepore
Self / Teacher
Sugar Land, TX

I am for higher teacher's pay, less testing, and NO vouchers!

Kathryn Kizer
Access Education RRISD
Austin, TX

I do not support ESA's or vouchers by any other name. I do not believe that public education funding should be tied to vouchers. We need a robust and well funded public education system to serve all students.

Vim Head
Self
Katy, TX

Texas parents know best how their child excels in the classroom. We must no long accept address to determine the outcome of a students success. It is time to support students over systems.

Becky Quick
Self - IM Terrell Academy for STEM & VPA
Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers hurt the students, teachers, staff, and parents involved in the public education system. Public schools already have challenges operating on the limited funds they receive, it would be detrimental to all involved if they were forced to try to work with less. Right now, my son attends a public school that specializes in educating students with rigorous academic instruction, while also allowing them to pursue their interests and talents in the performing arts and STEM fields. Our district, along with other districts in the area, have done a wonderful job of creating programs to encourage students to not only pursue their required education, but to give them skills and set them on a path to be successful, contributing members of society as adults. These programs provide free opportunities for students that they would not otherwise be able to pursue. If you take away funding, programs such as these would be at risk at being limited or eliminated. That would be a travesty for our students and our future as a whole. If anything, you should be implementing and voting for initiatives that enhance these types of programs in the public school setting, which is free and accessible in an equitable way for all, providing additional funding to celebrate the creative and incredible work being done by our public education system. Vouchers go against the progress that has been made, please do not hurt our children and educators in this way.

Roger Mayes, Rev.

self -- clergy, Pastors for Texas Children, Fellowship Southwest
San Antonio, TX

I am strongly opposed to vouchers and education savings accounts that will take away money from public schools. Texans do not want this. It will hurt children. It will hurt teachers and staff. It will benefit rich people and those aspiring for greater political offices.

Please stop telling us this will give us a choice. We already have a choice!

I do not want my tax dollars going to private schools. Ever.

I am a product of private education. It was good for me. My parents were not rich, but they made it happen. My wife and I chose for my own kids to go to public schools. We even chose for our kids to go to Title I schools. The teachers were great. My kids got a very good education.

I am for increasing the allocation of money to public schools.

You can do better. Texas' children deserve better.

Please stop trying to force something we don't want. This offensive to me as a constituent that time is being wasted on this issue again. Stop.

Anita Jiles

self/communications professional
Lago Vista, TX

I am opposed to HB 1 because it diverts money from our under-funded public schools to private entities. Texas does not have the capacity to support another school funding system. Our Texas children and teachers deserve better than a temporary, small bump in funding in order to bribe the public into accepting private school vouchers. We have already seen that vouchers don't work in other states.

We already have school choice in Texas. School vouchers are a blatant attempt to undermine and destroy our public schools. Texas ranks 28th in education, yet we are 43rd in the nation for public school funding. What a testament to the hard work of our teachers, principals and students! Yet the funding level is an embarrassment to our great state. Imagine what our educators could do if we actually supported their work instead of undermining it with voucher schemes! We should be in the top 10 in the nation for funding our children's future before we start offering coupons for wealthy families to attend private schools.

I respectfully ask committee members to oppose HB 1 and any other bill that includes education savings accounts, vouchers, and other schemes designed to siphon money away from our Texas public schools.

Mary Jacoby

Self Marcus HS, Durham MS, Rockbrook ES, Central ES
Flower Mound, TX

Public schools are the backbone of our communities and it's vital they are adequately funded. Until school funding is equitable across all forms of education in Texas, vouchers will do nothing more than hurt children in the public school system. All children in Texas deserve access to high quality education that is funded and appropriately regulated.

Thank you

Suzanne Grier

self

Austin, TX

Please vote NO on HB1! Do not rob our public schools. The children of Texas deserve fully funded PUBLIC schools. We do NOT want vouchers here in Texas.

Please vote NO on HB1!

Savannah Tybor

Self

San Marcos, TX

I am AGAINST HB1 as a product of the public school system, specifically KISD, Killeen High School, and Dr. Susan Buckley as Principal. Our public school system gave me an enriched curriculum alongside programs such as theater and choir which all allowed me to grow leadership skills, maintain a 4.0 GPA, get accepted into 10 colleges across the state of Texas, and many more benefits.

Cynthia Bauter, Dr.

self - educator

Justin, TX

This bill still does not address ongoing, sufficient funding for school districts (for example, a one-time \$4,000 bonus for certain employees would cost the district more to sustain in salary than the increase in basic allotment that is proposed). While the carrot of financial bait to public schools in exchange for vouchers/ESAs (no less at a rate of \$10,500/student/year versus the Third Special Session rate of \$8000) is enticing, this bill does not address catch-up funding for public schools, much less ADEQUATELY funding public schools to truly address the needs. Above all, giving MORE money for private school tuition does not do one thing to help a child access that school who cannot already access that school--including but not limited to these examples: rural school children are still left out; children who have special labels do not have to be accepted by private schools; children who make mistakes can be withdrawn by private schools, and there is absolutely zero guarantee that private schools won't increase their tuition by \$10,500 per year per student. Again, this bill would still allow taxpayer dollars for education to be routed to pockets of private school owners--without accountability, without mandates the public schools have, without changing the effective opportunity for ALL children in Texas. This bill has lipstick on it, but it's still a voucher bill that is not good for public education. And public education is a constitutional obligation; private school is not.

Carla Nix
Self
Grand Prairie, TX

I have spent many years helping individuals with disabilities within the Texas system care. It's clear to me the proposed voucher system is failure of children of disabilities.

Unbelievably, this bill was amended to become even worse.

A provision has been added that parent and guardians of children who have disabilities and go through the ARD process must be given information about State Supported Living Centers (former State Schools).

Vouchers discriminate against students with disabilities because there are no requirements for private schools to serve them. By law, children with disabilities are supposed to be served in the communities where they live. I cannot fathom how the solution is to allowing schools to reject students with disabilities is to push kids toward being institutionalized.

This bill was already headed for a lawsuit if it became law because of the detrimental effect it will have on children with disabilities. The addition of the ARD provision fuels the disability community arguments and likely violates terms of lawsuits Texas has settled.

There is a long wait list for disability services. Texas is 48th in how it funds and serves people with disabilities. Most change and movement in services for these folks have come from settlements of lawsuits. The voucher program itself will violate terms of settled law because of its treatment of people with disabilities. If this bill passes, and kids start getting pushed towards state supported living centers, this will likely violate terms of previously settled lawsuits going as far back as Lelz. State supported living centers are still under federal monitoring from a settlement from Rick Perry's tenure.

The average cost of serving someone in a state supported living center 120,000\$ a year, with a cap of 362,000\$. Is this going to become another unfunded policy for an already underfunded system?

Vouchers will end up costing the state a lot of money in lawsuits that they will ultimately lose because of previous settlements unfunded policies.

Marilyn Wood-Brewster
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I Support this Bill to provide students and families the freedom to choose .

ANDREW YAO
self
HOUSTON, TX

seriously. you need to stop it. you already lost.

Alice Ash
self
Belton, TX

I am in support of the establishment of education savings accounts, as well as the educational measures known as "school choice." It is very important to me that homeschoolers and other private schools who do not accept state money NOT be subjected to any kind of additional oversight, now or in the future. I heard a representative say that the school choice measures give homeschoolers and private schools added advantages or public schools, but I beg to differ. It is only a small step toward providing equal access to educational funding which is denied to these students based purely on the fact that their parents have determined that the public school system is not the optimal place for their children's education.

Rebekah Warwick, Texas State Director
Heritage Action for America
Mansfield, TX

Chairman Buckley and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on House Bill 1. My name is Rebekah Warwick and I represent Heritage Action for America, a national grassroots organization with two million conservative activists nationwide, including thousands of Texans.

Education freedom empowers parents to meet their child's unique learning needs and provide them with the best education possible. For too long, children have been forced into a one-size-fits-all education system. No longer should a student's zip code determine the quality of education they receive.

To give students access to the best education possible, taxpayer-funding for education should follow the student, and not be tied to a specific school.

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) are a key component to expanding education freedom, which open the gates to more options and opportunities in K-12 education. With ESAs, parents can hire a personal tutor for their child, find an education therapist, pay private school tuition, buy curricula and textbooks, and more.

Currently, Texas ranks 30th for School Choice in the 2022 Heritage Foundation Education Freedom Report Card ranking all 50 states. Texas can do better.

HB 1 recognizes the importance of empowering Texas students and parents with choice by establishing ESAs.

Heritage Action offers a couple of suggested improvements to make Texas a leader in education freedom.

Choice laws are commonly used by students across the country after their zoned public school experience goes poorly for them either academically and/or socially. No other program in the country has a provision to expel students from their chosen school, nor would the public school system ever accept such a practice. The language disqualifying a student's eligibility based on performance should be removed.

To ensure that no special needs child ever languishes on a waiting list and that special needs children have priority access to the educational resources they need, the bill could be improved by formula funding the scholarships of special needs students.

Parent satisfaction and student participation should be the barometer by which to measure the success and demand for the program. The sunset review of the choice program is unnecessary and should be removed.

Parents all across Texas are asking for school choice and we appreciate Chairman Buckley for taking up this important issue.

Rebekah Warwick
Texas State Director
Heritage Action for America
202-316-3930
rebekah.warwick@heritageaction.com

Peggy Redmond
Self
Hutto, TX

I am AGAINST HB1

Regina Davis
Self / retired
Murchison, TX

Public funds belong in public schools. Please vote NO to vouchers!!! My voting depends on your vote.

Kristie Bratcher
Self
Friendswood, TX

Please stop pushing something millions of families do not want and it will only hurt the public schools these families love. Actually find the public schools, pay the teachers their worth and see how much better Texas public schools can be! You are willing to give more money per student with vouchers then you are willing to give per student in public schools, how does that make sense!! Just stop!!!

Mary Wilson
Self, retired teacher
Groveton, TX

I urge you to keep public education funds allotted for free public education for all students. I do not support school vouchers for many reasons. Two of my top reasons are 1) not all students will be able to attend private schools and this will create very unfair disadvantages for the majority of our young people. Private schools do not provide currently for extracurricular activities without paying the extra costs. Many students will not have that advantage even if they take a voucher with them. Private schools can set their own fees and tuitions as needed to fit their needs. Public schools cannot do this and must educate and provide extra curricular activities of which I believe we should.

2) The public school system is already strapped and struggling to provide now for all students.

Why on earth would you want to take away from an already under funded program.

Let's find ways to grow our teacher retention and find our teachers equitable salaries comparable to industry standards. Reduce the alarming number of hours seasoned teachers must spend learning a new administrative leader throws at them, the hours of wasted time spent in unrelated facility meetings that have no bearing on their curriculum, or the countless hours they have to attend Ard meetings just to have a seat in the room. Proceed with 4 day school/work weeks to give younger students time with family or to just being kids. Schools can pay teaches extra to have tutorials, school extracurricular practices/events or for younger students daycare. I promise you teaches would love to have an extra income to manage those areas. And meals can still be provided for those children if they need it.

Leslie Wright
Self
Katy, TX

HB 1 would destroy my property value. I live in an area with excellent public schools and the only thing this bill would do is pull money from my area and give it to private religious schools.

Jack Daniel Harkins
Dykema Gossett
San Antonio, TX

I have been involved in education and supporting various schools for over 40 years. I strongly support the passage of school choice legislation. It is a high priority political issue for my family, my community, and me, and the legislature's response to HB1 is how I will determine my political support-- through my vote, but also through my political donations and my political volunteering activities. It is imperative school choice is passed.

Melissa Vaughan
Self
Sachse, TX

I oppose school vouchers. Please fully fund our public schools first, and pay our teachers a livable wage.

Thomas Baker, Mr.

Myself individually as a tax paying citizen

Temple, TX

I am writing solely in my individual capacity to oppose our state's enacting education savings accounts aka vouchers. State taxpayer funds should be used to improve our state's public schools. I am a father of two grown daughters whom I cherish and love. I am Roman Catholic. We put our daughters through 12 years of Catholic schools' education at Temple St. Mary's Elementary School and Temple Holy Trinity Catholic High School. They went on to University of Dallas, a Catholic University, where both had academic scholarships. We never had our hands out for state help nor did we receive any. While doing that we paid our property taxes to fund Temple High School and our public schools. We are not rich. We struggled at times, but we made sacrifices and did it. Parents have a choice to enroll their children in private schools, many of which offer financial aid. Many parents even can choose among different public schools. "Choice" is a false narrative. Truly some parents must have their children in our public schools. Therefore it behooves us to provide the best, safest public schools. Many rural communities do not even have private schools. Public schools are the center of their communities. Please stop trying to force on the majority of this state's citizens what the majority does not want.

Cheraina Dunn

Family

Day, TX

I am so disappointed in our leadership and our governor for packaging vouchers with teacher raises and public education funding. Before vouchers should be consider fund public education. It I obvious Governor Abbot is focused on destroying publication is order to get his vouchers passed. Texas use to be a state of great public education. But in the past 10 years it has suffered and become an embarrassment to this great state. Fund public education properly before you extend the funding to private education. Teachers are leaving public education because you have not funded properly. Students are suffering because you are not raising the basic allotment for the general education student. Do your job and recognize you are of the people for the people. We do not want vouchers. Vouchers sound good but they ado not give parents the "right to choose" where their students go. Vouchers create another government program that will be poorly managed and waste tax payer money. It's sad to hear that your team wants vouchers year two to be \$10,500 when current basic allotment is at \$6160 and you are proposing to raise it to \$6700. This is significantly less than a \$10,500 voucher and still very behind the national average.

Kim Stewart, Public school teacher

Huntington ISD

Huntington, TX

Reject Vouchers

Debbie Tropiano

self - retired

CEDAR PARK, TX

While I support the increases in public school funding, there needs to be specific funding directed to educator salaries to mitigate the shortages that are happening all over the state. There also needs to be funding for the new school safety mandates that are so hard and expensive to implement and staff.

Also, I am opposed to any taxpayer money being spent on non-public schools (private, religious, homeschool, etc). If any taxpayer funds are spent, the amount should not be any higher than what is given per student to public schools and should hold to the exact same standards for state testing (STAAR, EOCs, etc) and the IDEA requirements.

Thank you for consideration of my comments.

Sunny Masanow
Self/Valley Oaks Elementary PTA Historian
Houston, TX

Vouchers will hurt our children significantly! Our district and teachers will suffer. Please do not allow these vouchers to be approved. I support policy makers who can ensure all children in public schools have access to high quality, adequately and appropriately regulated public schools.

Diane Gibula, Mrs
Self-Nurse
Richmond, TX

It is my opinion that where to send our students for their education and formative years should be a choice for each individual family. We had one of our sons attend private school and one attended public and homeschooling. One son had a reading disability and was homeschooled for middle school. It was tailored to their individual needs. Both our sons are doing well. One attended college and has a great job for a large company as an actuary. The other son did not attend college and went into the trades. He has his own handyman business. This is a decision that each family should have the opportunity to decide on. Private education is a great choice for many but tuition is often the factor that many can not afford. They can help teach our students to be critical thinkers, rule followers raised with discipline and love. It seems to me that monies should be provided by the government. Also homeschooling should receive funds as well. Many students that have been homeschooled are pillars of our society. They are confident, courteous, faith-based and have great work ethic and integrity. I see the importance of allowing families to decide for themselves and cost should never be the deciding factor.

Irene Andrews
Self, Retired special education teacher KilleenISD
Nolanville, TX

Please do NOT approve HB1 school vouchers bill. Public education is required to serve and open to ALL students. That is where tax payer money needs to go. Private schools will never accept all students. They can refuse for any reason. They are not required to follow state and federal rules and guidelines.

Keep public schools strong.
Keep them fully funded! PERIOD!
Thank you for listening,
Irene Andrews
Nolanville, TX

Stephen Kupec
Self - Realtor
Round Rock, TX

Dear Representatives,

I am a constituent and I adamantly opposed to vouchers for PRIVATE education. I am advocating for funding our PUBLIC schools to a level commensurate with the best funding per student in the nation. School choice is truly that - a choice - and if someone wants to send their children, then I support that, but not with any money that should go to our public schools!

Laura Butler

Self

North Richland Hills, TX

I am against HB1. I do not want "Savings Account Program" (vouchers) that use public dollars for private schools to pick and choose students. Private schools do not have to give the STARR test, are not accredited by TEA, and most importantly, are not required to follow Federal law for students with disabilities. Private schools get paid per student per year. Not based on attendance as public schools are. And as of now the worst language in the bill was just added. Public schools would be required to tell every parent of a child with a disability that they have the option to institutionalize their child. And the government would pay. This would happen through the Annual ARD Meeting. This has not been language in the past. This addition confirms my belief that this bill is nothing more than discrimination and segregation.

As I was working with my public schools to assure my son had an inclusive education, I worked on the belief that schools are our children's communities. All children learn from others within their communities. Children that are segregated by color, learning style, learning ability, income, or belief system are limited in life experience.

Please vote no on this bill

Beverly Brown

Self

KILLEEN, TX

Please vote no to this bill, it is a violation of the constitution to use public funds for faith based schools. When they begin to pay federal and state taxes I may reconsider my position. Thank you

Christina Etri

Self

DALLAS, TX

ESAs are NOT a solution to education in the state of Texas. Public schools do the job and they do it well despite the limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and standards that change at every legislative whim. Public schools take ALL kids, not just a select few. I don't see private schools taking kids with behavioral problems, but public schools manage every day. Private schools often don't take kids with learning disabilities, but public school educate them every day.

If you want to see increased improvement in the public schools, make funding them a priority! Texas is 42nd in the nation in funding per student. 42nd! Public dollars belong in public schools. Parents have plenty of choices, and as a former public school teacher, I can confirm that parents have all the access they need to their child's education. Teachers communicate with parents regularly and hold conferences each semester or more. Parents can volunteer, visit classrooms, join their school PTA, and see what their children are doing through platforms like Google Classroom which is what most schools use. Parents hold the power. If they have ideological issues with public school, they are more than welcome to send their children to private schools. There are charter schools, private schools, and homeschools - parents already have choice!

Every state that has implemented a voucher program has their state budget increase exponentially and move the state budget into the red. (Pun intended.) Is that what Texas wants? To go into debt for a few PACs? Because we all know that is who is behind this push!

I have yet to met someone who is in favor of ESAs - most want more for their public schools. Stop making public school's jobs so difficult! No to ESAs! No to vouchers! Stop listening to your PAC money and start listening to your constituents.

Henderson Katy

Self

Montgomery, TX

No ESA/vouchers.

Monty De La Torre

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Please allow for School Choice!

Rachael Metcalf

HEB ISD

bedford, TX

We need to fully fund public schools. If parents want to send their students to private schools, they should pay for this out of their own pocket. If we fund public education correctly, we would not need to have this discussion. Please say no to vouchers, no to ESAs, yes to fully funding public education. Yes to fully funding special education. Yes to teacher pay raises, Yes to virtual education. Yes to CTE funding.

Rachael Metcalf

Bedford, Texas

Geeta Suggs

self

Austin, TX

I am a parent of two public school children. I am a proud graduate of a Texas Public High School and I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Lana Marker

self

Richardson, TX

I am opposed to this bill. My family are products of the public school system. You keep taking away funding and resources and have left us with underpaid teachers, limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and standards that change as often as the wind. Public schools CAN do the job. Private schools are not held to the same accountability standards or transparency as public schools. How will the success of students attending be measured? Will the state manage the curriculum standards? Who will provide oversight of how the funds are used (as TEA does for public schools)?

Celia Matthews, Mrs.

Board Member non profit early childhood program

Abilene, TX

As a board member for a non profit early childhood program I would like to see PreK included in child care programs.

Rick Williams, The Honorable

Self

Killeen, TX

Please do not support this or any voucher bill. We must make our public school system work for every citizen. If a parent wishes to send their child to a different institution of learning, let them, but let them pay the full ride.

Rebecca Ruiz

Self- Homeschooling Mom

Waco, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. First of all, this expands government which is supposed to be the opposite of what conservatives stand for. Second, we already have choice. You can send your child to public school, private school, charter schools, or homeschool. Yes, not everyone can afford a private school, but you make sacrifices. There are also a lot of scholarships available for private school tuition. Private schools also do not, and are not required, to accept every student that applies. There are a lot of school districts that offer more programs than ever before, and a lot of districts offer the ability for a student to transfer to their district from another one in order to attend it without actually living in that district. Third, I should also not have to pay for a family to send their child to private school. Nobody should have to pay for someone else to send their child to a private school that they don't agree with. We already pay for public schools that we don't agree with. Where is the accountability for what is taught in the private schools? Will parents in communities be allowed to attend meetings like we can currently attend school board meetings? Fourth, it does state in the TX Constitution that public funds for public schools (taxpayer money) are not allowed to go towards private schools. Fifth, when it comes to the testing stipulation, there is nothing that accounts for children with disabilities and learning challenges. In fact, having the testing requirement, does in fact change curriculum choices. Now, private schools would have to change the curriculum they teach in order for a child to pass the test. If curriculum is changed, how does that affect students who already attend those schools? Sixth, this actually does nothing to help students with disabilities. They aren't able to attend a private school because those schools are not set up to accommodate children with special needs. Schools that specialize in that, are far more expensive than a run of the mill private school. They are more expensive because they have to hire specialized staff, therapists, and curriculum. Overall, this is a bad bill and it should definitely not have public school funding held hostage because of the governor's ego and dismissive attitude to taxpayer concerns about vouchers. It's sad that you would cave to that by writing this bill. Vouchers need to be a separate issue.

Erika Bazan

Self

McKinney, TX

My child has gone to a charter and public school. I will tell you first hand our public school need this money more. Instead of handcuffing TX students and their privileges to learn and have the same opportunities as children in private or charter school, you need to release these funds so the majority can benefit!

Wilmalene Proffitt

Myself

Goldthwaite, TX

Vote NO VOUCHERS!

Pamela Slough

Self Retired

Georgetown, TX

This bill to create educational funding accounts (vouchers) for families are morally & ethically wrong. It is unAmerican. This bill is part of the effort to scuttle our public schools. Vouchers don't serve our poor who can't afford transportation and the remainder of private tuition. The private schools can deny entrance to our special needs and minority students. Vouchers provide public funding for religious school. Enough is enough! You are on your 4th special session wasting our \$ when there are important issues to address. Stop the drive for vouchers. Pass funding for public schools and teachers.

Teddy Grunden

self

Texas City, TX

All parents should have the right to chose a school that is not failing no matter their socioeconomic status. For too long our tax dollars have been wasted and frankly at times abused in a system that only cares about butts in seats to determine how much money schools receive. As a community it has always been the mindset that we want our children to attend a school and we as the public would pay for this service to be free for the child. This bill allows the parent to chose what educational path is best for them without being restricted by where thy live or the school being a financial burden. Ultimately this will lead to better educated and better adjusted adults with more opportunities.

Mickey Platko

Self

Magnolia, TX

I oppose school vouchers and demand full funding for Texas public schools.

Sandra Blankenship

Self

Killeen, TX

Our Texas schools need to bring back the three "C's", critical thinking, civics and cognition. We need to end the teaching to the test criteria that so many districts are forced into just to maintain a decent rating. Testing should be used as a tool to determine a student's progress and capability not as a punitive measure for teachers and schools. We need our children and grandchildren to be prepared to compete in a job market that is becoming more automated and requires higher level critical thinking skills. We need to support the profession of teaching as the building block of the future that it is. To do that we need to make funding our public schools a priority at the state level. The children of Texas deserve nothing less than a top-notch education and vouchers for rich folk ain't gonna get us there.

Amanda Ryan

Self / Parent and strong interest in K-12 education options

Austin, TX

I am writing to register my support for HB1. As a parent of 3 children currently in grades 3, 6 and 8, I care very much about K-12 education in Texas. While I believe that public schools serve a very important role, they are not the right fit for all children, families, or even teachers. I have spoken to many teachers who have chosen to teach outside of public schools for many different reasons. Teachers deserve to have more choices in the types of programs they teach, away from public schools. Until they have more options, I fear we will continue to lose talented educators which Texas sorely needs to retain.

As a parent, one who is very focused on academic rigor as well as having my children learn in a setting that is in alignment with our family's values, HB1 is very relevant. For many, many reasons I believe that HB1 should be passed. It addresses the opposition's concerns of accountability for participating schools, and it affords many more families to exercise their parental right to choose where their children learn. Until EVERY Texas child can be educated in the program of their parents' choice, there will be work to do, but HB1 is a terrific start!

Heather Lacey

Self - Project Manager and volunteer fundraising co-chair

dallas, TX

How are we expecting better safety outcomes if we are not adequately supporting students, teachers, staff and admin in our public schools? How does funding keep getting stripped away but we see it as an "issue", but nothing is being solved.

Our state is ranked the bottom 10 in funding for public schools. How and where is the funding going if Texas is ranked bottom 10 for multiple areas?

Public schools can do the job, but it is hard to do with limited funding, outdated teaching standards and overcrowded classrooms. Our state of education for Texas needs to do better.

Jennyfer Riojas

Christian Preschool Centers

Lubbock, TX

Pre-K needs to be included in ANY choice program!

Freddie Smith

Self

Garland, TX

If this is for the school vouchers please vote against it. This is nothing more but a tax cut for the rich. My daughter is a teacher. There should not be any funds taken away from public schools.

Karen Stanfill

self

Red Oak, TX

Texans do NOT want vouchers (by any name). Private school owners do, but not your constituents. Please listen to your voters, not to the deep-pocket donors. Texans want well-funded, well-supported public schools that put us in the top rankings in the US rather than the bottom.

Joanne Antovoni

Self - Real Estate Agent

Dallas, TX

I'm a real estate agent in Collin county. I've discussed the voucher program with my clients who are 100% against it. They feel it will take away resources from public schools, reduce the quality of education and create an unequal system of education. They feel vouchers are unfair and the majority of the money will go to children already enrolled in private schools. Vouchers will not address the underlying issues faced by the public schools, like inadequate funding, over crowding, outdated facilities and low teacher pay. Although most of my clients are Christian they don't want their tax dollars to fund Christian schools. This bill is extremely unpopular with the general public and we all want to know what is the real motivating factor behind Greg Abbott pushing this on Texans. It's apparent to all that he wants it more than parents.

Elisa Fisher

Self-Retired Public Educator of 35 years

Arlington, TX

Reject Vouchers - Our students with disabilities will suffer without the support of public education and all the support that is provided to them through these resources. In no way will vouchers support this population's needs. I have worked 35 years in education with our special needs students.

Ann Barnes

Myself- retired teacher

Keller, TX

I am firmly opposed to a voucher bill passing. It will drain money away from already underfunded public schools. It would not demand that private school take all applicants and show no accountability or transparency on their part. Abbott is holding school funding and teacher raises hostage to get his way! Enough is enough!

Megan Davis

Self - lawyer and professor

Houston, TX

Vote no for vouchers. Let's invest these funds in our public schools.

Melanie Van Winkle

Self/Technical Writer

Austin, TX

I attended Texas private and parochial schools from Kindergarten through High School. As a graduate of Texas private schools, I am adamantly opposed to any education savings program that would funnel taxpayer money into private, religious institutions for the following reasons:

First, these schools are selective and can admit, suspend, and expel students at their discretion. One of the schools my mother considered explicitly stated that students could be expelled for reading Harry Potter. Notably, the Catholic middle school I attended could expel students for having abortions, even if the student was only 11 years old at the time of the abortion.

Second, I have experienced the curriculum firsthand. One of the most memorable lessons was that of St. Maria Goretti. Maria is considered a 'virgin martyr' of the Catholic Church. Maria was 11 years old when she was murdered because she refused to be sexually assaulted. Indeed, this was the major takeaway from that lesson: It is better to die righteously than to be sexually assaulted. You can imagine how difficult it was to reconcile this lesson with my later sexual assault.

Third, these schools are overtly religious and often use tuition monies to fund religious coursework and field trips. I was required to attend a daily religion course with the same fervor and grade weight as my mathematics, English, and History courses. To force taxpayers to fund these courses would fly in the face of our state constitution, which states that "no man shall be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry against his consent." While this bill attempts to circumvent directly supporting places of worship, the end result is the same: taxpayer money would be used to fund religious institutions.

Fourth, the majority of private religious schools in the state are Christian in nature. Based on my research, there are only 6 Jewish schools and 8 Islamic schools in the state of Texas. In contrast, there are over 400 Christian private schools in this state. Clearly this measure would disproportionately support Christian families while depriving Jewish and Muslim families. It is not as simple as a Jewish family sending their children to a Christian school, either. In my life, I've never experienced more blatant and persistent antisemitism than I did as a Jew in a Catholic school. The spark for the antisemitism seemed to originate from the notion that 'the Jews killed Jesus', and that spark was fanned into a bonfire by adolescent cruelty.

Finally, the education savings account would likely be unable to completely fund a private education. The annual price for private schools located in/near major cities can exceed \$20,000 a year. Because the education savings account will not cover the entirety of tuition costs, many low-income families will be further disadvantaged by a policy that looks pretty on paper but is pathetic in practice.

James Simmons

Self, Business Analyst and PTA member

Austin, TX

We need your leadership! Until we have adequately funded our public schools, there is no room for ESAs/Vouchers. PLEASE SAY NO TO VOUCHERS!

Angela Keiser
Self / public school parent
Richardson, TX

I strongly oppose vouchers, education savings accounts, and anything that redirects public money to private schools. Do not hold our public schools hostage to try and force through your voucher scam.

Marcy Galle
Families Engaged for Effective Education Co-founder
Willow Park, TX

Once again, I am urging committee members to vote against the latest horrible voucher legislation. This bill has a massive price tag of \$36.4 Billion through 2028 and increases the government by 94 employees. As a lifelong Republican, I am reminding the Republicans on this committee that our platform supports shrinking government, not expanding it. This bill does not align with our platform, because of the huge price tag, but also, because it includes strings attached to ESA dollars.

Again, I am requesting action to be taken to repeal the bad bills ruining government education, like SEL, DOI, PBIS, HB 1605 (the Amplify vendor bill), Robin Hood (hasn't helped in 30 years), and many more. Stop the unfunded mandates. Stop giving Mike Morath and the TEA more power. Make the TEA Commissioner an elected position again. We already have enough un-elected bureaucrats running government ed and parents are ignored across the state when they complain locally, because law firms conspire with TASB to circumvent true parental involvement and influence. Government ed is a train wreck in need of less legislation, not more, and throwing billions at the problem while slapping "parental choice" lipstick on a failing system is insulting to every taxpayer. Empower teachers and allow them to actually teach again! Tell Governor Abbott, "NO!"

Thank you for your time.

Marvin Bobo
Self
Lucas, TX

I am not in favor of HB1's ESA language. I do not support using public funds for private schools that have no accountability and do not have to accept the same regulations as public schools.

Janeth Sims, Mrs.
Self
Rowlett, TX

I have major concerns about the blank check this effect. He gives private individuals and private schools to use our public tax dollars and this will end up reducing money available to the public schools.

Charlotte Ballatd, Retired educator

None

Tomball, TX

I believe in paying attention to the lessons of history. For that reason I do not support using public funds for any private schools, but most particularly, for religious schools. The donors and millionaires pushing this agenda have no right to force the voters to bend to their will. We have repeatedly rejected the voucher proposals. The governor should stop bullying the legislature to get his way, not the voters' way. I do not wish to live in a theocracy, and I suspect most of us can agree on that.

I would urge all legislators to find the gumption to say no to any vouchers.

It is time to refuse to dangle teacher pay raises and other carrots to districts in exchange for taking a bullet for public education.

Didn't we all agree that a free public education was a constitutional requirement in Texas. Nowhere do we agree to fund private schools.

Say no to vouchers and to sham compromises. Demand public schools be properly funded and teachers receive fair pay raises, no strings attached. It's time Texas public schools rise in the rankings in the US. We should not be at the bottom.

Kay McCracken

Gatesville Elementary

Gatesville, TX

I am a Texas resident, an active voter, and a strong advocate for public education. But, most of all, I am a TEXAS TEACHER. I am currently teaching a second grade student that has been "home schooled" and she is in my first grade classroom, struggling and far behind my other students who were taught in a public school classroom. I have yet to have "home-schooled" students enter my classroom prepared to handle the depth and rigor of what is taught in my classroom.

I thank the house members who have stood by the children of Texas and voted NO to all education savings plans (aka vouchers). I strongly ask that you continue to stand firm in support of the students, teachers, and communities of Texas and vote NO to all bills containing educational savings plans and start providing adequate funding for our Texas public schools. Texas has one of the strongest economies in the nation and yet we rank 43rd in public education funding. We serve all students regardless of disability, language, and behavioral needs of the student.

I respectfully ask that you please stop holding school funding and teacher raises hostage as an attempt to pass voucher legislation. Please vote no to house bill 1 and all voucher legislation and do what is right for ALL children of Texas!

Michelle Ruocco

self

Lantana, TX

Firmly a NO to vouchers per my perspective as a developmental psychologist seeing children who desperately need public education. The families of children with low income and special education disabilities cannot afford private schools no matter if you give them a voucher, as a voucher pays at most 1/3 of the cost. Therefore, HB 1 is an effort to make it seem like legislators care about these kids by saying it will be based on income and disability status, but the reality is, HB 1 is a political maneuver to try to make vouchers more palatable. HB 1 WILL NOT HELP DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN, so NO!

Cindi Paschall, Mrs.

Self

North Richland Hills, TX

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide public comments on HB1. As a Texas resident, I ask you to oppose Public School Vouchers and Sec. 29.0056. INFORMATION REGARDING STATE SUPPORTED LIVING CENTERS.

Public school vouchers are harmful for students, schools and teachers. Vouchers + a poorly funded public education system equals bad policy. Private schools have no responsibility to follow the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - leaving students with disabilities without needed protections to receive an appropriate education. Vouchers foster discrimination. Private schools cherry pick students who they allow to attend their school. This is particularly true for underserved populations - BIPOC, LBGTQIA, Disabled, Houseless, Poor, Pregnant Students, and others. For many family's vouchers do not provide choice due to additional costs, transportation, and availability. Further, vouchers increase the opportunity for segregation. Students who are unable to benefit from vouchers are left to fin for themselves. If we are to create schools for ALL, we much invest in students, schools, and our teachers.

Sec. 29.0056 is a horrible idea. The provision regarding SSLCs is a harmful provision that has the potential to increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities and would have a detrimental impact on children with disabilities and their families. Historically, the State Supported Living Centers have been determined to be rife with abuse, neglect, exploitation, sub-standard levels of care and Olmstead violations.

Olmstead or Olmstead v. LC is the name of the most important civil rights decision for people with disabilities in our country's history. This 1999 United States Supreme Court decision was based on the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Supreme Court held that people with disabilities have a qualified right to receive state funded supports and services in the community rather than institutions. If people are waiting on an interest list (known as a LONG waiting list - up to 17+ years - for HCBS services), placement in an SSLC is not a choice, it is forced.

Learn more about the SSLCs:https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/intellectual-or-developmental-disabilities-idd-long-term-care/state-supported-living-centers-sslcs/state-supported-living-center-monitoring?fbclid=IwAR056xOBHnu3doVaKT6_qfStR5J2zPIFzhrAqXMvxUsSjkJdK6gnrL--jc4

Learn more about the Olmstead Decision: <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/special-topics/community-living-and-olmstead/index.html?fbclid=IwAR1BFykoBswZRCNtKbd1o3PAxJdLOgqNVQgOXmRI9tSE5e6bNNiixasvTmY>

Learn about Texas LTSS Programs: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/long-term-care-providers/long-term-care-provider-resources/compare-long-term-services-supports-ltss-programs>

Learn about the LTSS "Interests Lists": <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/about/records-statistics/interest-list-reduction>

Mindy Webber

Self

Wimberley, TX

Please vote against any bill concerning vouchers and/or the education savings account program. The vast majority of people in Texas support, and depend upon, our public school system. I ask you to stop the political games and do what is best for the people of Texas. I know the facts; you know the facts. Please act with integrity. From the mother of a 5th generation public school educator

Penni Lemmon, Mrs

Self

Wichita Falls, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Penni Lemmon

1604 Brazos

Wichita Falls TX 76309

JL Trevino

Self (parent)

Pleasanton, TX

As usual there are numerous additions lumped in to one bill without real specification. For example what is required by public, private and homeschools who accept educational grant funds or state funded savings accounts for funding?. Is specific state selected curriculum required? Is there selected mandated testing? What about home educators, private schools and public school systems who do not wish to participate? Will they be mandated to participate? I believe this bill is quite lengthy (100+ pages) and that in itself should tell us something.

Jeannine Lee

Self

Garland, TX

Your constituents have spoken 3 times now and Gov Abbott is NOT listening. He doesn't care, yet I expect my representatives to care. The voucher program is a sham. It helps no one but the wealthy who can afford the extraordinary expense. Public schools are there for the majority of children in Texas. (Excluded private schools)

Consider making this 2 separate bills so they pass on their own merit. Gov Abbott is holding the teachers and students hostage for personal gain. Stand up for us and vote no!

Julie Draper

Self, Teacher

San Antonio, TX

House Bill 1 proposes that, under the Teachers Incentive Allotment (TIA), National Board Certified Teachers automatically earn a "nationally board certified" designation, equivalent to a new, fourth level of designation, "acknowledged." Under HB 1, National Board Certified Teachers would continue to generate \$3,000-\$9,000 in allotment funding.

This is concerning because, currently, National Board Certified Teachers earn a "recognized" designation, which is the third level of designation. Under HB 1, the "recognized" designation would have an increased allotment of \$5000 - \$15,000. This change would devalue the incentive that seeks to reward and retain Texas educators who demonstrate exemplary teaching practices and increased student outcomes.

The House Committee on Public Education's 2022 Interim Report recommended that National Board Certified Teachers be designated as "exemplary." This esteemed group recognized that the upper levels of the TIA designations are more aligned with the high level of teaching National Board Certified Teachers have demonstrated.

National Board Certified Teachers have met the "gold standard" for teaching. Research shows that National Board Certified Teachers produce 1-2 months of additional learning for their students compared to their peers. To earn National Board Certification, teachers undergo a rigorous process where they demonstrate their content knowledge through an assessment, submit samples of student work and videos of their teaching, and analyze their own instruction.

I have a master's degree in education, and this is my 15th year teaching. I took the last two school years to complete the National Board Certification. It is a very rigorous process in which multiple trained appraisers evaluate my work to determine my score, and thus, my ability to certify as a National Board Certified Teacher. This National Board Certification process has been extremely valuable in making me a more reflective teacher, and I have found that work more valuable than any other professional development or appraisal I have received in my many years teaching. Similar to TIA, National Board Certified Teachers must maintain their certification every 5 years to continue the designation.

Designating NBCTs as "Recognized" or "Exemplary" is the best way to reward and retain outstanding Texas teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools.

Rhonda Blackburn, Dr

Self, teacher

Wylie, TX

I am against education savings accounts (vouchers). I am in support of teacher compensation.

Joel Davenport, Dr.

Self/Public school teacher

Ennis, TX

Say NO to vouchers and instead fully fund Texas public schools. It is a joke that our Governor keeps wasting taxpayer dollars calling yet another Special Session to try and bully our House of Representatives into capitulating on his self interest pet project-school vouchers!

Christina Zini

Self- PTA member at Meadow Wood Elementary and Bendwood Elementary

Houston, TX

I am a parent of 3 children in SBISD (77079). I support fully funding public schools by increasing the basic allotment to \$1000 per students and I oppose any measures which detract from fully funding our public schools including vouchers.

Henry Lessner

Mayor of the Town of Fairview self

Fairview, TX

I keep hearing that vouchers are opposed by the democrats and rural republicans. I am a life long republican and here in the middle of Collin County, most everyone I know would identify as a republican. We strongly support our outstanding public schools.....so please start including affluent suburban republicans as being against vouchers as well! The only ones to benefit from vouchers are those already in private schools. Vouchers will tend to cause segregation of society again. This is robin hood in reverse.....steal from the poor and give to the rich. you put the public schools in a position of being the last resort. Most important - no vouchers to ANY sort of religious school including Christian, Muslim, Hindu, etc. Fully fund our fabulous public schools. Give our teachers and administrators more power/protection so that they can deal with disruptive students and parents. Did I say it enough - I think vouchers are a very bad idea.

Stacy Kyle-Romel

SELF

Kempner, TX

Please say NO to Vouchers, ESA's.... whatever you want to call them... they are bad for our State. The first reason they will be terrible for our state is the amount of money that will be allotted to this program, Starts off at only \$500 million but after that first year there will be no stipulations and it will be a free for all. It's going to cost billions! Another reason it is bad for our state is that on top of that, public schools aren't even being funded to inflation right now and they're going to continue to lose more and more as the years progress and the program expand. Another reason, is that it doesn't even guarantee students or families a "choice", it guarantees them a chance to "apply" for a choice, no guarantee of admission. Lastly, why this is so bad for Texas, just look at what it has done (or not done in this case) for other states. Come on Texas do better say no.

Katie Wittenbraker

self

Houston, TX

Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Inadequate funding will impact our campus, district, and community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase, or programs be cut?

Willem de Cock Buning

Meadow Wood and Bentwood PTA member

Houston, TX

I am a parent of 3 children in SBISD. I support fully funding our public schools by increasing the basic allotment to \$1000 per students and I oppose any measures which detract from public school funding, including vouchers.

Debbi Wagner

Self

Frisco, TX

Vote no to HB1. Stop vouchers from taking public funds from public schools. Fully fund public education. Perhaps if we fully fund public schools then there would be no need for private schools. Also tax churches if private schools are religious. Why should we pay for religious schools that I don't even go to their church. That's socialism for churches.

Rose McLean

Retired teacher and grandparent

League City, TX

Please do not approve Vouchers. They are expensive and bad for ALL students

Alan Ahlrich

SBISD

Houston, TX

Please do not divert tax dollars to private education and transfer tax dollars to wealthy individuals who already send their children to Kinkaid, St John's, Episcopal and the like. Please fully fund our public schools so school children in Texas don't fall further behind so many of their peers.

Charles Shockley

Self

Kilgore, TX

It's clear that letting parents choose the education of their children would greatly increase our children's chances to compete and become more successful. The current system is a monopoly and only serves the few. Do the right thing and support school choice.

Jody Lindh

Self

Dallas, TX

The very idea of linking passage of school vouchers and ESAs to passage of funding for our public schools is **HIGHLY UNETHICAL**. In addition, state funding support for any religious school is a violation of the separation of church & state in the US Constitution. Please listen to the vast majority of constituents who want support for our **PUBLIC** schools. Texas' ranking at near the bottom of the list nationally for education funding is frankly embarrassing. In summary: **NO** to vouchers; **NO** to ESAs. **NO** to Gov. Abbott's unethical arm twisting. **YES** to our students & teachers by fully funding our **PUBLIC** schools!

Danny B

Self

Montgomery, TX

Greetings. I am in support of keeping the current SSLC language in HB 1. Parents of severely affected SPED students who have made the difficult decision to seek residential placement for their son or daughter need information on the SSLCs in their ARD meetings in order to make a well informed decision. As an attorney, I have seen that those with severe IDD belong in our SSLCs, not in our jails. Our SSLCs are the appropriate setting to care for our most fragile Texans. Thank you for your time in considering my comment.

Faye Swisher, Ms

Self and Texas Christian School

Houston, TX

Parent's should have a choice, period the end. Thank you

Casey Moore

Self

Killeen, TX

I oppose vouchers for private schools and home schooling. I believe the funds should go to public schools and that raises for teachers should be a priority. IF any voucher system passes, it should be on a trial basis and only with strict accountability for student progress and use of funds. I'm disappointed in Governor Abbott's iron-fisted stance on this issue.

Brandy Byrd, Ms.

A citizen of the great state of Texas

Killeen, TX

Get rid of the educational savings account. No one needs this and it's just a way to lace rich people pockets while taking away from public education.

Paul Yamarick

Self

Moulton, TX

Educational freedom for all children will allow a wider range of opportunities with innovative techniques only competition can present. The fiscal note does not address many benefits, for example lower administration costs (ie: Houston ISD). Children trapped in marginal to failing schools is horrific. Note in the current system the low (unacceptable) TEA measured math and reading percentages of students simply meeting grade level. How bad does it have to get before children's and in turn parent's future is put first?

Stephen Brewer

self - spring branch school district Houston

Houston, TX

Our family has three little ones - ages 4, 6 and 7. Our oldest is special needs with autism. The Spring Branch schools have been amazing for him and he is making so much progress, but if the funding is reduced and classroom headcount goes up, we are scared that the teacher will be spread too thin to help him succeed. And we are very worried that problems and learning gaps now will cause big problems later, like foundational math skills and reading skills. Please find a way to provide more funding to Texas public schools! Thank you for taking the time to read this. Stephen and Linden Brewer

Jube Dankworth

President of Texas Home Educators

Tomball, TX

Texas Home Educators is a statewide homeschool service organization helping homeschool parents give children an enriched educational experience through networking, resources and events. Homeschoolers have been able to educate their children in Texas since it's inception without government oversight. Texas has a vibrant homeschool community which has built it's own infrastructure without government help. Even folks on the poverty level can and have been homeschooling for decades.

Keilene Miller

Self

Wylie, TX

I oppose school vouchers.

Martin Lockerd, Dr.

Self

Sugar Land, TX

Parents are necessary stakeholders in their children's education and should be granted the support necessary to send their children to the school of their choice. This has worked very well in other states and would work well in Texas. Thank you

Gene Krejci

Self - Bunker Hill Elementary PTA

Houston, TX

Vouchers are trash. Keep church and state separate. What's next? Polygamy? Keeping women's heads covered? This bill is obscene.

Establish the law for educating the common people. This is the business of the state to effect and on a general plan.

-Thomas Jefferson

I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits.

-Martin Luther King, Jr

Carole Hill

Denton Stgte Supported Living Center / Self

Dallas, TX

The Parent/Guardian of special needs children should be provided information regarding the Texas State Supported Living Centers.

I am the parent/guardian of of a multi-handicapped son who resides at DSSLC where he receives the care that he requires.

Rachel Boaz

Self

Haslet, TX

Please vote against this bill. I am opposed to vouchers, ESAs, and any other arrangement that provides public money to private schools. Instead we should fully fund public education. Texas ranks awfully low at expenditure per student compared to other states. My school has lost teacher positions and subscription programs/curriculum because of funding. Imagine if we gave public schools \$8000 per enrolled student!

Selina Martinez

Self

Austin, TX

Please vote no. As a product of public school education, we need to invest more not take resources away from them!

Sarah Chang

Self - Bunkerhill Elementary PTA member

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Our children and teachers in public schools need adequate funding first and foremost, until then there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers and inadequate funding will impact our campus, school district, and community in the short and long term.

Eric Higginbotham

Self, teacher

Little Elm, TX

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. I am writing to urge you to carefully consider the funding structure for our public schools in Texas, advocating for a separate allocation of funds to ensure the continued success and growth of our educational system. While educational savings accounts might seem like a promising solution, I firmly believe that funding public schools separately is the most equitable and sustainable approach to guaranteeing a high-quality education for all Texas students.

Investing in public education is an investment in the future of our state. By providing adequate funding to public schools, we empower our teachers to inspire and educate the next generation of leaders, innovators, and citizens. Public schools serve as the bedrock of our communities, fostering an inclusive environment where students from diverse backgrounds can learn and thrive together. However, this vital role can only be fulfilled when schools are adequately funded and resources are distributed fairly.

Educational savings accounts, while well-intentioned, pose several challenges that could jeopardize the core principles of our public education system. These accounts may inadvertently exacerbate educational disparities, as families with limited financial resources might not have equal access to educational opportunities. Moreover, diverting funds to individual accounts could strain the budgets of already underfunded public schools, leading to a decline in the quality of education they can provide. This, in turn, could perpetuate a cycle of inequality, limiting the future prospects of countless students.

By allocating funds directly to public schools, we can ensure that every child, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status, has access to a high-quality education. Adequate funding enables schools to hire qualified teachers, offer diverse educational programs, and provide essential resources such as textbooks, technology, and extracurricular activities. It also supports initiatives aimed at reducing class sizes, enhancing school safety, and promoting the overall well-being of students.

Furthermore, a strong public education system is essential for the economic prosperity of our state. Well-educated citizens are more likely to secure stable employment and contribute positively to society. By investing in public education, we are not only shaping the future of individual students but also strengthening the foundation of our communities and the state of Texas as a whole.

In conclusion, I urge you to prioritize the funding of our public schools separately, ensuring that every child in Texas has the opportunity to receive a high-quality education. By supporting our public education system, you are making a profound investment in the future of our state and empowering generations of Texans to come. Thank you for your time, dedication, and commitment to the betterment of education in Texas.

Frances Kerr

Self - Bunker Hill Elementary School PTA Member

Houston, TX

Vouchers are diverting funds from school districts that need critically need funding. Our district has already had to undertake extreme measures: close schools, cut back staff, and raise the cost of preK. All of these things lead to higher student to teacher ratios which leads to our kids being vulnerable, at risk and unsupported. Due to cuts within our district, we lost our kindergarten reading and math specialist funding. Kids that do not learn to read and write at this age are incredibly vulnerable to fail out of school - and YOU are part of this problem. Fund the schools so you don't have to pay for other programs to support them later when they can't support themselves - because they never learned how in the first place. Fix the root problem. Fund the RIGHT programs.

Deanna Masunaga

self, homemaker

Houston, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a mother to a teenager with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Deanna Masunaga

12319 Rip Van Winkle Drive

Houston, TX 77024

832-855-5369

dhmasunaga@gmail.com

Zelma Dixon

Parents

New Braunfels, TX

We do not support School Vouchers

Wendall Walker

Self

Pittsburg, TX

Funding Private schools with public funding is wrong. These schools would still not take students they did not want to take. Rural students will not be able to attend private schools with funding. There is nothing wrong with Private schools. Parents that want to send their kids to private schools send them to private schools. Tying funding to public schools with this voucher problem is simply holding public schools and teachers hostage. I really like voting for these things like in the most recent 14 items put up for vote with the people. If you think that this what the people want why was this not something we all could have voted on. Please provide schools with what is needed. Not what is wanted by a select few.

Sanjay Ambekar

SELF - Childcare center Owner

ALLEN, TX

PreK needs to be included in the bill to help childcare centers be more competitive in pricing to preschool aged children and help the community.

cRAIG CAMPBELL, DR

SELF

AUSTIN, TX

Our public schools have been the greatest innovation in the history of humans on earth. Destroying this is a negative step back in terms of social evolution. No vouchers.

Carla Billings

Self, parent of a resident at Abilene State Supported Living Center

Coleman, TX

Re: Support of wording of Sec. 29.0056

Text includes that information be provided to parents of students qualifying for residential placement to receive information about Texas State Supported Living Centers. I believe this to be very appropriate and important tool and resource for parents and guardians to have. The services at State Supported Living Centers are vital in the care of severe neurodiverse individuals. Placements for my own daughter failed until she was admitted to Abilene State Supported Living Center.

Ron Lacey

Self/retired

Cedar Park, TX

I believe this to be a clear violation of the separation of church and state. The founders showed great wisdom in building this into the Constitution. I do not want my tax dollars paying for religious indoctrination when our public schools are underfunded and our teachers underpaid.

Donna Hale

self

Pampa, TX

I encourage the House of Representatives not to be bullied by the Senate into allowing ESAs into our state. Even though the Senate and the Governor are attempting to force ESA's by bribing the House into accepting ESA's the people of Texas do not want ESA's. I urge the House to vote against anything that resembles ESAs or vouchers. Even though public schools and educators desperately need support, we do not want the help if it is tied to ESAs and vouchers in any way! Please do not vote out HB 1.

Sam Whittenton

Self - Educator, Parent, PTA Member

HOUSTON, TX

Vouchers (or "education savings accounts") are a bad idea and most people do not want them. If tax dollars are used to pay for private school then we are NOT insuring a free and appropriate public education for all children. Diverting funds from public education does not help public education. Vouchers are expensive. Splitting up public education funds to pay for discounts for rich families sending their kids to private school is not the best use of our resources. Private schools do not serve all children. That's why they're private. It is unconstitutional to provide tax dollars to go to private organizations that willfully do not or lack the ability to serve every child. Letting private schools siphon off the students who are cheap and easy to educate, at the expense of the public, will do nothing to help those kids or the students who are not accepted to private schools because of disability status, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, or any of the other myriad reasons a private school can reject a student. Public schools have elected leaders who are required to live in the district, be accountable to all taxpayers, provide full transparency and have accountability. They can be voted out of office and are subject to public commentary at board meetings. Private schools are not subject to public policy. It's undemocratic. This will hurt poor families. The real beneficiaries of these kinds of programs in other states are students who already attend private schools. In states like Arizona, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin, something like 75% to 90% of the students using vouchers already attended a private school, which demonstrates that the parents who could already afford private schools are the primary beneficiaries of the programs. So we're offering "welfare for rich kids" to give discounts for their private education. There are just SOME of the reasons Vouchers and ESAs are a bad idea. Fund public education FULLY. Pay every teacher like the qualified professionals they are. Stop deliberately sabotaging public education for the sake of a profit driven incentive.

Crystal Lambert

Self

Lucas, TX

Please protect public education. Please increase the basic allotment to make a meaningful difference in public education before voting to approve ESA.

Heather Walter

Self/Homeschooler

Austin, TX

Please fully fund Texas public schools. I do not want vouchers for private education. Thank you.

Suzy Collins

Myself

New Braunfels, TX

Money for public schools needs to stay in the public schools. It is not a good idea to defund public education. I believe in separation of church and state, and by allowing public funds for private schools it would possibly be funding religious organizations. If someone wants to send their children to private schools, they can do as they have always done and pay for it. They would still be allowed to do so.

Buff Strickland

Year

Austin, TX

Texas ranks 42nd in the nation in per student spending and this proposal would do nothing to address that inequity. Fund our public schools to an acceptable level and then and only then should you discuss private school vouchers. Small towns and large cities need that funding to improve the lives of ALL STUDENTS! The future work force in Texas needs this NOW!

Malena Moraes Simmons

self

Austin, TX

NO TO VOUCHERS! Yes to public school funding! Give teachers pay raises and fund schools that are already hurting, even more with current inflation. Vouchers are not fair and will hurt our children!

Silvia Revello

Self, Analyst

Roanoke, TX

Texas Legislature, my comments are regarding House Bill 1 in concern to the education savings account program.

I am a mom of a child who has a learning disability, vouchers to subsidize private schools at the expense of public school funding make me very worried about the DISCONNECT our Texas Representatives have with REALITY.

I learned early on that the Private school sector wasn't interested in welcoming my son.

He was in daycare since the time he was 6 months old, no problems then but when he was late for walking and talking, that's when we got kicked out from school the first time; they were concerned that he would be deaf and that their school wasn't what he needed, even though he listened and said a few words and had no behaviour issues, but they preferred an easier kid took his spot.

The second time he was almost two years old and the teacher hated that she had to hold him by the hand to walk, all the other kids already walked alone, he wasn't easy enough. They would call us to go pick him up at 10 am almost daily because of made up excuses in a subtle way to make us find a new place for him, my son had no behavior issues, he just needed more help, but a for-profit private company doesn't pay their staff enough to do more than the minimum, so we left.

He joined NISD when he was 3, the PPCD program is designed to give kids like mine early intervention, the people who worked with him not only loved their job but also had a lot of letters after their name, including doctorate degrees, the change in my boy was not short of a miracle, he was catching balls and talking, he now belonged with his peers.

As the years went by and my son learned to mingle, we tried other private sector institutions for sports, summer camp, math tutoring, but the only ones where he was truly welcomed and never rejected were the ones provided by NISD.

Private schools want it easy, so they don't have to pay highly qualified staff, they will cherry pick their students for that exact purpose, so it's easy. When politicians say these school vouchers will be beneficial for our Special Education kids, YOU ARE IN TOTAL DISCONNECT WITH REALITY, believe me. The only kids who will benefit are the ones who already go to private school, they will take funding from boys like mine, so that their lives can become even easier.

Micah Taylor

Self - Educator / District Administrator

Farmersville, TX

Inflation adjusted per student spending is \$2,000 less than it was in 2018-2019 and nearly \$4,000 less than it was in 2009-2010. An increase in the basic allotment so that schools are funded at prior year's levels. Any commitment to funding towards ESAs must be matched by a significant increase in the basic allotment, an increase to special education funding weights, and an increase to school safety allotment. Safeguards must be in place if ESAs are passed including: a cap on the number of ESAs available (recommendation: 5% of total public school enrollment in Texas); a mandate that a guaranteed percentage of the ESAs can only be used for students who receive special education services (recommendation: guaranteed percentage is the same percentage of special education students in Texas public schools; i.e. if 12% of Texas public school students are special education, 12% of ESAs can only be used for special education students); students who utilize ESAs must take the STAAR at their nearest Education Service Center, data for those students needs to be monitored using the same A-F formulas that are applied to districts but instead applied to the ESCs; the number of service providers approved to manage ESAs must be limited to five or fewer and be under the oversight of the department under the authority of the Comptroller and the TEA; all purchases by ESAs must be published publicly each month on the Comptroller's website.

Tamara Archer

Self

Justin, TX

I am writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session. I am aware that our governor is attempting to railroad our voice via holding hostage funds earmarked for education and the increase per student monies to match inflation and rising costs. I plead with you all to continue fighting for our public schools by addressing important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers, which I am one of, and students rather than diverting much-needed funds to go towards a voucher scheme that is being covered up by "parent choice" and 'school choice'.

Vouchers will weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept. Every bill brought forth has had zero oversight on charter or private schools with regards to tuition caps, required programs to meet the Federal Disabilities Act, etc. There are no curriculum requirements at charter or private schools, that guarantee children have what is required knowledge for further education.

There truly is a problem when a state government ignores the majority of the constituents who put them in office in favor of the wealthy 1% who donate millions to their campaigns. Let us stop playing to the purse and work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement-not vouchers.

Marissa Randolph

Self- retired educator

Rhome, TX

Public money should not be allowed to apply to vouchers for private education. If this Pandora's box is opened, every state taxpayer must be informed regarding how tax dollars are spent, and private entities would be responsible for providing this information. Where would it stop then? If public money is allowed to be allotted to individuals to spend with private entities, what would stop any taxpayer from making demands to spend tax dollars on other discretionary private entities? If taxpayers can choose to apply public funds for education to a private school of their choice, taxpayers should also be allowed to apply public funds to private roadways, security, retirement accounts....

The obvious reason public money should never be allowed to be used on vouchers is one of accountability. Public money should always be accountable and spent on public services. Our schools have consistently been short-changed by our governor and a legislature more interested in lining their own pockets and pushing a ridiculously exclusive evangelical agenda than in actually educating its citizens for the greater good of all in our state.

Do the right thing. Do not approve vouchers. EVER.

Kate O'Mara, Mrs

Self

Houston, TX

Say NO to vouchers and yes to public schools. Our amazing teachers and students are woefully underfunded already. Please don't divert any more funds to private schools.

Elizabeth Franklin

Self /management

Austin, TX

I oppose this bill, and any bill that includes taxpayer subsidies for private schools.

"Education savings accounts" are vouchers in disguise, and if Texas wanted vouchers, you wouldn't have to use deceptive names to sneak them in.

Fund our public schools and quit trying to force voucher schemes on us.

Charlene Drake

self

Fulton, TX

I live in Aransas County say NO to vouchers @Dist32StateRep @LoisKolkhorst

Robert Pack, Dr.

Self / Professional Public Educator

Dickinson, TX

Vote no on HB 1. Vote no on any bill that has vouchers, Education Savings Accounts, or anything similar. Public funds must not be sent to private schools.

Anna Griffin

Self, concerned parent

Chandler, TX

Please stop attacking our public schools, absolutely no to vouchers. The majority of Texans do NOT want vouchers. NO VOUCHERS! it's a huge scam just like standardized testing...millions and millions could be going to our schools directly but instead the money is being wasted in special sessions for issues that keep getting shut down because WE DON'T WANT VOUCHERS. This is beyond a partisan issue, there's so many Texans on both political parties that will not stop fighting against this and we will remember this next time we're electing officials.

Lisa Stobb

Immaculate Conception School

Grand Prairie, TX

Please, please support House Bill 1. Parents always know what is right for their children. We have to trust them to do the right thing. Not the government to make choices for them.

Hillary Hickland

self

Belton, TX

I am a mother of 4 children. Each one of my children is different, and education is not a one-size fits all model. Over the last two years, we determined that public school is not the best choice for our family for various reasons. The right for parents to choose the best path for their children's future is fundamental. This right cannot be hindered by barriers like zip code or economic status. If we consider the outcomes of public schools, anything less than 100% reveals that students could benefit from an alternative to public school. Unfortunately, outcomes are far less than 100%, with less than 50% of Texas Public school graduates being on grade level for reading and math. If education is the great equalizer, it is immoral to stand in the way of any student accessing all educational opportunities possible. Prior to moving my 5th grade son to an alternative to public education, he could not write. After 12 weeks in the new school environment, he has closed the learning gap and is now writing and excelling on par with the rest of his class. My other children are thriving in this new educational environment as well. Please listen to parents above those affiliated with maintaining the current status quo. Pass education savings accounts for ALL Texas families.

C.H. Campbell

SELF

AUSTIN, TX

Resegregate American society, empower white nationalists, Nazis, encourage a new aristocracy, the end of America has we know it. Welfare for the rich.

Marushka Bland

Self

Austin, TX

Please vote "no" on HB1. Thank you.

Jessica Kirklin

Self Caregiver to Special Needs Daughter with IDD

Frisco, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication.

[Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,

Jessica Kirklin

6497 Aldridge Drive

Frisco, TX 75035

jbkirklin@aol.com

Natalie Weimer

TEXAS HOMEOWNER AND PARENT

Fort Worth, TX

NO to vouchers. YES to funding PUBLIC schools.

Stephanie MONDRAGON

TEACHER - self

FRIENDSWOOD, TX

As a public educator, I stand against vouchers. I am for keeping public funds in public schools that provide education to ALL students.

Kala Schlaegel
Self- Teacher
Mansfield, TX

Public money for public schools! No vouchers, ever. It's bad for schools and it's bad for Texas kids.

Jill Glover, SREC SD12
Republican Party of Texas
Double Oak, TX

Unfortunately this bill doesn't meet the legislative priority language as voted on by our State Convention delegates regarding parental rights and educational freedom. No conditions on private and home school students.

Philip Gully
Self / member; chemicals industry
HOUSTON, TX

As a strong conservative, I believe the vouchers may be generally well-intentioned. HOWEVER, they will imperil and diminish the success of functioning, well-run schools and school districts (like our very own SBISD in Houston) in order to ATTEMPT to help poorly performing ones and the students that they should be serving (but which they do not). We will remember which politicians are responsible for the negative impacts their policies have on us.

Jennifer Brown
self - homemaker
Austin, TX

I support the establishment of education savings account programs. We should be empowering parents, especially those of limited means, to help their children reach their fullest potential by finding educational resources that best support their students. Parents know their children best, and are motivated to do the best they can for their children, and the state of Texas should enable parents to do so.

Sophie Magness
Self
Houston, TX

Public schools should be properly funded! Our future depends on it!! No to vouchers!

Anne Wicks
George W. Bush Institute
Dallas, TX

I am Anne Wicks, and I serve as the Ann Kimball Johnson Director of Education and Opportunity at the George W. Bush Institute. While the Institute does not comment on pending legislation, I wanted you to be aware of our policy recommendations on accountability.

I encourage you to stay committed to robust A-F accountability for the billions of public Texas dollars invested in education.

Pausing and/or eliminating accountability denies Texas parents and taxpayers critical information about the progress of children and the effectiveness of our state's public schools.

Accountability is the cornerstone to ensuring that every Texas child has access to a high-quality education. Eliminating or softening accountability invites the "soft bigotry of low expectations", former President George W. Bush's memorable phrase, back onto Texas school campuses.

We should hold high expectations for what all Texas children can learn and do. Students need us to hold those high expectations, and they need us to create the conditions required for them to succeed in school.

The current A-F accountability system has only been fully implemented once (the 2018-2019 school year) before being paused and then partially deployed in the years since due to the pandemic. That means that years of critical information for parents and decision-makers has already been lost – and information in the coming years is at risk if accountability is dismantled.

Without our state's assessment and accountability system, Texas parents and policymakers would be in the dark about student readiness as they progress through school. Lacking actionable data about student progress instead, Texas' \$70 billion public education system would be guided by anecdotes and averages rather than facts and data, leaving state leaders unable to see lingering disparities and serve the interests of every Texas child. And we would leave billions of federal education funding, dedicated to supporting low-income students, on the table by not complying with federal law.

Texas has one of the most powerful economies in the United States, but native Texans are often left out of this growth. A veritable jobs factory, Texas leads the nation in job creation. But this job growth is not being sustained by Texas talent. Instead, Texas is importing a significant portion of its talent from out-of-state. Employers have no choice but to fill open positions with qualified employees, and if Texans do not have the qualifications employers need, they will have to recruit from out of state. Right now, each cohort of Texas eighth-graders stands to lose \$104 billion in future earnings due to a lack of readiness for their futures.

Instead of focusing on strategies to improve the readiness rates of young Texans, Texas lawmakers are now being asked to roll back progress and weaken how Texas measures readiness. A strong Texas future requires remaining clear-eyed and honest about our students' readiness.

Debra Erck
self
Austin, TX

I am opposed to HB 1 and the creation of a private school voucher program. I am heartbroken that the work of teachers and public schools is not enough on its own to be worthy of our states' financial support. Teacher pay raises and per pupil funding increases should be a priority, and voted on separately from the creation of a voucher program.

Tom Farmer
Self
Clyde, TX

Teachers need pay raises!

Rosalie Boldin

self - retired special education teacher and (formerly) Texas Department of MHMR policy specialist
Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a former special education teacher and Texas MH/IDD policy specialist, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children and their families.

Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement for children with disabilities. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.0245 (SB 368, 77R).

It is inappropriate for school district personnel or the ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure, rendering the creation of another brochure a duplication.
[Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>]

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. (At minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.)

Sincerely,
Rosalie Boldin

Anne Howell
Myself
DALLAS, TX

This DEFUNDS public education, one of the tenets of our Republic, valued by the Founders of our country and the Framers of our Constitution. This bill represents the self-interest of billionaires and special interest groups not the public. Let's fix public education and give money to our schools where it is needed. I am a voter and I value public education.

Marivel Maciss, Chief Organizational Transformation and Equity Officer & ISD Board Trustee
El Paso ISD / Socorro ISD / Self
El Paso, TX

NO to vouchers, NO to Education Savings Account Programs and NO to School Choice. A bad idea is a bad idea no matter what you call it. Diverting money away from underfunded public schools is another attempt to Dumb Down Texas. Education is the opportunity equalizer, why are political entities trying to fund Charter Schools that are not held accountable to serve and grow all students? Segregation and elitism at its best.

Sarah Yee
Self
Houston, TX

I strongly oppose school vouchers. Vouchers hurt children! A strong future for Texas means supporting ALL children. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than fully funded and strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Other states who have passed school voucher programs have found them to be ineffective in improving college enrollment or improving test scores. Please do NOT vote for school vouchers. Thank you.

Anil Prabhakar
Self - Engineer
Cedar Park, TX

I support our public schools and strongly oppose giving taxpayer money away to private schools through school vouchers. Taxpayer money should be used for public schools only.

Kelly Levar
Self - Houston ISD Durham Elementary PTA
Houston, TX

Absolutely NO public funds for private schools. Vouchers will hollow out our public elementary school which is a pillar of our community. Texans have spoken again and again - NO ESAs, NO VOUCHERS.

VIRGINIA JENTSCH
self
Arlington, TX

Please do not give my tax dollars to parents who want their child in a private school. That is clearly socialism for the rich. \$10k will not pay the complete tuition for poor kids. They will not be able to find transportation. They may not pass the 'entrance exam'. Parents can spend this money on just about anything--electronics, home school equipment, 'educational ski trips', virtual school, etc.

Spend this money & more on all public schools--they are the foundation of democracy & required to educate every child regardless of religion, race, mental acuity etc.

Our federal taxes are already buying things for church schools (Title 4 for library books when I was in the school district). Do not also send my state tax dollars to support any religious schools. Take a look at other states where vouchers have failed. I know for a fact that in Arkansas, most of the money went to the students already enrolled in the private school that the governor's children were in.

Vouchers are one more place where corruption will take hold just like our 'deregulated' electrical providers!

Doretha Allen
Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching
DeSoto, TX

As a member of the Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching, a 501(c)(3), I urge you to continue to designate National Board Certified Teachers as “recognized” or to designate them as “exemplary” under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA).

House Bill 1 proposes that, under the Teachers Incentive Allotment (TIA), National Board Certified Teachers automatically earn a “nationally board certified” designation, equivalent to a new, fourth level of designation, “acknowledged.” Under HB 1, National Board Certified Teachers would continue to generate \$3,000-\$9,000 in allotment funding.

This is concerning because, currently, National Board Certified Teachers earn a “recognized” designation, which is the third level of designation. Under HB 1, the “recognized” designation would have an increased allotment of \$5000 - \$15,000. This change would devalue the incentive that seeks to reward and retain Texas educators who demonstrate exemplary teaching practices and increased student outcomes.

The House Committee on Public Education’s 2022 Interim Report recommended that National Board Certified Teachers be designated as “exemplary.” This esteemed group recognized that the upper levels of the TIA designations are more aligned with the high level of teaching National Board Certified Teachers have demonstrated.

National Board Certified Teachers have met the “gold standard” for teaching. Research shows that National Board Certified Teachers produce 1-2 months of additional learning for their students compared to their peers. To earn National Board Certification, teachers undergo a rigorous process where they demonstrate their content knowledge through an assessment, submit samples of student work and videos of their teaching, and analyze their own instruction.

Designating NBCTs as “Recognized” or “Exemplary” is the best way to reward and retain outstanding Texas teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools.

Steven Nieting
self - engineer
Katy, TX

I cannot emphasize enough the importance for setting up a system for school choice and a savings account program to enable this. My children have encountered numerous challenges in the large public school system to which we are zoned (Katy ISD). Our of our own pockets we have paid for private schooling, however, this has created financial hardship for the family. We gladly do it because we want the best for our kids. Allow parents to direct where their school funds go so that they may do the best for their children. I understand this may not work for all school systems, however, in a system where the schools are over loaded and not able to handle the needs of the children, it is certainly appropriate and the right thing to do.

April Garvin
Self, Parent/Homemaker
Joshua, TX

As a mother and taxpayer, I am against HB1. I am deeply concerned about the potential ramifications of House Bill HB1 on our public education system. Responsible governance necessitates the protection and improvement of our public education, a critical component of our children's development and our state's future prosperity.

I firmly oppose the introduction of ESAs and/or vouchers, which divert funds away from public education. These mechanisms are not a comprehensive solution to addressing the challenges in our education system. Instead, they can harm students with disabilities who may not receive the same level of access and opportunities in private schools.

The bill seeks to expand the Texas Education Agency with 100 new positions, which does not align with the desires and needs of parents and schools. TEA has already been expanded and continues to fail our students.

There is a genuine concern that this bill, with its emphasis on market-driven solutions, may weaken public education by promoting privatization. This could lead to selling our education system to the highest bidder, undermining the accessibility and quality of public education.

It is imperative that we focus on strengthening our public education system rather than dismantling it. This requires collaborative efforts to address the issues within our education system, including finding equitable solutions that benefit all students. I urge you to vote against HB1 and ensure that any changes made prioritize the best interests of our children, parents, and the future of Texas.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to the well-being of our state's students and families.

Haley Skrnich
Texas Home School Coalition
Lubbock, TX

My name is Haley Skrnich and I support HB 1 and ask that you do the same.

Alexa Probst
Self, PTA member Bunker Hill Elementary
Houston, TX

Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Inadequately funded public schools result in higher student:teacher ratios, closure of important programs, and possible closures of entire schools. The government cannot, in good conscience, support vouchers while not providing adequate funding to its public schools.

Heidi Gordon
Self
League City, TX

I do not believe in taxation without representation. I'm a Texan originally from Boston so this belief runs deep.

Our public tax dollars should not go to any organization in which the school system does not have an elections process so we taxpayers can weigh in on how these schools are run. Vote NO ON HB1

LaQuesha Dillingham-Spivey
Self - Bunker Hill Elementary PTA Member
Houston, TX

Fund the future of our state and nation! Provide adequate funding for public school education in TX now! Focus on making our state have some of the brightest best educated students in the nation and the revenue you seek to hold will come back to you tenfold. Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers will cause the loss of teacher aids that provide additional support that children need to be the best. It causes loss of teachers aimed at providing additional support to highly gifted students that need more than the standard academic plan. Vouchers take funds from public schools that need those funds for keeping students safe. Show us you care about our children. Support us when our children need you most. Act now, be a maverick and stand up against the tide.

Laurie Wehring
Self, a taxpayer in the great state of Texas
New Braunfels, TX

By continuing to put the issue of school vouchers in front of the legislature in special session after special session, you are wasting taxpayer money. Texans overwhelmingly do NOT want school vouchers. They will rob our public education system of much-needed funds that will be diverted to private schools. Please STOP.

Gina Daly
Self Retired
Lantana, TX

I say NO to vouchers in any form in any way. Vouchers are damaging to public education which will continue to be underfunded even with the per student increase being included. Our taxes should not go to increase the bottom line of private schools which are not being asked to match the TEA requirements of public schools. Who is funding this push for vouchers? Where is the research that shows this is a benefit for the children who are disadvantaged financially and/or those with special needs? Most of the articles I have researched is that other states that implemented vouchers did not result in increased performance and public education suffers. Everyone already has a CHOICE of where to go to school but the taxpayers should not be forced to finance their desire to leave the public school system.

Shanti Korpi
Myself, a citizen
AUSTIN, TX

NO VOUCHERS

Dakota Clayton
self educational interpreter
Waco, TX

We desperately need an increase in funding for all educational interpreter salary and wages, specifically ASL interpreters, as well as all Regional Day School Programs for the Deaf within the state of Texas. Interpreter qualifications and compensation need to reflect that of professionals, not para-professionals. All of the continuing education requirements, certification, and legal language regulating the use and employment of interpreters is in line with those of professionals such as teachers. Independent School Districts struggle to attract and retain talent of qualified ASL interpreters because of the pay discrepancy between educational interpreters and other interpreting fields average compensation. Additionally, include structures for cost of living adjustments for those educational interpreters and RDSPD employees each year.

Cory Cory Cardwell

Self

Sachse, TX

I am a public school teacher from Garland Texas. I have been teaching for 26 years serving the state, serving our students serving our parents and our economy. I stand against vouchers or ESA's for private schools that cherry pick their students, do not have to take the same standardized test that we do, and are allowed to choose whatever curriculum they please. Public schools teach all students not just the ones they want. Any school can do great when they are picking their kids.

When our state ranks 43rd in the nation for funding we must do a better job of supporting our schools before sending public tax dollars to private schools. As a teacher, it is very insulting that this plan is even being put forward. As a taxpayer, I want my tax dollars to be accountable to me. Private schools have no such accountability for our tax dollars. If they want public tax dollars then they should have exactly the same standards and requirements every other school receiving public tax dollars must adhere to. Fund public education first. That is the way!

Josephine Piper

self - retired

Dallas, TX

My daughter is a career educator. This is her 25th year. She is awesome. She is an NBCT. Recognize her and all other NBCTs for their worth and put your money where your mouth is. You don't have to think back too far to remember the mess the world was in during the pandemic when everyone had to take charge of their children's education. She helped countless parents who were just trying to survive. It is because of her training as a National Board Certified Teacher that she was able to do this.

I urge you to continue to designate National Board Certified Teachers as "recognized" or to designate them as "exemplary" under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA).

House Bill 1 proposes that, under the Teachers Incentive Allotment (TIA), National Board Certified Teachers automatically earn a "nationally board certified" designation, equivalent to a new, fourth level of designation, "acknowledged." Under HB 1, National Board Certified Teachers would continue to generate \$3,000-\$9,000 in allotment funding.

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The House Committee on Public Education's 2022 Interim Report recommended that National Board Certified Teachers be designated as "exemplary." This esteemed group recognized that the upper levels of the TIA designations are more aligned with the high level of teaching National Board Certified Teachers have demonstrated.

National Board Certified Teachers have met the "gold standard" for teaching. Research shows that National Board Certified Teachers produce 1-2 months of additional learning for their students compared to their peers. To earn National Board Certification, teachers undergo a rigorous process where they demonstrate their content knowledge through an assessment, submit samples of student work and videos of their teaching, and analyze their own instruction.

Designating NBCTs as "Recognized" or "Exemplary" is the best way to reward and retain outstanding Texas teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools.

Don't think twice about this. My ask is clear. Do the right thing.

Thank you,

Josephine Piper

Mother of 5 public school educated children of which one is a NBCT!

David Kinsey

Self, Computer Consultant/DBA

Weatherford, TX

As a former Dallas school student who encountered, and became friends with, other middle & high school students bussed in, I see this as an ongoing effort to undo the long struggle to desegregate the schools. As the brother to my sister who attended a church school, I am well aware of just how poorly they prepare one for life or even a GED. As the supportive spouse of a former public school teacher, I have seen the low pay, poorly maintained buildings, short staffing, and declining overall respect & support of the teaching profession. So mark me down as firmly against this, and any other travesty, that does not more than fully fund public schools. Especially this bill which merely diverts funds from public school directly to those scamming, unaccountable, entities. NO TO HB1.

Terris Goodwin

Self, RN

Temple, TX

Please do not pass this bill, which will only further widen the educational gap. Instead, fully fund our schools and educators. Invest funds and intentional support into our public school systems so that we can provide an adequate knowledge base to our future: Texas students.

Sarah Sarah Stanfield

Self & Valley Oaks Elementary PTA

Houston, TX

Vouchers should not be considered until public education is fully funded. The basic allotment needs to be raised by \$1,000. Without changes our district will be at a deficit and forced to cut \$35mm from its budget. These cuts will be painful. They will likely close schools, increase the student to teacher ratio and eliminate specialist who helps those struggling. The state has a surplus, you can choose to fix this! You have no control over private schools, they should receive no public funds when our public schools are hurting. Take pride in our state, in our teachers and educators working for the public and put public education before vouchers.

Candace Pruett

Self

Pflugerville, TX

Private school subsidies will not support public education. This bill will create inequality in schooling. Do not pass this terrible idea of a bill.

Lisa Chabarría

Self - Day Nursery of abilene

Abilene, TX

As a staff member for a nonprofit early childhood program, I ask that HB 1 include Pre-K for child care programs.

Pam Hennigan

Self

Lavon, TX

I am a 4th grade public school teacher. Please consider how this will effect teachers and students left in the public school system. This will teach our children who already struggle with social skills and gaps in learning from Covid that if you aren't happy with the situation you are in to throw money at the problem and go somewhere else. Teachers are working so hard to make sure all children are educated properly. We do this for a pay raise that will probably never come. Vouchers will not help special ed kids, second language learner kids, eco disadvantaged kids. You are creating a country club vs skid row environment and this generations children will grow up with that mentality. Our nation will pay for this one way or another. All kids deserve the best education we can give not what their parents can pay for. Let's fix our public education system now so that all kids matter in our state. Vouchers will drive a wedge between teachers, parents and students...the has and the has not. Please do better for your teachers and the students of Texas.

Marisa Miller

Self - Lovejoy Independent School District

Lucas, TX

We need a bigger basic allotment increase for our children. At least \$1,100 per student to cover inflation. We also need to keep tax dollars in our PUBLIC schools. Why should we give private schools our Tax dollars? Everyone has a choice of where they want their child to go to school and the state of Texas does not need to fund their personal decisions.

Mike Anderson

Concerned citizens

Belton, TX

As a Texas resident, taxpayer, and concerned citizen, I STRONGLY oppose the proposed HB1. I oppose the bill for several reasons, including:

1. Private schools are given a pass on meeting the requirements of special needs students, leaving that responsibility to under funded public schools.
2. The proposed bill offers a pittance in increased public school funding that doesn't even keep up with inflation since the 2019 increase.
3. The proposed bill gives funds from our taxes to the already-wealthy,
4. The proposed bill provides NO accountability for private schools with respect to enrollment criteria, staffing, and decisions on curriculum.

Thank you.

Brenda R Wesley, Miss

Me

Killeen, TX

Why all of a sudden Savings Account for education. What is the process of using it? So my impression is all of a sudden, Abbott wants vouchers for education, practically forcing sessions to get it passed, and not really getting feedback for it from citizens by voting. The voucher system he wants for education, well if parents want their child in private schools, let them pay for it. There are many private schools in Monterrey, Mexico, as an example, and many pay for th education or child's private schools. So, why not improve the schools with the money rather than vouchers. Why all of a sudden, Abbott wants school voucher system to be passed, is he getting a kickback, money if it goes through? He seems not to care about pay raises or things needed for improving Texas public schools. .

Sheila Ashford, mentor trainer

Day Nursery of Abilene, Inc.

Abilene, TX

As a staff member for a nonprofit early childhood program, please consider HB1 for Pre-K. Our facilities include working families that supports children from birth to 10 years old. Some of the children are enrolled from birth and remain with us until school aged. Lots of families would love to stay at our facility because of the partnership with the pre-K program through our schools.

Lauren Zarovy

Self, Special Education Paraprofessional

Driftwood, TX

I have many, many concerns about the current iteration of this bill. However, my strongest opposition comes out of concern for special education students in the state of Texas. Private and charter schools do not have the same requirements to provide a free and appropriate education to EVERY child. They do not have the same requirements to provide least restrictive learning environments. By funneling desperately needed dollars away from the public system, the students MOST in need of diagnostic and support services will have even fewer resources available to them. While I respect the right of private institutions to shape their student bodies by picking and choosing which students they will exclude, I am philosophically and morally opposed to public dollars further segregating students in this state. As a public educator who works in special education, I value the contributions of EVERY student, no matter what services they may or may not require to be successful. Our communities thrive when all students are served appropriately within a free public system. I oppose the bill and vouchers in any form.

Stephen Davis

Self

Wylie, TX

Public schools,are the foundation of our democracy. Vote NO on any form of vouchers, which send public dollars to private institutions.

Adrianna Hasoon, Mrs.

Self - Valley Oaks Elementary PTA member

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

My child's district has had millions recaptured from it by the state and is sitting at its largest budget surplus (\$33 billion) in history, yet the state has kept our revenue flat for four years.

To reduce SBISD's \$35 million budget shortfall for the 2024-25 school year, the board approved resolutions that include changing the staffing ratios for high schools, aligning high school schedules, increasing Pre-K tuition and adjusting Pre-K Center boundaries, and pausing the bond program for the four remaining elementary school rebuilds. Trustees paused until November 27 decisions around closing two schools, which would shuffle children and families unfairly.

FUND PUBLIC EDUCATION. DO NOT DIVERT our tax dollars to vouchers or any other euphemism the governor may call them.

FUND PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Cecilia Alejandro

Self

Weslaco, TX

Vote NO! to vouchers

Meredith Munn
Self - San Antonio, Texas
San Antonio, TX

We need to fully fund public schools before we can even think about giving money to private schools. No to vouchers, no to ESAs, yes to fully funding public education. Yes to fully funding special education. Yes to teacher pay raises, yes to para pay raises. Yes to virtual education. Yes to CTE funding.

Cristina Nahidi
Self
Austin, TX

This is a misleading and misguided bill designed to rob our public schools of the funding they need. Vote NO!

Sharon Bennett
Self, retired
New Braunfels, TX

Governor Abbott is mistaken when he states the majority of Texans want school vouchers. We do not. Ridiculous that he's called a fourth special session to try and get his plan passed. That should make it obvious that it is not wanted. My representative does not speak for me, my wishes, at all which is why I'm writing as an individual. We have school choice now and people can put their children into private schools if they want. Don't take taxpayer money to fund that. We need all the money to go to public schools and make them the best they can be. Texas has been ranked the 10th least educated state. We rate 28th in state public school systems. People are not entitled to private schools. They are entitled to the best public schools we can provide.

Christiana Gallaher
Self- speech language therapist
Fort Worth, TX

Do not approve use of vouchers for private schools. Approval of this bill would not enable more school choice. It reflects dishonesty if you state it will let more students attend private school. We all know this is a way to save the rich from paying a full tuition and only stands to hurt public schools. Texas is an embarrassment in how educational funding is lacking. Show care for ALL students in Texas and vote against vouchers.

Tracy Almanzan
Self
El Paso, TX

I am in support of House Bill 1.

Neda Nosrati
Frostwood
Houston, TX

Please say no to HB 1! These vouchers will hurt the children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESA's or vouchers. Our district is suffering because the state has kept revenues flat for 4 years, while costs have sky rocketed (19% inflation!). Our teachers essentially took a pay cut this year because they did not receive an increase and insurance costs went up, so now they make less per paycheck. We are having to cut services and close schools to make up for a \$35 million shortfall, all the while the state takes \$87 million in local taxpayer funds from the district this year alone (that is 21% of all local taxes paid by SBISD taxpayers for public education in SBISD). Passing HB 1 will only increase our recapture payments and further damage our district! As a lifelong republican, I am very disappointed with the party's push for this bill. Our focus should be on funding and helping to fix the problems within the public school system first! We are sitting on a historic surplus, and we need to focus on adding to the basic allotment and teacher raises before wasting taxpayer dollars on vouchers. Frankly, I find it very disturbing that you are holding public school finance and teacher raises hostage to force through your ESA/voucher bill. The Texas school children deserve better!

Meredith Boam

Self- parent and speech language pathologist

Austin, TX

A fully funded public education works and reaches way more children than vouchers. Please vote against vouchers. We need to invest in our children.

Jolene Sanders, Advocacy Director

Coalition of Texans with Disabilities

Hutto, TX

CTD opposes any initiative that would diminish or completely eliminate protections for students with disabilities. In addition to waiving federal protections for people with disabilities, families would also face significant barriers to access such as:

Reconciling the ESA amount with the actual cost of private services: The average private school tuition in Texas is \$10,087 for elementary schools and \$11,638 for high schools, with additional costs for application and enrollment fees, adaptive equipment, related services like therapy and resource, transportation, evaluation fees, and specialized instruction and materials.

Availability of private schools and providers: Private school availability varies widely in Texas and those that do exist can establish very selective program enrollment criteria such requiring certain performance on entry assessments, establishing IQ thresholds, and denying access based on diagnosis, discipline history, or religious adherence.

Specialized programs: Private schools do not necessarily serve all grade levels or genders. Some others hold themselves out to be “special education” schools which negates any opportunity for meaningful inclusion with non-disabled peers or LRE.

Source of tuition discrimination: Private schools may perceive accepting ESAs as a risk in the event that a family may be unable to pay the difference out of pocket, or absorb future tuition increases.

Confidentiality: The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) ensures that public schools maintain educational records, parents have a right to access educational records, and those records may not be released without written parental consent. Most elementary and secondary private schools do not receive federal funding and therefore are not required to comply with this safeguard.

Additional limitations include waitlists and maintaining enrollment once a student is accepted.

CTD adamantly opposes the attempt to tie urgent and long-overdue public school funding reforms to the creation of divisive education savings accounts that ultimately harm our public schools. Until Texas tackles the chronic underfunding of public schools, we cannot even entertain a conversation that suggests allocating taxpayer dollars to private schools.

Hilary Toma

Self

The Woodlands, TX

NO VOUCHERS. Public \$ for public schools. Private schools don't have to take OR keep all students.

Abigail Patel

Self

San Antonio, TX

Please vote in favor of HB 1! I have been waiting for a bill like this for sometime and hope you will consider all the parents that this bill would bless in Texas! Please vote in favor of HB 1! It's time for parents to have a choice on their child's education.

Thank you for your consideration.

Abigail Patel

Lee Spiller, Executive Directive
Citizens Commission on Human Rights-Texas
Austin, TX
On HB1.

The Citizens Commission on Human Rights is a mental health watchdog, working internationally to restore, promote and protect human rights in psychiatric and other mental health settings. Among the most fundamental of these rights is the right to truly informed consent for mental health services.

As the State of Texas has insinuated more and more mental health services, including psychiatric services, into our educational system, we increasingly find ourselves addressing issues of questionable or no parental consent.

An excellent education, in our view, is the best guarantee our children have to later understand and exercise their rights. We've been repeatedly reminded of this in trying to help foreign nationals who've been institutionalized. Often, they have a language barrier and then they lack a basic understanding of our system of laws. This leaves them at an extreme disadvantage in advocating for themselves and exercising their rights.

Anything that interferes with or distracts from students' basic literacy and understanding of history and civics, eventually puts students at a similar disadvantage.

In spite of this, Texas continues to divert time and money from basic academics to wide array of social and mental health services in schools. As yet, we see little, if any, indication that this is increasing basic literacy. It does expose children to providers, as a captive population.

While we take no position on Education Savings Accounts, we make two recommendations:

Eliminate the Communities in Schools piece and re-allocate the \$50 million in CIS funding to basic academics, history, and civics.

While Communities in Schools is defined in statute as an "exemplary dropout prevention" program, it is clear that they have become something else. A written testimony asserted that "Communities In Schools is the largest provider of school-based behavioral health services for students in Texas, providing more than 536,000 hours of mental health services last school year." They also asserted that they provided intensive case management services to more than 120,000 students.

With little, if any, parent voice in this committee's hearings, it cannot be said that droves of parents showed up asking for these services and case managers.

Second, add stringent parental consent for psychological examination, testing and treatment. In the 88th session many parents testified as to the challenges they face in protecting their children from these measures when school districts provide mental health assessments and interventions while calling them something else, such as surveys, screenings, and "circle time." Informed consent is not the process of saying yes. It is not a magic word.

Parents and children deserve rights protection, not an expansion of non-academic approaches that do not guarantee our children's ability to understand and exercise their rights.

Hillary Hiler, Principal
Self
Houston, TX

Our public schools already do not have enough funding to operate. The ESAs do NOTHING to support the constitutional requirement of the state providing a free and appropriate public education for all children. ESAs will also not provide enough funding to cover the cost of private education for their children. Not only that, but you have to know that private schools will promptly raise their tuition rates by the amount of that ESA. I have been an educator for 20 years and this program will fail as it has in other states. Do the right thing for ALL Texas children and raise the basic allotment for districts. What Gov. Abbott is doing - refusing to even discuss public school funding until he gets his vouchers - is nothing but extortion.

Emma Luckemeyer
Self; public school teacher
New Braunfels, TX

I oppose HB1 and any sort of ESA/voucher system. Public funds belong in public schools. This is the wrong direction for our state. Instead our schools need to be fully funded and teachers need to be properly compensated for all they are asked to do.

Kathryn Oakes
Self, Frostwood Elementary PTA
Houston, TX

Vouchers are not the answer to helping our children - they hurt the future of our society, our children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Kyev Tatum, Pastor
Ministers Justice Coalition of Texas
Fort Worth, TX

I support HB1 and the many opportunities and benefits it will bring to families that are not empowered by public schools. Education Saving Accounts will unleash a wealth of educational resources to encourage families to choose the best educational program for their children. Our public schools are overcrowded and are mental health ticking time bomb since the pandemic and we need to help them by reducing the classroom size by allowing students to choose the best learning environment for themselves.

Tim Barlow
Self CDL Driver
Midland, TX

Please vote no to school choice

Sincerely
Tim

David Kvale
Self Retired
Plano, TX

I do not support using tax dollars for anything but public schools. No school vouchers or education savings accounts.

Scott Campbell
Self
Winnie, TX

Holding public schools and teachers hostage to the voucher bill is disrespectful to to the Texas Constitution and to professional educators statewide. Fund the public schools and consider vouchers as a separate issue. They should not be tied together.

JoAnne Biggers
Self/retired teacher
Bonham, TX

No vouchers! Fully fund TX public schools. TX ranks 48th in the US in amount spent to educate each student! Spend tax dollars on public schools. Private schools have no accountability, no requirement to hire certified teachers and no obligation to teach every student. They refuse students who have special needs or are behavior problems. The public of TX do not want vouchers! Why was this issue not voted on in the recent election as retired teachers annuity raise was??? Because the governor knows it wouldn't have passed! Do what is right for the children of Texas. Do not open the door to vouchers or you face being responsible for ruining the TX public school system!

Courtney Baker
self, parent/teacher
Haslet, TX

While I appreciate the efforts to provide an increase to Basic Allotment and give teaching staff a bonus, I am still concerned that vouchers are linked together with this. I believe these should be separate issues altogether. Families in Texas already have school choice. Public tax dollars should not be used for private schools. This will do harm to the public school system that teaches 90% of students across our state.

I'm not opposed to ESA and tax credits for families who want to pursue other options, but it shouldn't be through a program that pulls funds away from local school districts. The state's budgeting and funding should be sustainable. Voucher programs in other states regularly grow well beyond their projected costs. Texas public schools adhere to state-mandated academic and financial accountability standards. Private schools are not required to meet the same academic standards as public schools, and they do not report test results, graduation rates, and other performance measures to the public. Education savings accounts and similar voucher plans allow for your tax dollars to be spent without transparency or accountability. Private schools can pick and choose whom to admit whereas public schools proudly welcome all students with all needs. Please separate the issue of public school finance and voucher programs. Please fully fund local school districts by increasing the basic allotment, providing incentives to recruit and retain teaching staff, and not tie public school funding to voucher programs.

Tammy Stevenson
Day Nursery of Abilene
Abilene, TX

childcare partnership with school having the Pre K headstart program in the childcare center is good

Shaquita Rodgers, Mrs.
Self/Program Manager
San Antonio, TX

Please vote yes for the' 6.2 million children eligible for up to \$10,400 for each student – the biggest dollar amount in the nation
Strong protections for the autonomy of private schools.
Money for homeschoolers.
Pay raises for our teachers & improvements for their working conditions.
Immediate aid to people who need it most—especially families with children in special education or families below or near the federal poverty line.

Carolyn Ann Kucera
Self - Retired
Houston, TX

Until public schools are fully funded to address the needs of all learners, I urge you to not adopt this bill. Once public schools are fully funded, ESAs should only go to private schools that must have the same accountability standards and admission standards for all students, just like with public schools. Public, taxpayer dollars should not be intermingled with private institutions unless there is full transparency as to the use of those dollars.

Janie Brittain

Self

Garland, TX

I am strongly opposed to this bill for many reasons. It is an extremely costly omnibus package with everything thrown in but the kitchen sink, in an attempt to garner votes for passage. It is **not** a “money follows the child” bill, but a new wealth redistribution entitlement that injects the government and the bad educational policies it has developed over the years into charter, private and home schools as strings attached. It will also do **nothing** to help public schools. The **extras** added to the bill to garner votes include more ed tech - the opposite of what we should be doing. We need to return to basics, eliminate most technology, and institute classical liberal curricula. So much cheaper, and so much better, and would allow our teachers to do what they do best - teach.

Ruth Brazeal

Self

Allen, TX

Am not for vouchers should not use public funds for private education. Separation of church and state. Just a form of segregation Put the money into improving education for all. Sad that we are 43rd in nation. Has to be money in all this for someone.

Allison Lee

Austin ISD, parent and teacher

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Danielle Roberts

Self Special Education Teacher

Cedar Park, TX

Please vote No. Public dollars should stay in public education. Fully fund neighborhood public schools. The students of Texas deserve robust public schools.

Meghan Howeth

Spring Branch ISD

Houston, TX

This was my comment: I am a product and parent of Spring Branch ISD in Houston. We are a niche in the big city. However, due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. Our class sizes will balloon. The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. **FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!**

Jessica Barlow

Self and family

Midland, TX

Please vote no to school choice

Sincerely

Jessica Barlow

Nancy Pfiester, Ms
Self/Retired
Harker Heights, TX

I am a retired teacher from TX Public Schools in Bell County. I am sad and upset that my tax money would be hijacked and given to private school tuitions. Our state was founded long ago with Public school establishment. Oppose any ESA disguised as harmless and then takes away fully funding public school students and programs. Private schools are not guaranteed to serve all children equally and offer no public accountability. Vote No to voucher.

Michal Rivers
self - teacher and parent
Buda, TX

This bill will harm public education! Please note no.

Angela Sherr
Self
Richardson, TX

I am against any public dollars being used to fund private schools. Please vote no on HB 1.

Margie Medina, center director
Day Nursery of Abilene
Abilene Texas, TX

As a non-profit organization I ask that Pre-K to be included, as we are in partnership with an ISD.

Ruth York

Self (Direct Sales); Tea Party Patriots of Eastland County (VP); Texas Family Defense Committee (Interim Chair)
Cisco, TX

We oppose HB1 because:

Rule 1: Government cannot create choices; it can only limit them. Claiming HB1 gives parents more choice is deceptive, because it LIMITS choice. (Remember, that's all government can do.) It narrows school options by imposing accreditation, curriculum and testing limitations.

2. Texans already have school choice. Students may choose home, private, charter or public, including which public school to attend. Texas home schoolers are especially free to choose curriculum and mode that's best for their child, but they're also free from government oversight – unlike any other state. They can also participate in public school classes and UIL, if approved at the local level.

3. HB1 is socialist-style redistribution of wealth. It is marketed (falsely) with "It's not fair that only the wealthy can afford charter, private or home school." Reality check #1: Success brings benefits! – in clothing, college, healthcare, housing, transportation and a host of others. Reality check #2: Families who have sacrificed to provide alternative educations for their children prove this Bernie Sanders-style argument is NOT true.

4. Government programs don't produce "competition" and "free market." Proponents say it will end a government monopoly and create competition benefitting public, charter and private schools. Note, however, that these funds can only go to accredited private schools or be spent on approved curricula and materials. This is not free market. Competition will actually be reduced.

5. Calling this an "education savings account" is deceptive. We're all familiar with bank savings accounts, where we save our money. Ditto medical savings accounts, Coverdell Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), and 529 College Savings Plans, where we put aside OUR money, tax-protected, for specific purposes later. Unlike those, HB1 "education savings accounts" divert public funds into an account for the student, and the unused balance returns to the State. This terminology is misleading at best.

6. Public funds require public oversight. HB1 charges the Comptroller with ESA fiscal integrity. Someone, presumably the Texas Education Agency, must approve purchases. (Ironic, since TEA is the agency in charge of the "failing" public schools.) Parents would thus be accountable to agencies.

7. This program will grow another arm of government. A new agency in the Comptroller's office would administer this program, with authority to contract parts of it to a private company. The legislative fiscal note sets the initial two-year price tag at \$7.5 BILLION dollars. That means opportunity for fraud, special interests, and burgeoning expense.

Fix the free, efficient PUBLIC schools you are tasked with providing.

Herb Cox, Dr.
Public Schools
Waco, TX

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a retired teacher, coach and administrator who served 29 years in Texas public schools.

My hope is that you will see this voucher scam for exactly what it is; reverse Robinhood. Vouchers will steal public tax monies from our most marginalized kids and pay for tuition payments for those students who are already attending private schools.

At its roots vouchers are a return to segregation.

They initially cropped up in the post Brown v. Board of Education ETS so white kids could steal tax monies meant for public schools and send them to private schools.

Texas public schools serve ALL of God's children.

This movement is labeled "school choice" but in fact it is truly the school's choice.

Private schools will pick and choose which kids they enroll. Our special needs kids will be kicked to the curb and left in the dust.

This is immoral and should be illegal under the Texas Constitution.

I implore you to say no to vouchers in any shape form or fashion.

Under the law you must be good stewards of our most precious natural resources; the boys and girls of the great state of Texas that walk the hallways of our beloved public schools every single day.

Texans absolutely LIVE their local community public schools.

Sincerely,

Dr. Herb Cox

Jennelle Berger

Self - TX Public School Alum, Parent to Public School Students & PTA Member - Oak Meadow Elem & Jackson MS
SAN ANTONIO, TX

I am parent with a 4th grader and 8th grader who attend public schools in North East ISD and have done so since Kindergarten. I'm commenting in opposition to vouchers, education savings accounts, tuition reimbursement grants, and all other names given these programs that would provide public tax dollars for parents to use on private institutions such as religious schools.

I will make this important note. I don't have anything against private schools. I know and love people who have attended, currently attend, as well as teach at private schools.

What I DO take issue with are public tax dollars going to private institutions especially when there is no equity when it comes to accountability, serving students with special needs, reporting on spending, and testing requirements. If Texas passes legislation on vouchers, the state will be siphoning public tax dollars meant for the public education system to private institutions with zero government oversight or public accountability. That is not equitable to public schools who are held to strict accountability and testing standards.

Students who are economically disadvantaged will likely be left behind in a voucher program due to the gap in voucher funding and education expenses, including uniform, transportation, and meal services. Private schools can also choose or decline who attends their school. Thus vouchers would NOT serve all students.

Our public schools are amazing and important to the community. They serve ALL students. They do so much great work despite being severely underfunded. Just imagine if they were properly funded?! That's why it is just salt in the wound to hear that public dollars might go to private schools when our public schools so desperately need that funding themselves. For as much as we Texans claim to be great (and yes, on many of those reasons I agree), it's embarrassing that Texas is currently ranked 47th in per-capita student funding, \$4000 less than the national average. Instead of taking funds out of an already vulnerable system to benefit just a few, we should be increasing the basic allotment per student as well as saying NO to vouchers/education savings accounts.

I'll end this with the best analogy I've heard about this issue and sums up it well: allowing families to use public dollars on private education would be like calling the city and saying "I don't really use the public libraries so I want those tax dollars back so I can purchase books from Amazon". It does not work that way and should NEVER work that way. Vouchers are unconstitutional and have a history/foundation in segregation. Please vote no on education savings account programs.

Sonya Barbola
Self Teacher
San Antonio, TX

No vouchers. Please consider fully funding public education without the ESA. Public money should NOT go to private schools.

Jacob Brune
Self (teacher)
San Antonio, TX

Vouchers, often championed as a means to provide school choice, can be detrimental to public education. When funds are redirected from public schools to private institutions through voucher programs, it can exacerbate existing inequalities. Public schools, already facing financial challenges, may suffer from reduced resources, leading to a decline in the quality of education they can offer. Moreover, private schools that accept vouchers are not always held to the same accountability standards as public schools, potentially compromising educational quality and equity. Vouchers have the potential to fragment the education system, diverting attention and resources away from addressing systemic issues within public education. Instead of promoting overall improvement, voucher programs may inadvertently widen the educational gap between privileged and disadvantaged students.

Margarita Bagwell
Self- PTA President-Elect, Hill Elementary. PTA member at Murchison Middle School
Austin, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers and inadequate funding will impact Austin ISD directly and we are already struggling to work with the minimal budgets our principals have to work with. Or student- teacher rations are why to high, funding for programs cut at both our elementary and middle schools. What makes you think we have extra money to hand out. Stop hurting our children!

Derick Craig
Self - SBISD PTA member / parent
Houston, TX

Regardless of whether or not you fund vouchers, you need to INCREASE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION BASIC ALLOTMENT! The state has "recaptured" my tax dollars and it has gone into the black hole that is now a \$33B budget surplus. We have experienced skyrocketing prices in so many industries, yet public school funding has stayed flat - no increase for inflation. Public schools aren't these liberal indoctrinating institutions that Abbott has made them out to be. At least not in SBISD.

Kristopher McDonald
Self
Rockwall, TX

This bill is a pathetic attempt to steal money from public schools and redistribute it to private entities, most of whom are religious. There should always be a clear division between church and state and this bill perverts that. Public funds should be kept in public schools. Fund them sufficiently and students will excel.

Michelle Moore
Self - CTE Teacher
San Antonio, TX

These vouchers will mean the slow death of our programs that support students interests outside of core classes within public education. Students should have equal opportunity for programs that support career and college readiness - their ability to succeed should not be tied to their parents bank accounts. Pulling students away from public education will be less allocations for the schools which will result in the death of elective courses. These courses currently provide our students with industry based certifications and a way for students to find their passions that they will eventually either major in college or immediately pursue in the career field. Mass lay offs of public educators are coming and smaller charter and private school cannot offer the varied array of courses because they will not be able to fund an entire CTE (career and technical education) staff. Private schools will not be able to justify the hiring of this many teachers and students will be the ones who suffer. Vouchers are NOT the answer and are nothing more than a drop in the bucket to private education tuition. How can a school with no regulation, no common assessments, and potentially uncertified teachers be qualified to receive this money. There is no logic behind the execution of this bill.

Nicole Rinaldi
Self
San Antonio, TX

Teacher AGAINST vouchers!!!!

Antonio Lozano, Sir
Self
Belton, TX

I disagree with school vouchers because it is not helping under privileged children who come from poor families

Linda Morris
Self retired teacher
Plano, TX

Please, please vote no on vouchers. I do not think it is fair or legal to take money from our public schools and give it to private schools or to home school students. This is a choice they are making. Our public school students need those funds to provide them with the best education possible
Thank you so much for your attention and support in this very very critical issue.
Linda Morris

Kamari Strong
Self - Teacher
San Antonio, TX

Teacher against vouchers.

Cecilia Tolboom
Self- Valley Oaks Elementary
Houston, TX

* Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Belinda Henson, Parent

Myself

Saginaw, TX

I co-founded a private, Christian University-model school because I wanted to raise my children in the admonition of the Lord for the entire week, not just nights and weekends. Early in motherhood, I had the realization that 8 hours a day for 187 days for 13 years would become a spiritual battlefield. I wasn't willing for others to influence my impressionable children's self-worth and moral development.

That was my "why". I know others have more trust in what public schools can offer their 6 and 7-year-olds than I did. I didn't want to roll the dice and hope for a win. I wanted to hedge my bets as much as possible.

But I don't support the Education Savings Account because of my choice to raise my children in a Christian environment. I support Education Savings Accounts for other reasons. Mostly because none of it comes from the public education line item. I could only find 2018 statistics about how much money public schools received, so here is that breakdown

6.3 billion in federal money
20.9 billion in state money
31.6 billion in local property taxes
3 billion in other local sources
61.8 billion for 2018

<https://kinder.rice.edu/urbanedge/student-spending-and-state-funding-are-lagging-texas-meanwhile-window-closing-accurate>

I am going to assume Texas public schools will receive a similar amount (except I did read they increased state funding by 30% and have earmarked another 5.2 billion for teacher raises). While Texas public schools will receive at least 67 billion dollars (excluding that 30% increase), the separate fund for ESAs to be used on TEA-approved third party vendors (such as accredited private schools, dyslexia therapy programs, ABA programs, and the such) will be \$500 million.

In addition, Texas received \$19 billion in stimulus funds due to the pandemic (<https://www.raiseyourhandtexas.org/policy/school-funding/>). That's so great! In fact, many private schools were able to receive funding also. They allocated \$305 million! (<https://www.nationalopportunity.org/eans-funding-texas/>)

Here is the math (and remember, none of this is coming from the line item for public schools). Texas has a \$27 billion excess, which is why our property taxes were cut. (Good news for home owners.) I suppose low-income families who rent won't receive a discount, though. I don't know what the answer to that would be, though. Which, now that I think about it, is probably why they increase public education by 30%. They had to compensate for the lower property taxes. Hmmm? So it might not really be an increase, just a shift in the money for accounting.

Adding in the \$19 billion to \$67 billion, that is \$86 billion that public schools have received over the last 18 months. (<https://www.raiseyourhandtexas.org/policy/school-funding/>). Accredited private school parents paid taxes for the local public school plus tuition for their children, and I have no way of calculating that. However, over 400 accredited private schools received \$305 million in stimulus

Abby Yarborough

Self

Conroe, TX

I'd like to begin by stating that I'm not a lobbyist, I'm not testifying on behalf of a PAC, nor am I in any way personally benefiting from my testimony. I'm simply a parent, a taxpayer, and a native Texan who is exhausted and fed up with the current state of affairs in my local school district, and I do blame our legislators for the lack of oversight and continued problems that are ignored in our public school system. It seems we have more rules, regulations, and laws that are rarely, if ever enforced. Two years ago, I brought a valid complaint to my local school district. I was stonewalled, lied to, and publicly harassed by district leadership. Unfortunately for my local school district, I refused to stand down. Instead, I chose to stand up! Not only for myself and my children, but for all children, the community, and for the future of Texas.

My original complaint led me to start attending school board meetings. This opened my eyes to a multitude of unlawful decisions and unethical behavior from our superintendent, central administrators, and the tenure school board members on our board. Willis ISD was blatantly taking advantage of taxpayers and operating to benefit, financially and politically, as were the adults placed in charge of educating our children. I encourage you to look into Willis ISD's student performance reports from recent years. I think you will see that our local school leadership epicly failed our children, and its tax paying community. We have financially and as a community paid a high price for these failures.

Student underperformance remains at an all-time high in Willis because the leadership responsible has had absolutely recourse and has lied to the public, because let's be honest- Public Information Request responses are an honor system controlled by dishonorable people. This isn't just happening in Willis ISD, this problem is systemic. Our local ISD's continue to push frivolous school bonds off on the public, and are marketed by half truths and unnecessary spending because the State of Texas does nothing while we the people are left without answers. School bonds absolutely have their place but they are managed with fiscal irresponsibility and no oversight according to rules and regulations, and this should not be the case. It creates public mistrust!

Abby Yarborough

Self

Conroe, TX

It has been two years of fighting for some form of accountability and our superintendent has moved on unscathed, enabled to prey upon the next vulnerable community. The rogue school board members who have remained on the board, continue to lie to the public, retaliate and target parents who complain, accept no responsibility for the policies and procedures they have violated, and blatantly abuse their power. These people shouldn't hold public office, much less be the example set for our children.

I can honestly say that after two years of fighting for accountability, that I have knocked on the door of every state agency I could think of in the State of Texas, and not a single one of them has cared to acknowledge even the smallest infraction from our district. I have exhausted all efforts and tried to hold my local ISD accountable in hopes of doing what is right for our children. The same cannot be said for a single state agency in Texas. TEA doesn't care, SBOE doesn't care, TX Ethics Commission doesn't care, Ken Paxton and the OAG don't care, Brandon Creighton doesn't care, and as far as I'm concerned Brad Buckley proves my point with HB1. As it stands- HB1 isn't worth the paper it's written on! Shouldn't the focal point of education be our children? HB1 and the ideological text surrounding accountability will hardly benefit the children, and there's certainly nothing to empower parents.

When at least 5 of the 14 members ON this committee are backed by The Charter School NOW PAC, I cannot help but wonder if this committee is serving the general public that elected them, or if they too have succumbed to the corporate greed we've allowed to corrupt Public Education in Texas. I suggest this committee get back to the drawing board and remember that WE THE PEOPLE are your BIGGEST donors.

Create legislation that will benefit the taxpaying community, specifically for our kids, followed by addressing the systemic issue of dwindling classroom teachers, and overpaid top heavy administrative staff, half of which are moonlighting for district vendors- only then should you expect taxpayers to continue to fund this circus Stop taking advantage of children just because you assume the general public is t paying any attention. Start advocating for legislation that will actually educate our children and provide parents legislation that will encourage transparency, and a means to accountability.

Parents shouldn't be expected to spend personal finances, hire an attorney, and fight so hard for answers from publicly funded schools. We certainly shouldn't be expected to do all of this while our local ISD's are remain protected by sovereign immunity, use attorneys funded by our tax dollars to intimidate us, and remain completely ignored by all of the state agencies that are supposed to be holding them accountable. I encourage the committee to consider crafting educational legislation that will keep our state great! Anything less is unacceptable.

Abby Yarborough

Self

Conroe, TX

If our legislators will not accept responsibility and write legislation that will actually trickle down to benefit our students, classroom teachers, communities, and taxpayers then go ahead and hand public education over to the federal government completely, because this is where TX Education seems to be headed. I see no need for TEA, SBOE, Local ISD's, Local School Boards, The Ethics Commission, or even the OAG when NONE of these agencies ever seem to have any jurisdiction to do a single thing when a complaint is made. These made up rules and regulations that are actually meaningless and as far as I'm concerned, there's no need for any of them.

Stop kicking the can down the road, politicizing education while you destroy our constitutional birthright, and start thinking about who will be footing the tax bill when YOU are old and gray. Start thinking about the children of Texas, the future of our great state, and stop using our educational institutions to for profit. Lead by example for our children!

Priscilla Rocha, Teacher

Reagan

San Antonio, TX

Against

Diana Adamson

Self

Austin, TX

We do not want vouchers. Vouchers take money away from public schools. Our public schools serve every child. Do not take money from public schools.

Crystal Beshoory

Self homemaker

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt the children! Fund the schools, give teachers raises, that should be the priority NOT VOUCHERS! Our school district is about to close 2 schools because of the lack of urgency on getting a schools funded. Stop with all this nonsense.

Jeanine Grizzard

Self/restaurant owner

Weatherford, TX

I am opposed to giving public tax money to parents to use for private school tuition when private schools are not held to the same accountability standards. Please fully fund public schools including pay raises for school employees.

Jean Bedrossian

Self, RN

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

My son is highly gifted and has ADHD. The special programs he attends are the only thing keeping him engaged in school are on the list to be cut if his school in Spring Branch ISD is forced to make massive budget cuts. He will suffer mentally if these programs are taken from him. My daughter is thriving in elementary school but if the school is forced to dramatically increase class sizes, her education will suffer. Please help us help our kids. Our teachers are incredible and I want to see them fully supported in their positions.

Thank you!

Michael Grimm
self, financial advisor
Irving, TX

My wife and I live in Terry Meza's district in Irving. After my wife taught in an Irving public school, tried homeschooling, tried the local private school - we have been very fortunate to have won the lottery (literally, since there are over 1,000 students on the waitlist) to attend a charter school here in Irving.

We need better choices here in Texas, and all children should have access to Education Savings Accounts.

HB1 will make the local public schools better!

Most families across the state of Texas support school choice, and have been disappointed by the current options for their kids.

For the sake of our children and our future Texas leaders, empower parents to choose the education that is best for their child!

Please support HB 1.

Thank you so much for your time and service,
Michael Grimm

Gabriela Olivas
Day Nursery of Abilene
Abilene, TX

We ask that PreK be included for child care programs

Karen Johnson
Self
Austin, TX

Public education should be for all children who choose to attend public schools. Public monies should not be syphoned off to private or parochial schools. Public funds should only benefit our public schools which need more funding badly at this time to enrich our curriculum & our educator's salaries. Texas schools deserve more funding not less.

Cheryl Bustillos

Self

Midland, TX

As a member of the Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching, a 501(c)(3), I urge you to continue to designate National Board Certified Teachers as “recognized” or to designate them as “exemplary” under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA).

House Bill 1 proposes that, under the Teachers Incentive Allotment (TIA), National Board Certified Teachers automatically earn a “nationally board certified” designation, equivalent to a new, fourth level of designation, “acknowledged.” Under HB 1, National Board Certified Teachers would continue to generate \$3,000-\$9,000 in allotment funding.

This is concerning because, currently, National Board Certified Teachers earn a “recognized” designation, which is the third level of designation. Under HB 1, the “recognized” designation would have an increased allotment of \$5000 - \$15,000. This change would devalue the incentive that seeks to reward and retain Texas educators who demonstrate exemplary teaching practices and increased student outcomes.

The House Committee on Public Education’s 2022 Interim Report recommended that National Board Certified Teachers be designated as “exemplary.” This esteemed group recognized that the upper levels of the TIA designations are more aligned with the high level of teaching National Board Certified Teachers have demonstrated.

National Board Certified Teachers have met the “gold standard” for teaching. Research shows that National Board Certified Teachers produce 1-2 months of additional learning for their students compared to their peers. To earn National Board Certification, teachers undergo a rigorous process where they demonstrate their content knowledge through an assessment, submit samples of student work and videos of their teaching, and analyze their own instruction.

Designating NBCTs as “Recognized” or “Exemplary” is the best way to reward and retain outstanding Texas teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools.

Ysidro Bustillos

Self

MidlandT, TX

As a member of the Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching, a 501(c)(3), I urge you to continue to designate National Board Certified Teachers as “recognized” or to designate them as “exemplary” under the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA).

House Bill 1 proposes that, under the Teachers Incentive Allotment (TIA), National Board Certified Teachers automatically earn a “nationally board certified” designation, equivalent to a new, fourth level of designation, “acknowledged.” Under HB 1, National Board Certified Teachers would continue to generate \$3,000-\$9,000 in allotment funding.

This is concerning because, currently, National Board Certified Teachers earn a “recognized” designation, which is the third level of designation. Under HB 1, the “recognized” designation would have an increased allotment of \$5000 - \$15,000. This change would devalue the incentive that seeks to reward and retain Texas educators who demonstrate exemplary teaching practices and increased student outcomes.

The House Committee on Public Education’s 2022 Interim Report recommended that National Board Certified Teachers be designated as “exemplary.” This esteemed group recognized that the upper levels of the TIA designations are more aligned with the high level of teaching National Board Certified Teachers have demonstrated.

National Board Certified Teachers have met the “gold standard” for teaching. Research shows that National Board Certified Teachers produce 1-2 months of additional learning for their students compared to their peers. To earn National Board Certification, teachers undergo a rigorous process where they demonstrate their content knowledge through an assessment, submit samples of student work and videos of their teaching, and analyze their own instruction.

Designating NBCTs as “Recognized” or “Exemplary” is the best way to reward and retain outstanding Texas teachers, particularly in high-need and rural schools.

Charmi Vince

Self

Irving, TX

Please pass school choice for every Texan child. Every family should be able to avail themselves of the best education for their child. Each child has different needs and the education savings account program would help parents choose the best school for their child.

Amanda Osbeck

Self - bunker hill elementary pta - sbisd

Houston, TX

Vote NO to school vouchers. You need to increase the basic allotment for each child and fully fund Texas education. Vouchers will take money away from public school systems which are already struggling with huge deficits in the years to come. DO BETTER for the children of texas.

Ali Gentry, Miss

The Arc of Texas

Dallas, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am a writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and a sibling to a brother with an intellectual disability, I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this would have on students with disabilities.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the growth of disabled students. My brother was forced to attend private school because of chronic underfunding of public special education. Private schooling was not better: he was pushed out of multiple private schools due to his support needs because private schools have no obligation to serve students with disabilities. He did not get to experience the sense of belonging I had from being part of the Coppell ISD community. I wish he had the same educational opportunities I did at my local public schools. I oppose vouchers because I want a strong, well-funded public education system, as is required by federal law, for ALL students, including those with disabilities like my brother.

I am also greatly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities. Both the federal government and the state of Texas recognize that SSLCs are the most restrictive residential placement. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. It is inappropriate for school district personnel to provide parents information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information. Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential programs are superior in quality of life and cost-effectiveness to SSLCs. It is not fair of Texas to chronically underfund special education and community-based services and then push children into SSLC placements.

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives. At a minimum, please remove the SSLC provision from HB 1.

Sincerely,

Ali Gentry

972-824-8280

Ryan Rayle
Self
Leander, TX

For as long as I can remember, vouchers have been turned down time and time again but for some reason, this go around, there is an even stronger push but from the govt, not the people. Forcing our legislators into multiple special sessions for a program that does not have the majority support of the people is a waste of tax payer money.

With our schools and teachers being woefully underfunded for years, now is the time to use the surplus to take care of our teachers and school employees along with being first in the nation with per student spending. If the Governor is so pro life, then invest the money where it can really make an impact on our children today and those that choose to educate them and keep them safe.

With the lack of transparency/regulation imposed on charter schools, there isn't a way to have a good checks and balance to allow the public to see where the money is going and how it is being spent.

My children are bright and love going to their public schools. I've seen 5 built within 5 miles of my home in the last 5 years and there are two more going up this year. If we siphon away public tax dollars that was meant to maintain our public school system and give it away to charter schools who will ultimately raise their rates and make more profits, we will see an even more rapid decline in our public school system which is so vital to all our communities across Texas.

Thank you for your time and I hope you make the right choice for the majority and not just the party lines. This is an easy one. Don't make it difficult.

Dale Tribble, Mrs.
self
Alvin, TX

Dear Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to House Bill (HB 1). As a member of The Arc of Texas, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I'm deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill would have on students with IDD.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

It will also hurt students without disabilities that have parents that are not looking out for the child's best interest but is in need of financial assistance.

It is very sad that the governor is more concerned with politics than with the education of our children!!

Linda Latham
Self
Sachse, TX

I'm totally against the proposed school voucher funding program. All funds should be allocated to the public schools not private schools.

Amy Woodell, Mrs

Self

Austin, TX

90% of Texans want our public schools funded. They are currently very unfunded including new unfunded mandates regarding security. Three times now the people's State Representatives have rejected the effort to send \$8000 of tax payer dollars to vouchers/ESAs. We want our heavily eegulated (but at least transparent) public schools ro receive this money. NOT private schools or charter schools. This type of legislation has delivered poor results in Arizona and other states. Why? Bc these schoola arent accountable to the public. No to ESAs!

William Latham

Self

Sachse, TX

I am opposed to the proposed school voucher funding program. All funding should go to the public school system in our state. Vote NO to this proposed program.

Amy Dodds

Self, registered nurse/nurse educator

Belton, TX

I have been waiting for school choice! Please pass this as I believe it will not only help with those who lighten the burden of those who have already chosen alternative schools (private, homeschool co-ops, classical hybrid schools, etc.) but also raise the bar for public schools and hold them accountable. If they want more money, they need better results! Our district has an average reading level of below 50%, and math is even more atrocious!! But they definitely make sure litter boxes are in the bathrooms for anyone who identifies as a cat!! WHAT?!! How is this so?

I believe "vouchers" or whichever way alternative schools will be supported will force public schools to wake up and put more money and manpower into what matters... actually EDUCATING children in what is needed to be a successful adult and contributing member of society — literacy, math, history, writing skills, character building etc. We see the idea of "friendly competition" with free markets as a good thing. Then no one company can create a monopoly. Public school has no such friendly competition, which has let them do a sub-par job and get away with it for far too long because they are the only "free" choice in town. This needs to end. Our kids need better!

Please approve school choice!

Thank you kindly,

Amy Dodds, RN

Amy Andrews

Self

Houston, TX

Against HB1

Mary Beth Metcalf

Self, Teacher

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers! Any form of vouchers will drain funds from our severely underfunded public schools. Keep public dollars in our public schools!

Craig Watts

Self Hill Elementary PTA

Austin, TX

I oppose this bill and providing tax dollars for private education. I support public schools and adequately funding them. Thank you

Hayley Howard

Self

Sachse, TX

I stand for and support public schools and their teachers

Kecia Smedley

Self

Spring Branch, TX

I am against giving \$10,000 vouchers to be used to pay for private schools.

Carolyn Murphy, Dr.

Self; public school teacher

San Antonio, TX

Against vouchers to private schools

Raschke Cindy

Self/mother/grandmother

Victoria, TX

NO VOUCHERS. How many times do we have to tell you? NO VOUCHERS. NO UNFUNDED MANDATES! How many times do we have to tell you? Stop. Wasting. Taxpayer. Money. Fix Public Schools. Stop trying to gain control over private schools ... LEAVE HOMESCHOOLS ALONE. If you were able to do it right, you wouldn't need vouchers to allow white flight from public schools to private. Vouchers will only serve the upper middle class. Lower middle class and poor families, more times than not, will be left behind. How many times do we have to stop this effort give privileged families even more privilege, while leaving the scraps for poor families. You are not fooling anyone. Public schools are against vouchers. Homeschools are against vouchers. Only private schools and the upper class want them ... because they will be the only ones to benefit. DO. YOUR. JOB. Stop this now.

Wendy Kirkpatrick

AFT

Spring, TX

It's time to support public schools and stop trying push vouchers. Give teachers the raises they deserve and help Texas students get a better education by funding public schools. Private schools do not have the high standards that our public school system does. They do not have to serve any student they feel is difficult due to disabilities or behaviors. They also do not have to teach to the Texas TEKS. Stop trying push an agenda that voters do not want or you will find yourself voted out of office.

Stephanie Brown

Self

Austin, TX

Providing tax dollars to private schools when public schools, which are a right to students and families, are funded far below the necessary amount is ridiculous and makes Texas an embarrassment. The fact that money cannot be found to properly fund public education and support teachers but can seem to be found for private schools with no supervision and curriculum that doesn't align with any of the requirements required for public schools is nonsense. Keep separation of church and state and properly fund public schools instead of holding the funds hostage.

Leigh Blake

Texas Parent

Coppell, TX

This bill is very important for Texas families to be able to let parents choose the best education options for their children based on their family needs. Our children NEED this bill!

Dawn Williams-Richardson, Mrs.

Self

Killeen, TX

As a tax payer, a retired Texas teacher, a voter, and a constituent of Rep. Buckley, I OPPOSE this and ALL bills attempting to give public tax-payer money to private schools.

The filing and consideration of this bill seems to suggest that the chair of this committee believes that there is a magic set of numbers -- a certain increase in ADA, a level of salary, an amount of training, a set prioritization of rural districts, etc -- that will make it okay to use public money to benefit under-regulated private schools. There is no such amount.

Private schools have no accountability to the public when it comes to curriculum, staffing, employment, enrollment, or assessment standards. Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES should tax-payer money be taken used to subsidize them.

While I strongly believe that public schools deserve every penny allotted to them in this bill, AND SO MUCH MORE, it is obvious that this bill is simply an effort to silence public schools and public school educators/staff with a silver gag.

If this committee and the Texas legislature as a whole wish to improve the educational standing of our great state, they will stop playing games and commit to fully funding our public education system. They talk about giving choice, while they have spent the past several decades stripping every bit of funding for specialists, programs, and support out of public schools and then pointing fingers when bare-bones funding doesn't result in top-notch performance.

VOTE NO ON HB 1. FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH PUBLIC MONEY.

Jim Furgeson

Myself

Austin, TX

I oppose any public funds for private schools. Private schools serve a function in this society, but that does mean that taxpayers dollars should be used to support them. Such savings accounts also raise the issue of separation of church and state. No to House Bill. Instead of this bill just adequately fund public schools. They are the critical institution supporting democracy in Texas.

Kristin Del Mul

N/A

Allen, TX

As a homeschool graduate and a current homeschool mom, I stand against HB 1. As a homeschool family, it would be more logical if we could keep the \$4,500+ we pay towards our local ISD via property taxes. We don't need our money to be processed through the government and returned to us in some form. All that does is create more bureaucracy. School Choice should mean if you choose public school, you choose for your property tax dollars to fund your ISD. If you choose private or homeschool your property taxes designated for ISD shouldn't be touched so the family can choose the best educational route for their own children. Please vote against HB1.

Elizabeth Webber

Texas Homeschool Education

South Padre Island, TX

My vote is against HB1

I strongly oppose HB1 and stand against school choice.

Tina Hickman

Self/school psychologist

Converse, TX

If private schools collect public funds, they should be responsible for following ALL laws governing public school education, including accepting students with disabilities. Period.

Maria Anna Barrera Esparza, Ms

Self- Educator

Spring Branch, TX

I oppose school vouchers vehemently! I support funding public education and raising salaries for public school employees!

Brandy McDonald

Self - Church staff

Dallas, TX

I support HB 1. This bill would enable families to use the education savings to fund an education that they could not otherwise afford on their own. Had this been available to me and my family, I would have continued in a faith based education program. But at the time, this was not financially feasible.

Eric Sundheim

Self

Godley, TX

Vote no on vouchers , as a 20+ year educator and lifetime Republican I am 100% against vouchers

Stephen Braulick

Self (Retired)

Arlington, TX

I'm really sick of the un-democratic strategies used to undermine our public education system. So-called voucher programs represent a systematic effort to strip-mine public school funding by enabling a for-profit education model that is primarily known for it's unconstrained level of corruption, nepotism, and mission failure.

Patrick Ward

NEISD

San Antonio, TX

Against

Bonnie Harker

La Vernia ISD

La Vernia, TX

As a proud public educator for 28 years, I am heartbroken that there is a continued fight to take public school funds and put them elsewhere. After being defeated not once, not twice, but three times, shouldn't elected officials listen to their constituents? Public money belongs to public education.

Mary Podhaski, Mrs

Self

Georgetown, TX

I strongly disagree with spending taxpayer money on private schools. The public schools are already understaffed and underfunded and this will further undermine public education.

Ninfa Gonzalez

TXP2P

Corpus Christi, TX

I oppose to this preposition

Margot Moczygemba

Self

Corpus Christi, TX

I do not want my tax dollars to fund private schools.

Misty Dempsey

Myself

Conroe, TX

I am vehemently AGAINST this bill. As a former coach in a public school, private school teacher and now homeschooler I have seen the good and bad in all sectors. I speak as a homeschool parent on this issue. We as homeschoolers already have school choice. We are happy to forfeit our tax money for our freedom. We have traditional homeschoolers, but more importantly we have large groups of road schooling and unschooling families. With government money comes government oversight and strings. I would rather see investment in reestablishing the family unit, sex education and nurturing a single working parent household. Repairing the fundamental family unit and supporting single parents, while simultaneously repairing the public school Prussian model that has not changed or evolved since the early 1900s.

We saw in the Tebow Bill after it passed only a half page long list of schools opted in. One district in Northeast Texas lost their ability to play in UIL for five years. Exactly one of the concerns that was mentioned in testimony against that bill. How many of those kids were hoping for football scholarships?

It did nothing but add a notch to a House members resumes. The abuse of this bill, if passed, will come to fruition which will result in more oversight and regulations to derail said abuse. Overstepping into religious and private sectors and free choice, which is protected in the Texas Constitution, will erode the trust from Texas parents that their state has their kids best interest at heart. Address the failing public school system, before inviting yourselves into other sectors. You don't stop a jugular bleed in the heart by amputating a leg.

Grace Obregon
Self
San Antonio, TX

Members of the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment:

I am writing to express strong opposition to HB 1. As a Texas citizen, and an ally of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), I see this bill as a grave disservice to all residents of our state - and our most vulnerable populations in particular. This bill reflects poor economic policy and misuse of tax dollars as well as a distinct lack of care and respect for Texas students. All Texans benefit from strong public education policies and support.

HB 1's authorization of education savings accounts could divert crucial resources from public schools, affecting the education of students with disabilities. Private schools, lacking accountability and specialized programs, may deny admission or fail to provide adequate support, hindering the academic and social growth of already marginalized students.

I am particularly concerned about the state supported living centers (SSLCs) provision in Section 29.0056 of HB 1(88(4)) and the negative impact this could have on students with IDD as it could increase the number of institutionalized children with disabilities, posing a detrimental impact on these children, their families and our communities.

Even an additional three students with disabilities residing in an SSLC, as a result of this provision, would incur significant financial burden to the state, costing over a million dollars each year. SSLCs cost Texas approximately \$28,300 per month per resident, significantly more than alternative options such as the Home and Community-based Services (HCS) Waiver Residential program, which costs taxpayers approximately \$6,600 per month per individual. By highlighting SSLCs specifically as an option, there is a risk of influencing families to choose the most costly and restrictive setting.

There already exists a comprehensive residential options brochure duplication. [Existing brochure: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/services/disability/residential-options-brochure.pdf>] No need for wasteful duplication. It is inappropriate for school district personnel/ARD committee to provide parents of students with disabilities information about SSLCs when discussing possible residential options. Local IDD Authorities are the most informed and appropriate entities to provide such information. Institutions are not family homes, and children should grow up with their families whenever possible. This principle is acknowledged by the federal government through the Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. OC* and by our state through Texas Government Code Section 531.02

Again, I urge you to oppose HB 1 and protect the rights of students with disabilities to receive quality, inclusive education. Your rejection of this bill is vital in ensuring that our public education system survives and supports ALL Texas students.

Anna Bowers
Self
Burleson, TX

No to vouchers.

Katie Hroncich
Self
Carthage, TX

THIS IS A VEHEMENT "NO" TO HB1!

Susan Cooper
Self, School librarian
Georgetown, TX

I oppose HB 1. Two wrongs don't make a right. The first wrong is not funding Texas public school appropriately. The second wrong is to then blame Texas public schools for not meeting standards and use taxpayer money to fund vouchers for other options, including parochial schools. I have very strong feelings against my taxes being used to fund a child's tuition at a parochial school. Texas legislators needs to get with the separation-of-church-and-state program!

Rachael Abell
Texas PTA
Grapevine, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers.

I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

John Cotter
Self
Kingwood, TX

There is no place in this country that public tax dollars should be used for any for-profit private or religious schools. Tax payer dollars should be for public schools only. It is time to give our teachers a pay raise and fully fund our public schools. I stand firmly against any voucher deal, no matter the amount.

Jennifer Bowland
Self- Public School Educator
Round Rock, TX

I am a Texas public school educator. Texas public schools don't need the establishment of an education savings account program/voucher to make our schools better. We need better pay for educators, more money allocated to the student allotment funding, and we need programs especially special education fully funded. Educators are paying close attention to lawmakers this session and hope you do what is right for educators and students in Texas. We work hard every day to educate every student who walks in our doors no matter their circumstances. A voucher system would just further deplete the school system of much needed funds. Please do better and support the education system that was created by our state to educate all students by voting against any legislation that includes a voucher.

Billy Stone, Mr
Home
Cleburne, TX

Please do not approve the use of public tax dollars in any form. Education savings accounts etc.

Sara Ray, Dr
Self, pharmacist.
Austin, TX

Please vote NO on education savings accounts, no on vouchers. Our public schools need our funding and support. Please remember that you were elected to represent us and support for public schools benefits everyone, not just the wealthy.

Julie Hoyle, Mrs
Self
College Station, TX

Vote No. Vouchers will be bas for everyone. Support the public schools that have been ignored, bashed and beaten up with little to no support from our legislators.

jeffery bassie
self, teacher
Houston, TX

This ESA legislation is a SCAM. Taking money out of public schools to provide financial help to mostly affluent kids who already go to private school is WRONG. Fund our schools, pay our teachers, and STOP trying to turn every aspect of our society into a profit-generating engine. It is obscene and immoral.

Gina Gandy
Self, public high school teacher
Lewisville, TX

Please continue to stand firm against school vouchers. Your public school teachers thank you so much for continuing the fight into a 4th special session. Your state's future workforce deserves the best education possible, but vouchers are not the way. Increasing the basic allotment per public school student is! Thank you!!

Elizabeth Hatfield
Swlf
Missouri city, TX

As a mother of three and life long Texas resident, I do not support school vouchers and ask that the house committee not support vouchers or related measures. It is important to me that state and resident taxes support the local public schools and teachers and that every effort is made to bolster the resources and education offered at the public level.

Jordan Michel
Self
Dallas, TX

Texas has an obligation to offer quality public education to all children. Any program that diverts funds from public schools undermines that goal.

Mary Neal
Self
Huntsville, TX

HB 1 needs to keep the SSLC information going to parents in the ARD meeting, if these parents are seeking a good residence outside of their home, in the bill. Many group homes cannot take care of the young people with severe IDD, and they end up in jail. My grandson lives in Denton SSLC. My daughter did not get any SSLC information from Denton County MHMR, and she had to find out about the SSLCs on her own. She needed SSLC information in the ARD meetings. Thank God that my grandson did not end up in jail. Please keep the SSLC information going to Special Education Parents in the bill. This information is very important and parents deserve it because they know what is best. Thank you.

Sarah Bell
Self - Retired
Mckinney, TX

Using taxpayer money for private schools is wrong. Private schools do not have to accept everyone, as do public schools. Private schools do not have the meet the high level of accountability that the public schools must meet. I am originally from West Texas and know how small rural schools are struggling financially. Taking money from them will only make things worse.

I am a Christian and I firmly believe in the separation of church and state, as did Jesus. Among other things, Jesus said, "render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's". You only have to look at countries like Iran to know that theocracies are not a good idea and taxpayer support of religious schools is a stepping stone to theocracies. Providing taxpayer money to religious schools, no matter what religion they are, is a clear violation of the First Amendment.

Michelle Goll
Self, Designer
Austin, TX

Vouchers hurt public education and Texas teachers. My own children have attended both public and private schools. I would never have dreamt of taking money away from my district. Taxpayer money needs to fund Texas schools and staff! Quit wasting our hard earned tax dollars on this waste of time and get serious about properly funding our state.

Ruthie Keyes, Retired teacher, teacher
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Why do you think that a student going to a private school is more valuable (\$10,500) than one of our students (\$6100) that their family is barely able to pay bills? I graduated from a private high school, but my parents paid nothing. I started working at the campus center at Abilene Christian University to pay my way because I wanted to go!
Use the money more wisely, take away all the unfunded mandates, don't make districts pay a penalty when hiring experienced retired teachers, and pay teachers more!

HORTENSIA Villanueva
Self/Retired
OLTON, TX

Please vote against HB 1. I am totally against using tax money for private school education. No school vouchers. Thank you.

Marta Fischer
Education funding and standing against vouchers
San Antonio, TX

Special education educators need more planning time, lighter case loads, more para professionals. When you pass laws please provide funds for those laws and if you pass vouchers then hold the private schools and charter schools accountable to need state and federal mandates supporting special education student populations.
Thank you
Marta Fischer

Cheri Thomas
Self
Houston, TX

I am a parent in Spring Branch ISD in Houston. Due to the inability of our legislature to properly fund public education our district has to make \$35m in cuts for the 23-24 school year - that's 10% of the operating budget. This will include cuts to school choice and teachers. Our class sizes will balloon. The state of Texas should fund one system of schooling properly and fully. Too many districts have been forced to run budget deficits through no fault of their own. Districts can't control their own purse strings, they rely on legislators to do the right thing. Our taxpayers monies should never go to private schools unless and until our public schools are properly funded, our kids are safe and our teachers respected. **FULLY FUND OUR SCHOOLS AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!**

Whitney Briggs, Mrs.
Educational leader
Little Elm, TX

Review this bill looking at Public school finance only. Stop tying it to vouchers because it will never pass. Our students and teachers deserve better. They should not be used as pawns in a scheme.

Megan Bice

Self and sister of a brother with severe IDD

Montgomery, TX

I am in support of the legislators keeping the SSLC language in HB 1. There are young people with severe IDD in our public schools, like my brother, who need an SSLC. The parents need to get the SSLC information in their ARD meetings. All parents seem to get is just information on community options. The SSLC is a public service and parents need to know that this could be an option if their son or daughter qualifies. Please keep SSLC information going to special education parents in the bill.

Debra Johnson

Self/ Teacher

Temple, TX

Vote NO to HB1

Candra Schatz

Self

Eules, TX

My son receives lifesaving care at the Denton SSLC.

I fully support the bill to ensure PARENTAL FREEDOM for parents to determine the appropriate setting for their child. Please support this bill!

Janalee Wiles

Hillside Academy for Excellence PTA- Garland ISD

Garland, TX

It is NOT acceptable to give government funding to private schools. My tax money belongs in the public schools and NOT in private institutions. Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Kim Johnson

Self

Kemp, TX

I STRONGLY oppose giving public funds to private schools in any way. Unless they are held to the same rules and regulations and required to follow the same assessment and grading system as public schools, they do not have the right to public funds. Taxpayer dollars are public funds. They belong in public schools.

Danielle Weston

Self

Round Rock, TX

I am a taxpayer and parent of two Round Rock ISD graduates. What is happening in Round Rock ISD is a case study in everything that is wrong with Public Education in Texas. The school board majority employs a superintendent with a permanent restraining order for family violence. This is offensive on more levels than I can list. And the district and trustees are defendants in a 1983 Federal Civil Rights lawsuit filed by a parent. Parents want out of this chaos. The wealthy and upper middle class can opt out but poor and middle income families are trapped. Would you leave your own children with a man who has a permanent restraining order for family violence? Set families free of the madness.

Randy Podhaski, Ed. D.

Self-retired educator

Georgetown, TX

I strongly oppose using taxpayer monies to fund private schools. Public schools are under-funded and under-staffed and this will further erode the educational experiences for our students. Additionally, a system of haves and have nots will be created that will negatively affect economic and educational futures of students. No, No, No.

Virginia Marshall

Self

Kyle, TX

No matter how much lipstick you try to put on it, HB 1 is still a pig. NO, a thousand times NO on vouchers!

Sonja Pace

Texas AFT

Dallas, TX

I'm against Vouchers. Vouchers take from Public funds.

Guadalupe Avila

Retired Teachers

Houston, TX

NO, NO, No to vouchers

john cobarruvias

Self

houston, TX

HB 1 would provide \$10,500 to a family for a school voucher. I am opposed to this. Why should my tax dollars subsidize a religious educational system? And why would someone who pays only \$2000 in taxes be given \$8,500 more than what they put in.

If a family chooses a voucher they should be limited to how much they actually put into the school system. Not one single penny more.

I am against HB 1 in its entirety.

Nicole Tarpley
Self and America's for Prosperity
Nacogdoches, TX

My name is Nicole Tarpley from Nacogdoches County. I am testifying on behalf of myself in favor of House Bill 1.

I have lived in rural east Texas since 2017 and my children have attended two different public school districts during these years.

Over the years, my middle son has struggled with ADHD and the public school system has fallen short of accommodations or providing an educational environment that fits his needs.

My daughter is a brain cancer survivor and has had medical accommodations but still has issues academically. She needs more individualized attention in her general education setting.

I recently withdrew my youngest son from public school and enrolled him in a private school because he was bullied. The school administration ignored it and wanted to punish him. It seemed to me that their district disciplinary policy was more important than the well-being and safety of my son.

He is thriving in the PRIVATE school! He enjoys learning now. He has a safe and nurturing environment to focus on his studies.

I am a recently widowed mother of 4 children. Three of which are school aged. Each of my children have different needs and learning styles. Public schools have not met my standards for my children, but I have had no other choice.

I am a working single mother that does the best that I can for my children, but private school is not really in my budget. I have made enormous sacrifices to enroll one child. I believe the money should follow the child and the parent should be able to choose the educational environment that best fits each child's needs.

Supporting school choice is putting the parent back in control of their child's education. Public schools may work for the majority of the population, but it may not be the best learning environment for every child. Please vote FOR school choice.

Thank you for your time.

Suzi Kennon
Self
Sachse, TX

I am opposed to HB 1 because it diverts funds away from the 5.4 million children being served by Texas public schools. I believe that public dollars should be directed toward public schools. Instead of diverting funds to private schools or private vendors, we should be continuing to bolster and empower our local public schools to meet their mission of meeting the needs of every child—to serve every student that comes through their doors. While the intent behind education savings account programs is to increase school choice for all, in reality many kids get left behind: including children with disabilities who aren't guaranteed access to private schools or afforded the same protections as in public schools, middle-income and lower-income students who still won't be able to afford private schools even with the ESA, and rural students who don't have access to private schools. Creating ESAs would be allowing private institutions to use public dollars without holding these schools to the same accountability standards that we hold our public schools to, such as the administration of the STAAR test or the A-F accountability system. Our public school system is facing unprecedented challenges, where teachers and students are feeling overburdened and under supported. We must get behind our public schools and support them in all ways—through funding, encouraging a positive work culture and environment, and ensuring our teachers and administrators feel valued. Allowing education savings account programs to be created would be diverting the state's support elsewhere, when it's our local schools that need it the most. ESAs drain critical funding from an already underfunded system. Public funds should remain in the public school system that serves the vast majority of Texas students.

Stephanie Jarnigan

Self - mother

Austin, TX

HB1 - vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools

Emily Templin

Self

Houston, TX

I am so disappointed in this item, that politicians would siphon money away from Texas school children and attempt to divert our taxes to a voucher system that will hurt quality public education. They are holding the schools hostage until they get their way with the vouchers.... Very selfish, hurtful, and political. I am shocked that people employed to look out for the public good would refuse teachers raises during times of rampant inflation, look at closing wonderful programs for our children, and see severe cuts, unless they can drain money for a pet program that will damage our public school system. It's just very disturbing.

Jami Boslow

LEWISVILLE ISD

JUSTIN, TX

Right now, this state needs to worry about keeping educators because MANY are quitting due to LOW pay, increase in expectations, and lack of support from parents, administrators, and the state. This state needs to understand that educators should be making a six figure salary if they have been in the profession over 27 years, has a master's degree, and has several honors and accolades throughout the years. Instead, I don't even make \$80,000 a year, and that has forced me to have several other part time jobs to make up for the low salary, despite my years of experience. So, thank goodness I am able to retire after next year because that's exactly what I will be doing to get out of this profession. Someone up there in the Texas government had better start focusing on treating teachers and educators much better, or you won't have any soon! Just saying!

Beverly Avila

AFT

Mcallen, TX

An absolute NO to school vouchers. Children in the state of Texas deserve fully funded public schools. Those wishing to attend charters or private should be willing to pay for it. ANY school receiving ANY sort of public funding should follow equal policies, requirements, standards, etc. NO exceptions!!

Improve public school funding. NO education account savings plan/vouchers.

Gina Gelber

SBISD

Houston, TX

Fully fund our schools! Stop the push for school vouchers- the voters DO NOT support them. We want our public schools that serve the majority of Texas children funded-FULLY! Texas is sitting on a pile of money that could be used NOW to educate our children- they are our future. Texas law makers and GOV ABBOTT are FAILING Texas children!

SBISD is facing 35 million dollar shortfall- DO YOUR JOB and educate our kids. One of the wealthiest states that ranks the lowest in education. Fund our schools!

Rebecca Welch

Texas PTA/ Wylie ISD

Wylie, TX

Vouchers are HORRIBLE for Texas! They will destroy the Public School system. Our legislatures don't value the importance of education for all. So sad to see our schools literally under attack. I am all for parent choice, but not like this....taking money and support away from our public schools to give them to charter and private schools with no accountability and have the right to turn away any student with special needs. Disgusted that vouchers are even be discussed. Texas does NOT want vouchers!!!!!!

Zenobia C. Joseph, Educational Consultant/Policy Analyst

Self - A+ WRITERS Consulting

Austin, TX

1. Federal Law: “Title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., was enacted as part of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance” (USDOJ, 2017). HB 1 (Education Savings Account) has a disparate impact on Black students—jeopardizing the state’s Federal funding.

2. Discrimination: “Austin Is [the] Most Economically-Segregated Metro Area” (Florida & Mellander, 2015). It takes longer to get from Northeast Austin (HD 50) to Texas Capitol by bus than a drive to San Antonio—a fact Education Chair Brad Buckley ignored when announcing on or about 11:20AM that the kiosk would close at 1:00PM. After Vice Chair Barbara Gervin-Hawkins asked how best to reach African-American students who fail to read on grade level, I checked Capital Metro’s Trip Planner. Route 392W had: 32-min. wait; 10-min. ride to Braker/North Lamar; then 801S-MetroRapid transfer (45-min. ride). I arrived about 1:20PM, too late. HB 1 excludes transportation, but Austin’s inequitable bus system is real! It impossible to get to Texas Capitol or a westside “good school” in less than two hours. June 3, 2018 Cap Remap changed 52 routes. Planner Roberto Gonzalez unilaterally eliminated Northeast-west connectivity, forcing a 30-min. transfer. Blacks wait 60 min., 10 times longer than whites for the bus. Buckley threw fundamental fairness out the window though Speaker Dade Phelan said rules “rest on the timeless principles of good faith and fair dealing” (88th Texas House Rules of Procedure, 2023, p. ix).

3. Opposition/Research: Breaking Schools’ Rules longitudinal study of “nearly 1 million students” (Fabelo, 2011) found, “The great majority of African-American male students had at least one discretionary violation (83 percent),” compared to Hispanic males: 74% and white males: 59% (p. x), similar for females. HB 1 prioritizes students with Autism but is silent on discipline, ignoring data, and a principal’s authority to discriminate against minorities. Austin ISD’s discriminatory transfer policy specifies, “A parent and student who accepts a transfer shall agree to abide by the receiving school's standards for academic progress, attendance, discipline, and parental cooperation. The principal of the receiving school shall be authorized to deny or revoke the transfer if these conditions are not met ... in FDB(REGULATION).”

4. Solutions: Amend HB 1. a) Stop the school-to-prison pipeline: Prioritize students with a discretionary disciplinary history; b) Revamp teacher-education programs: Include social work-education dual degree: Require Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and culturally-relevant pedagogy; c) Include transportation vouchers (e.g., Uber); d) Appropriate incentive funds for former Title I educators with a proven track record to co-teach as consultant-coach; and e) Cross-reference Local Govt. Code, Ch. 252 (sole source professional services contract). Thanks! ~zcyj

Aaron Mayfield

Self

Dallas,, TX

Regarding HB 1, I am in support of SSLC information being given to parents of those with severely affected children with IDD. Parents have the right to get this information in their ARD meetings. Parents need the freedom to decide if their son or daughter should go into an SSLC. Now, because of the passage of SB 944, they don't have to wait. They can go directly to the court. Parents know best. Not state employees or state contractors. Thank you for taking my comments.

Ashley Smith

self/ Self/ Veteran/ Veterans Final Touch

killeen, TX

I was raised in Michigan and we were one of the first States to incorporate vouchers. The voucher program ruined many of the cities school districts as public funds were unconstitutional utilized to line private schools. Many of these schools are NO longer in existence, left our children in underfunded schools, and teachers were laid off due to the lack of resources. Texas has great school districts that deserve our support as constituents.

Lynn Jones, RN

Self

Talco, TX

Vote NO to use off education vouchers.

ENRICHING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS BEST FOR TEXAS!!!

Don't track our children to fail.....

Ashley Marshall

Self - Bunker Hill Elementary PTA member

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Simon White

Self

Houston, TX

For democrats: public education is a vital tool of equality, of creating an educated and successful generation. For republicans: cutting public education creates inequality that will ultimately result in increased poverty and a growing democrat voter base

SUZANNE ATCHESON

Self/High School Teacher

Lubbock, TX

The PEOPLE DO NOT WANT VOUCHERS! Vouchers are not a logical solution to anything. The proposed plan would not be available to many students across the state as distance makes access to private schools prohibitive. The plan doesn't offer enough financial assistance to provide for a private school education or take into account the need for transportation assistance to make private school attendance possible. The voucher plan will not magically make the existing schools systems any better! The vast majority of Texas students are served beautifully by the public school system. Why are we not pumping money into these schools? To these teachers? This is where the SURPLUS of money needs to go!! Not to private schools! Low, middle, and upper-class families are NOT calling for this type of support. Public schools are asking and begging for support. Where is the legislature? Teachers are asking and begging for support. Where is the legislature? The VOTERS are NOT asking for vouchers!!! Only the lobbyists and the governor want to make vouchers a reality. It is NOT what the voters want. It is not what the schools need. And it is NOT what our youngest Texans need!!! Elected officials need to listen to the PEOPLE! Fully fund the public school system! Pour money into these schools and watch how things improve! Pay teachers more and watch how things improve - or at least, watch how more folks stay in the profession and new folks join in better numbers! With some prudent forethought, it would behoove the legislature to make these fiscal changes to the current state of teacher pay sooner rather than later. Throwing vouchers out is not the enticement the governor wants to pretend it is. PLEASE, STOP THIS VOUCHER NONSENSE AND FUNNEL SUPPORT TO THE EXISTING SYSTEMS THAT ALREADY EDUCATE THE LARGE MAJORITY OF TEXAS STUDENTS!!! Say no to vouchers and increase teacher pay!!!!

Janet Brown

Self

Belton, TX

I am for HB 1 - especially for the establishment of an education savings account program for Texas families and their children.

Christina Coats-Gatz

self

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Martine Thomas

Retired TSTA

ARLINGTON, TX

Before you consider ANY amount of money to be used for private education you need to:

Adequately fund all the mandates that have been placed on public schools

Raise teacher pay to retain new teachers

Mandate private schools meet the same mandates, testing and standards required of public schools

Mandate private schools keep the student/s for the entire school year if they receive state money

An equal dollar amount should be contributed for each public school student

Annemarie Coats-Gatz

self

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Todd Epperson

self

Lewisville, TX

I only support fully funding Public Schools. I do not support Voucher of any kind.

Cindy Lo, Mrs.

RED VELVET | Strong Events

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Rebekkah Sandt

self, mother

houston, TX

Public money for public schools. We need to adequately fund children and teachers in public schools, there is NO ROOM for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Schools at Spring Branch ISD may close due to inadequate funding. Support the future of Texas with educating students. No to using public money for ESAs, I urge you to support public schools that will benefit ALL STUDENTS.

Gilbert Japko
self, retired
BRENHAM, TX

I am in favor of HB1 especially providing families with information on SSLC placement. There are some children with severe behaviors and extreme support needs that even parents and teachers cannot safely manage. A residential treatment facility is not the first educational choice that a school will recommend but it is the last resort to keep students safe from themselves and others. Some kids are being sent out of state and parents should know that staying in Texas is an option. A parent can decide if they want to pursue that option. Thank you

Jennifer Boynton
Self
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.”

Katherine Leano
self- homemaker
Houston, TX

Please leave all homeschoolers out of this. We don't want increased regulation, restrictions, division. It would also cause curriculums to cost more which would be burdensome to some parents and guardians.

Natalie Gunnell
Self
Houston, TX

I fully oppose state vouchers and implore the Texas government to work as a functioning body of elected officials to fully fund public schools!

Ravi Kummaraguntla
Self
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep public money in Public Schools

Debby Wolfensohn
Self, writer
Austin, TX

I urge you to please vote NO on vouchers. This is terrible & will be so damaging to the Public Schools so many of us depend on. Public schools are already underfunded! Keep Public money \$ in Public Schools! Please vote no on vouchers !

Tiffany Brantley
Self
Marble Falls, TX

As an educator, I fear for the public education system. Each year we are being mandated and told to do more with less. This Bill will widen the economic gap between public and private schools. I ask instead for a bill with more public school funding, reduced testing, and opposition to vouchers.

Carolyn Ross

Self/ Retired Teacher/Administrator, Plainview ISD

Plainview, TX

Please vote NO on HB 1.

All available state funds should be used for our public schools that serve all kids, that need \$1,000 more in the basic allotment just to catch up to inflation.

As a conservative, Christian voter, I oppose using PUBLIC funds for private schools.

This robs our public schools of much needed financing.

Thank you for OPPOSING HB 1.

Sherri Thompson

self

Millsap, TX

Do NOT use our public taxes for school vouchers and help destroy our public schools here in Texas. We need all funds going to our schools. If someone wants their child to go to a private or charter school, let them pull themselves up by their bootstraps and pay for it themselves.

Julie Brown

Trinity Christian Academy

Addison, TX

I support of HB1. As both the parent of children who were able to receive a private school education and as an employee of the same school, I am able to see first hand the academic, relational, spiritual and developmental benefits of this educational experience. Our low student-teacher ratio in each classroom, particularly in our Lower School (Pre-K to 4th) as well as having a teacher and teaching assistant in each Lower School classroom, allows students to receive exceptional individualized guidance when needed. The curriculum our young students are receiving and then continue to receive through Middle School and in our college preparatory Upper School, prepare them for the steep challenges ahead in the collegiate world. With 100% of our graduates attending college, for some of our socio-economic challenged families, their child represents the first family member to be able to go to college. This fact can change the trajectory of families and neighborhoods for the better for generations to come. We currently provide over \$1.5 million for student tuition aid to help families who could not otherwise afford this education; however, we turn away many families because we do not have enough student tuition aid to assist them. Passing HB1 would allow us the opportunity to help these students receive an excellent education that can in turn propel them for success in college. Thank you.

FRANKIE PARKER

Self

AUSTIN, TX

Keep Public Dollars in Public Schools.

Sherry Jones

Self

Fort Worth, TX

I do NOT support this or any other type of funding or vouchers that allows public school tax \$\$\$ to be used for payment to private schools. My public tax dollars are for public schools ONLY. Vote NO

Paige Hoes

Self

Melissa, TX

Continuing to hold public education hostage by tying every proposed bill to ESAs is criminal. In no way, shape, or form will I support vouchers, and my future votes will be solely dependent on how legislators handle the funding of public education moving forward. If vouchers are so highly favored (they're not), then let them stand alone so they can pass or fail on their own merit. Allow funding public education to stand alone and allow it to pass or fail on its own merit. The games being played with the livelihood of children and teachers is appalling, and I am disgusted by those who don't have the common sense or decency to do what is RIGHT.

Sarah Ramirez, Mrs.

self/director of special education

Plainview, TX

I am commenting today to express the frustration felt by so many in public education. Our students in special education are short-changed repeatedly, and this bill does it, yet again. This bill holds funding hostage. Special education is already underfunded, taxing the general funds of school districts, demanding schools become more and more "creative" in order to meet student needs. The approach of holding this funding out as a carrot to get "savings account" programs passed is unconscionable. There is no justification for this move, other than to line the pockets of others. Do what is best for kids, especially our kids in special education, and pay teachers and paraprofessionals what they deserve, fund special education like it should be funded, support public education, reading instruction, early childhood education.

Lizdelia Pinon, Dr.

Self/ educator

Crowley, TX

Subject: Petition to Oppose HB1: Protecting Access to Education for Special Needs Students

Dear House Committee Members,

I am writing to express my deep concern and opposition to House Bill 1 (HB1), which seeks to implement a voucher system for education. As a mother of four special needs students, I have personally faced numerous challenges when trying to enroll my children in private schools, including special needs schools in Fort Worth including special needs lab schools for special needs students at TCU and several catholic and fine arts schools.

The current system has left me disheartened and frustrated, as my children have been denied admission to these schools solely based on their individual needs. For instance, one of my children is in a wheelchair, while another relies on a feeding tube for nutrition. Many schools have provided no explanation for their refusal, simply stating that they are unable to adequately care for them.

It is crucial to remember the importance of maintaining the separation between church and school. While private schools may have their own unique missions and values, it is vital that they do not discriminate against special needs students or any other marginalized group. Every child deserves equal access to quality education, regardless of their abilities or conditions.

Instead of implementing a voucher system, I urge you to focus on improving the inclusive practices in both public and private schools. Adequately FUND public schools!! This can be achieved by ensuring that schools are adequately equipped and trained to cater to the diverse needs of special needs students. By investing in resources, training, and support for educators, we can create an educational environment that embraces and celebrates the unique abilities of all students.

I kindly request that you carefully consider the concerns raised by parents like myself and reject House Bill 1. Let us work together to foster a more inclusive education system that provides equal opportunities for all children, including those with special needs.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lizdelia Pinon

Beth Rindfuss

public school parent

austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Katherine Sells, Mrs

Myself

Lewisville, TX

I am opposed to this Bill, especially when it pertains to Educational Savings Accounts. Please fully fund the public education system that you are required to fund by our constitution before diverting funds to systems with no plan for accountability. Accountability by expunging from the program after 2 years of testing failures will only put more responsibility on the public schools who can not say no to those wanting to re-enroll. Will you fund current public schools for remediation for those students when they return and will you allow TEA to count those students in the ratings of a school district once students have returned who are not on grade level. Please do the right thing and fund our public schools fully before opening the door into a third system.

Phong Phan
Individually and Family
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public Monies in Public Schools. If this passes, we will remember you and this will be your legacy.

Martine Thomas
Arlington Retired School Employees Association
ARLINGTON, TX

Before you consider ANY amount of money to be used for private education you need to:
Adequately fund all the mandates that have been placed on public schools
Raise teacher pay to retain new teachers
Mandate private schools meet the same mandates, testing and standards required of public schools
Mandate private schools keep the student/s for the entire school year if they receive state money
An equal dollar amount should be contributed for each public school student

Orpha Berry
Myself
Midland, TX

Please vote no! Government runs what it funds. Expansion of government in private institutions is not the answer. Fix public schools and do away with so much bureaucracy!

Jenny Davila
self
AUSTIN, TX

“Vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. We need the money for our amazing teachers, staff, and installations. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.”

Linda Litzinger
Texas Parent to Parent - Public Policy Specialist, and self (public policy)
Austin, TX

Remove the SSLC notice from the bill, please. It would be rude to tell a student about an SSLC as they attend their own IEP meeting, when they could have had better options if they'd had access to the CLASS or HCS waiver that they have waited their lifetime for. They're sitting there knowing they're still 50,000 slots away from getting their waiver, and you're telling them about institutions? Mastering Chaucer, photosynthesis and algebra, all for an institution?
Thank you

Amanda Covo
Self
Texas, TX

Every child deserves access to educational choices that best meet their unique needs. Please stand with parents and pass HB 1. Millions of school children are depending on you. Thank you so much for your service to our state and for unleashing opportunities for our children.

Holly Cox
Day nursery of abilene
Tuscola, TX

As a Board member for a nonprofit early childhood program, I ask that HB 1 include Pre-K!

Heather Schmitt

Self/Parent

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Diana Hubbard

Self

AUSTIN, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public money in Public Schools. It is shameful what it's happening and that adults are hell bent is destroying education for future generations. Stop it! Say NO to vouchers

Li Huang

Self

Austin, TX

Public education is the backbone of our community. I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Emily Hayes

Self

Austin, TX

I implore you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our already severely underfunded TX Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools, and put your efforts toward making Texas public schools the best they can be.

Angelica Giuffre

Self

Austin, TX

I am a huge proponent of Texas Public Schools. Our local Blazier Elementary, where my son attends 5th grade, is outstanding and high achieving. Please don't defund public schools by voting for vouchers. Please vote NO on HB 1.

Rebecca Scott

Self, retired public educator

Killeen, TX

As a retired public educator and registered voter, I cannot in anyway support vouchers for students using public funds for private schools. The use of vouchers (in whatever form) can only be seen as a way to "defund" public schools and erode the quality of education in Texas.

Shonda Cannon, Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Denison ISD

Denison, TX

I vehemently oppose this legislation. I urge the Texas House to continue to hold the line against vouchers. Do not allow Governor Abbott to bully you. Texas teachers will have the backs of those who take a stand opposing this legislation and take the important step to fully fund Texas public schools who accept the challenge of educating ALL students.

Coretta Graham, Lawyer

Self

Corpus Christi, TX

Dear Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition to House Bill 1, the school voucher bill. I believe that this bill would harm public education in Texas and would disproportionately impact low-income and minority students.

My specific concerns about House Bill 1 are as follows:

The bill would divert PUBLIC funding away from public schools. Public schools in Texas are already underfunded, and House Bill 1 would only make this problem worse.

The bill would create a two-tiered education system. Vouchers would allow wealthy families to send their children to private schools with Public TAXPAYER MONEY, while low-income families would be forced to send their children to underfunded public schools. Its STEALING!

The bill would undermine accountability. Private schools are not subject to the same accountability standards as public schools. This means that parents would have less assurance that their children are receiving a quality education at a private school.

I urge you to vote against House Bill 1. This bill is bad for public education in Texas.

Sincerely,

Coretta Graham

Gray Ginther

Self

Austin, TX

I oppose this and any legislation that diverts funds from public education into private schools in the form of vouchers or education savings accounts. No public funds for private education.

Christie Slape

self

Round Rock, TX

A 3rd grade boy diagnosed with ADHD grew up to be a restless 11th grader who struggled to stay engaged in traditional public school. He came home from high school one day and told his parents he could not take another day of public school. He felt as though his entire day was wasted spending 7-8 hours in school with too little instruction and too much "free time". He was, and still is a kinesthetic learner who needed an opportunity to learn differently and work with his hands. He wanted to finish high school quickly and follow his dream of working for the railroad. He did his own research and presented to his parents his well-thought-out plan to get his high school diploma through a self-paced, accredited private online high school. His parents were public K-12 and public college graduates and had always planned for their 4 children to be educated in public schools. The decision to withdraw this bright and active young man from his public high school was a difficult one, but his parents quickly learned that this was the best decision they could have made for their son. He excelled at online learning, without less distractions of a traditional classroom. He finished high school a year early, and is currently a 21-year-old conductor for Union Pacific Railroad. His father and I are filled with joy on the occasion that our son comes through our home town, waving to us from the window of his locomotive.

I am in favor of Educational Savings Accounts because they provide hope and a pathway for children to succeed academically. Our son's alternative education in 2019 would not have been possible if our family had not been able to pay \$900 out of pocket for the courses he needed. In today's economy, that \$900 is much harder to come by. We did not need \$10,000 or \$5,000, only \$900. That \$900 could be the difference between a teenager dropping out of high school or graduating from high school.

There is an assumption by those in opposition to ESAs that every child benefitting from an ESA will utilize the full dollar amount. Our story is a reminder that the ESA funds could go a lot further than anticipated and help more children succeed.

Stephanie Ellis
Self
San Antonio, TX
Vote No

Sonja Pace
Texas AFT
Dallas, TX

Please say NO to vouchers because they will hurt Public Education. As a retired teacher who taught in Public School, funding is needed to help Public School students. I graduated from a Public School like Gov. Abbott. I graduated from Dallas ISD while he graduated from Duncanville ISD. Those Public Schools were vital in my learning success.

Hayley Davis
Spring Branch ISD/parent
Houston, TX
For our kids. All of them.

Elizabeth Lozier
Self
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Katherine Higgins
Frisco ISD
Frisco, TX

Please consider separating the education savings account program from the rest of the public school funding.

Kathy Stokan
Self / Frostwood Elementary
Jersey Village, TX

Please support support our public school where the majority of students attend and say no to vouchers. Thank you

Marisa Ladd
Self
Austin, TX

Please vote NO on vouchers. This will hurt our severely underfunded public schools. Keep public money in public schools.

Lindsey Bianchin
Teacher
Plano, TX

Please FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS! I'm a Special Education Teacher and I have triple the behavior students. There isn't enough money to add more paras or support. The cost of living is so high, but I can barely pay my own bills now. Teachers need less students and higher wages

Randy Broussard

Self

Belton, TX

No vouchers

Alma Silva

Self

Corpus Christi, TX

I am writing to show that I am Against HB1. I truly believe the future of the state will be negatively affected if public funding that is to go to public schools is sent to private hands.

The strength of not only our state but of our country depends on a strong, educated workforce and limiting the funding that goes to public schools where the greater majority of students attend will have a long term effect on our society. Public schools are already struggling with the lack of support the state has shown them under Abbott and Morath. Public education needs to be protected. Say no to HB1 and any other bill trying to take away public school funding.

Monica Gonzalez

Self

Austin, TX

I strongly encourage you to vote against vouchers, as they have the potential to detrimentally impact our already underfunded public schools. Let's ensure that public funds remain invested in our public education system.

Amy Dodson

self

Cisco, TX

While some of this bill would be helpful and is appreciated, I must oppose it. Regarding school funding: please make an immediate, sustained and significant increase to the Basic Allotment. The myriad of allotments already in place and in this bill are restrictive to schools. Add to the BA and allow local districts to make financial and programmatic decisions best for their community and their students. The BA is also the BEST way to give teachers and other a pay raise.

The accountability changes are greatly appreciated, and I absolutely support that portion of HB 1. Sadly that support must be set aside because voucher have been tied to it.

The real problem with HB1 is the voucher. This behemoth is fiscally irresponsible. Just a decade ago the State was billions in debt; times and fortunes can turn quickly. Pulling money away from public ed that serves 90% of our state's children, and let's be honest about the real/profound impact that creating yet another money stream for a voucher would do to local public ed, is not a faithful stewardship of public resources. Idaho recently rejected a voucher push because giving state tax dollars to private schools who have zero fiscal accountability/transparency was not a conservative action.

I am a lifelong Republican. I am a staunch fiscal conservative. Vouchers are NOT in ANY way fiscally conservative. Period...full stop.

Please reject HB1, even the things schools desperately need. Tell our Governor that you will not be bullied into this; this is not even a policy point that he has cared about until the last year. Stop this nonsense and please get to real legislating to take care of our public schools.

The cornerstone of communities across Texas are our local schools. This last 11 months has been damaging and needs to be rectified. Reinforce the Texas constitution and support the well funded, supported system of free public schools. Do not allow the voucher scheme to siphon off money that is needed to ensure the viability of Texas long-term as an economic leader in the world. Support the workforce creator that is public ed.

Daniel Miller
self
Amarillo, TX

Texas public school teachers and staff need pay raises so that Texas schools can compete with qualified teachers in others states and so teachers do not have to work multiple jobs just to make ends meet. Please prioritize funding for public schools and public school students over vouchers. Texas doesn't need vouchers that take money away from public schools in order to prop up private schools that don't have the same rigorous accountability. Thank you.

William Roy
self - software
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Zenobia C. Joseph, Educational Consultant/Policy Analyst
Self - A+ WRITERS Consulting
Austin, TX

1. Federal Law: “Title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., was enacted as part of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance” (USDOJ, 2017). HB 1 Education Savings Account has a disparate impact on Black students—jeopardizing the state’s Federal funding.
2. Discrimination: “Austin Is [the] Most Economically Segregated Metro Area” (Florida & Mellander, 2015). It takes longer to get from Northeast Austin (HD 50) to Texas Capitol by bus than a drive to San Antonio—a fact Education Chair Brad Buckley ignored when announcing on or about 11:20AM that the kiosk would close at 1PM. After Vice Chair Barbara Gervin-Hawkins asked how best to reach African-American students who fail to read on grade level, I checked Capital Metro’s Trip Planner. Route 392W had: 32-min. wait; 10-min. ride to Braker/North Lamar; then 801S-MetroRapid transfer (45-min. ride). I arrived about 1:20PM, too late. HB 1 excludes transportation, but Austin’s inequitable bus system is real! It’s impossible to get to Texas Capitol or a westside “good school” in less than two hours. June 3, 2018 Cap Remap changed 52 routes. Planner Roberto Gonzalez unilaterally eliminated Northeast-west connectivity, forcing a 30-min. transfer. Blacks wait 60 min., 10 times longer than whites for the bus. Buckley threw fundamental fairness out the window though Speaker Dade Phelan said rules “rest on the timeless principles of good faith and fair dealing” (88th Texas House Rules of Procedure, 2023, p. ix).
3. Opposition/Research: Breaking Schools’ Rules longitudinal study of “nearly 1 million students” (Fabelo, 2011) found, “The great majority of African-American male students had at least one discretionary violation (83 percent)” compared to Hispanic males: 74% and white males: 59% (p. x), similar for females. HB 1 prioritizes students with Autism but is silent on discipline, ignoring data, and a principal’s authority to discriminate against minorities. Austin ISD’s discriminatory transfer policy specifies, “A parent and student who accepts a transfer shall agree to abide by the receiving school's standards for academic progress, attendance, discipline, and parental cooperation. The principal of the receiving school shall be authorized to deny or revoke the transfer if these conditions are not met ... in FDB(REGULATION).”
4. Solutions: Amend HB 1. a) Stop the school-to-prison pipeline: Prioritize students with a discretionary disciplinary history; b) Revamp teacher-education programs: Include social work-education dual degree: Require Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and culturally-relevant pedagogy; c) Include transportation vouchers (e.g., Uber); d) Appropriate incentive funds for former Title I educators with a proven track record to co-teach as consultant-coach(es); and e) Cross-reference Local Govt. Code, Ch. 252 (sole source professional services contract). Thanks! ~zsj

Stacy Smith

Self

The Woodlands, TX

I do not support educational savings vouchers for Texas and neither does anyone else in family support this.

Private schools have no accountability to what they teach, who they teach, how well they teach, and how they will spend the money given to them. It's a recipe for disaster! Other states have seen this cost grow exponentially to become a huge liability to tax payers.

I do not support giving public money to private christian schools, muslim madrassas, hebrew educationcenters, Hindi schools, which will segregate our children based in religion.

Texas is currently under funding public schools. We shouldn't be spending public money on private schools when we are failing public education in this state as mandated by it's constitution!

Kerry Turner, Mrs

Self

North Richland Hills, TX

I am a teacher of Special Ed in Title 1 school and parent of a child with disabilities. I OPPOSE vouchers because they will not help the kids who need accommodations and modifications. Students who depend on transportation will be left out. This bill will take the high performers away from lower schools and leave them more needy of good inclusion practices as well as blending off performance levels. The divide will deepen with vouchers. We need to find a way to boost the low schools not pull out the best from them. No to HB 1!

Help teachers who work in title 1 and Special Ed instead

Connie Gooding

Self retired

Hutto, TX

Using taxpayer money to partially fund enrollment in private schools should be seen as a bill to only give a rebate to those who can afford tuition on their own.

Accountability should be demanded of all alternative education providers. Mandated testing and mandatory attendance would be great places to start. Don't demand of one what you won't demand of the other.

Kyle Harris

Self - IT

Denison, TX

State funds should not be paid to private schools, full stop. Public schools, the lifeblood of the state and the nation, are underfunded. Holding state funding for public schools hostage until the passage of vouchers by any name is immoral and will not be tolerated when voting season rolls around. Hold the line. Do the right thing.

Christine Englund

Public School Educator and BHE PTA member

Houston, TX

Tax dollars need to be used to fully fund public schools before we can even think about giving money to private schools. NO vouchers and NO to ESAs! We need your full support in saying yes to fully funding public education to ensure a high quality education for ALL students. YES to teacher pay raises! Yes to CTE funding!!

Andru Gilbert, Dr.

Self

Denison, TX

Our public schools and public school employees deserve and have earned respect from our elected officials. By continuing to connect pay raises for those who educate our future to vouchers, our legislature shows they are more interested in being loyal to campaign donors from outside Texas instead of their constituents. Our teachers kept our schools going during the crisis of Covid and we repay them by making them the only state employee group to not see a raise during this session. Our students, schools, and teachers deserve much more from those who are supposed to be leaders in our state. Do the right thing and fund our public schools that serve over 5 million students.

Kyle Uber

Self- Educator

Denison, TX

I strongly oppose this proposed bill. You need to fully fund public education, and not take away from public education. Education Savings Accounts will destroy education Texas!

Elizabeth Bomba

self

Austin, TX

I am writing in opposition to HB 1. It is inappropriate to consider funding a voucher program when our public school students, our teachers, and our schools are inadequately funded. If you would like to improve outcomes for students, you could fully fund public education by increasing the basic allotment and tie it to COLA, provide teachers long-overdue raises, and fully fund early childhood and special education. I support policies and policymakers who ensure that all Texas children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. We simply can't afford to continue underfunding public education and we certainly can't afford a voucher system.

Jacob Gonzalez, Mr.

Self - Client Services Account Mgr

Godley, TX

I am very much AGAINST this bill!

- NO Vouchers
- Our lawmakers and politicians need to fix government education.
- Stop spending, stop unfunded and stop mandates
- Repeal BILLS stop writing them
- Stop wasting tax payer money by calling special session for something only the Governor wants. We don't want the strings attached voucher money!
- Stop growing the failed TEA

Megan Perkins

Self, IT Manager

Katy, TX

Keep public dollars in our public schools. We do not support school vouchers. One reason we moved to Texas from Louisiana was for the public education for our kids. Public schools need to be invested in, not diluted through a voucher program that enables private schools to pick their students. All children in Texas deserve an education, and the more educated a populace, the more successful.

Jim Baxa
Self
Lubbock, TX

I'm opposed to this liberal bill because it spends too much and it requires testing for those using vouchers. Part of why private schools are better than socialized schools is because they don't have to teach for the test

Jill Fisher
Public Educator, PTAs
Highland Village, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

Add how vouchers and inadequate funding will impact your campus, district, and community. Will schools close, student-teacher ratios increase? Yes! Say no to vouchers and yes to fully funding public schools.

Lindsay Rose-Arellano
Self Pre-K Teacher
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. Vouchers will deprive our public schools of much needed resources. Our schools are currently severely underfunded and this will only make it worse. Please Keep Public money in Public Schools.

Ana Lopez
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I believe hb1 weakens the public schools to the benefit of private institutions that are not held to the same rigors. This legislature demands so much of the teachers and administrators in the public school system and then turns around and abandons them. Support public schools. Support the teachers in the system. Stop undermining the system that is meant to serve the greatest public good. Thank you.

Larry Rickel
Self
Hutto, TX

I strongly oppose HB1. Fully fund our public schools & give our teachers a raise. No more special sessions to the tune of \$3 million taxpayers money. Texans both republican & democrat have made it clear to their respective representatives that they don't want ESA's. Enough!!!

Lalena Fisher
self
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on this irresponsible school voucher plan. It would ultimately hurt our severely underfunded public schools, and is vulnerable to rampant abuse. Keep public (tax) money invested in public schools where it belongs. Thank you.

Martinez Selena
Self
PFLUGERVILLE, TX

Vote no to private school vouchers. Public dollars belong in public schools. We need to maintain separation of church and state.

Carol Peralta

Self

Austin, TX

Just stop this!! I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. You are killing public education and hurting our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Josh Wilson, Lord

self

austin, TX

“I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.”

Rafael Gonzalez

Self. Systems engineer

Austin, TX

We do not want voucher programs!!

Lindsey Wineholt

Self - speech-language pathologist

Austin, TX

Please vote no on HB 1. As a speech-language pathologist and the spouse of a public educator, I urge you to invest in our public schools to provide equitable educational opportunities for all Texas children, regardless of their background. Our public schools do so much for our kids, and this voucher program would divert valuable resources from those schools. I urge you, please vote no on HB 1. Thank you.

Susan Buck

Self

Austin, TX

I am against vouchers. I do not want us to be taking money away from the public school system.

Thais Kilday

self, parent and social worker

Austin, TX

Please vote NO on school vouchers. Our public money belongs in our public schools, helping ALL of our students.

Erin Chow

Self

Houston, TX

Vouchers hurt children! Until you have adequately funded children and teachers in public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing is more fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools. Vouchers will take away my child's access to special programs (gifted talented) and access to preschools

Paige Young Cannon

self, Montessori teacher

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers!! This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Jennifer Kruppa
PTA - Valley Oaks Elementary
Houston, TX

Vouchers will destroy the public school system in Texas. As long as our public schools are not properly funded, vouchers should remain off the table.. It is wrong to drain funds from public education and send those to private schools that have zero accountability to parents, students or lawmakers. My daughter receives dyslexia services at her neighborhood school. If she was in private school, I would have to personally fund those, because private schools are not required by law to provide the special services needed by students with disabilities. My daughter receives an outstanding education in Spring Branch ISD. I have no doubt that it is better than any private school education we could find for her in the city of Houston. However, the district will be forced to cut key programs and resources next year, to the detriment of all students, if they do not receive adequate funding. No money for vouchers until there is an increase of \$1,000 per child to the basic allotment!

Mara Kemp
Self / retired teacher
Fulshear, TX
Vote NO to vouchers

Diana Sharp
CCDP
New Braunfels, TX

I oppose HB 1 & the voucher system and Governor Abbott wasting taxpayer money with a 4th Special Session.

Elizabeth Cole
Self
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Anya Hidalgo
self - Sr Finance Manager
Plano, TX

I am supporting the Parental Choice in Education. The parents should have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options.

Kristen Foster
Self- parent/ marketing manager
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools. "Parental choice" is no choice when you deliberately starve public education.

Gaston Hidalgo
self - Engineer
Plano, TX

I support the Parental Choice for Education. The parents should have the right and responsibility to determine the best education for their children and the government should cooperate with parents in providing that education, including funding non-public options.

Diane Podhrasky
self.- retired teacher
Dallas, TX

The real intent of this bill is to underfund and undermine our local public schools. Giving affluent families a \$10,500 voucher to subsidize unaccountable private schools is a violation of the Texas constitution, and the bill's overall impact will decrease much needed funding for currently cash-strapped public schools. Most Texans oppose voucher scams such as House Bill 1. Opinion polls taken in Texas have shown that.

Dalia Seidner, Ms.
Self
AUSTIN, TX

I'd like to express my opposition to private school vouchers and HB 1 .

Ellie Andrew, Ms.
Homeschool Association of the Lone Star State
Round Rock, TX

I'm completely opposed to spending government money on private education, including private homeschooling, especially with the level of control and accountability that will be levied on the private homeschoolers. Keep your money; let private homeschoolers keep their freedom. As far as the "school safety fund," that just sounds like a black hole that will suck my tax dollars away with nothing to show for it.

Amy Gatlin
Self
Allen, TX

Please vote NO on vouchers. Please FUND our schools and pay our teachers.
How many times does Abbott need to be told no. Public funds for public schools. Private schools don't have to accept or keep students. Please do what is best for ALL students in Texas.

Rhae Hardin
Self, teacher
Houston, TX

Dear Rep. Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,
I'm writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session. Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much-needed funds to go toward a voucher scheme. Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept. Let's work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement — not vouchers. We appreciate the support the committee has shown so far for public education and the over 5 million Texas public school students.

Lance Hansen
Self, PA-C and PTA member at Bunker Hill Elementary
Houston, TX

Every minute that the state government wastes considering vouchers is an injury to the thousands of public school students and teachers who actually deserve our support. Do not drag our children into this senseless culture war. The productivity and self-reliance upon which Texas prides itself depends on an educated populace. Adequate public school funding—not vouchers—will be the rising tide that lifts all boats.

Kay Klumpp

Myself

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote against HB one. I've been an educator for 25 years and this bill will weaken public schools. Our society at its core should provide a solid education for every student. This bill will divert funds from public schools that are already severely struggling to meet the demands to support our children. Private schools do not have the mandate to educate every child. This would lead to iMessage vulnerable children not getting the education and services they need which will lead to a need for greater supports throughout their lives. I will also strip funding from public schools in rural areas without sufficient alternate options.

Parul Desai, Dr

Self, physician

Austin, TX

Please vote NO on this bill. Our public schools do not get to cherry pick which students attend and are asked to provide any and all services for an array of needs. We are already severely underfunded; private vouchers will end up gutting the funding for public schools. Our democracy rests on access to good and free public schools. Please focus your energies on improving class sizes in schools and funding existing public school more fully.

J Lander

Self, Public School Administrator

Bryan, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed legislation that would create education savings accounts (ESAs) for private school tuition in Texas. I believe that this policy is harmful to public schools and their funding, as well as to the principle of separation of church and state. First, ESAs would divert public funds away from public schools, which are already underfunded and struggling to provide quality education for all students. According to the Texas Education Agency, the average per-pupil expenditure in Texas public schools was \$9,375 in 2020-21, which ranked 43rd in the nation. Second, ESAs would violate the constitutional principle of separation of church and state, which prohibits the government from endorsing or supporting any particular religion. Many private schools in Texas are affiliated with religious denominations, and they are not subject to the same academic standards and accountability measures as public schools. By allowing public funds to be used for private school tuition, the state would effectively subsidize religious education and indoctrination, which is contrary to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the Texas Constitution. Therefore, I urge you to reject the proposed legislation that would create ESAs for private school tuition in Texas. This policy would harm public schools and their funding, as well as undermine the secular nature of our government and society. Instead, I urge you to invest more in public education, which is the cornerstone of our democracy and the best way to ensure equal opportunity and social mobility for all Texans.

Emma Anderson

Self

Austin, TX

I am Opposed to private school vouchers... it's only going to hurt our public schools in the long run.

Paul Cardarella

Self

Denton, TX

My daughter, who was in Special Education, was never advised (that is, my wife and I) were never notified of the existence of the SSLCs in our ARD meetings. My child is non-verbal, non-ambulatory tube fed and mentally challenged... an obvious candidate for the SSLCs which is where she now resides. It would have saved our family a great deal of anguish and consternation had we been made aware of this option. After a great deal of trying to navigate the state options we ultimately discovered the SSLCs. It is quite unforgivable we were not advised at the most obvious point in our process.

Stephanie Clayton

Self, construction photographer

Austin, TX

Please vote NO on school vouchers. Tax money should be reserved for public use, not private endeavors. We need to be focused on investing in our public schools to keep Texas strong well into the future. Siphoning off more \$\$\$ for vouchers is not only short-sighted and detrimental, but also deeply unpopular. It's not what we Texans want.

Natasha Moser

Self

Farmers Branch, TX

Frankly I'm shocked that a House rep with trys to a Texas public school district would sponsor a bill that so blatantly handcuffs public school districts especially the poorer ones. Sir if you are truly from rural Texas you would not support this bill that includes vouchers when there are absolutely NO private schools in rural Texas and these school districts are already suffering from lack of funding. Shame on you.

Kathryn Tipton

Self and Valley Oaks Elementary PTA Member

Houston, TX

Vouchers will hurt my child!! Until you have adequately funded children and teacher sin public schools, there is no room for ESAs or Vouchers. I believe nothing i smore fundamental to making every child's potential a reality than strong public schools. I support policies and policymakers who ensure all children have access to high-quality, adequately funded, and appropriately regulated public schools.

My child wants to go to Cornerstone Academy or Westchester Academy. Without funding, these schools will close. All the children in these schools will be pushed out. My child will not have a good school to attend and we will be struggling. Even if school vouchers existed, there would be NO private schools that my child could get into or that I could afford at this time!! PLEASE FUND our schools!

Rochelle Ran

Self, teacher

Garland, TX

I am vehemently opposed to voucher programs. In particular, I am concerned about proposals to use special education grant funding beyond special education, which is already notoriously underfunded. In addition, unspent funds should roll over. Do better by Texas education and take care of those most vulnerable students rather than leaving them by the wayside.

Garrett Jackson, Dr.

Public Education

Melissa, TX

School funding and vouchers should be heard and voted on separately. Holding one hostage for the other is nothing but political gamesmanship. Let them stand alone and live or die based on their own merits.

Catherine Peralta

Self

Austin, TX

Stop trying to hurt our public schools with this ridiculous legislation. It's already pathetic to see how little support the state of Texas gives it's public school system.

Kennard Rydolph, Mr.

Self

Pflugerville, TX

I sent both of my children to private school. It cost me about \$140,000 for both of them. My wife and I sacrificed many material things. I write this from what I believe is a big picture perspective. I do not want my public dollars paying for private schools. I want all of my education tax dollars to go towards public education. Teacher raises, smaller class size, adequate facilities, and mental health support.

Rebekah Rivisto

self

Belton, TX

As a homeschool mom and homeowner. I would like the funds we oat to be used as we choose. I pick school choice as an important need for our children and families.

JOCABED HOUSLEY, MS.

SELF- FROSTWOOD ELEMENTARY PTA MEMBER

Houston, TX

The detrimental impact of vouchers on children's education cannot be overlooked. It is my firm belief that, before considering the implementation of Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) or vouchers, we must prioritize sufficient funding for both students and educators in our public schools. In my view, nothing is more foundational to unlocking the full potential of every child than the establishment and sustenance of robust public school systems. I wholeheartedly endorse policies and policymakers who are committed to guaranteeing that every child has access to public schools of the highest quality, adequately funded, and subject to appropriate regulation. Strong public schools are not just places of learning but also essential pillars of thriving communities. The vitality and future prospects of our towns and cities are closely tied to the strength and accessibility of quality public education.

Mary C Smith, Sr.

Self

San Antonio, TX

Very good

Cindy Helf, Mrs.

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Do not pass this bill. It does not adequately fund public schools and school vouchers are not a good fit for TX.

Anthony Rivisto

Self

Belton, TX

Thank you

Bethanie Wilwayco

Self

Austin, TX

Please vote no on HB1, thank you

Angie Morgan

Self

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on vouchers. This will ultimately hurt our severely underfunded Public Schools. Keep Public \$\$\$ in Public Schools.

Korren Pugh

Self

Houston, TX

Dear Rep. Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,

I'm writing to ask you to support public schools during this special session. Our public schools need a boost in funding to address important issues like teacher shortages, school safety, and rising costs due to inflation. I urge you to focus on supporting our teachers and kids rather than diverting much-needed funds to go toward a voucher scheme. Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers and that get to choose the students they accept. Let's work together to strengthen our public schools by focusing on important issues like teacher shortages and student achievement — not vouchers. We appreciate the support the committee has shown so far for public education and the over 5 million Texas public school students.

Jennifer Roach

Self - Public Educator and School Board Vice President

Crosby, TX

I just wanted to take a moment to say THANK YOU for opposing vouchers. I am a product of public education, the parent of two sons who benefited from public education, and a veteran educator of 21 years. Additionally, I'm the vice president of our school board.

I've worked in urban, suburban, and rural public schools and one thing rings true in each. Educators are doing the work necessary to support students socially, emotionally, and academically. Your support is appreciated.

I may not be one of your constituents, but the work you do impacts 5.5 million children, and it matters. So THANK YOU for standing strong AGAINST vouchers!

Leigh Northcutt-Benson

Self/Public educator

Austin, TX

We do not want vouchers and see this as a clear attempt to weaken our public school system. This is not the will of the majority. Stop it.