

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Educational Opportunity & Enrichment, Select
For Hearing Dates: Tuesday, July 11, 2023 10:00 AM and Wednesday, July 12, 2023 9:00 AM
Compiled on: July 19, 2023 8:58 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.

COMMENTS FOR Educational opportunity & freedom to obtain a quality education

Chloe Latham Sikes, Dr.
IDRA (Intercultural Development Research Association)
San Antonio, TX

Dear Chair Buckley and Members of the Committee:

IDRA is an independent, non-partisan non-profit that for the past 50 years has committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

Through working with educators, parents and students, and policymakers, IDRA has developed a framework for students' educational equity and success. Equal educational opportunity for all Texas students can be achieved through five fundamental aspects of quality schools (see IDRA Quality Schools Action Framework):

- 1) Healthy school districts that support students to thrive;
- 2) Fair funding of school operations, educators, programs and facilities;
- 3) Race and gender equity in school policies and practices;
- 4) Strong and representative governance and policymaking; and,
- 5) Supportive school leadership.

These fundamentals of quality schools translate into key policy recommendations for the Select Committee:

- Fully and fairly fund public schools. The Committee should raise the basic allotment by a minimum of \$1,000, incorporate an inflation adjustment factor in the school funding formula, and increase targeted investments for students requiring additional educational services in bilingual education, special education, and compensatory services. Relatedly, investments in public education should be kept in public schools to realize the return on investment. No public funds should be diverted to private school voucher programs.
- Support authentic family and student engagement. Policies should ensure that schools are transparent and accountable to families and students in their services, in decision-making processes, and in their data and outcomes reporting.
- Implement safe and welcoming school practices. Students are safest and most able to learn in an inclusive and supportive educational environment. This means they have strong relationships with trusted adults, are not pushed out of school through discipline or discouragement, receive behavioral and mental health supports, and are free from violence in any form in schools (see Craven, 2022).
- Ensure high-quality academics through teaching quality and rigorous curriculum. Teachers should be certified, trained to educate students from diverse backgrounds, and supported to engage students and their families. Rigorous curriculum should reflect learning standards and affirm students' racial, ethnic, and gender identities to engage and inspire them.

Thank you for your consideration. See these resources for more information:

Craven, M. (2022). What Safe Schools Should Look Like for Every Student. IDRA, Issue Brief, <https://idra.news/SafeSchoolsIB>.
IDRA (2020). Quality Schools Action Framework. <https://www.idra.org/change-model/quality-schools-action-framework/>.
IDRA (2020). Infographic – Quality Schools Action Framework for Educational Equity & Success. <https://idra.news/QSAFgraphic>.

Rebecca Bain, Superintendent
Fruitvale ISD
Fruitvale, TX

Public schools should be funded, without a raise to the basic allotment in years, while expenses have skyrocketed, you are strangling public school districts. Money is being given to schools that don't represent our local communities, especially our rural local communities. Any other school that is wanting money from our state should be required to follow the exact same laws that public schools follow to a T. There should be no difference if they are accepting state money. They should also not be allowed to discriminate in any way against any child wanting to attend their school. Please for the love of all children say no to vouchers, or at minimum make the funding and the rules the exact same. Raise the basic allotment and what you are providing teachers.

Blair Brown
Self
Panhandle, TX

Giving public money to private entities is unconservative with no oversight or accountability

Mike Carroll
Self
Graham, TX

I am a three plus decade public school employee. Most of my friends are public school teachers. Two members of my family are public school educators. We all take our jobs very seriously. We try to educate the students (ALL students) of our district to the best of our abilities and try to maximize the potential of each and every student who is in our class. Professional educators want what is best for their students. The school that I work at is no different. All that is to say that while the governor has given lip service to teachers his actions speak much differently. I have always believed in the saying “when someone shows you who they are, believe them”. Last year when the governor convened an educational task force that gave the illusion that he wanted help in improving public school education and the outstanding teachers in the system. He then took the task force recommendations and supported exactly none of them. He made it a priority this legislative session to get vouchers passed. Not only did he do that, he supported bills that would give the student who left public school more money in a voucher than the public school would have received if they stayed enrolled. As for vouchers or ESA as he wants to call them. On the surface his concept seems simple. The money follows the child. Let the parent make the decision as to what is best for their child. The problem with that is private schools don’t have to follow the same rules as the public schools. They don’t have to accept all students like public schools do. They don’t have to provide services like public schools do. But, of course, he already knew that and seemingly did not care. The state has a record budget surplus and the ONLY public employees to not get a raise to this point are teachers. The basic allotment has not been increased in years. What did he and the legislature decide to do about it? Well, he went on a tour of private schools in the state to push your voucher plan and the legislature did nothing. Preaching to the choir is the phrase that comes to mind. He did not do a rally at one single public school and I know that he had open invitations to several public schools because I saw the tweets from the superintendents in those districts. At his private school rallies he demeaned public school teachers calling them “woke” and said that they were “indoctrinating” their students. He made vague references to schools that didn’t say the pledge of allegiance although you didn’t say which school or if it was even in Texas. There are probably teachers out there that do what he is implying all public school teachers do, but I can promise you that they are in a very small minority. For him to imply that there are only bad teachers in public schools and not private schools is also wrong. Don’t get me wrong. I have nothing against private schools. I have friends that send their kids to private schools for their own personal reasons. This isn’t about knocking them. The teachers at those

Angela Jolene Surratt, Mrs.
Self
Fabens, TX

We are tired of the woke, nonsensical ideology being forced on our children in public schools. We need school choice now!!!

Ross A Schumann
Self
Midland, TX

Texas children, all Texas Children, deserve access to quality education opportunities. Unfortunately, our state public school system is unable to provide those opportunities to all children, as it carries by design inequity towards children in less affluent or rural areas.

Children born in lower income areas, minority dominant areas, or rural communities have for decades been denied access to the opportunities and quality of education that more wealthy, white dominant, urban and suburban districts have received.

We need our youth to be trained in skills that will be necessary for the coming future as our economy continues to transition from agricultural to technological. Kids in smaller or less affluent districts need to have access to the training and education in these skills just as those who attend larger schools do as well. It is past time we stop deciding a kids future based on the zip code their parents happen to be able to afford to live in.

Educational freedom mean that more Texas children will be able to access the education and training that will make them more productive adults. The purpose of public education spending is as an investment by the public into our children so that they will be productive and self-sufficient adults who are able to add to our state Economy and Tax revenue instead of being a draw on those resources.

It is clear, that after many decades of being told more funding would fix the inequities of our public education system, that such inequities are not fixable within this system, as they are an integral part of that system from its inception. Giving our students and parents freedom to choose their educational path will allow for Texas children to receive more equitable access to educational opportunities, training, and education. This will lead to increased economic opportunities not only for that child, but also for those in their community.

Beverly Gavenda, Ms
Self. Retired RN
Austin, TX

I urge you to NOT take MY tax dollars from Texans' #txed schools to subsidize affluent private schools far away from me & religious schools teaching doctrine that I don't believe!

Stacy Ward
Self Teacher
Amarillo, TX

I do not support vouchers,

Dakota Freda Thompson
Self
Addison, TX

Vouchers for private schools will ultimately be detrimental to lower-income families as they will not be able to afford a private school. Eliminating public school is not the right way to improve education for younger generations. IMPROVING the foundation already built is the way. I do not support this bill.

Brad Owen, Dr.
Burkburnett ISD
Burkburnett, TX

I understand school choice for parents is critical in today's world. I am the superintendent of a public school district that allows for open transfer to help provide for parent choice. I also am not opposed to the thought of Education Savings Accounts, or vouchers, for parents to move their kids to other educational options. I am however opposed to taking public education funding and shifting it to private institutions who do not have the same accountability measures or enrollment requirements that public schools do.

If private schools receive public funds to educate students, then they are no longer privately funded and therefore should be held to the exact same standards as public schools. These standards would include:

1. Standardized testing from the state.
2. Acceptance of any students who applies with the "vouchers."
3. Implementation of Individualized Education Plans for students receiving special education services.
4. Auditing procedures and public hearings on finances like public schools.
5. Certified teachers.
6. Must teach the required TEKS in all subjects.

Again, I am not opposed to ESAs. I am opposed to pulling public funds from public institutions and funding private institutions who do not have to account for the same standards. If private schools who choose to receive ESAs are held to the same standards above as public schools, then I don't have a problem with it.

And just to remind everyone, Texas already has school choice. We have open enrollment public schools all across the state, we have open enrollment charter schools across the state, and we already have a private school system for those who choose that. I am not sure why we need to change the current system unless it is to benefit a particular section of the population, which will further widen the gap between the "haves and have nots."

Hannah Gourgey, Dr.

Aspen Institute Opportunity Youth Forum - Texas Opportunity Youth Network

Austin, TX

My name is Hannah Gourgey and I have the privilege of leading a statewide network called Texas Opportunity Youth Network (TOYN) which consists of communities who are building collaborations between education institutions, community organizations and local businesses to re-engage their youth and young adults who are not in school, not working and not in any postsecondary setting.

These communities include Amarillo, Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex, El Paso, Houston, Jasper, the Rio Grande Valley, San Antonio, San Augustine and Waco.

In Texas, we are seeing a growing number of young people who dis-engage either during or immediately after high school and struggle to launch successful, meaningful futures.

Across the state over 500,000 young people between the ages of 16-24 fit this description or 14% of our youth and young adult population. These “opportunity youth” (OY) represent a tremendous potential as we seek to secure the future well-being and prosperity of the state.

Who are OY?

- Most are HS graduates although about 100,000 have no high school diploma or equivalency.
- They tend to come from low-income families and are disproportionately youth of color
- They often faced childhood traumas that threw them off course with few adult relationships to help them get back on. (foster youth, children of incarcerated adults)
- While the majority of these youth and young adults live in our cities, the rate of disconnection in rural Texas is much higher, as much as 1 in every 3 our rural young adults experience disconnection from education, or work for extended periods of time.
- When they return to work (without a high school diploma or GED, or postsecondary credential) they struggle to earn a family-sustaining wage.

Why do they matter?

- Re-engaging this population will return over \$7.1 billion to Texas tax payers in earned revenue every year and an additional \$19.1 billion in social costs.
- They are also the “canary in the coal mine” for systemic challenges that inhibit the potential of all our students and by addressing these barriers, we create a far more versatile education system for each and every one of our children, youth and young adults.

What can we do?

- Leverage TEA standards changes regarding dropouts that create accountability incentives with \$17 million in funding to support ISD/charter community partnership to e-engage high school non-completers (\$5 million specifically allocated for rural communities)
- Create an early warning system to provide low-ratio counseling and support to high school students experiencing chronic absenteeism.
- Require Workforce Investment Boards to have a specific plan to re-engage opportunity youth to workforce training and employment pathways.
- Recommend a Tri-Agency Commission pilot of coordinated programming to support high school-to-college and work transitions and bridging and develop a shared data infrastructure for OY

Greg Rogers

Self / THSCA and GHFCA Coaches

Cypress, TX

No Vouchers. Our public school teachers are the backbone of this state. It's time to show them how important they are.

Christy Garza
Self
McKinney, TX

I am a parent of children in public schools and home owner paying more than ten thousand a year in taxes. I request for my tax dollars to support public schools. They are the only equal opportunity schools. Any private or charter school utilizes an application process that screens out children with the most difficult of circumstances to overcome, leaving public school teachers to carry the need. In times of crises, our public schools are leaned on to accept any and all children such as during natural disasters, homelessness, refugees fleeing harm, and continuing instruction through COVID. Additionally, our public education system has multiple measures of accountability to ensure students rights are not violated or to hold us accountable if they are. Private institutions do not. And, our teachers work tirelessly to teach Texas standards, not hidden agendas. Texas has the highest number of standards of any state making it very difficult to ensure all children master all standards. Fund our schools properly. Give them adequate staffing, resources, and support please! Private schools serve an elite few and don't exist in rural areas. A select few will benefit. Acknowledging that alone should close the school voucher discussion. PS. Have any of you attempted to take a current STAAR assessment? Try it. Then imagine you're the teachers responsible for ensuring all student master it. And, some of your students speak a language other than English, some have a learning disability, a few are in there fifth school in two years, one isn't sure where they'll be sleeping tonight, and others have hardworking parents with limited time for home support. It just got real, right? Those of you on the committee fighting for our educators, thank you! Those tearing them apart for personal or political gain, shame on you! I pray for you all to be enlightened and make decisions that support all children, while recognizing the hardships our teachers face. I notice republicans outnumber democrats...very interesting and concerning imbalance of representation. May good prevail!

Sylvia Campbell
retired/self
The Woodlands, TX

Dear Select Committee,

Please understand that "Educational Freedom" does not mean diverting much-needed funds from public schools to poorly regulated private interests. Our public schools are the bedrock of democracy in America. People are certainly free to send their children to private schools, but no on the backs of the taxpayers of Texas.

Thank you,
Sylvia Campbell

Carol Ortiz, Ms.
Self/retired
Montgomery, TX

I strongly oppose JHR 140. No matter what you call it, the diversion of public funding away from public schools is a voucher scam to rob public education and enrich the private and religious school industry. People already have the freedom to choose private schools or to home school. The vouchers proposed do not even cover a full year, leaving parents on the hook for the rest. Publicly funded education guarantees payment for the whole year. Quality education without religious indoctrination can be available to everyone equally if the public schools are properly funded and teachers are paid fairly.

Carolyn Mitchell, Rev
Texas Women for Justice
Conroe, TX

Proponents of diverting funds from public to poorly regulated private schools have changed their strategy and are now pushing vouchers as “educational freedom.” Changing the name (vouchers = educational savings accounts = educational freedom) does not make vouchers any better for Texas.

This change I terms is not “educational freedom;” it is a trick to cash in on public money to support private and home schools that will not be held to the same requirements as public schools. Parents already have the freedom to choose private or home schooling for their kids—they should not expect to fund those choices with taxpayer dollars.

I believe that legislators could use our historic \$32 billion surplus to improve public education and better support students and teachers. Additionally, the STAAR assessment and the accountability (school grading) system should be improved.

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I believe that legislators could use our historic \$32 billion surplus to improve public education and better support students and teachers. Additionally, the STAAR assessment and the accountability (school grading) system should be improved.

Laura Weaver
retired/self
The Woodlands, TX

I oppose the adoption of vouchers (aka: educational savings account, educational freedom). As a taxpayer, I oppose any plan that moves funds from well-regulated, needy public schools to poorly regulated private schools and home schools. Our public schools need this funding, and our students definitely deserve the very best education that the taxpayers of our state can afford. By robbing this money from the local schools, you are jeopardizing the future of our children. This is not about choice. Parents already have the freedom to educate their children any way they want. This is about playing to the demands of a small percentage of voters who do not represent the majority of taxpayers.

Beth Isernhagen

Self/licensed teacher and mom of public school students

Spring, TX

All students are accepted in our public schools and have opportunity and freedom to obtain a quality education. Public schools have the oversight needed through publicly elected school boards, parent-led organizations (like SHACs), and laws that they must abide by, so all state funds should go to those schools. State funds should not go to private schools that do not have to accept all students or comply with public oversight.

Please do not use a penny of our taxpayer money for vouchers or other private funding. Instead, invest in schools who do not have enough money after so much inflation. Even the most fiscally conservative districts are struggling to break even in next year's budgets because the state of Texas is not adequately funding schools. Invest in our public schools. These special sessions are costing taxpayers money because the legislature didn't properly fund schools in the regular session.

Less state testing and less emphasis on the STAAR test would greatly help schools and students better focus on learning and not assessment. State assessments should be used only as one of many tools, not the main tool, in looking at what students, teachers, and schools are accomplishing.

Less state testing, more state funding for public schools! Thank you.

Maria CruzPerez

Self interpreter

Kennedale, TX

Providing a quality education to all of Texas children is something the state should strive for this will not be accomplished if our public money goes to private entities. Allowing this will only create a greater gap between socioeconomic classes in our society and will only benefit a small number of our children. Let's prioritize the funding of our schools, paying our public servants yes those teachers that spend so many hours with our children an adequate salary and adequate benefits. Use public funds to help those families whose children need to go work not because they want to but because they need to have an income for their family to pay eat. Let's give these families the freedom of being able of having a FREE quality education. Texas is an amazing state full of equally amazing people. How nice would it be if the state worked towards being one of the top states in public education.

Polly Montgomery, Dr

Retired public educator/administrator, current adjunct professor, current trustee Allen ISD

Allen, TX

As a public school educator for over 40 years in Texas, I am sorely saddened by the lack of progress to support public education in Texas. If “parent empowerment” is so important then shouldn’t the parents be involved in making sure they retain the promised powers in public entities? Parents will see that they have little to no power when it comes to private schools:

* Child with special needs? Loss of federal and state protections by leaving public education, services may be offered but for an additional fee

*Unhappy with a board member? Community doesn't elect them so toughen up

*Unhappy with the curriculum? No oversight, SBOE is for public schools only

*Unhappy with health and sex education? No required SHAC with parent input

*Wanted your child to go to a specific private school but child was not admitted? Parents have no right to admission and the school is free to select within the admission process

*Child struggling with behavior and needs additional support? Maybe your child will get support or be “released” from school, TEC Ch 37 does not apply

*Want to know board decisions? No requirement for open meetings

*Want records? Private schools are not subject to public info requests

*Want minimum safety standards? Private schools aren't subject to all the new safety requirements

*Appointed board not upholding their duty? No assistance from TEA and elected SBOE cannot assist

*Want your kids' teachers completing state-required training including safety, CPR, etc? The 63 pages of required training for #txed teachers does not apply to private schools

*Want elected officials to make changes at your kid's private school? Does not apply

*Need transportation and meals? Additional fees apply for additional services if offered

I could add to this list tenfold. I have yet to see how funding private education through the state will provide parent empowerment. Parents have the power they need now! Parents need to know their kids' schools, teachers, administrators, and board. Visit your kids' school often. Stay connected to their learning.

I welcome the opportunity to speak to any of you individually or collectively.

Respectfully submitted,

Polly Montgomery, EdD

Herb Cox, Dr.

Self: Professor

Waco, TX

Texas public schools need to be fully funded.

We currently rank in the bottom 10 in the nation in per pupil allotment. That is embarrassing and shameful.

We currently have the reserves and revenue to fund Texas public schools as well as give all teachers in Texas a \$10,000 per year raise that is sustainable.

Vouchers are nothing more than theft of public funds to pay for private school tuitions.

Support the 5.5 million students and the 400,000 teachers that are currently enrolled or employed by Texas public schools rather than catering to the push for vouchers by a few billionaires.

There are only about 350,000 kids currently attending private schools in Texas.

I have personally worked with educators in some of those schools and they are doing a great job with their constituents.

However, private schools do not admit all kids; rather they pick and choose which students they will allow to enroll.

Texas public schools serve ALL of God's children.

I implore you, as a life long educator in public schools, fully fund Texas public schools, support our 5.5 million children who attend them, and give well earned raised to our incredible Texas professional educators.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Herb Cox

Nancy Jones
Self, retired educator
San Antonio, TX

Please do nothing to support vouchers. A free public education is what our democracy is based on and vouchers will erode that for most students.

Julian Poynor
Self Retired Texas Educator
Granbury, TX

Thanks to the members of the House of Representatives for refusing to pass a bill that includes vouchers! The public schools have been hurt from lack of adequate funding but will be completely destroyed if vouchers become a reality. Public education has been and needs to continue to be one of the most unifying factors for our society. Students from all economic classes, racial groups, and religious or non religious groups coming together for a common education. What a value that has been and needs to continue to be!

Hilary Toma
Self
The Woodlands, TX

Vouchers are not “educational freedom.” Vouchers are a ruse to cash in on public money to support private and home schools that will not be held to the same requirements as public schools. Parents already have the freedom to choose private or home schooling for their kids—they should not expect to fund those choices with taxpayer dollars.

Use the surplus funds to give raises to all teachers, school administrators, and other school district staff. Provide the same raises to all districts, regardless of the size of the district. Where is the focus on children in these debates? Focus on improving the students’ experiences in Texas public schools rather than providing vouchers to parents.

Dolores Mitchell
self
Spring, TX

please vote against school vouchers. As a Texas taxpayer I believe the state public schools are the only schools that should be funded by my tax dollars. The majority of children going to the private schools are in families who already can afford to. Improve the public school system and everyone will have the opportunity to receive a good education that we are already paying for

Erin Bingham
self
Spring, TX

I have been incredibly disappointed by the continued efforts of certain legislators to try and force Vouchers into Texas. Texas Public Education is underfunded. That is a fact. To take any amount of money from an already overworked and underfunded system is not in anyone's best interests. To try and take money from an underfunded Public Education to divert those funds to Private/Homeschool/Charter Schools that are not held to the same standards is absolutely absurd. I hope that our House reps will stop doing what the donors want and actually represent the interests of the millions of children who rely on Texas Public Education to mold their future. NO to vouchers. If you have absolutely any desire to actually give each child the most opportunity to thrive academically- Get rid of STAAR. Fund PubEd properly. Stop using our kids as pawns and let the educators get back to work. Listen to your constituents- reread the hundreds of pages of public comments from the Legislative Session- No to vouchers!

William McNeal
Self
Cypress, TX

Affirmative action seeks to rectify historical inequalities by promoting equal opportunities for underrepresented groups in employment, education, and government contracting. It works towards dismantling systemic barriers and discrimination by taking into account factors like race, gender, and ethnicity to foster workforce diversity. Advocates argue that it addresses past discrimination and promotes diversity, while opponents raise concerns about potential reverse discrimination and advocate for merit-based systems. The implementation and extent of affirmative action vary across jurisdictions, organizations, and evolve over time, necessitating consideration of specific context and legal frameworks.

According to a study cited by the American Cornerstone Institute in the Wall Street Journal, it is reported that an Asian American applicant in the fourth highest decile has approximately a 6 percent chance of admission to the University of North Carolina. However, if the applicant were black, that probability would rise to 58 percent. The study also highlights that an out-of-state white male with a 10 percent chance of admission would see their odds increase to 98 percent if they were black. Notably, the study does not mention that African American representation at the University of North Carolina stands at the lowest percentage of 8.23%. If this bill is implemented, it will cause an inequity among racial groups specifically minority groups.

If this bill aims to implement a merit-based system for university admissions, then there is a question regarding the need for applicants to provide information about their racial or ethnic background during the application process. In a truly unbiased process, the applicant would not be required to disclose any information that could reveal their identity. The focus would solely be on evaluating applicants based on their qualifications and merits. This perspective suggests that removing any consideration of racial or ethnic information would be necessary to ensure a completely impartial application process.

Dorie Johnson
Self/ Teacher
Conroe, TX

I have been incredibly disappointed by the continued efforts of certain legislators to try and force Vouchers into Texas. Texas Public Education is underfunded. That is a fact. To take any amount of money from an already overworked and underfunded system is not in anyone best interests. To try and take money from an underfunded Public Education to divert those funds to Private/Homeschool/Charter Schools that are not held to the same standards is absolutely absurd. I hope that our House reps will stop doing what the donors want and actually represent the interests of the millions of children who rely on Texas Public Education to mold their future. NO to vouchers. If you have absolutely any desire to actually give each child the most opportunity to thrive academically- Get rid of STAAR. Fund PubEd properly. Stop using our kids as pawns and let the educators get back to work. Listen to your constituents- reread the hundreds of pages of public comments from the Legislative Session- No to vouchers!

Paige White
Self
Fate, TX

It is critical that our public funds do NOT go to funding vouchers or private schools, unless those private schools are required to accept EVERY STUDENT and have the same accountability expectations for student achievement. Keep funds in public schools that serve every single child and are transparent in their outcomes.

Paige White

Self

Fate, TX

Do not provide any funding to private schools or vouchers unless they are subject to the same accountability and curriculum legislation as public schools, and are required to accept every single child. Money needs to be reserved for public schools that must serve every child in Texas, regardless of background of individual circumstance or need. Our public schools deserve the money they need to support all children!

Mary Branson, Ms

Self (Retired)

Spring, TX

I do not support school vouchers, no matter what you call them! Taxpayer funds should only be used to support public schools. We should be improving the quality of public education, not starving it by diverting funds away to unregulated private or charter schools. Parents already have the freedom to choose these schools- but taxpayers should NOT subsidize these choices. Increase funding to public schools, increase teacher pay, and improve programs that enrich students' educational experiences.

Terry Leyenberger

Self- retired

Spring, TX

Vouchers are not the answer to improving public education. Vouchers just take taxpayer money away from the schools that desperately need it and put it into the hands of private schools which are not accountable to elected officials, and which do not have to take all students. No matter what you call it, "educational freedom" or school vouchers, it's the same old thing. People want someone else to fund THEIR private school. Vote NO.

Mike Carroll
Self
Graham, TX

I am a three plus decade public school employee. Most of my friends are public school teachers. Two members of my family are public school educators. We all take our jobs very seriously. We try to educate the students (ALL students) of our district to the best of our abilities and try to maximize the potential of each and every student who is in our class. The school that I work at has 100s of dedicated educators who are not "indoctrinating" their students with "woke" agendas. They are teaching the TEKS that are approved by the state. All that is to say that while the Governor and legislature has given lip service to teachers their actions speak much differently. I have always believed in the saying "when someone shows you who they are, believe them". Last year the Governor convened an educational task force that gave the illusion that he wanted help in improving public school education and the outstanding teachers in the system. He and the legislature then took the task force recommendations and supported exactly none of them. It has been made a priority this legislative session to get vouchers passed. Not only did the Governor do that, he supported bills that would give the students who left public school more money in a voucher than the public school would have received if they stayed enrolled. As for vouchers or ESA as the Governor wants to call them. On the surface this concept seems simple. The money follows the child. Let the parent make the decision as to what is best for their child. The problem with that is private schools don't have to follow the same rules as the public schools. They don't have to accept all students like public schools do. They don't have to provide services like public schools do. But, of course, you already knew that and seemingly did not care. The state has a record budget surplus and the ONLY public employees to not get a raise to this point are teachers. The basic allotment has not been increased in years. What did the legislature decide to do about it? Well, the Governor went on a tour of private schools in the state to push a voucher plan. Preaching to the choir is the phrase that comes to mind. He did not do a rally at one single public school and I know that he had open invitations to several public schools because I saw the tweets from the superintendents in those districts. At these private school rallies he demeaned public school teachers calling them "woke" and said that they were "indoctrinating" their students. He made vague references to schools that didn't say the pledge of allegiance although he didn't say which school or if it was even in Texas. There are probably teachers out there that do what you are implying all public school teachers do, but I can promise you that they are in a very small minority. I do not support vouchers now or ever and the legislature of the state of Texas should not either.

Clay McChristian
Graham ISD
Graham, TX

Vote no on vouchers. It only helps a select few Texans. The vast majority of low and middle class citizens will see nothing out of this but their public schools getting worse.

Travis Thompson
Self
Graham, TX

I believe all students deserve this opportunity. They deserve it in the public school district where they reside. The state should think highly enough and support schools more so that obtaining a voucher is not an option. Improve public schools. Don't take the money from them. Put more in.

Bryan Houston
Self
Tyler, TX

This bill will kill public education. You expect my tax dollars to pay for private school against my will. At the same time those funds are not being invested in public education and teacher pay to educate all children, not just the privileged ones. I sent my child to private school, but I paid for it. I never expected others to pay unless they willingly donated scholarship money. This bill is so short-sited. If you kill public education, why would businesses come to Texas where their employees' children can't get an education. Next \$8000 per year per kid is totally unsustainable. All this is is vote-buying. If you pass this bill, I will work with all my energy to see that you are voted out of office. You don't listen to me, you don't represent me, you are all power-hungry, narcissists who don't care one bit about ALL the people in your state. The governor and all who support vouchers are a disgrace.

Tracey Blake
Self
Childress, TX

There is no need for vouchers that come from public taxes to support private education. Everyone already has this freedom and **PUBLIC SCHOOLS DESERVE TO BE FULLY FUNDED!**

David Nixon
Self
Burleson, TX

Voucher programs do not solve the issues of public education but kick the can. If true educational reform is required and it currently does, then we should have elected officials seeking ways to lead this charge. The public tax payer dollars should not go towards any private or charter schools.

Sometimes change requires real work, and vouchers are a bandaid for an amputee. Go big and meet the challenge.

Claudia Hurst
Texas Taxpayer/Self
Weatherford, TX

Vouchers are fiscally irresponsible. Please excuse due diligence and review States who adopted vouchers. The vouchers became an fiscally increasingly insatiable beast. An unwise use of taxpayer money. The lack of oversight, regulation and accountability are a formula for disaster. No to vouchers on all fronts. Thank you.

Russell Hayter
Self/Retired
Mountain City, TX

Please pass universal school choice.

Mitchell Knauth
Self/public education
San Antonio, TX

Please fully fund public education without provisions.

Mitchell Knauth
Self/public education
San Antonio, TX

Please fully fund public education without provisions.

Timothy Horsley, Mr.
Self
Roanoke, TX

If you give more funding per student with vouchers than you do to those who choose public education is immoral. You're telling me my kid isn't worth as much as yours. My household is not for vouchers. If you want vouchers, put it on it's own bill and let it play out. Holding children's education and other bills hostage because of one person's political agenda is wrong and will effect my votes in the next election.

Jamie Duderstadt, Mrs.
Self, educator
Spring Branch, TX

Vouchers do not have a place in public schools. Please, please please fund our PUBLIC schools.

Micah Stanley
Self - Teacher
Waxahachie, TX

This bill and all other bills that push the narrative public schools are failing children belittle, demean, and insult the work public educators do every day. It also belittles the work public school students do every day. As a legislative body, your first duty should be to fund and allocate the things which you are responsible for. Instead, public education students and teachers have had to endure constant attacks from the state senate and Governor's office claiming their are "woke" agendas in classrooms. That teachers are indoctrinating students. This is ludicrous. The state of Texas has been run by Republicans for over the last two decades. Republicans have directed public education in the state of Texas for 25 years. If any agenda is being pushed by teachers it is a republican agenda. If public schools are failing, it is due to republican failure. I say this as someone who has voted for conservative republican candidates in many elections. I believe in many of the values that a conservative claims to believe; however, in this issue I can't help but believe this legislature is missing the point. Instead of believing the the conservative core value of limited government, this Governor and Lt. Governor want to expand government reach into the private sector. Truly at the core not many in this legislative body care where kids go to school, but care where their reach can be extended in the name of freedom. As an educator who has lived and believed in conservative values, I will tell you I feel betrayed by my representatives and Governor. Instead of doing things they promised, they have attacked me and my colleagues. I have friends who are educators who fought tours of duty for this country, patriots, and you dare to say they teach kids to hate this country. Shame on you. Shame on those who allow it to happen. What happens when someone chooses to start a Muslim private school, an atheist private school, a satanic private school, are you going to allow tax dollars to go there? Or will you cry foul and try to create a way for the place of "educational freedom" to fit your narrative. As a Christian it is my duty to live as Christ. This is Jesus' command to us. I do that for my students every day. I show them a man and what values I live by. I do this and a majority of teachers in this great state do that as well. Yet, we are attacked because of the few. I will end with a warning. If the Republican Party doesn't pull its head out it is going to lose the vote sooner rather than later in Texas. You will lose the independent voter, and you will lose the conservative educator. If you continue to attack my profession, and therefore me, I cannot support you. I will not support leaders who do not support me. Support Texas education. Lead people to do the same, and watch it make a great state better. Thank you.

Mandi Murphy, Dr.

Plano ISD employee, Allen ISD community member, Lovejoy ISD proud parent

Plano, TX

Equal opportunity and enrichment for students is possible!

1. The TRUE student-teacher ratio, is the top concern in developing equal opportunities for all students. The issues of student-teacher relationships, clarity in student expectations, measurement of growth, assessment - accommodations- enrichment - re-assessment cycle, communication with families and retention of high-quality teachers will be the answered. The ratio reported is a lie. Every adult and even every teacher in a school building can not be counted in the teacher-student ratio. It doesn't matter if it is secondary or elementary - Texas measures this incorrectly. Teachers are the answer. They CAN do this, but not with ratios as high as they are. Look at general educator classroom teacher to the number of students. Look at role sheets. If there is one teacher on the role and over 20 students, the ratio is NOT the number that is stated be Texas. Texas has more classrooms over 25 to 1, than 20 to 1.

2. You must have more counselors that counsel. If a student is in a threat assessment, seeking emotional assistance, or is struggling with drugs, family or abuse they need to be in the care of a counselor.

3. Staff development such as Instructional Rounds or Texas Lesson Study (contact Lauren Smith at Region 11- excellent model) IS the way to develop educational opportunity for ALL students. This IS internal development based on the needs of students IN the school and using the most experienced and quality teachers in the district to unify the development on facts rather than a committee of people that know outside information rather than internal clarity. IF you use these types of training/development - it must be scheduled, paid and supported by school administrators, school boards, and legislatures.

I believe in educators. I believe we do will do what is right. We will do our best. We will show others we care.

Susan Webb, Mrs.

Self, teacher

North Richland Hills, TX

Providing funding for private schools while withholding funds from public schools puts public schools at more of a disadvantage than they already are. Private schools are not required to educate everyone who comes through their doors, and they're not held to the same standards as public schools, specifically in regards to the STAAR test and special education requirements.

When public school retired teachers haven't had a cost of living raise in over 20 years, it is shameful that this governing body would find money for sending students to private schools while keeping retired teachers at the same rate they have been for 20+ years.

In addition, there is no private school that costs \$6,000-\$8,000. The people who would be able to use this money to send their children to private school already do. This does not provide school choice, it is simply a tax break for those who are already sending their children to private school.

If school choice is the goal, then make the playing field level. Require the same standards for all schools. Stop refusing to fund public schools if vouchers don't get passed. You cannot continue to hold public schools to higher and higher accountability, with less and less funding each year. With a \$32 billion surplus, it is inexcusable.

Jason Valentine
Self - Educator
Wimberley, TX

I oppose the use of public funds for private education without accountability. As a 24 year public educator, it is insulting to see funds that could be used to better support public school students being used for private schools without accountability. If public funds are to be used for private education, either hold the private institutions to the same accountability public education is held to, or remove accountability from public education. I am not opposed to accountability, I am opposed to the establishment of a publicly funded voucher system for private schools.

Thank you for your time and work for the state of Texas and its constituents.

Ashley Hurley
Self- mother
Conroe, TX

I have watched in disappointment as some legislators continue to push for vouchers even when it's clear many Texans do not want them. As a mom of three children, two of whom attend public schools, I utilize different services and opportunities to ensure my children both receive the education that's best for them. My middle child has an IEP. We are lucky to have a school near us that has pre k and offers us services he needs. Because of the availability of these services, and his wonderful teachers, he learned so much in just 4 months of pre k. He is THRIVING. My oldest child struggled with reading when we first moved here due to schools starting later in our previous area and missing a few weeks of school for moving. She was able to attend summer school to help her progress and now she is independently reading going into second grade. Vouchers are concerning as a parent because I have no way to ensure ALL of my children receive the same quality education. Lack of universal requirements means many schools of choice may opt to not enroll students like my son who need extra support. What is that teaching my children if some of them can go to the schools of choice and some cannot? What choices would I have to make as a parent? All children deserve the same standard of education and I just don't see that happening when money and few regulations are involved. Please say no to vouchers and invest in the children of Texas.

David Kaminski
self
Hockley, TX

Please support traditional Texas Public Education by raising the basic allotment by the amount of inflation, at a minimum (it has not been raised since 2019) and then add language that adjusts it annually by the amount of inflation. There is no need to force educators to beg the legislature for basic allotment adjustments that should be tied to inflation.

David Kaminski
Self
Hockley, TX

Please support traditional Texas Public Education by raising the basic allotment by the amount of inflation, at a minimum (it has not been raised since 2019) and then add language that adjusts it annually by the amount of inflation. There is no need to force educators to beg the legislature for basic allotment adjustments that should be tied to inflation.

Tricia Richner
Self
Temple, TX

School choice for all Texans. Our public schools are failing and parents should be able to direct their children's education. Tax dollars follow the child.

Tom Sawyer
Self-Employed
Plano, TX

Just as in Comparison with the Healthcare Industry in the U.S., it's All about :

1. Access
2. Outcomes
3. Transparency
4. Affordability

The MORE Options PARENTS have (not Bureaucrats), the Better the Results '

LET FREEDOM RING !

Karen Pelphrey, Ms
Self/retired
Lubbock, TX

A curriculum based on primary skills reading, writing and math. Plus American citizenship based on true historical documents. Encouraging love for America and her founding documents. Restoring prayer and The Holy Bible in classrooms.

Terry Braun
Myself and all Texas kids
Weimar, TX

Education choice

Jennifer Madrid, Ms.
Self
Belton, TX

Please pass a bill offering Texas parents freedom to choose and fund the school setting of their choice without strings attached. As a parent whose children have attended public, private, and homeschool, we have experience in many settings and have mostly paid school taxes that we were not allowed to use for our children's education. Our nation was founded on the blessing of freedom. Please help us restore freedom in the area of educating our children in the way we believe gives them the best chance at a successful and fulfilling life.

Thank you.

James Watt

Self; Retired private and public school educator

Spring, TX

Dear Members of the Committee: I am writing in support of education savings accounts for parents in the State of Texas. As a retired private and public-school educator with experience in four states, I have seen the benefits of both systems. In the past two+ years, it has become apparent that there are certain materials and worldviews being expressed by educators that have previously been mandated to be apolitical that conflict with the right of parents to have more and adequate input into the education of their children. Two of these items related to curriculum are critical race theory, which injects race-based, faulty and controversial historical perspectives into social studies courses and other content, whether formally taught or only promoted by the personal influence of an educator, as well as the inclusion of sexually explicit and age-inappropriate books and experiences in health courses or other general coursework. The objectionable inclusion of these items and experiences in the education of children has already led some proactive public-school systems to enact various structures, like district library book review committees, to help prevent such things from happening again. Other districts, unfortunately, are remaining unresponsive to the unwelcome intrusions into the education of children. While I am still a supporter of the public school system, I can see the advantages of allowing at least some of the monies that taxpaying parents provide through their property taxes to be diverted to a system where they could financially afford to consider a private school, faith-based or secular, or homeschooling, for their children, if they so choose. Allowing even \$ 4,000-\$ 6,000 a year per child to be placed in education savings accounts would incentivize such needed educational choice and freedom. Texas should study the programs of other states in this regard, such as Arizona, Florida and others. Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Bobby Leshikar, Dr.

Self - High School Teacher

Kerrville, TX

Our Texas Constitution explicitly states that the duty of the legislators is to provide a "suitable provision" to maintain a public education system. Time and time again, from teachers and superintendents across the State, you have heard that the current system is NOT "suitable." The Taskforce's recommendations provided to legislators makes clear that additional funds are needed to recruit and retain quality educators in Texas classrooms. Dr. Buckley, I personally came to the Capitol and met you earlier this year and shared these exact concerns with you. You shared at that time that public schools could count on you to do the right thing.

The notion of "school choice" proposed by the Governor and members of the Congressional Body is a detractor for several reasons: 1) Parents already have school choice. There are numerous private schools, religious schools, and online schools that a parent can choose to send their child if they do not want them in a public school. 2) If there is already a teacher shortage for existing public schools, how much more will there be with start-up, "fly-by-night" private schools that pop-up if public funds are diverted to private education?

Public funds belong in public classrooms. Please help us ensure that we have "suitable provisions" to not just sustain, but create more opportunity for public schools to flourish. Teachers want our schools to be the best in the country. We have done so much with so little for so long - imagine how Texas public education could set the national standard for teacher recruitment and retention, and raise the bar for student outcomes if we were fully funded.

Please vote to ensure that Texas communities continue to have access to the best education that we can provide for them by increasing public school funding in a way that is sustainable.

Thank you.

Beth Durham
Self
Lubbock, TX

As a concerned mother and grandmother, I believe it's every parents choice to give their children the education they choose for their kids. This is a God given duty to protect our children from all harm and bring them up in the way they should go. The funds should follow that choice. I prayer your hearts and minds are open to the changes that are needed to let the parents protect their children. Thank you, Beth Durham (Mimi)

Brenda Arnold-Richard
Individual
Pearland, TX

Please support ALL Texas schoolchildren by fully funding public education in Texas. No public funds should be used for private education.
In addition, it's time to minimize high-stakes testing and let our teachers have fewer testing/practice/review days and more days for actual instruction.
Surely you can see this is best for our children and families.
Please do what's right; families in Texas are counting on you.

Rebecca Teran, Mrs.
Self/Homemaker
San Antonio, TX

I am a lifetime educator and urge you to support school choice even in counties that seem to have no need for it. Why? Because Texas is diverse and even if there may a tiny minority that desires to have school choice, it is the right option for our great state of Texas to offer it.

Personally as an educator, I have discovered school choice to be the best option for families.

Thank you in advance for reading my plea for school choice!

Cecily Riesenber
Self - Educator
Amarillo, TX

As an educator and parent of public school students who has taught in Amarillo for 15 years, I strongly oppose any form of vouchers or ESAs. In other states, vouchers have led to learning loss and lower test scores. They hurt vulnerable students the most. Tax dollars should never go to religious schools that indoctrinate students. Please help improve public education and learning outcomes by fully funding public schools - raise the basic allotment to \$1,000 per student and help recruit and retain quality teachers by giving them permanent \$10,000 raises.

Gov Abbott likes to tout Texas as the best state for business and opportunity. If we are to maintain that status, we have to improve our public ed system and make sure every student has the best possible opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Thank you,
Cecily Riesenber

John Parks
The Trinity Ranch
Hamilton, TX

how can we republicans be so dumb? school choice is simple. you are either for the students and their parents or you're for the nea and tea which have done so much to ruin texas' public educational system as well as are country's values. vote for school choice and mandate that the money GOES with the student. small rural counties like mine are as poorly served by the schools as are the metroplex schools. never is the fight about quality of education. it is always a fight about allocation of money. schools will not produce a better outcome until the flow of money stops. republicans are weary of your failure and blame games. john parks, hamilton, texas

Cheryl Torres
Self
Jacksonville, TX

Please provide freedom of choice for education!!

Rebecca McGill, Dr
Self
Fort Worth, TX

As a parent of a child in a major metroplex of Texas, paying substantial taxes on my home each year; a large portion of which goes to the very underperforming school district my children are stuck in due to where we live, I believe school choice is a must. Currently the only "choice" I have is to pay for school through my faces and either send my 3 children to a school where they will not get a quality education (and will likely be exposed to things they shouldn't be at a very young age—like drugs, violence, sex and progressive social ideas) or I can pay my taxes and fund that school, while also paying double to afford a quality private education (which our one parent income doesn't allow for. So really, we have no choice. And with the amount of money we pay for schooling each year through our taxes, our children should at least be afforded the opportunity to receive a quality education. School choice is LONG overdue in Texas. And school choice will not only provide educational options to families like mine, it will bring the quality of education that all students get up, as competition had shown in other choice states to improve educational outcomes for all the schools including large public ones like the district were in. That is a win for all tax payers in the state. Better education for all improves quality of life for all. Please I urge you to listen to the constituent's and make this a priority. Say YES to school choice...help our children and their parents!

Yoneidy Rodriguez

Self

Aubrey, TX

As a first-generation American child of immigrants, I deeply value the opportunities this country provides. One such opportunity I believe in fervently is the right to School of Choice. This system empowers parents to choose the best educational pathway for their children, based on unique needs and abilities, rather than being restricted by our address.

My parents pursued the American dream, one of freedom and individualism. Now, as a parent myself, I see School of Choice as an embodiment of these values, shifting the power from the bureaucracy to the families it affects most. Parents understand their children best - their strengths, passions, fears, and challenges. Who better to decide their educational pathway?

Texas has often faced criticism for its education system. I believe School of Choice can turn the tide. By encouraging competition between all schools - public, charter, magnet, private, and even homeschooling programs - we ensure that every institution strives to improve, ultimately benefiting our children.

Detractors worry about draining resources from public schools, but they miss the point. Competition fosters improvement across the board, raising the bar for all schools and expanding educational opportunities. School of Choice isn't about shrinking resources but increasing quality.

Importantly, School of Choice promotes equity. No longer would a child's future be determined by the zip code they were born into. Every child, regardless of income or location, can access quality education.

As a child of immigrants, I know the transformative power of opportunity. Let's give all Texas children this opportunity, shaping their futures, and fulfilling the promise of the American dream. School of Choice keeps the pioneering spirit of Texas alive, and I am ready to fight for it, for my children and all children of this great state.

Shaina Johnson

Self

Waxahachie, TX

We the people want free choice in where our children are educated. And as taxpayers, we want to choose what's done with our money.

Theresa S Neman

Self educator

Spring, TX

Do not support vouchers or those education savings accounts. You have a \$32 BILLION surplus. Fund Texas education now! Support the policies that you have already put into place.

Remember, in the state of Texas, we teach the TEKS that TEA established. We don't have time to teach anything else.

Give us our resources.

Don't hold Texas children hostage to political whims!

Theresa S Neman
Self educator
Spring, TX

Use the \$32 BILLION dollar surplus and fund Texas education!

Don't hold Texas children hostage to political whims!

Vote NO on all vouchers and education savings accounts.

The new STAAR isn't half bad. However, don't compare apples and carrots. This STAAR isn't the 2018 STAAR, just like these GOP politicians would embarrass Reagan and George H Bush.

Do what is right, not what is easy or politically expedite.

Erika Armstrong
Self
Sanantonio, TX

To go to a better school

Erika Armstrong
Self
Sanantonio, TX

I think students should go to a good school

Sarah Peterson
self, chemistry instructor
BELTON, TX

Last year we made the difficult choice of moving our 3 children into private schools. We are a well-below-average-income family of 5, so this has been very difficult financially. At St. Mary's Catholic School and Holy Trinity Catholic High School, the gains we have seen in our kids' attitudes, education, and sense of well-being have been tremendous. In their local school they were picked on by peers, ignored by teachers (because they were performing well enough), and coming home having learned values contrary to our own. Without financial aid, we cannot maintain the private school tuition and this year there is less aid available than last year. At the same time, we are still paying taxes to the public schools they are no longer attending. ESA's are a just way to give parents the freedom to find what is best for their kids. The stance of total control over education taken by the political groups representing public schools is frightening to me. What I see are schools that do not want to have to try harder or do better for Texas kids. It is clear that this is not about the money. Our own representative, Hugh Shine, has sided against us as parents. Please take action on this issue so that boys like mine can learn in a wholesome environment that helps them achieve the highest standard of education that they can. For us, that just wasn't happening in our local public school.

Barbara Fabianke
Self bus driver for school district
Lampasas, TX

Parents should be able to choose where want children go to school for better education and not to be indoctrinated.

Dolores Kmiecik-Graham
self Retired
COLLEGE STATION, TX

In the 1950s and 1960s, my parents sacrificed greatly to be able to pay for Catholic School tuition for me and my two brothers. My parents were not wealthy. My Dad worked in the retail industry and my Mom went to work in the school cafeteria to be able to afford tuition. We never had family vacations or the extras and my family ate home grown food to save. I am forever grateful for my parents' and their decision.

The pandemic has opened people's eyes to what the teachers' unions and liberal politicians are doing to our public schools. All parents should have the opportunity to decide what is best for their children and choose the school their children attend. Unions and politicians sadly have their own agendas and our children's success is not even on their list.

Why is it that Catholic schools can educate children for 1/3 of what it costs public schools to educate a child? I can tell you why. My own children attended Catholic schools. When landscaping was needed, the Dads got together on a Saturday and provided the labor. When the school was wired for the internet, a project was organized. A parent with expertise developed the wiring plan, parents and grandparents volunteered to do the work with donated materials. The school was wired on a weekend with little cost to the school. When new books were ordered for the classroom, parents volunteered to sort and move the books to the classrooms. Moms volunteered as 'lunch moms' and in the nurse's office. The average test scores on the standardized tests at my children's Catholic elementary school were in the high 80's. Children are taught to be respectful. I have met parents of children in public school who are being bullied but the parents can't afford a private school. So their children are stuck. I have family members who taught at public schools and finally quit because they got tired of coming home with bruises when students pushed them around. I could go on and on with examples from my own experience. Not all public schools are bad, but the ones who are not doing the job need to go out of business.

Texas needs to give ALL CHILDREN THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND EXCEL by allowing their parents to make the best decision for the education of their children. No one in government or in a teacher's union can decide what is best for the children. Only parents know what is best for their child. I hope our legislators put children first and support Gov. Abbott's plan to empower parents.

Brenda Howard

Self

Belton, TX

Public Education – E2.036

July 11, 2023 10:00 a.m.

Good morning, Chairman Buckley and members. My name is Brenda Howard and I am speaking for myself and FOR Educational Opportunity & Enrichment.

I am an advocate FOR school choice because I have seen it work in my own life. We moved to Arizona after my husband retired from the military and my son was to finish his junior and senior year in the metro Phoenix area. There were two public schools available for our zip code and the best school was filled up a year in advance, so my son was going to have to attend the school that struggled.

I wasn't worried about him because he was an Army brat and had attended some the worst and best schools our Nation has to offer. He could be successful in any school. I, unfortunately, ignored him, when he told me that this was a terrible school, that it wasn't safe and that it was run by gangs. I told him to "buck up" because he is a tough kid.

Near the end of the first semester, my 17 year old son, came to me and said, "I have made an appointment with a principal of a different school and he says I can graduate as a junior." If you know 17 year olds, they don't always show initiative and when my son, did this on his own, at a time when I was off work, I knew I had failed him.

We met with the principal, he transferred and graduated as a junior. My "happy go lucky" kid returned, his joy for school returned and I was so grateful that Arizona offered school choice.

I know that it works, I know that public schools do not die and I know that it saved my son. It is past time for the Great State of Texas to step up and offer options that will empower parents and students. Thank you!

Jennifer Hall, Mrs.
Self-Employed/Self
Bulverde, TX

We are very disappointed with the way our local public elementary, middle and high schools are being run, with regard to “woke” ideology being implemented, lack of discipline and consequences, and a woeful lack of personal responsibility. We have had multiple issues with regard to both of our daughters’ educations over the past 8 years (since my husband retired and we moved from Okinawa to Texas). Unfortunately we’ve noticed since the pandemic that things have become much worse as well!

Our 18-year-old graduated from high school (barely) last year, and our 11-year-old starts middle school in the Fall. We do not feel that either one of them have received a quality education since we came back. As such, we would like the opportunity to obtain a quality education for our youngest child, but that’s not possible unless we have educational opportunities that allow her to thrive in an environment where she feels comfortable; and, where the administration actually takes care of her needs in a way that is respectful and kind. Thus far we have not experienced this...in fact, it’s been the exact opposite!

Our youngest child has had to endure multiple issues of disrespect, bullying, plagiarism...none of which the administration addressed or dealt with appropriately. As a result, our daughter hates school, has suffered from depression, and is very negative towards most things school-related. You could say that she has not received an appropriate education. Prior to all of the issues with the school, which began when the new administration took over, our daughter was happy, loved learning, and was absolutely thriving!

I have spent most of my life living in this great state, so it’s especially upsetting for me to see that things have gone so far downhill; and, I’ll be damned if I am going to let anyone treat my child like that, especially those who are supposed to be educators!

We are just one of thousands of families in the state of Texas who are experiencing these kinds of unfortunate events. I pray you will listen to us, because our children deserve appropriate and quality educations; and, y’all need to clean house in some of these districts (in my opinion).

Thank you! God Bless You!

David Gauna
Self
Victoria, TX

Our duty as parents, is to provide the best education possible to our children to enhance their future as citizens of Texas and this Country! The ability to Choose can function as a remedy for all schools to perform at a higher standard to equalize the Best education for all!

Mary Ellen Bryant
Self
The Woodlands, TX

I have been incredibly disappointed by the continued efforts of certain legislators to try and force Vouchers into Texas. Texas Public Education is underfunded. That is a fact. To take any amount of money from an already overworked and underfunded system is not in anyone best interests. To try and take money from an underfunded Public Education to divert those funds to Private/Homeschool/Charter Schools that are not held to the same standards is absolutely absurd. I hope that our House reps will stop doing what the donors want and actually represent the interests of the millions of children who rely on Texas Public Education to mold their future. NO to vouchers. If you have absolutely any desire to actually give each child the most opportunity to thrive academically- Get rid of STAAR. Fund PubEd properly. Stop using our kids as pawns and let the educators get back to work. Listen to your constituents- reread the hundreds of pages of public comments from the Legislative Session- No to vouchers!

KELly Haight, Mr.
self
Sattler, TX

Please break the stranglehold the Teachers Union and the Department of Education have on school choice. Bring competition back into the education profession for all age groups and maybe we can get the testing scores back up!

Mary Ellen Bryant
Self
The Woodlands, TX

I have been incredibly disappointed by the continued efforts of certain legislators to try and force Vouchers into Texas. Texas Public Education is underfunded. That is a fact. To take any amount of money from an already overworked and underfunded system is not in anyone best interests. To try and take money from an underfunded Public Education to divert those funds to Private/Homeschool/Charter Schools that are not held to the same standards is absolutely absurd. I hope that our House reps will stop doing what the donors want and actually represent the interests of the millions of children who rely on Texas Public Education to mold their future. NO to vouchers. If you have absolutely any desire to actually give each child the most opportunity to thrive academically- Get rid of STAAR. Fund PubEd properly. Stop using our kids as pawns and let the educators get back to work. Listen to your constituents- reread the hundreds of pages of public comments from the Legislative Session- No to vouchers!

cassandra posey
self
waller, TX

MANY other states have an ESA program and Texas families need it. Please trust parents to do what's best for their children. Please partner with parents to empower them to move their children out of schools that aren't serving them. Homeschool families want this and we need this just as much as everyone else.

Bryan Diamante
Self
Lewisville, TX

Please allow parents to have the educational opportunity and freedom to obtain a quality education

Tara Awezec
Self - retired
Lucas, TX

58% of all Texans are in favor of school choice; this includes 66% of rural Texans. It's time for the Texas legislature to listen to Texans and vote for school choice NOW. ESA programs work very effectively in multiple other states like Arizona, Florida, and Tennessee. ESAs will provide opportunities to Texas kids of all backgrounds in rural, small town, and suburban areas alike. And it will NOT harm public schools—in fact, it will make them stronger. Our public schools are failing to teach our children the basic skills they need to succeed and they are too politicized and focused on cultural issues. Parents need alternatives - you can be a leader and a hero for students across our state.

I respectfully urge you to take a stand for Texas students and parents and support Education Savings Accounts.

John White
Self
Rockwall, TX

In 2022, I represented Senate District 2 on the Texas State Republican Convention Platform Committee. Parents spoke for School Choice at our committee meetings and before the full Platform Committee. Most of those parents opposed the indoctrination and sexualization of their children in public schools.

My four children, all close in age, are graduates of Rockwall High School. At the time the youngest, now 46 years of age, was finishing High School, there were no pornographic, pro-homosexual books in the school library. Today, there are many. I know because I can browse the Rockwall High School library online.

Four grandchildren live in Rockwall, and all are homeschooled. The youngest, nine years of age, recently tested for math. She was rated "post-High School." Our choice of Home School curriculum is Classical Conversations. My nine-year-old granddaughter has a better understanding of civics than students in Rockwall High School and Rockwall-Heath High School. I know because I talk with local high school students.

I want our local government schools to be effective and successful. I am not anti-government schools. I appreciate the superior education my home-schooled grandchildren receive. I believe all the children in our area deserve the best education to address challenges even I did not have to deal with as a child.

I urge you to support School Choice. Our Governor agrees.

Thank you.

Sergio Porres
self, software engineer
Irving, TX

I am writing to you legislators to express how important this legislation is to me. Children are the future, and the responsibility of molding them into good, virtuous and responsible citizens of our great state is the primary duty of all parents. Therefore, to empower parents and create a competitive educational environment it is vital that the ability to choose the schools our children attend is essential. After the events of the last few years it has never been clearer that parents must have the ability to send their children to the schools they think will best prepare them for the future ahead. Educational opportunity is best not only for the children and for the parents, but also for the future of Texas.

John Crews, Mr.
Me
Kerrville, TX

Please don't let teachers and administrators over power any legislation pertaining to this subject. School choice will benefit parents as well as state schools because the competition will improve both the choices and the state schools. The results will be improved curriculum at both places and better teachers. It's a no "brainer" !

William Harrison
Self - blue collar worker, project manager, consultant, parent and grandparent
San Antonio, TX

Texas legislators need to step up and finish the job and at least allow a vote on Education Savings Accounts. The public school system is not doing its job. There is not enough focus on 3 R's, kids are coming out of school and not knowing how to survive in the real world. School choice must be an option for every family. This will require the public school system to either straighten up shut down. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this matter.

Michael Ross Heinrichy
self
Austin, TX

Beyond any doubt the responsibility of raising and educating my children belongs solely on my wife and I. The educators act in loco parentis and are responsible to the parents and the community in every way. Having a choice where and who educates my children is of the utmost importance to me. Furthermore, I am beyond weary with the indoctrination that takes place while the education suffers. Teach my children and the children in my community to read write science history English etc and lets have these teachers and administrators quit pushing their beliefs and their wokeness on our children. Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinion - shalom.

Michael Walton
Self, The Justice Foundation
Lubbock, TX

As a former teacher and administrator in a 97% at risk, credit recovery, alternative Charter High School, I can attest to the fact that poor discipline policies have a significantly negative impact on students and their overall feeling about their educational experience. In the same alternative context, I have seen the impact of a poorly executed discipline policy and, under different administration, a very peaceful, well-ordered learning environment where the students were happy and discipline problems were handled admirably. If this were the only problem with attaining a quality education, it could be resolved.

Educational opportunity is also hindered when students of lower income families are required by compulsory attendance laws to attend a poor performing school in their zip code. This is particularly true when the school in question is without the necessary resources to provide a quality education; and struggling families are without the financial resources to consider an alternative that isn't free.

The problem is exacerbated when school administrative personnel adopt a lax discipline policy that is so focused on making the child 'feel good' that character development suffers, and teachers are left woefully unsupported. I know of teachers who were threatened in the classroom by students, and nothing was done by the administration to demonstrate that the administration had the teachers' back.

Many students are prevented from having a quality, meaningful and beneficial school experience because too many adults are playing political games with their hearts and minds. Instead of being focused on the advancement of the child's education. There is a large movement, fueled by Teacher's Unions like the NEA and the American Federation of Teachers, to indoctrinate these children with abandon; to groom them for sexual deviance and train them to become activists who swear religious allegiance to a cult like set of beliefs that have nothing to do with education and everything to do with social programming.

School Choice, where the money follows the child through ESAs is a brilliant solution to the problem. It makes school districts more accountable to stakeholders, has empirically proven benefits for academic performance and teacher pay, and will give parents all over Texas the opportunity to enrich their child's education.

Teacher's Unions have force-fed false information about public school funding failures to teachers and administrators all over the state of Texas. As a result, the truth is buried in false hype and fear-based manipulation. Their arguments will not stand in the face of an honest account of empirical data. It has been proven time and time again that increased competition breeds increased success. To ignore this is to do a great dis-service to Texas students and Texas families.

Please do what's best for our children. Let's start supporting students, not school districts, and provide ESAs to families who need them.

Steve Pfeifer

Self

North Richland Hills, TX

I am all for education opportunities provided that any institution receiving tax payer funds play by same rules. That includes admission, student testing, and annual spending auditing of funds received. Anything less is ripe with corruption and waste of funds. Have read too many stories in NY Times and WAPO about funds going to private religious schools and students not being prepared enough after high school graduation.

Teresa Hinojos

Self - professional development consultant

El Paso, TX

I am a parent and an educator. I have two children in elementary school and I have been an educator for 18 years. I am a certified Teacher in Texas and a certified Principal as instructional leader. A quality education in Texas means that teachers and schools are held to a high caliber by ensuring that the teachers are certified and that the schools are performing to meet high standards according to the accountability system in Texas. Providing all children in Texas a quality education should require that students have access to high quality CERTIFIED teachers and to schools that are not underperforming on the accountability system. This will guarantee that students obtain a quality education. There have been a lot of talks in this year's legislative session about school choice and charters as well as vouchers. Charters are not all held to the same standards as public schools. Some of these schools are failing their students and communities because they are not doing what is best for kids by meeting those expectations of certified teachers and accountability standards. Charters are also able to turn students away if they are not performing. How does this equate to educational opportunity for all students? Public schools are not allowed to turn students away or push them out with tactics like some private and charters do. Public schools have to meet accountability standards with all of the students that they are given and they cannot pick and choose the way charters and private schools do. Finding more charters and giving vouchers to families for "school choice" just defund public schools and makes it even more challenging for them to perform. Why can't we fund our public schools more to retain high quality teachers and incentivize them to do more for kids? Give public schools more money so they can hire more teachers and reduce class sizes? More money and more teachers can mean more planning time for teachers so they aren't overworked. More money for public schools can mean better security for our schools so that children and educators feel safe. I hope that legislators will talk with public school educators across the state to hear from them instead of select schools that may not have the best interests of our children. Why not listen to the recommendations from the Teacher Task Force and find those objectives that they listed? Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cynthia Swoyer, Ms.

Athens Christian Academy

Mabank, TX

I retired from a public school in Iowa in 2022. I witnessed CRT theory being taught, bullying, no dress code for students, and a total lack of respect for Authority Figures. I now am subbing at a Christian School that has respect, God based curriculum and excellent well behaved students who are smart Happy and kind! As a Grandma of 5 and former teacher I believe parents deserve a CHOICE in their child's education and where that education occurs. A Public Education cannot fill all the requirements needed to face our complicated and highly competitive work environments of tomorrow. Please consider this question "What would I want for my own child?" A carefully chosen faith based education where all students fit in and are accepted is the only logical answer.

Daniel Miller

self

Amarillo, TX

The best way for all Texas students to receive a quality education is through our Texas public schools. Please say NO to vouchers that would give tax payer money to private schools that are not held to the same high standards and accountability as public schools. Thank you.

Sarah Gregory, Educator/ Parent
Self- Educator
Round Rock, TX

Parents currently have many options for their children's' educations: neighborhood public school, inner-district transfers, out-of-district transfers, charter schools, and private schools. Vouchers are a giveaway of tax payer money to the rich, and they are completely unnecessary. Vouchers do not increase the "school choice", as there are plenty of choices already available in our urban and suburban areas. Further, we need to fully fund public schools and adequately pay teachers so that every child has access to an excellent public school in his/her neighborhood. Vouchers are NOT the solution. They will contribute to more inequity and exacerbate the teacher shortage due to a decrease in school funding. Please support using our record budgetary surplus to support public schools, which serve the vast majority of students in Texas. Thanks!

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Jennifer Bowland
Self- Educator
Round Rock, TX

Texas public schools don't need educational savings accounts/vouchers for all students to have equal opportunities for their education. Our current education system provides this but could provide even more to students if the basic student allotment was raised by at least \$1,000.

Taryn Painter, Teacher
Self
Lubbock, TX

As a public educator in a rural district, putting public tax dollars into private schools rather into Title 1 schools where the funding is desperately needed, it would absolutely hinder the students I teach. More students attend public schools, which is what all students across Texas have a right to by the constitution itself. The focus of this session should be on the public student sector and not based off of the governor's farce of "parent choice".

Sarah Friar, Mrs.
Self/military Officer
Harker Heights, TX

I strongly urge you to vote for parental school choice for the state of Texas. There are many families who are in underserved communities who cannot afford private education and their children are subjected to the whims of liberal teachers and board members. Parents have very little power and no control over what their children are subjected to. El Paso ISD is a very good example. The median income in El Paso prohibits a private education but the schools in that district are below Texas standards and teach children in 3rd grade how to put condoms on bananas. The focus should be on literacy in that district and other basics. Taking time away from actual education to focus on sex in the elementary schools is very alarming to parents. This is just one example.

I deeply urge you to have integrity for these kids, our next generation in Texas and vote for school choice. The next generation is depending on you.

Katrina Price, Principal
T. G. McCord Elementary
Vernon, TX

Children of Teachers should qualify of free public Pre-k programs. Teachers typically make “too much” money to qualify for our free pre-k programs, so they are left with the option of paying for private daycare, which is an added burden to their family, or they leave their children with family. These children then begin kindergarten an educational year behind those students who do qualify. These students and their educator parents deserve this opportunity for quality education at the pre-k level.

Paula Wilder
Self retired teacher
Dickinson, TX

I am opposed to vouchers of any kind. We need to support public education to create strong communities.

Joyce Shirley
Self
Fritch, TX

I believe that it is in the best interest of every school age child and the State of Texas that we establish Educational Savings Accounts for every student. These ESA should not be under the control of the local school district. The money should follow the student and the parents decide how to best educate their child. This will give the I S D s competition and they will become better schools and their teachers will be more free to just educate the children.

Nathan Carrington, Pastor
Jubilee Apostolic Church
Amarillo, TX

As a pastor, I hear from families, on a regular basis, concerning their children’s education. There is tremendous interest and support for parents having the freedom to choose the quality and source of education that their children receive. I, myself, am a father of 5 children: 3 are biological and 2 are adopted. We have chosen to educate our children, at home, which is an expense some families cannot absorb. We believe this choice should be available to all families, by allowing each student’s educational financial support to follow them into the system their parents elect.

Cathy Kennedy
Self-teacher
Conroe, TX

I teach at a private Christian school. Our enrollment has increased as local public school policies have caused the loss of trust from parents. But not all parents have the financial resources to provide a private education for their children. I want all parents to have that freedom of choice. Please pass legislation that would give parents the financial freedom to make the best educational choice for their children.

Jesus Morales
self
Pearland, TX

School vouchers can better promote student success.

Bettie Saccardo
Self/Educational Diagnostician
Mansfield, TX

Public Education is the cornerstone of our Democracy. Texas public schools have been providing that to all children of Texas without preference to race, economic status, gender, religion, or disability. It is imperative that moving forward Texas continues to provide free public education to all children. That includes fully funding our public schools and preventing schemes like Educational Savings Accounts or vouchers to pull money out of our schools. It is also imperative that public tax money is used for our public schools and not sent to private or religious organizations.

There have been many attempts at pulling money out of our public schools in the name of educational freedom. It is a smoke screen. Parents have always have educational freedom to send their children to private or religious schools. But the vast majority of students have remained in public schools. ESA's would not benefit the vast majority of Texas children yet it would hurt them as there would be less money for public schools. It will only benefit those students whose families can make up the difference in the cost of tuition. In addition as a Special Education professional, private and religious organizations are not subject to the same protections for our most vulnerable students as public schools are.

I urge you to continue to fight against vouchers, ESA's or any other attempt to defund our public schools. Without a free public education, we will not have the workforce necessary to drive Texas's economic growth and we will be hurting our children and their future.

Edward Kubicek

A really concerned retired citizen.

Franklin, TX

As a spouse of an administrator in a Texas school district Special Education Department, I am privy to a lot of information concerning our education system. As such I have learned that schools are currently focused on teaching for the Star test and basically have little to no ability for creative teaching of the basic fundamentals' students need. The ranking of students as compared with other states as well as other countries is alarming. The education system appears to be failing to produce educated students. Public education has lost practically all sense of control over the student population. Teachers are practically powerless in controlling the student body so they can do their jobs. It seems that about two percent of the class that are the troublemakers are allowed to control and disrupt the ability of the ninety eight percent who actually want to learn.

A significant percentage of parents take little to no interest in the students' performance and almost appear to be allowing the school to raise their children. The lack of support from some parents who feel the school is not treating their child fairly when the school attempts to hold their child accountable is disconcerting. Parents who lack the ability to send their children to private school have to endure the public system so desperately in need of reform. Perhaps if TEA would review the guidelines' SPED teachers are forced to adhere to and truly listen to the problems, they are facing there would be fewer teachers leaving the field and a significant increase in those wanting to enter. It is quite apparent that a significant number of students currently in SPED should not be in that environment that affords them preferential treatment. ADHD and emotional distress are greatly exaggerated in my view. A view anchored in an education system over half century ago where students were held accountable, and discipline was swift and progressive. Students understood the focus was on education and not what you could get away with. Respect for the teachers and their instruction was given freely. Such is no longer the case in an alarming number of cases. The disparity of treatment between SPED and GENED is further allowing for the decline in fear of retribution for SPED kids. GENED kids are sent to DAP for serious infractions where SPED kids can assault a teacher and return to class the next day. That indeed is ridiculous. Parents need to have the option of sending their kids to a school where their children can receive an education free from the issues plaguing the public education system. I know the Teachers Union would be opposed to any such legislation but a simple review of the number of teachers leaving the public system for the private system should be a glaring example that either TEA should change the current system or give the parents the option through a voucher system.

Christie Justice

8th Generation Texan

Salado, TX

Texas Public Test Scores down. Population growing with illegal immigrants and Americans moving here from Blue states. As a grandparent of ten, Texas must pass school choice for ALL Texans. This is not an income based problem. This is a quality of education problem. Texans must have School Choice. Stop the delays. Do your job!

David Kaminski

Self

Hockley, TX

Public education is not immune to inflation. And the biggest impact to public education funding is the basic allotment which has not been adjusted since the 86th legislature when it was set at \$6160.00. When US average inflation is applied to the 2019 basic allotment that number (\$6160.00) would be \$7327.86 today according to <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/2019?amount=6160>

It is unfair to force supporters of public education to come to the legislature and beg for an increase in the basic allotment. Those supporters should only be required to beg when they are asking for new funding required for new initiatives. It is past-time to be honest when dealing with public education. It is past-time to fully fund public education.

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Krystin Feole
Self-Educator
San Marcos, TX

A voucher system will be detrimental to the public school system. It will cause a lack of opportunity and equity for students by furthering achievement gaps due to taking much needed funding from public ed.

Laura Montgomery
Self/teacher
Salado, TX

Students have plenty of opportunities to obtain a quality education with public schools. Parents have the freedom to choose where they live and therefore what school district their children attend. It is **REQUIRED** that the state fund **PUBLIC EDUCATION** and not use public funds to support private education. That is doing a disservice to the entire population of this great state. If we funded public education the way it should be the quality of education students receive would increase. **PLEASE DO NOT** support vouchers of any kind!

Scott Davis, Public High School Teacher & Coach
Self
Millsap, TX

I am requesting that you honor and respect the **PUBLIC** education system by doing away with voucher plans so that funding can be raised to improve our public schools, increase pay and quality of teaching staff, test for improvement documentation of students without penalizing the reputation of school communities by these results, and raise funding of our public schools so districts can provide students with a chance to succeed and feel respected in a quality learning environment. Access to quality public schools is what makes America different. Please respect **ALL** people by making this a priority. Our future depends on diversity and respect. Children are our future, so please treat their education with care and thoughtful planning. Public tax dollars should not be given to the private sector of schools!

Candice Tenbush

Self

Hutto, TX

Say NO to vouchers and/or educational savings accounts. Tax dollars need to stay within the public schools. Parents already have a choice, and subsidizing private school tuition will only underfund our public schools. Access to quality public schools is what makes America different. Our Texas public schools are doing amazing things, even though they're not fully funded. Imagine all that could be accomplished if you made students and teachers a priority. Please respect ALL people by making this a priority. Our future depends on diversity and respect. Children are our future, so please treat their education with care and thoughtful planning. Public tax dollars should not be given to the private sector of schools!

Ken Damron

Self

Austin, TX

Public taxpayer dollars should remain with public schools, that educate ALL students. I do not want my tax dollars to be spent on vouchers that go to private entities that have absolutely no accountability, transparency or oversight. Private schools, not parents, decide who they wish to admit...or deny, and this is not how the public's money should be used.

Monica Zamora

Self - paralegal

El Paso, TX

Our children need school choice. The reality is that we spend massive amounts of money on our current public education system and get little for it. Approximately half of the children in Texas are unable to read or do math at grade level. That is massive failure. What other industry can produce 50% failure and survive? Only a government protected monopoly that is strongly politically organized can achieve that much protection for massive failure. It is the students who are hurt and are no longer taught moral law that comes from Judeo Christian values. Our children have a right to go to a school where these values are also taught.

Real accountability is when you take your educational funding you pay in taxes, and you voluntarily give it to someone who gives you a great product or a service in exchange for your money. If someone does not do a good job, you go somewhere else, to someone who has better service. That pressure makes most businesses try to do a good job, they copy businesses that are successful and that people like. Services and products get better and better, slowly but surely, because of this freedom.

School choice would introduce that same dynamic by giving the children's money not to the districts, but to the students and their parents through an Education Savings Account (ESA) to be spent solely on education. Everyone would have money to spend on education, so everyone gets a free publicly funded education but the schools have to be directly and immediately accountable to the consumers. Every school would have to meet the needs of the children, not the needs of the unions or the politicians. Please support school choice. Praying for each one of you on this important committee.

Jeanne Mixon
Self retired
Pflugerville, TX

I am writing to strongly urge you to vote against school vouchers that only benefit the rich who attend private schools at the expense of the public school system which is struggling for lack of funds. I am the grandparent of two children who attend schools in Pflugerville. I am dismayed at how hard my grandchildren's school struggles to make ends meet and provide a quality education despite teaching and staff shortages. I do not understand why rich people who choose to send their kids to private schools would take my tax dollars to defray the costs of the schools they chose. Historically if someone considers the public school not good enough for their children they have paid out of pocket for that choice. As a taxpaying citizen of Texas who votes, I do not approve of my money lining the pockets of people who opt out of our public school system. Instead of robbing public schools, we should be working to make them better, pumping state money into them so they can hire adequate staff and improve student learning. Please vote against the "educational opportunity and freedom to obtain a quality education" legislation because it only accomplishes school choice by stealing tax dollars from children who can't afford private schools.

Marivel Macias, EPISD Chief Organizational Transformation and Equity Officer and SISD Board Trustee
El Paso ISD & Socorro ISD
El Paso, TX

No to Vouchers

Meredith Torrence
self/educator
Rowlett, TX

I am requesting that you honor and respect the PUBLIC education system by doing away with voucher plans so that funding can be raised to improve our public schools, increase pay and quality of teaching staff, test for improvement documentation of students without penalizing the reputation of school communities by these results, and raise funding of our public schools so districts can provide students with a chance to succeed and feel respected in a quality learning environment. Access to quality public schools is what makes America different. Please respect ALL people by making this a priority. Our future depends on diversity and respect. Children are our future, so please treat their education with care and thoughtful planning. Public tax dollars should not be given to the private sector of schools!

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Grace Mancilla, Mrs.
Self
Palestine, TX

As a public educator and supporter of public education I am against vouchers/ESA. Public funds need to stay with public schools. Texas ranks 49th in student funding. That is embarrassing for such a rich and thriving state. Let's fund our public schools better before we even consider taking money away!

Julie Hoyle

Self

College Station, TX

As a Texas school teacher, I am against vouchers of all kinds that will separate public school education from private. If the voucher bill passes the private education system will not have to serve students with special needs, special education or learning disabilities, unless they choose to do so. There will be no oversight by the Texas government system, and it will further separate the classes within the state of Texas. This this will not allow for a equal opportunity in education for any student who is b is not financially affluent. Choosing vouchers will mean that a large number of public schools will receive less funding and will further hurt the public school education system. A vote for vouchers would be a vote for the upper class to have an unfair advantage over the normal working class citizen of Texas.

George Edwards

Self/Teacher-Coach

Center Point, TX

I have been a public school teacher in a small, rural district for the past 22 years. When I began my career, I would have never dreamed that the State Government would systematically do everything in their power to defund and destroy the best tool of democracy known to man--a free public education. It is even set out in the Texas Constitution--in Article VII--" 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." Perhaps if some of you, particularly my Republican friends, actually read these constitutions you hold so dear to your heart, maybe you would know this. Perhaps some of you forgot the opportunities you were afforded by that free public education you received. Maybe some of you were able to go to the private, for profit, schools that you are seeking to divert money to. Whatever the circumstance, it is a travesty that the voucher scheme is even being considered. If public schools are actually failing, how about fixing them? How about funding schools beyond the level they are currently funded? Why was funding cut in 2011 and then never restored? Why are you sitting on a surplus of \$32.7 Billions dollars and then have the audacity to not properly fund the school children of this state? Do you want to create a permanent underclass? That is what is going to happen if school funding isn't restored. Private schools want the money but they don't want certain kids. Those kids are going to become a burden to you and I eventually. And for what? A quick profit. Another campaign donation. The veil has been lifted. It is very apparent what the Governor and Lt. Governor want. For those of you who are providing a road block to their insolence I salute you. I pray for your success. If you are part of their ilk, I hope you can sleep at night. Vouchers and "Educational Savings Accounts" are not a solution to our problems. In fact they will only create more. Schools like mine will wither away. And in rural Texas there are no other options. What are you going to do about that if the voucher schemes pass? I am also a property owner. And yes, property taxes have gone up exponentially the past 4-5 years. It would be nice to have some relief in that realm. **BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF EDUCATION.** How about eliminating some corporate welfare? Yes we have a nice business climate in this state. That's great. So why do we need even more? Greed. That's why. Greed is going to destroy this state and all of us in it if left unchecked. And that is the sole sum and purpose of the Voucher schemes. You have the power to stop it. Even if Hot Wheels calls 25 more Special Sessions. Stay vigilant. Stay the course. The children of Texas, **YOUR CHILDREN AND MINE**, depend on it.

George Edwards
Self/Teacher-Coach
Center Point, TX

I have been a public school teacher in a small, rural district for the past 22 years. When I began my career, I would have never dreamed that the State Government would systematically do everything in their power to defund and destroy the best tool of democracy known to man--a free public education. It is even set out in the Texas Constitution--in Article VII--" 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." Perhaps if some of you, particularly my Republican friends, actually read these constitutions you hold so dear to your heart, maybe you would know this. Perhaps some of you forgot the opportunities you were afforded by that free public education you received. Maybe some of you were able to go to the private, for profit, schools that you are seeking to divert money to. Whatever the circumstance, it is a travesty that the voucher scheme is even being considered. If public schools are actually failing, how about fixing them? How about funding schools beyond the level they are currently funded? Why was funding cut in 2011 and then never restored? Why are you sitting on a surplus of \$32.7 Billions dollars and then have the audacity to not properly fund the school children of this state? Do you want to create a permanent underclass? That is what is going to happen if school funding isn't restored. Private schools want the money but they don't want certain kids. Those kids are going to become a burden to you and I eventually. And for what? A quick profit. Another campaign donation. The veil has been lifted. It is very apparent what the Governor and Lt. Governor want. For those of you who are providing a road block to their insolence I salute you. I pray for your success. If you are part of their ilk, I hope you can sleep at night. Vouchers and "Educational Savings Accounts" are not a solution to our problems. In fact they will only create more. Schools like mine will wither away. And in rural Texas there are no other options. What are you going to do about that if the voucher schemes pass? I am also a property owner. And yes, property taxes have gone up exponentially the past 4-5 years. It would be nice to have some relief in that realm. **BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF EDUCATION.** How about eliminating some corporate welfare? Yes we have a nice business climate in this state. That's great. So why do we need even more? Greed. That's why. Greed is going to destroy this state and all of us in it if left unchecked. And that is the sole sum and purpose of the Voucher schemes. You have the power to stop it. Even if the Governor calls 25 more Special Sessions. Stay vigilant. Stay the course. The children of Texas, **YOUR CHILDREN AND MINE**, depend on it.

Alexis Wilson
T4PE
Spring, TX

The Basic Allotment needs to increase to allow all students the opportunity to get the education they deserve. No to vouchers, especially to vouchers that ate more than the basic allotment

Alexis Wilson
T4PE
Spring, TX

All districts should get a huge increase in the basic allotment in order to provide students with everything they need. No to vouchers, especially vouchers that are more than the basic allotment.

Nancy Havens, Mrs
Self/retired teacher
Allen, TX

Good quality Public schools are immensely important to all citizens of Texas. You have an obligation per our constitution to provide for them. Quality can best be achieved by providing ample amount of funding for each student in Texas. There is no evidence that all private schools can, or will provide as good of education as correctly funded public schools are able. You are working hard to avoid “ indoctrination “ of students. It would make no sense to give vouchers to go to private Christian schools which will “indoctrinate “ students to their belief. This ruins separation of church and state. They can refuse to provide accommodation for I.E.P.s, refuse to accept students, or kick them out. NO to vouchers! Correctly fund public schools and give the needed support to teachers and students!

Joy Cook
Educator/parent/taxpayer
West, TX

On choice for parents, we already have choice in that a parent can transfer their child if the district they live is failing along with charter school, in lies the problem TRANSPORTATION most students in failing low income do not have away to pay for transportation nor the difference to pay for tuition the voucher doesn't cover. Do you realize only about 50% of students at low income can pay for basic school supplies. Teachers buy them in many cases so students are able to participate in lessons. Lastly, I disagree private schools really offer choice for all students. Private do not have to accept your child especially if they are behind, sped, or behavioral issues. They do not have follow any type of guidelines for having certified teachers or best practice curriculum. How will the state hold private schools accountable for providing a high quality education using taxpayers money??? Seems to me we are trying to solve poverty issue in education with a half thought out plan with vouchers. What we need is put our best teachers in high poverty schools with incentives of pay and supports so all students have the same opportunity as students in our most affluent districts. Why don't we do this????? Because vouchers are not about truly helping students from low performing schools but to push a conservative agenda that schools are anti Christian that are indoctrinating children. Most public Ed teachers are Christian conservatives just trying make a difference for kids despite being told how they are failing on a daily basis. Vouchers will never be the solution to improving education. It's just another pie in the sky just like charter schools.

Terri Fontenot
self
Fort Worth, TX

I am a 20 year veteran public school teacher that went to Austin in May to testify, but because of the amount of time spent on the floor and having to be back in the classroom I left my written testimony. Please understand that providing vouchers to provide “educational opportunity” will not work. The amount of money being proposed will not cover most private school programs for students. This will provide those already paying for private school a subsidy. As of right now there is not a raise in PPF for the next school year. Based on inflation this should be raised by \$1,000. How can the proposal be made to give \$8,000 for parents to use on private school? How can you leave our kids that have no choice either because of transportation or proximity to a private school. Our tax money should not be used to provide private education. Should parents choose that avenue, then it needs to be paid for by them. To add to this, private schools do not have to take the STAAR test, nor do they have provide special education services. If a student is a severe behavior problem, they have the luxury of denying services to those students that public schools are required to serve. Please help public school teachers and students at a very difficult time in education.

Sincerely,
Terri Fontenot

Maritza Wong, Mrs.
Self - Stay at home mom
Manvel, TX

The state's constitutional role is to make available a quality education, free of charge, to EVERY Texas child through the public school system - full stop. It is NOT, in any way, the state's role to create, fund and manage a scholarship program for private schools. Parents are, and always have been, free to choose private school for their children. I am a product of K-12 private school. My husband is a product to K-12 public school. This was in the 70's, 80's and 90's, and nothing has changed to take away that freedom of choice from parents. We CHOOSE public education for both of our children today, they are enrolled in Pearland ISD, in REP. ED THOMPSON's district. In discussing school vouchers and education savings accounts, the legislature is not creating any new freedoms, only looking for ways to divert funding away from public schools and divest itself of its constitutional responsibility. If the legislature is genuinely concerned about the quality of public education in Texas, legislators should fully fund our public schools instead of holding them hostage to voucher schemes. In a year with a historic budget surplus, it is nothing short of an embarrassment that our legislature refused to 1) increase the basic allotment by the hundreds of dollars needed to keep up with inflation, 2) increase teacher pay in a time where recruitment and retention are an enormous challenge, and 3) increase the school safety allotment in a manner even close to being commensurate with the armed officer requirement included in HB 3. In the year following one of the most horrific school shootings in our nation's history in Uvalde, following the money shows that school safety still didn't rank as a priority. Some children will never have any other choice in their lives but to attend public school, no matter what scheme legislators come up with. It is upon our legislators to guarantee a quality education for every one of those children, not just the children for whom the stars align. My children are receiving a quality education in Pearland ISD, and I would not send them anywhere else. Yet I am tired of watching school board meetings where the main topics are budget deficits, unfunded mandates from the state, and potential VATREs (Voter Approval Tax Rate Elections), all because the state won't do its share. Stop making our districts beg for basic funding, when their energy needs to be focused on education. I am OPPOSED to vouchers/education savings accounts. I am IN FAVOR of the state taking care of its responsibility - our public schools.

Lindsey Johnson
Self/Teacher
New Braunfels, TX

I am a public school music educator with 20 years of experience. I have taught hundreds of students over the years ranging from kindergarten through 12th grade. My most recent experience has been as a high school Choir Director in North East ISD in San Antonio. In addition to this, I am also the parent of an 11 year old and a 14 year old, both of whom attend public schools in Comal ISD.

Voucher initiatives will harm Texas children, particularly those who live in low-income and rural areas. It will remove vital dollars from schools areas which are already struggling to meet their basic operating expenses, funneling those dollars towards private entities that are not subject to even basic fiscal oversight. Public dollars should never be spent on private ventures.

I urge my elected officials in both chambers of the Texas Legislature to hold the line and continue to vote down this fiscally irresponsible and morally questionable venture. Vote "no" on vouchers in all forms. Keep public tax dollars in public schools.

Jolynda McGrath, Mrs
Self
Montgomery, TX

Just say NO to vOUCHers! Public Education is already hurting! The state financially cannot sustain funding for 2 systems! Make our public schools STRONGER AND BETTER!

Suzy Hagar, Ms
Self
Dallas, TX

Texans have made it clear NO to vouchers! They are destructive to rural schools that have a hard enough time as it is making ends meet! Prove you are FOR ALL students by not short changing schools most in need of your support! Our public schools have not been adequately funded for years. Vote NO VOUCHERS! Thank you.

Maritza Wong, Mrs.
Self - Stay at home mom
Manvel, TX

This is simple - FULLY FUND our public schools. It is what the state constitution requires. The freedom to choose private school or homeschool has always existed - and those aren't the realms of the state. The state must stick to its lane and use public dollars for public schools. Both of my children attend Pearland ISD, in Rep. ED THOMPSON's district. We love our school district, and we CHOOSE public school for our kids. I value the opportunities provided to EVERY student in public schools, regardless of life situations outside of school. A level playing field is what every child deserves, and public schools are where this is achieved. I am OPPOSED to vouchers/education savings accounts.

Tasha Yarbrough
Concerned Texas citizen
Channing, TX

Increase funding to PUBLIC schools to ensure that students have the opportunity to obtain quality education. Private and charter schools do NOT offer this opportunity because they do not have standards they have to teach, they also may discriminate during their acceptance process, turning away students with disabilities, academic and socio-economic challenges. It is important to take seriously the future of our students and say NO to vouchers or ESAs, fund public schools so teachers may have the resources and students given opportunities for extra-curricular and arts and lower student-teacher ratio. Class sizes matter, teacher pay matters, value of education matters and the state has repeatedly shown the lack of value by continuing to decrease the funds to it and now villianizing public schools and teachers with made-up propaganda trying to pass a detrimental voucher system. Do better legislators!! Try subbing in public schools, talking to classroom teachers, not administrators far removed from the daily workings of a classroom and SUPPORT teachers!! NO to vouchers/ESAs! YES to increase funding to public schools. YES to teacher pay raises, as every other state employee received a raise from the budget surplus this session, except those that make the most impact on the future. Teacher pay was tied to a voucher stipulation, which no other state employee had stipulation on their increase.

Anne Russey
Self
Katy, TX

As a taxpayer, a mother and a public school graduate and now parent, I oppose any and all proposals to diverse public dollars into private schools (via vouchers by any and all names). I ask you to do the same. Thank you.

Anne Russey
Self
Katy, TX

As a taxpayer, a mother and a public school graduate and now parent, I oppose any and all proposals to diverse public dollars into private schools (via vouchers by any and all names). I ask you to do the same. Thank you.

Janette Church

Self

Prosper, TX

No vouchers!!! Support and fully fund public schools. I'm a conservative voter who is tired of the way the media and politicians are portraying teachers as liberal indoctrinators.

Janette Church

Self

Prosper, TX

NO VOUCHERS! Fully fund public education. Public dollars are not for private education. I'm a lifelong conservative voter and so sick of this!

Paula Miller

Self-retired educator

Lubbock, TX

Our forefathers correctly realized an educated population would lead Texas to greatness. Using funds from land sales ensured every community could educate every child. Our constitution guarantees a quality, free education. Now it's time for our generations to use Texas' vast wealth to create the nation's #1 school system. Kids are not commodities or products to be "stamped out". They are the future of this great state. If we would trust educators to be the heart and soul of schools, we will soar. Turn their expertise loose and watch our students excel in every imaginable area. Do not micro manage. Allow local schools to determine what is best for their communities. Then FUND IT. Stop outsourcing our kids to groups you know are in it for the money, not the students.

Emily Hoppel

Self (and 3 public school children), Value Chain Emissions Advisor

The Woodlands, TX

Public tax dollars should go only to public schools who have to accept all children. Our family does not support vouchers, ESAs, tax rebates for private education, or any other methods of taking public money and giving it to private entities that do not support all students. Also, our public schools need an increase in the basic allotment. You are willing to give private schools \$8000 per child, please raise the public allotment to that amount?

Kristina Fortenberry

Self- Dyslexia Therapist in public education

McKinney, TX

1. No vouchers! Public funds need to be used for public schools that serve all students.
 2. Raise the standard allotment per student, fully fund public Ed, and give teachers much deserved raises (like every other government employee in Texas is getting).
 3. End standardized testing for grades 3-8 or drastically restructure the tests to be age and developmentally appropriate.
-

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Self- Dyslexia Therapist in public education
McKinney, TX

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Cynthia Lara
Self
San Angelo, TX

It has always been a huge part of our educational system for all students to get an equal education. Vouchers does not do this. Vouchers keep this from happening. It will be detrimental to our children for you to fund vouchers of any kind. Freedom to obtain an education doesn't mean you can take funds away from our public schools and give money to schools that do not have to meet the same requirements as public schools.
Please take care of all children and take care of our schools.

Kathryn Jones
Self, educator
New Braunfels, TX

I am a public educator who has also taught in a private sam requesting that you honor and respect the PUBLIC education system by doing away with voucher plans so that funding can be raised to improve our public schools, increase pay and quality of teaching staff, test for improvement documentation of students without penalizing the reputation of school communities by these results, and raise funding of our public schools so districts can provide students with a chance to succeed and feel respected in a quality learning environment. Access to quality public schools is what makes America different.

Cynthia Lara
Self
San Angelo, TX

Vouchers do not provide educational freedom for all students. This state has always prided itself on giving a quality education for all children. It gets in the way of providing a quality education for all children. We as a society should want our public schools to be the best and to do that we need to protect our schools.

Kathryn Jones
Self, educator
New Braunfels, TX

I am a public elementary teacher who also has experience working in a private school setting. I appreciate the option of private schools, but request that you vote NO to the current voucher plan. I am requesting that you honor and respect the PUBLIC education system so that funding can be raised to improve our public schools, increase pay and quality of teaching staff. Public funds should not be going to schools that do not have to comply with state or federal standards and laws.

Cynthia Lara
Self
San Angelo, TX

Say no to any type of voucher program. This is not in our state's best interest. Our public schools need to be fully funded and fully equipped with the best resources. We deserve better than giving up on schools and funding private schools.

Gregg Scott
Myself
Midlothian, TX

The only path to educational opportunity and freedom is to pass funding to support public schools. Any vouchers or ESAs will only lessen access for Texans for quality education.

Linda Kirkdorffer
Self, retired educator
North Richland Hills, TX

I am a retired public school teacher. I have spent many years working with highly professional and competent colleagues to provide quality education to every child in our district. Many of our children have needs which will not be provided for in private schools (unlike in public schools) because it is too expensive for them to do. I'm opposed to any voucher plan. Only students from wealthy families who can afford to pay the balance of costs to attend them even after receiving a voucher will benefit, and this is not the goal of our society! Please care more about our children who cannot speak for themselves than your wealthy political sponsors. Public schools are doing a fabulous job despite what our governor and some of our legislators would have you believe....and deserve all of our support! Just make it a priority to visit them and see for yourself!

Gregg Scott
Myself
Midlothian, TX

All Texans currently have access to opportunities and freedoms. Give public schools the funds they require and stop any ideas of vouchers or ESAs.

Dorothea Cline, Retired teacher
Self. Retired teacher
San Angelo, TX

You need to look at the May 2023 exit lists for Texas public schools. Not just the numbers, but WHO you lost across the state. Teachers who represent the last generation of "career classroom teachers" just resigned en masse. Most of them (I am in this group but had to retire in 2020 due to health). This group has dealt with poor pay, negative parents, rough kids, poor public opinion, September 11, Columbine and every shooting drill since then, and so many other things while in their classrooms with students. They have Taught more than one generation of families who have come through their doors and have coworkers who once were their student.

The loss of this group should be mourned. They are unicorns and dinosaurs- both rare and extinct. No one today plans to stay in the classroom for long. It is seen as a stepping stone to larger pursuits.

Jo Biggers

Self/Retired Teacher and Educational Diagnostician

Bonham, TX

The idea that Vouchers will give parents the choice to send their children to other schools will only help parents who already have the money to send their children there. Only a very few private schools will accept students who have been diagnosed with a disability of ANY type. Private schools do not have to do so and they will not. I know of two private schools in DFW who serve special needs children (Winston school—dyslexia and Notre Dame School—Intellectual Disability). These two schools have 3 to 4 year waiting lists. The governor was not being truthful about this. If a student has any type behavioral issues, private schools will not take them unless those are the only students they serve; again, these are very few in the state. Low socioeconomic/ minority students likely don't have transportation to or supplemental money need for private schools. Private schools have no regulations requiring certified teachers, nurses, librarians, PE teachers, cafeterias, bilingual classes, speech therapists, etc. Don't let anyone tell you that vouchers will not take money from public schools —because they certainly will! Many areas of our state don't have a private school within 100 miles of public schools. Many rural areas have no private schools. Get the picture? The governor is pushing vouchers to appeal to his base—NOT to give parents a choice where to send their children. He wants to “get out of the school business” which is NOT what our country was based on. Don't let him pull the wool over your eyes. Check out what I've written. My husband and I are lifetime educators. Our schools rank 39th in the country now. Any type voucher plan is guaranteed to move us even farther behind. Is that what you want? We sure don't!

JoAnn McMinn, Ms.

Self

Rosenberg, TX

Say no to vouchers. We should maintain the separation of church and state. Public money should not pay for a private, religious education. This will take away money away from and weaken our public education system.

Lorea Seidel

Lorea Seidel

MURPHY, TX

As a homeowner in Texas, I pay a large amount of taxes to the state for use in funding public education, NOT private education. I want to maintain separation of church and state and I do not believe using tax dollars to support private -- often religious -- education respects the wishes of the public or the premise of separation of church and state. I also find it fundamentally unfair that the state holds public schools to specific standards (which cost money to implement, audit and report on) and that it will not hold charter or private schools to those same standards. This state has yet to properly support public education with its policies and financial structures. What my family wants is for the state to restructure school finance to make it truly viable, to address the pay issues for teachers and staff and to finally value education the way we should. There is no reason why our state shouldn't have high quality public schools capable of educating the next generation and beyond. Vouchers are not the way forward; they are a way to end public education in Texas. Vote NO on vouchers.

Marilyn Aponte
Self
Copperas Cove, TX

I am For JHR 140 ,because I believe that each child (student) should have the best opportunities to fulfill their full potential in learning. By giving parents the right to have School choices if they feel and see that their child require change. I believe that this change or choice should be free for those patents who make that choice of change.

I believe that children should not be passed on to the next grade without having that child show that they have mastered the grade requirements. Both Teachers and students should be held accountable. Teachers by having to test their knowledge of the subjects they teach as well as their students have to show their knowledge of the subjects that the teachers taught.

I believe that Teachers should be free to teach their students in ways that can improve their students learning. Teachers should not be put in a box to teach students. I believe that teachers should be paid on the grounds of % of the students who pass their classes.

I believe that sex gender education should not be taught in our schools. As well they should not be put in school Libraries, in text books or on tests to be taken by students.

I vote for school choice.

Patricia Cantu
Self
Pearland, TX

As a proud and native Texan I believe in freedom and choice, but vouchers have been proven to not deliver a quality education. Please let the work of this committee focus on improving the quality education that Public schools provide to ALL children. A quality education begins with certified teachers, research based curriculum that is aligned to the TEKS set by the SBOE and fair and transparent accountability.

If Texas invested in public education as opposed to ranking 40th in the country for per pupil funding, our state would not have the current devastating teacher shortage and schools would be more successful.

Leadership requires flexibility. With that in mind, if you choose to represent me by allocating my tax dollars to charters or private schools, then my expectation is that you hold them to the same financial and academic accountability measures and transparent reporting expected of my successful and surrounding neighborhood schools in my "A" district of which I am proud and who's interest I will use my voice and vote to protect.

Throwing tax payer money into an unproven venture such as charters and vouchers sounds too liberal and experimentally risky to me. Please invest our surplus into public education. My local community of voters expects the Legislature to pay the hardworking certified teachers we have left. Thanking you in advance for your careful and conservative representation within this committee.

Nicole Timmons
Self/TX Public School Educator
Commerce, TX

I am a veteran educator of 17 years in the state of Texas and a mom of four children who attend Texas public schools. As a voter, I demand our state honor its constitution and fully fund our public schools. Our teachers need a living wage that accounts for the rising cost of living in Texas, including our retired teachers. Our teachers and students deserve fewer testing burdens; eliminating high stakes testing would be a great start. The amount of money spent on STAAR is ridiculous and could be spent on increasing funding for schools to allow them to hire more teachers to lower class sizes and to purchase research-based programs to help close learning gaps for at risk students. As the majority of Texas constituents are, I am opposed to any kind of voucher program that will take public school tax money and put it in the hands of private schools. Parents already have school choice. Those who choose private school education should not receive public funding for their choice. I appreciate the opportunity to express my concerns with you, and I thank you for your continued support of Texas public schools.

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Dorothea Cline
Self- teacher
San Angelo, TX

Vouchers/ educational savings accounts will destroy rural Texas schools- especially those west of I 35. In West Texas, our rural schools are already struggling to stay afloat and function on limited funding and increased state demands. Adding. The stripping of funding for vouchers to the mix will be the death of public schooling in these communities and consolidation is far from children's best interest when towns lay 60 miles apart. Vouchers will not serve the best interest of Texas public school students - which is your Constitutionally given job.

Michelle Mock
Teachers and students
Navasota, TX

NO vouchers of any kind. This will ruin public schools and segregate communities!, Fully fund public schools. Fix the schools that are teaching gender, crt, etc and leave the other districts alone. Get rid of so much testing. Pay the teachers a decent salary, lessen the work demand and trust us to teach!

Michelle Mock
Teachers and students
Navasota, TX

NO to vouchers of any kind! This will ruin public schools and cause segregation in communities. Fix the schools that are teaching gender, crt, etc and leave the other schools alone. Stop the constant testing and everything that is tied to the test. Pay teachers a decent salary, lessen the work demand and trust us to teach!

Rebecca Williams
Self
Lubbock, TX

Using tax dollars to pay for private school vouchers is wrong. Private schools will discriminate against minority populations and those whose religious beliefs are different. If state funding is allowed then state oversight must be put in place to monitor any discriminatory activity.

Lynley Nall
Self - public education teacher
McKinney, TX

Educational opportunity and freedom already exists without passing this. Any Texan has the freedom to enroll their child in a private school. The burden of shouldering that cost should not be on the shoulders of Texan citizens. I should not be responsible for the cost of a child's private education, when I am paying taxes to support public education. Instead of a voucher program, fully fund Texas public education and allow it to flourish.

Nicole Hohensee
Myself
Hutto, TX

I am an educator, Mom of publicly educated children, and a tax payer. I support fully funding schools based on enrollment not attendance, providing teachers a raise that represents the importance of educating children in the state of Texas, and developing a system that evaluates schools fairly.

I do NOT support sending tax payer money to private, charter, or homeschooling parents where there is NOT a system of checks and balances and where they can pick and chose which children they would prefer to educate.

Public education needs to be fully funded to keep are democracy fully functioning.

Nicole Hohensee

Bryan White
Patton Springs ISD
Afton, TX

I am opposed to vouchers, ESA's and any other name vouchers go by. Texas public schools are woefully underfunded and they do not need to share their slice of the pie with any private school. Vouchers have not been successful in any other state to date.

Cindy Triggs
Self
Georgetown, TX

The public education system has been on a downward trajectory for decades and became significantly worse in recent years. Powerful teachers' unions and Department of Education mandates have destroyed local control over public schools. As a result, the needs of many students are not met by the public schools. Parents must be able to choose the school that best meets the needs of their children, regardless of their financial situation. Education Savings Accounts, funded by the state, are the best way to achieve that goal.

A democratic government and a thriving business and industry environment require citizens who are proficient in reading, writing, math, science, history and civics. Most importantly, they must develop critical thinking skills. School choice will promote academic excellence as schools compete for students.

It is also important that parents have the ability to send children to schools that reflect their values. There is a perverse movement to sexualize children, confuse them with extremist gender ideology, demoralize them with Critical Race Theory and mock them if they express traditional values. Despite legislation to stop these destructive activities, they continue to occur. When public schools fail to provide a nurturing environment for children, parents need the ability to send their children to a school that does.

Please help the children of Texas succeed by supporting school choice, as proposed by Governor Abbott. Thank you.

Jake Odom
Self/Public School Teacher
Palestine, TX

Subject: The Importance of Supporting Texas Teachers and Opposing Vouchers

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

As a dedicated 4th-grade reading teacher in Palestine, Texas, I feel compelled to express my concerns regarding the implementation of vouchers in our state's educational system. It is crucial to consider the potential consequences and prioritize the needs of our teachers and students before making such a decision.

First and foremost, vouchers are not a suitable solution for Texas. They divert public funds away from our public schools, which are the cornerstone of our communities. By allocating resources to private institutions, we risk leaving behind those students who rely on the support and infrastructure provided by public education. It is vital that we maintain a strong public school system that caters to the diverse needs of all our children, fostering inclusivity and ensuring equal educational opportunities for every student.

Moreover, let us not forget the invaluable role that our teachers play in shaping the future of our great state. Texas educators are dedicated professionals who deserve recognition and fair compensation for their hard work. The demands and responsibilities placed upon teachers have grown exponentially in recent years, with increased emphasis on standardized testing and evolving educational standards. Therefore, it is essential that we prioritize providing them with a well-deserved pay raise, acknowledging their tireless efforts in molding young minds.

Furthermore, it is time for our voices to be heard. Teachers across Texas will no longer remain silent while politicians dismiss our concerns and treat us as if we do not matter. Our commitment to educating the next generation should be celebrated and supported, rather than undervalued. We have a unique insight into the needs and challenges of our classrooms, and it is crucial that we are included in the decision-making processes that impact our profession and the future of Texas education.

In conclusion, I implore the committee to consider the detrimental effects of vouchers on our public schools and instead focus on supporting our teachers and investing in the strength of our educational system. It is time to prioritize the welfare of our students and ensure that every child in Texas has access to a high-quality education. Together, let us work towards a brighter future for our state, where teachers are valued and empowered to make a lasting impact on the lives of our children.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
4th-Grade Reading Teacher
Palestine, Texas

Jake Odom
Self/Teacher
Palestine, TX

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As a dedicated 4th-grade reading teacher in Palestine, Texas, I feel compelled to express my concerns regarding the implementation of vouchers in our state's educational system. It is crucial to consider the potential consequences and prioritize the needs of our teachers and students before making such a decision.

First and foremost, vouchers are not a suitable solution for Texas. They divert public funds away from our public schools, which are the cornerstone of our communities. By allocating resources to private institutions, we risk leaving behind those students who rely on the support and infrastructure provided by public education. It is vital that we maintain a strong public school system that caters to the diverse needs of all our children, fostering inclusivity and ensuring equal educational opportunities for every student.

Moreover, let us not forget the invaluable role that our teachers play in shaping the future of our great state. Texas educators are dedicated professionals who deserve recognition and fair compensation for their hard work. The demands and responsibilities placed upon teachers have grown exponentially in recent years, with increased emphasis on standardized testing and evolving educational standards. Therefore, it is essential that we prioritize providing them with a well-deserved pay raise, acknowledging their tireless efforts in molding young minds.

Furthermore, it is time for our voices to be heard. Teachers across Texas will no longer remain silent while politicians dismiss our concerns and treat us as if we do not matter. Our commitment to educating the next generation should be celebrated and supported, rather than undervalued. We have a unique insight into the needs and challenges of our classrooms, and it is crucial that we are included in the decision-making processes that impact our profession and the future of Texas education.

In conclusion, I implore the committee to consider the detrimental effects of vouchers on our public schools and instead focus on supporting our teachers and investing in the strength of our educational system. It is time to prioritize the welfare of our students and ensure that every child in Texas has access to a high-quality education. Together, let us work towards a brighter future for our state, where teachers are valued and empowered to make a lasting impact on the lives of our children.

Sincerely,

Jake Odom
4th-Grade Reading Teacher
Palestine, Texas

Sisha Ward
Self/Teacher
Fairfield, TX

Texas teachers such as myself are vehemently opposed to vouchers. I have three children in my local public district, and they are thriving. We ask the focus be placed on funding for public education to insure a quality experience for all of the children in Texas.

Tammy Cunningham
Self
Haskell, TX

We should invest our dollars in the public school system and not private schools with no accountability. When we invest dollars in our current system, retention of good teachers goes up and the quality goes up. Small struggling schools do not need our dollars going outside our current system.

Corey Thompson
Self / Parent
Denton, TX

Public tax dollars do not belong in private or religious schools with no accountability or transparency. We pay taxes to educate ALL children, not just our own individual children. Vouchers will dismantle educational systems in rural areas and harm families who need special services.

Defunding public schools is not what the general public wants. Say no to vouchers and the special interest groups promoting them. Your attention should be on increasing school safety and teacher pay.

Melody Robinson
Selg
Prosper, TX

No vouchers! Public funds need to be used for public schools that serve all students.

Melody Robinson
Self
Prosper, TX

No vouchers! Public funds need to be used for public schools that serve all students.

Heather Chapman
self
Buda, TX

Families already have enough school choice with the availability of transfers within and outside of their district. Vouchers and ESAs are NOT a solution to our crumbling public education system. The legislature MUST increase the per student allotment to at least to match the MIDDLE of the US averages at around \$15,000 per student. We are currently at the bottom quartile of the US and have not raised the allotment in years! Giving parents ESAs would further exacerbate the funding challenges in public education and leave our youth in a dire situation for education for this great state! DO NOT pass vouchers!

Heather Chapman
self
Buda, TX

NO to vouchers
NO to ESAs
Increase student allotment for funding of public schools.
Parents already have choice with transfers within and outside of districts. NO mixing of religion with our education!

Andrew Gunn
Self
McKinney, TX

School vouchers will not improve the public school system nor will it improve students ability to receive a quality education. It will be used by the rich to fund their children's education at the expense of the middle and lower economic classes. Additionally, it will be abused by those who want to build their athletic programs on the backs our children. If want to you truly care about education and want to ensure every student has an opportunity to obtain a quality education, fund public education and support teachers.

Janis Fiske-Genest
Self
Tomball, TX, TX

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

I understand the legislature is now pushing vouchers as “educational freedom.” Changing the name (vouchers = educational savings accounts = educational freedom) does not make vouchers any better for Texas.

This is not “educational freedom;” it is a misuse of public money to support private and home schools that will not be held to the same requirements as public schools. Parents already have the freedom to choose private or home schooling for their kids—they should not expect to fund those choices with taxpayer dollars.

Legislators need to use Texas historic \$32 billion surplus to improve public education and better support students and teachers. Texas is having a difficult time hiring quality teachers. Let's give them a raise instead of taking funds away from the public schools and giving it to the private schools via the voucher program. The legislature supports the lives of children before they are born so they need to pass Bills that support every child after they are born. A priority is providing them with a quality education through better funding of the public schools. Texas Legislators and the Governor need to use some of the \$32 billion surplus to properly fund public schools. Any other decision is shameful.

I am a grandmother who strongly believes in excellent public schools for all children. Children represent the future of Texas.

Sincerely,

Janis Fiske-Genest

Shamone Minzenmayer
Self Teacher
San Angelo, TX

Fully supporting and investing in public schools is vital to the future of our state. Public schools ensure that every single student that shows up has an equal opportunity for an education. When teachers are paid as professionals and treated as such, all public schools will improve. It is imperative that money be allocated for public schools and NOT vouchers to make this happen.

Shamone Minzenmayer
Self Teacher
San Angelo, TX

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Celeste Zadnichek
self/Director of Data and Strategic Planning Priority Charter Schools
Temple, TX

I have served Texas public schools for 25 years. I have spent the last year and a half in a Charter organization. Walking into the Charter world I had many questions about who would attend or who would teach for an organization that can not come close to the ISD pay. I found that families are desperately trying to find a place for their student to fit in and get a good education. I've worked in a mega school with 1,200 students. I can tell you that the Charter kids have a true sense of family and community because of the sheer difference in numbers. The sad thing is that Charters do not get the money from property taxes or any other revenue other than enrollment and any grant we can find to help us out. Vote yes for school choice. It's the right thing to do. Families should be able to choose where and how their students are educated. Spreading out how districts get money would help Charters and Private institutions truly create competition for seats in the school house.

Matt Maudlin
Self/parent of students
Spring, TX

Texas families have always had “parental choice” and “parental freedom” regarding their children’s education. The state of Texas would never allow those rights to be taken away, withheld, or compromised. This is why a push for vouchers is really more than “freedom”, “choice”, or any other political buzzword that has been thrown around. Private education is quite the opposite of choice or freedom. I’m not saying private education is bad, or wrong, but it comes with limitations. Private education institutions get to choose/ limit the types of students they accept, can remove a student at anytime, or change the requirements without family input. The push for vouchers does not guarantee ANY student acceptance into these schools. What vouchers will do is subsidize families who already have children in these schools. If it was truly about “freedom”, and “choice”, the governor would’ve visited with families and their public school communities. Instead his push has been made with private education families and communities. As a tax paying citizen, my tax dollars should not be used to subsidize the families who choose to attend private schools. The overwhelming majority of Texas constituents want a properly funded public education, for their kids, since this is where the majority have, do, and will continue to get an education.

Christina Jeffcoat
Self, public school Texas
Boerne, TX

Education Savings Accounts and other types of educational vouchers are WRONG for Texas public schools and their students! Vouchers and ESAs will steal money from already poorly funded public schools and will lead to rampant fraud and misuse of state funds. Other states which have implemented similar voucher programs have seen some of the largest negative impacts to student learning across the country. Texas schools are already overcrowded, many with outdated facilities and resources, and limited ability to attract highly qualified personnel.

Equally concerning is the fact that private schools are not required to meet the same standards as public schools. They do not follow TEKS, they do not take STAAR tests, and many of them do not require teachers to be certified to teach at all. As a certified Texas teacher who has taught in public school, private school, and since returned to public school, the meager requirements for accreditation of private schools and lack of pedagogy requirements for faculty is atrocious.

Private schools should NOT be funded by tax payer money, especially if they are not going to be held accountable to the state and the public the same way that public schools are. Families who choose to obtain an education in a private setting outside of public schools must fund it with their own private money.

Tina Lacey
pU
CLARENDON, TX

NO VOUCHERS!!
NO VOUCHERS!!
NO VOUCHERS!!!

Tony Canterino
Harker Heights City Council, Place#3
Harker Heights, TX

School Choice, Vouchers, and Tax Credits

Please consider passing into law a system of choice for parents to select and pay for the type of education their children receive. While some families are able to afford both private school tuition AND their local school taxes, this is not the case for most families. As a businessman, I know that competition drives each entity competing for market share to put their best ideas and product forward for the consumer, our education system should be no different. It is neither fair nor equitable that middle income to lower income families have to pay both the tuition of their school of choice and subsidize a failing public education system simultaneously. Please keep in mind that a public school can also compete and be a winning option that families can choose. Everyone involved in this process, especially our children, will benefit from a competitive educational system. The state of Texas is the world's ninth largest economy and our children are our greatest natural resource. It only makes sense that we have the best and the brightest people to take our state into the future. That begins with education, school choice and a tax credit system which allows parents to pay for the best education possible for their children.

Very Respectfully,

Tony Canterino
Harker Heights City Council, Place #3
Legislative Coordinator, Bell County Republican Party

Christina Jeffcoat
Self, public school teacher
Boerne, TX

Education Savings Accounts and other types of educational vouchers are **WRONG** for Texas public schools and their students! Vouchers and ESAs will steal money from already poorly funded public schools and will lead to rampant fraud and misuse of state funds. Other states which have implemented similar voucher programs have seen some of the largest negative impacts to student learning across the country. Texas schools are already overcrowded, many with outdated facilities and resources, and limited ability to attract highly qualified personnel.

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Private schools should **NOT** be funded by tax payer money, especially if they are not going to be held accountable to the state and the public the same way that public schools are. Families who choose to obtain an education in a private setting outside of public schools must fund it with their own private money.

Michael Ford, MR

Self. Public school teacher.

Plano, TX

In an ideal world all schools would be private schools. The government would provide public money to the private schools for every student in attendance. Parents could send their children to any school they wished. Parents could remove their child at will, for no reason. Schools would be motivated to provide the education that makes Parents happy, so that the parents would not remove the student. Removing the student, would remove the public money. Schools that fail, would be shut down.

Under the current system a failing public school will remain open. Parents in that school's area MUST send their child to a failing school. To knowingly send a child to a failing school is immoral at best, abuse at worse.

We can change that. Let Parents select the school that their child will attend. Let the schools compete for the honor to educate that child. Let failing schools close. Thank you for your time.

Shawn Read

Self

Amarillo, TX

1. Opportunity & freedom already exist. 2. Not the same amount of financial transparency between potential entities who would receive vouchers.

Judy Kamen-McMillan

self and my public school age grandson; I'm a retired teacher and sub for the NEISD

San Antonio, TX

I do NOT support vouchers! Vouchers limit the ability of public school students to get a quality education by siphoning money that would otherwise provide the resources to public schools to provide them. The students who really need financial assistance attending quality private schools would not benefit, because quality private schools either tend not to accept them or cost so much the voucher doesn't begin to cover the cost. Students who take advantage of vouchers and leave public schools are those who already have family resources and probably would have attended anyway, and not all students are even accepted by private schools because they might have learning differences or behavioral issues that cause them to be rejected, all of which make the idea of "vouchers for all" and "school choice" a joke, as this is clearly not true. Students without personal resources to pay fees or who might be difficult to teach have NO choice and will be left in public schools struggling to make ends meet. Furthermore, many small towns in Texas don't even have private schools, therefore the public schools that serve as hubs for these communities will be left without enough resources to serve them. Please don't be hoodwinked and allow a governor who has his own best interests in mind...who wants to impress a small but vocal minority that he supports their wishes...convince you that the majority in Texas want vouchers to be implemented. We're not stupid and it's not true.

Judy McMillan, Mrs.

self and my public school age grandson; I'm a retired teacher and substitute teacher for NEISD
San Antonio, TX

I do NOT support vouchers! Vouchers limit the ability of public school students to get a quality education by siphoning money that would otherwise provide the resources to public schools to provide them. The students who really need financial assistance attending quality private schools would not benefit, because quality private schools either tend not to accept them or cost so much the voucher doesn't begin to cover the cost. Students who take advantage of vouchers and leave public schools are those who already have family resources and probably would have attended anyway, and not all students are even accepted by private schools because they might have learning differences or behavioral issues that cause them to be rejected, all of which make the idea of "vouchers for all" and "school choice" a joke, as this is clearly not true. Students without personal resources to pay fees or who might be difficult to teach have NO choice and will be left in public schools struggling to make ends meet. Furthermore, many small towns in Texas don't even have private schools, therefore the public schools that serve as hubs for these communities will be left without enough resources to serve them. Please don't be hoodwinked and allow a governor who has his own best interests in mind...who wants to impress a small but vocal minority that he supports their wishes...convince you that the majority in Texas want vouchers to be implemented. We're not stupid and it's not true.

Laura McBain

Self Teacher
Bastrop, TX

Vouchers will destroy public rural schools. Communities and governments must work to educate all students including those with lower ratings based on accountability measures that do not meet Texas students.

Carol Sewell

Self
Plano, TX

As educational quality and graduation rates have declined crime has increased. It is time to give parents a choice when their children are in a failing system. Please vote for freedom of choice.

Erin Thompson

Self
Houston, TX

It is my opinion as a public educator for 20+ years that creating a system of "school choice" will only cause harm and negative outcomes to public schools and children across the state. Instead we should be working to improve all of public education to better serve our children. Vouchers will only pull money away from our public schools further creating issues. Instead of fixing the problem, vouchers will exacerbate the problems our public schools are already facing.

Erin Thompson

Self
Houston, TX

As a public school employee for over twenty years I strongly oppose the use of vouchers, educational savings accounts or school choice. A quality education should be attainable for all students of Texas at their zoned public school. The money that would be used for "school choice" should be used to ensure that our children can receive the best education at their local public school. It should be used for curriculum, training, salaries and programs that will ensure our students are receiving the knowledge and experiences that will lead to a better quality of life for a citizens on the state. Educational savings accounts (vouchers) are a sure sign that the legislature in this state has given up on public schools and our students.

Tracy Nolan
Self- teacher
Round Rock, TX

The voucher program is a bad idea. It will diminish much needed funds from our public schools. If there is a problem with public schools, fix the problem, don't just bail out.

Christine Scovill
Self
Grand Prairie, TX

I am requesting that you honor and respect the PUBLIC education system by doing away with voucher plans so that funding can be raised to improve our public schools, increase pay and quality of teaching staff, test for improvement documentation of students without penalizing the reputation of school communities by these results, and raise funding of our public schools so districts can provide students with a chance to succeed and feel respected in a quality learning environment. Access to quality public schools is what makes America different. Please respect ALL people by making this a priority. Our future depends on diversity and respect. Children are our future, so please treat their education with care and thoughtful planning. Public tax dollars should not be given to the private sector of schools!

Rhonda Hanson, Teacher
Self
Haskell, TX

I urge each member to disregard vouchers and fund public schools properly. Vouchers will allow private and charter schools choice NOT parents. Please make Texas great again by educating every student properly with fully funded schools and keep AND ATTRACT quality teachers by raising teacher pay. Not just new ones coming in but retention of current teachers!

Phyllis Mosley, Mrs
Self/ educator
Ivanhoe, TX

If you want to improve student outcomes and have world or career ready students after graduation you have to fund public schools instead of taking money away. If vouchers are approved this will only create a bigger divide between the haves and have nots. Those that can afford private and have access to it will go and those that don't will stay public leaving the lower income in public. Then You will continue to test them like crazy with the absurd staar test that we all know isn't a true representation of abilities. This testing will never show what a child truly knows. And as a parent with one in college ask me how many times colleges asked about her staar score. NEVER! They don't matter to higher education. Jobs don't care either. It's all to make money for pearson and testing companies.

Jeff Seidel
Self- Veteran Public School Teacher
Murphy, TX

I am opposed to the voucher system. Public education is one of the greatest things that sets our country apart. In other countries, there is a glass ceiling for they students, they are put into tracks far too early and their future is determined for them by the 3rd or 4th grade. Public schools are already underfunded. I know this because I have spent a minimum of \$1500 out of my pocket every year, over the past 29 years, for supplies in my classroom. It is ridiculous to syphon money away from public neighborhood schools, especially to private schools. Families who can afford private schools don't need the help and the amount of money a voucher would generate would not cover the cost for private school tuition for less fortunate families. Please, do not weaken public schools by passing vouchers.

Karen Amador
Self- teacher
The Woodlands, TX

The use of vouchers will undermine public education, especially in rural Texas. The money will not be enough for disadvantaged families to use it for tuition at private schools. Also, to subsidize private schools without the “accountability” and oversight that public schools are subjected to is contradictory to the supposed aims of the that monitoring. Considering that some limitations of public schools are actually caused by the accountability system in place now, perhaps addressing those concerns would be better than taking money from our schools and using it to support a select elite that can take advantage of a small supplement to afford a private education. I have been teaching in our public schools for almost 35 years and I strongly believe vouchers hurt the children of Texas.

Paige Wood
Education
Lubbock, TX

School improvement will come with better funding to public schools and higher pay for teachers. Fix public schools with fewer tests and mandates. Private and charter schools are not providing students with quality education and do not give access to everyone.

Leslie Vazquez
Self
Humble, TX

My name is Leslie and I am an alumna. As a former student, I am deeply invested in the future of our education system. I would like to see repealing the prohibition on promoting homosexuality in TEKS; Provide curriculum about common menstrual disorders; Increase ethnic studies curriculum in TEKS; Disability Rights education in TEKS; Saying no to book banning and censorship of any kind; be a priority to the legislature.

As a former student, the decisions you make will directly impact people and their quality of education so remember that students are the primary stakeholders and listen to them.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to the students of Texas.

Leslie Vazquez
self
Humble, TX

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As a former student, the decisions you make will directly impact people and their quality of education so remember that students are the primary stakeholders and listen to them.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to the students of Texas.

Nancy Carlson, Dr.
Self
Stephenville, TX

Vouchers are the worst idea for quality education. Pay teachers a living salary; fund public education fully; fund special education fully, and quality education results. Public education has been the requirement for American children since the 1600s. Compulsory attendance has been the law for equal education. Public Schools are required to meet state standards set by law. Charter schools don't meet those standards. Students transferring from Charter schools lose credits and must retake classes get a certified diploma. Teachers in Charter schools are not certified by the state. Vouchers are lost money.

NO VOUCHERS! Fund public schools fully and pay teachers a livable salary. Stop the STAAR tests and use reliable and valid standardized tests: Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, Stanford Achievement Tests, California Achievement Tests. Let Teachers teach the state approved curriculum and not teach to the STAAR tests.

NO VOUCHERS.

Margie Turner
Self-teacher
San Antonio, TX

Vote **NO** to vouchers! They will steal much needed funds from public school children. They benefit only those who can afford private transportation to school ...the most wealthy. Furthermore, private school are not held to the same standards as public schools. Why should public money go to private institutions whose standards are not equitable for all children?

Johanna Ullrich
ATPE
Huntsville, TX

Every child in Texas deserves a quality education. Instead of providing more options to wealthy children please provide a quality education to all children. Please vote to support public education by voting for pay raises for teachers to encourage more people to become teachers. Vote to support public education because every Texan is depending on our future Texans.

Paige Wood
Education
Lubbock, TX

School improvement will come with better funding to public schools and higher pay for teachers. Fix public schools with fewer tests and mandates. Private and charter schools are not providing students with quality education and do not give access to everyone.

Donna Wynn
Self
Booker, TX

No to vouchers! This will be detrimental to rural schools which serve half of the Texas students! These schools have the highest accountability ratings and do so with the least amount of money. You should be funding public schools which serve all students, rich and poor, special needs or not, one parent or two, white, black, Hispanic, Asian, or any other ethnicity. Vouchers fund private schools that serve only a certain student! You were elected to represent all students; do your job! Vote no to vouchers!

Leigh Powers
Self/Teacher
Conroe, TX

Texas students deserve a quality education. A state voucher program will not help achieve this goal. Vouchers do not improve student outcomes, funnel public dollars to religious education, and tend to benefit only students who are already enrolled in private education. Texas parents already have the power to choose the educational opportunities that are best for their children. Vouchers will not increase these opportunities. Rather, since they divert funds from public education, they worsen outcomes for public schools. Many of our rural districts are already struggling with inadequate funding. Texas currently ranks 42 out of 50 states in state education spending per student, making us one of the states that spends the lowest amount on education. Vouchers will not improve this situation. Vouchers will not help schools keep up with inflationary costs, raise teacher salaries, improve student safety, repair aging infrastructure, or help schools invest in technology. Instead of funneling money away from the public education system through vouchers, work to improve public education funding and make this funding equitable for all districts and students. Oppose vouchers, refuse to tie vouchers to other educational proposals and funding, and work to improve our public education system. Thank you.

Susan Hammond
Self, retired Educator
Bryan, TX

Dear madam/sir,

As a retired Texas educator, I've spent most of my 36 years teaching in Title 1 schools, from 1A to 6A. I have also supported private schools in the Bryan-College Station area through curriculum writing and teacher professional development. While the goal for every Texas student is a quality education, I can say that not all private schools provide that quality due to watered-down curricula, and a lack of standards-based expectations. Many a time it is the teacher teaching what they want, how they want and when they want. Students who have attended local private schools and returned to public schools, have been identified as several grade levels behind their peers. Now it is up to public schools to try and remedy these student deficits. While many parents will see the voucher system as their child's "escape" from "problematic" schools, it is not the instruction they are escaping but the discipline issues plaguing public education. Long gone are the laws that aided districts in holding students and parents accountable for their behavior so instruction CAN take place. I have worked with several regional education centers where student discipline preventing instruction is a common them. Instead of allowing student to flee public education, draining our classrooms of diversity and intellectual challenge, I implore you to consider bringing back common sense discipline accountability to parents, students and schools. Respectfully, Susan Hammond

Christie Noonkester, Ms
Self School Counselor
Waxahachie, TX

No vouchers

Judith Pardo
Self
Alpine, TX

Teacher raises
Do not tie vouchers to this

Oralia Mascorro

Self

Mckinney, TX

Texas public educators do not support vouchers. Improve public education for all by supporting public school educators with smaller class sizes. Invest in public schools, not vouchers.

April Hughes

Self / teacher

Moran, TX

Please vote NO to school vouchers. Praying this will only ensure the teacher shortage gets worse. I will gladly surrender my certificate if this passes.

Christine Thomas

Self/ public school teacher

Sulphur Springs, TX

All children deserve a quality education, but vouchers are not the way to ensure this. Vouchers will only benefit the wealthy, people who already have the means to provide rich life experiences for their children. Children from low socioeconomic rural school districts will not have access to the “quality” education supposedly provided through the voucher system because parents will not have the means to transport their children to and from these other schools. Public schools NEED the funding that will be taken away with vouchers. Instead of a voucher system, provide schools with funding to hire teachers who are actually qualified to teach the subject they are hired to teach and funding to allow schools to provide culturally rich and diverse experiences for students.

Judith Pardo

Self

Alpine, TX

Support teacher raises

Do not support vouchers

Do not tie them together!

Christina Gann

Teachers

Waxahachie, TX

NO NO NO to vouchers

Stacey Ward
Public school teacher.
Nocona, TX

No vouchers!!

Please do not tie teacher pay to this. It is wrong.

If you want to retain good teachers, you must give us the respect we deserve and tying a much-needed pay raise to the vouchers is just ethically wrong.

Since the price of everything has sky-rocketed, we can't pay our bills!

Della Maria Chaffin
ATPE
Roanoke, TX

No vouchers

Melinda Falk
Myself
Lago Vista, TX

Public schools need more support and funding, not less. Removing funding is not an option to improve education! Making schools less effective will not create equal access.

Carrie Nance, Ms.
Self
Cedar Park, TX

No to vouchers. Schools need more funding. Equal education should be available to every single student, and diverting dollars from public schools will have the opposite effect. We teachers deserve adequate compensation and incentives to stay in the classroom. Stop driving us away and jeopardizing the education of Texan kids. Vouchers are not the solution.

Amanda Pullin, Ms.
Harper ISD
Kerrville, TX

23 year veteran teacher here that says NO to school vouchers!

Ashley Hermann

Self

Anna, TX

Educational savings accounts promise “opportunity and freedom” but in reality it’s only “opportunity and freedom” for those students who are CHOSEN by the desired charter or private schools. Private and charter schools have the luxury to pick their student population. Educational savings accounts, or vouchers as they are more commonly known, will NOT benefit all the students of Texas.

Public schools educate ALL students who walk through their doors. It doesn’t matter what their socioeconomic status is, whether they have special needs, whether they have a criminal record, whether or not they can pay for supplies or lunch.

Public education in Texas is not perfect. If we want to improve it we need to listen to parents, students and teachers of our rural, urban and suburban areas. NOT the deep pocketed donors that are pushing for educational savings accounts because it will benefit their own bias agenda or allow them to use funds to pay for private schools they can already afford.

Jennifer Mollenkopf

Self, teacher

Allen, TX

I do not support ESA/public school vouchers. The vast majority of public school students will not benefit from these as private school institutions tuition is much higher. Private schools do not have to accept all students or have the same financial transparency as pub ed institutions. No to school choice vouchers!

James Williams, Mr.

Self/ Counseling Specialist

Lubbock, TX

We need to mobilize our efforts to improvement of public schools, not supporting a voucher system. Allowing students to leave their neighborhood schools would force school districts into closing them. That inadvertently leads to devaluing of those neighborhoods as families prefer to have their children in schools closer to home. Marshaling resources for these schools makes more sense.

Shelley Petkovsek

Self, ATPE

Huntsville, TX

I am a Texas Educator going into my 24th year of teaching. Please vote "no" to vouchers. They take away funds from public schools which are here for everyone and give it to charter and private schools who do not have to accept all students. Should a private or charter school remove a student, that money stays there and the student comes back to public schools. This means that money to help pay teachers, supplies, etc are less and public schools have to take all students. The phrase, "it takes a village," is true. Our school tax dollars helps to pay teachers, utilities, supplies, etc. Please do not tie teacher pay to vouchers just to pass vouchers. Our teachers deserve better. Give teachers the raises they deserve and don't attach "other" items to it. Help our retired teachers as well. Additionally help our Instructional assistants with a pay raise.

Finally, we the tax payers have voted you into your position to help our state thrive, not divide. You need to work together to stop the flow of teachers out of the classrooms due to low pay, Healthcare, and funding for classrooms. Please say NO to vouchers.

Jennifer Mollenkopf
Self, teacher
Allen, TX

Support public education teachers by passing a meaningful pay raise for both active employees and for raising the cost of living adjustment for retirees.

Do not tie raises of hard-working educators to school choice vouchers. I do not support ESA/public school vouchers. The vast majority of public school students will not benefit from these as private school institutions tuition is much higher. Private schools do not have to accept all students or have the same financial transparency as pub ed institutions. No to school choice vouchers and yes to teacher raises!

Shelley Petkovsek
Self, ATPE
Huntsville, TX

I am a Texas Educator going into my 24th year of teaching. Please vote "no" to vouchers. They take away funds from public schools which are here for everyone and give it to charter and private schools who do not have to accept all students. Should a private or charter school remove a student, that money stays there and the student comes back to public schools. This means that money to help pay teachers, supplies, etc are less and public schools have to take all students. The phrase, "it takes a village," is true. Our school tax dollars helps to pay teachers, utilities, supplies, etc. Please do not tie teacher pay to vouchers just to pass vouchers. Our teachers deserve better. Give teachers the raises they deserve and don't attach "other" items to it. Help our retired teachers as well. Additionally help our Instructional assistants with a pay raise.

Finally, we the tax payers have voted you into your position to help our state thrive, not divide. You need to work together to stop the flow of teachers out of the classrooms due to low pay, Healthcare, and funding for classrooms. Please say NO to vouchers.

Pamela Buckley, Mrs.
ATPE
Andrews, TX

While all students deserve a quality education, I do not believe that vouchers are the answer. First of all, they provide public school money for a private education. Public school money was not designated for private schools. Secondly, if you allow a large group of students to withdraw from public schools, the remaining students will not be afforded the same opportunities due to lack of funds.

Our public schools can be great! Money won't solve the problems because most teachers didn't enter education for the money. **BRING DISCIPLINE AND RESPECT FOR OUR TEACHERS BACK TO THE CLASSROOM!!** Then, learning will occur. Thank you.

Kevin Fletcher
Self/Teacher
Houston, TX

I have a unique perspective regarding education. My family has experience in and with public education, private education, and homeschooling. I attended public school and graduated from a private university and earned masters from seminary. Then I earned teaching credential from a public university. I taught in private and public school and am the proud parent of two college graduates who were home schooled. My wife went to private school and completed university work at private university. She taught in public education, educated daughters at home and is now teaching at a private school.

We are proponents of government staying out of private and home schooling as much as possible. Introducing bills that involve government funds that could be used for either opens up the unintended consequences of future government involvement into both of those forms of education. Not to think about that possibility is short sighted. If Texas ever flipped to democrat again it could cause problems for those families who choose private education for religious and other reasons and for private Christian Institutions.

I have been teaching in public school for 22 plus years and I am approaching retirement under the Rule of 80. School has changed noticeably during that time. Each school district/community has its own unique set of challenges based on where it is located. Some communities are college focused based on clientele and needs. Some are focused more on careers, military and trades. And obviously many are mixed between all the options.

State guidelines and laws should be broad enough to support all these communities. Do not hamstring by forcing specific current political national agendas on a Texas public who does not fit into a specific narrative. Many rural communities who vote Republican are not supportive of vouchers.

I also still know many teachers in private education and if vouchers are approved by the state they already have decided to simply raise their tuitions by the amount of the voucher. This obviously would not help meet any financial needs of those who cannot afford private schools.

Please help public teachers financially and assure that the government stays out of private and homeschool education in the future by not attaching any government funding to these other forms of education.

Mandy Murphy
Self
McKinney, TX

Vouchers for private schools should not be tied to teacher pay raises. I have taught in Texas public schools for 25 years and am a graduate of Texas public education. Teachers deserve a pay raise not tied to vouchers or performance incentives. We are not a corporation, we must serve ALL STUDENTS not like private schools who can pick and choose their students. People argue that incentives and competition will make teachers "work harder" which is an insult to our profession. I take work home and plan during the summer, attend professional development that I sometimes pay for out of my own pocket so that I can provide the best learning opportunities for ALL of my students. And I know that I am not alone. We are PROFESSIONALS who take pride in our commitment to our students AND their success. Education is the one of the only professions that is not based on profits but the outcomes of young people. If pay was tied to incentives it would only increase the amount of work outside the classroom and take time away from our students. Vouchers would do the same bc now schools would have to recruit students to stay at their school much like universities and colleges. K-12 schools focus should be student outcomes not recruitment. For my entire educational career from kindergarten through the 25 years of my professional career, public schools have only improved and made every effort to educate ALL STUDENTS without being given the necessary funding by the state legislature. It is your duty and constitutional requirement to provide for public education in this state and we teachers are tired of being ignored and made to feel less than the professionals that we are. We are watching this legislative session to see if you will live up to your promise rather than give into a small minority who want to defund public schools and give basically tax breaks to wealthy individuals. Thank you and I hope you will do what is right.

Cynthia Oropeza
Self
Falfurrias, TX

Quality Education is already in your public teachers. They must be certified. Private schools? No! Abbot is not giving everyone opportunity! He is only concerned about the wealthy. What about rural schools who do not have a choice to go to private schools? Is this voucher going to pay for transportation for all children to get them to a private school that is within their reach? Some, like my district, are a hour away from private schools! What about special needs children? Is this voucher going to pay for the needs they have too? Related services like occupational therapies, speech, counseling services that are already provided as a part of FAPE? Let's not forget that Special Education is Federally funded and must have a certified teacher? What are you to do when Private schools get flooded with Special needs children? Will you hire more teachers there? Something you could have done for public schools!! Abbot listens to his lobbyists instead of listening to his people. We are crying out to him. We need a better livable wage. We shouldn't have to work 2 or 3 jobs while holding a professional degree! Some of us are still paying back student loans and cannot pay our rent with the wage we earn. Invest in your public schools!! Stop the nonsense of testing! What if we tested the Governor 3 or 4 times a year? Wouldn't he be tired ? 1 test should not make or break a child. Special needs students, who already have severe issues with math or reading should not be forced to take the same test other students take. My son was a disabled student, all it did was mock his self esteem! He would cry and state that he was never going to be able to pass the test! What are you trying to do to our students? We need more funding for our public schools for supplies. Teachers spend an average of 1,000 dollars each year to make their classrooms ready for our kids! Invest in your teachers that already go beyond the call of duty for kids! Stop listening to others who have no idea or have not spend a day in a classroom. I invite you to come to mine for 1 day.

Brian Kinsworthy
Self/Education
Terrell, TX

Vouchers will not allow for all children to have a quality education or an equal education. No to vouchers! Increase funding for all public schools!

CJ Lowery, Dr.
Self
Portland, TX

I am a superintendent of schools. I do not believe vouchers will help solve the problems we have. I also do not believe throwing money at problems helps either. There is no doubt pubic schools are underfunded. If I wasn't welcoming my new staff I'd be there to speak and I would tell you: "Pass vouchers as long as there is a \$1550 raise in the BSA with a guarantee it will continue to rise with inflation., but make sure vouchers are received with the same accountability that I have to the money I receive from the state and federal government to fund my students." I would add that this is more about "privilege" staying away from "those kids" instead of true help. I see it daily. No matter what you do, I will continue to educate students to eventually do better than you and I have done for them. You still have time to do better. Quit worrying about making your wallets fat and instead do some good. For those of you who are doing this in the name of being a Christian, remember you to will face judgement one day, as will I as a Christian.
Thanks

CJ Lowery, Dr.
Self and students of Texas
Portland, TX

I am a superintendent of schools. I do not believe vouchers will help solve the problems we have. I also do not believe throwing money at problems helps either. There is no doubt public schools are underfunded. If I wasn't welcoming my new staff I'd be there to speak and I would tell you: "Pass vouchers as long as there is a \$1550 raise in the BSA with a guarantee it will continue to rise with inflation., but make sure vouchers are received with the same accountability that I have to the money I receive from the state and federal government to fund my students." I would add that this is more about "privilege" staying away from "those kids" instead of true help. I see it daily. No matter what you do, I will continue to educate students to eventually do better than you and I have done for them. You still have time to do better. Quit worrying about making your wallets fat and instead do some good. For those of you who are doing this in the name of being a Christian, remember you will face judgement one day, as will I as a Christian.

Thanks

Charlotte Godsey
Self - Retired teacher
Houston, TX

Somewhere in the system the focus of education has been lost. State leaders are trying to control, school administrators are in positions for self glory, teachers no longer can teach or guide students through the exploration of learning at a pace conducive to student learning, students do not ask questions and are handed so much that they do not apply themselves, parents are too busy to engage in their child's behaviors and learning. In other words, our society is broken having lost its values of what education is and the respect that system deserves. I do not believe vouchers are the answer only adding to the corrupted system. The focus needs to be on respecting the profession as professional individuals who want to give to our youth. That drive to give is being lost in the systems of government dictatorship, freedom to actually teach, money restraints and unnecessary spending, low salaries and lack of benefits, along with a shift in society's norms and values. The digital age has also had its impact but a voucher system may appear to give parents a choice but is a cover up for improving the profession and its work environment. There are some wonderful teachers that are not being listened to. These are the teachers who love to teach and are struggling each day to give students a true learning experience but are hampered by all the politics.

Jennifer Pederson
Self
Sulphur Springs, TX

What I wrote and just copied and pasted into each of the six selections...

I am a veteran educator of 17 years in the state of Texas and a mom of two children who attended Texas public schools. As a voter, I demand our state honor its constitution and fully fund our public schools. Our teachers need a living wage that accounts for the rising cost of living in Texas, including our retired teachers. Our teachers and students deserve fewer testing burdens; eliminating high stakes testing would be a great start. The amount of money spent on STAAR is ridiculous and could be spent on increasing funding for schools to allow them to hire more teachers to lower class sizes and to purchase research-based programs to help close learning gaps for at risk students. As the majority of Texas constituents are, I am opposed to any kind of voucher program that will take public school tax money and put it in the hands of private schools. Parents already have school choice. Those who choose private school education should not receive public funding for their choice. I appreciate the opportunity to express my concerns with you, and I thank you for your continued support of Texas public schools.

Amber Clark
Self/school counselor
Sherman, TX

Public schools need higher pay and benefits for all employees, less testing and no vouchers

JoDi Harris, Mrs
Self
Boys ranch, TX

No vouchers!

Don Downey
Self- Teacher
Cibolo, TX

Vouchers are not an appropriate method to support our children, educators, or institutions which are providing the education. The negative aspects of the vouchers far outweigh any benefits they may provide. I am not denying that there can be seen a "few" positive items for which vouchers may generate, but the "many" negative items generated must be taken into account and seen that as a whole, these are not a valid idea to be considered. Please do not ignore the thousands of people in the educational field- including teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and all other staff members who are arguing vehemently against the use of vouchers. They WILL help to DESTROY the fabric of our public education- which is already painfully hurting and weakened already. We need to help STRENGTHEN it not do anything to WEAKEN it.

Don Downey
Self- Teacher
Cibolo, TX

Vouchers are not an appropriate method to support our children, educators, or institutions which are providing the education. The negative aspects of the vouchers far outweigh any benefits they may provide. I am not denying that there can be seen a "few" positive items for which vouchers may generate, but the "many" negative items generated must be taken into account and seen that as a whole, these are not a valid idea to be considered. Please do not ignore the thousands of people in the educational field- including teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and all other staff members who are arguing vehemently against the use of vouchers. They WILL help to DESTROY the fabric of our public education- which is already painfully hurting and weakened already. We need to help STRENGTHEN it not do anything to WEAKEN it.

Carlos Soliz
Self
Sunnyvale, TX

I am requesting that you honor and respect the PUBLIC education system by doing away with voucher plans so that funding can be raised to improve our public schools, increase pay and quality of teaching staff, test for improvement documentation of students without penalizing the reputation of school communities by these results, and raise funding of our public schools so districts can provide students with a chance to succeed and feel respected in a quality learning environment. Access to quality public schools is what makes America different. Please respect ALL people by making this a priority. Our future depends on diversity and respect. Children are our future, so please treat their education with care and thoughtful planning. Public tax dollars should not be given to the private sector of schools!

Jennifer Pederson
Self
Sulphur Springs, TX

I am a veteran educator of 17 years in the state of Texas and a mom of two children who attended Texas public schools. As a voter, I demand our state honor its constitution and fully fund our public schools. Our teachers need a living wage that accounts for the rising cost of living in Texas, including our retired teachers. Our teachers and students deserve fewer testing burdens; eliminating high stakes testing would be a great start. The amount of money spent on STAAR is ridiculous and could be spent on increasing funding for schools to allow them to hire more teachers to lower class sizes and to purchase research-based programs to help close learning gaps for at risk students. As the majority of Texas constituents are, I am opposed to any kind of voucher program that will take public school tax money and put it in the hands of private schools. Parents already have school choice. Those who choose private school education should not receive public funding for their choice. I appreciate the opportunity to express my concerns with you, and I thank you for your continued support of Texas public schools.

Kathryn Cook, Mrs.
Self-Teacher
Trenton, TX

Vouchers are not going to help our system. They may make a few stop complaining, but they will not help the majority. Make private schools follow the same guidelines as public. You have created an unfair system where only public schools have to meet the state's requirements. They don't have to educate everyone just the ones they choose. We teach EVERYONE. Vouchers are not going to do anything but make a bigger mess.

Kim KimHare, Mrs.
Self, Life Skills Teacher
Dublin, TX

I am a conservative Christian educator. I teach special needs 4th, 5th and 6th graders. I love my students. I love and respect my students' families. I think they feel the same about me. I view my career as a calling. I understand that the religious right-my people- want to shield the impressionable minds of their children from the liberal influence of public schools and vouchers, ESAs and school choice are being peddled to families of poor performing schools as a way out of that situation. The way it looks to me and everyone I've ever talked to in education is that vouchers, ESAs, and school choice are destined to drain money out of public schools providing private school educations to primarily middle and upper class mostly white students leaving the public schools to children of color and the LSE-poor. Basically re-segregating the school system. I beg you not to do this. And tying a raise for public school teachers to vouchers is just wrong. No other public servant, and that is what we are, has to worry about their income being held hostage by the state.

Sara Roland
Self
Rockwall, TX

I am an educator and I am writing to encourage you to do what is best for kids! Please provide proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS! I appreciate your careful consideration in this matter.
Thank you,
Sara Roland

Sara Roland
Self
Rockwall, TX

I am an educator and I am writing to encourage you to do what is best for kids! Please provide proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS! I appreciate your careful consideration in this matter.

Thank you,
Sara Roland

Cynthia Dominguez, Teacher
Bryan ISD—public education teacher
Bryan, TX

I am requesting that you honor and respect the PUBLIC education system by doing away with voucher plans so that funding can be raised to improve our public schools, increase pay and quality of teaching staff, test for improvement documentation of students without penalizing the reputation of school communities by these results, and raise funding of our public schools so districts can provide students with a chance to succeed and feel respected in a quality learning environment. Access to quality public schools is what makes America different. Please respect ALL people by making this a priority. Our future depends on diversity and respect. Children are our future, so please treat their education with care and thoughtful planning. Public tax dollars should not be given to the private sector of schools!

Jessica Sanford, Teacher
Atpe
Kingsville, TX

No to vouchers. If parents want to send their children elsewhere, they should pay for it themselves.

Jodie Allex
Self - teacher
Harlingen, TX

Vouchers will not help the public schools that you are supposed to be supporting! Why would you allow for vouchers for people to choose a private school while you are a public institution? If you're concerned about the quality of public schools, then do more to support them. If people want to send their children to a private school, that's fine, but we (the public) should not have to pay for that. If you choose to start a voucher system, you will be hurting the majority of kids in this great state - not helping them. It will create a domino effect that, I'm sure, you have no intention of starting.

Kimberly Finke
Self- School Counselor
Bryan, TX

NO vouchers. Support public schools, not private schools.

Jennifer Spivey
Self/teachee
Magnolia, TX

Vouchers are just the latest way for lawmakers to devalue public education. Texas has proven over and over they do not support or respect public schools or Educators. Much-needed pay raises for educators should not be tied to vouchers.

Sandra Klein
Self- Teacher
Fredericksburg, TX

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for giving your time in this second special session focusing on property taxes and education.

As a public school teacher, I understand the willful thinking behind the freedom' to obtain a quality in education. Will our parents of children with disabilities completely understand the 'freedom' they will be surrendering if they choose to move their child/children to private schools? Private schools are NOT required to follow IDEA which means these children will NOT be receiving the individualized education they need.

Plus, please consider the number of students who will struggle and go unidentified without Response To Intervention plans that private schools are not required to provide. In addition, the teachers at private schools are not certified teachers like Texas public school teachers held to the highest standards. Ask yourself: How is this equity in education?

Let's consider the other spectrum of students, students who have been identified as gifted. It is not required by private schools to challenge these students beyond their standard curriculum. It is not required for them to identify students who are gifted and talented as required in the public schools. In our public Texas schools, teachers are required to maintain GT training every year. Most campuses have specialized teachers and teams to teach these students beyond the standards and challenge their problem solving, creativity, and critical thinking skills.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Sandra Klein

LeAnna DAVIS
Self. High School chemistry teacher
Cypress, TX

Vouchers will destroy the public School system and only benefit the wealthy. No vouchers. There is no evidence that the voucher system improves a students education. The evidence actually shows the scores drop for such students. No vouchers.

Jessica Cisneros
Self, public school teacher
Groesbeck, TX

Vouchers do not give middle class and poor students more "choice." There's no choice for rural, economically disadvantaged families. Travel alone is not feasible, but the vouchers won't put a dent in what poor families need, it will only help already wealthier families in affluent neighborhoods. The solution is making all schools better for ALL the public, not giving blank checks to private schools.

Elizabeth Ault
DSISD
Dripping Springs, TX

No!!! Why not put that money into public schools? Teachers deserve more money, obviously. However, higher pay or not, why demand so much from them? Reading Academy? So many Professional Development Days? There is so much demand on them with higher classes they don't have time for all the other stuff. That is why retention is so hard.

Kent Black
Retired teacher
Lakehills, TX

Teachers deserve a raise , it shouldn't be tied to vouchers. Vouchers hurt public education. If you don't want teachers to keep leaving, do not tie their raises to vouchers which most Texans do not want. Also less testing we pay way to much to testing companies.

Thomas McEachin
Self/Retired teacher
Bandera, TX

The educational system needs higher pay to attract and retain the best teachers, and NO VOUCHERS since public funds would be siphoned off to private schools to the detriment of public education in Texas.

Susan Cherry
Self
Lubbock, TX

We must do all that is possible to improve education in Texas where only about 20% of students are on grade level. I am strongly in favor of educational choice for ALL families in Texas. Educational choice would give parents the tool needed to pick the school that would be best for their children's needs.

Education Savings Accounts would also be a wise use of our tax dollars to improve education in Texas so that families could afford the right school for their children.

Please stand for students and parental rights by passing out of committee Educational Choice with Education Saving Accounts for all students in Texas.

Brenda Barnor, Ms.
Self
San Angelo, TX

As a parent I support parent choice. I have the responsibility for my child and I believe that everyone should have access to the best education available. However, the proposals to provide equal opportunity and access require two things to be successful. First, everyone has to play by the same rules. This is not present in the current proposals. I do not deny the lack of experience, training, drive and abilities of public school personnel. I do not deny there are school personnel who should be removed from service. Some schools have a choice in the students they educate, and the teachers that they hire. The variables for success can be manipulated by charter and private schools. In public schools, we educate the children of dysfunctional families, absent parents, and drug and alcohol laden environments. Every person that has a mental illness or unreasonable expectations was educated every day by a teacher that had too many expectations placed upon them and was not trusted to develop a working plan for addressing the issues. If vouchers are going to be offered I am in support. However, every school recieving a voucher has to be subject to the same requirements. STAAR testing, ethnic diversity, economic diversity, behavior intervention strategies and they must agree to provide education to the challenging students. My second point is providing equal power to the parent and the school. Allow schools to require parental involvement. If a parent is involved in the education of the child then the child has a better opportunity for success. Allow schools to develop reasonable participation from the students in maintaining the campus, their classroom and cleaning up after themselves. People value what they work for and learn to despise what is provided without effort.

Natalie Cannon
Self, educator & parent
Austin, TX

I do not support vouchers or educational savings accounts for Pre-k through secondary schools. Texas public schools are the heart of their communities, and they deserve better.

Raise the per pupil standard allotment- we should not be in the bottom 5 for this in our country. Texas is better than that. Put all public educators and school staff into ERS for retirement and insurance. Give teachers what other state employees and our elected representatives get for healthcare and retirement. Pay teachers more, and by teachers I mean counselors, teaching aides, librarians, and all of the people in a school who make schooling happen. Raise pay by at least \$15,000, give staff & the children of public school staff discounts at state schools, and reinstate mandatory step raises or COLAs.

Fund schools better so that teachers do not have to outfit their classrooms and supply their students. Eliminate or reduce mandatory testing, OR allow public schools to submit their own benchmarks or results for data to track. Thank you.

robert mayfield
self and 5 grandchildren under 16 years old
Austin, TX

We need school choice over the entire state. I worry my grandchildren will be exposed to inappropriate books and indoctrination with the Leander School District. This district has been caught secretly teaching critical race theory, LGBT discussions with minor children and the like. It is a matter of public record. We need the option to move them to another, better, school as needed. I worry my grandchildren will not get an adequate education or worse will be indoctrinated with lies about this country, gender, etc. The parents, my sons and their wives, completely agree with this statement

Not long ago, a friend of mine with a daughter in Leander Schools said her daughter came home and told her mom that another child, a minority, had accused her daughter, who is white, or "oppressing" her. Where do you think she heard that. The daughter didn't even know what the term meant!

Lena Haislip, Mrs
Self
Lubbock, TX

I support school choice

Connie Englund
Pcenglund
Lubbock, TX

I support this for our children

Jenna Hogan
Self
Plano, TX

The voucher system will not provide the school choice you want it to. Private schools will simply raise their tuition rates by the same rate or the voucher or reimbursement. Instead, we should be looking at how our public schools can better serve the Texas student population: increase the basic allotment so that we can have smaller class sizes. Increase teacher pay for those with 10+ years of experience so that teachers see real wage growth through their careers. Studies prove that experienced teachers provide a higher quality education for students. We need to incentivize people to not only join, but stay in the teacher profession. We need to have high quality instructional materials without factual inaccuracies to teach from and we need to create a partnership between the community and their public schools through communication and understanding. The answer is not to avoid the issue and send a fee students to private schools, the answer is to invest in public education and our future. Studies show that most Americans live within 20 miles of where they grew up. Therefore, our public schools are a direct investment in the future of our communities.

Lisa Laudermilk, Ms.
Self- teacher
Rockwall, TX

NO VOUCHERS!

Nellie Martin
Self/Retired Parents & Children & Youth
Temple, TX

School Choice is very important for our children and youth and their parents. Children and youth are suffering from depression and confusion. I support Freedom of School Choice. Our children & youth are being subjected to sexually exploit books, gender affirming and other things that they are too young to understand and they should not have to be subjected to this. They are just starting to explore life and learning. We need to be teaching them life skills that will carry them through life as they grow. These children and youth need to learning about math, science, American history, geography, writing, and the basics of reading. These skills will take them further in life as they learn more each year as they grow. The items they are being taught now, they will learn as they become older and better able to understand. We need to pass this Freedom of Choice for Educational Opportunity as I feel it will make all schools stronger and more caring for our children and youth today. We do not need to destroy and confuse our children and youth in order to meet a hidden agenda that wants to destroy the future of our children & youth. Please pass this bill for the sake of Texas Children & Youth Futures.

Elizabeth Padgett, Mrs
Self retired teacher
Lubbock, TX

The money should follow the student to school of choice

Falbert McCoy-Garrett
ATPE
SAN AUGUSTINE, TX

All students deserve the right to the best education possible, regardless of where they attend school. All schools should be held to the highest standards.

Falbert McCoy-Garrett
ATPE
SAN AUGUSTINE, TX

We need to spend less time testing, and more time teaching our students.

Michelle Keough
Self/Parent
Argyle, TX

Vouchers provide extra funds to those who can already afford private schools for their children-the \$8k voucher does not cover private tuition and pads the wealthy.

But it does mean that students and families not in the top socioeconomic tier will have programs cut or reduced because of vouchers.

I went to private school. It was a choice my parents made knowing they would have to pay it AND pay school taxes. But they did it because they believed that stronger public schools created a better community and held property values.

Keep public education public and let private education be a privately funded choice. VOTE NO ON VOUCHERS and support strong schools for strong communities.

Amy Gatlin
Self
Allen, TX

Vote no for school vouchers. Vouchers will not provide “freedom and opportunity” for all. Private schools don’t have to accept every child. They also don’t have to provide special Ed support services for kids. Vouchers will only help those that can afford the tuition that isn’t covered and those that private schools accept which is typically kids with excellent grades and no learning differences.

Instead please provide more funding and support for public schools to meet the needs of all children in Texas. You can give every child in Texas a quality education. You can fund electives, career ready classes and expand offerings to be better than any state.

This is not only marketable but will help our economy and bring more businesses and jobs to Texas.

Vouchers won’t help our economy. They will only take money from our public schools and we will see declines in every area.

Vote no for vouchers! Listen to your constituents. This message is loud and clear. Texas doesn’t want vouchers. We want strong healthy public schools for ALL.

Ruben Torres
Self
Webster, TX

Either do your work or resign!!

If you plan to ignore the voters, please resign.

If you don’t care for the future of our children, resign!

Maria Coplen, Mrs.
Self
Ennis, TX

I do not support vouchers. Nor does anyone that I know. I have taught 33 years in public elementary schools in Texas. Vouchers are a terrible idea. People assume that private schools are better and that their kids would do better if they were at a private school. In my opinion, kids in private schools do better because their parents are involved and invested by paying twice (school Taxes and private tuition). Unless our public school kid's parents are going to be involved when their kids are enrolled in a private school we won't see the benefits that are advertised. That money should stay in the public schools so we can truly educate all kids in the great state of Texas.

Teresa Wheeler
Self/ house keeper
Evant, TX

I am a registered voter and that I am "FOR" school choice.

Here are my reasonings FOR bill to pass EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY and FREEDOM:

- . Parents should have a say in how the tax dollars for our children's education are allocated
- . Texas has a 51% illiteracy rate so parents should be able to choose a school where their children have the best opportunity to learn
- . While Texas has a 51% illiteracy rate, children are still passed to the next grade without the knowledge to master the next level of learning
- . Opposed to the sexually explicit books being made available in the public schools
- . Opposed to the gender affirming indoctrination of our children
- . Want our teachers to get back to the basics of teaching our children reading, writing, math, American history and science

Thank you for the consideration and may it vote in FAVOR of this bill.

Teresa Wheeler
Tstephens8230@gmail.com
10 July 2023

Linda Stringer
Self
Lubbock, TX

Please vote for school choice in education.

Evelyn Winn
self
Lubbock, TX

Stop schools from teaching our children subjects that are not in line with God's teachings. Schools should only be teaching the basics -. The madness needs to stop and Texas should be leading the war on all wokeness and immortality in our public schools.

Jolie Willis
Self
Austin, TX

Thank you for your service. As you work to find common ground and creative solutions to the state's school finance shortcomings, I ask you to protect children in public schools by standing strong against vouchers of any kind. Vouchers are not effective at improving educational outcomes and undermine community schools. Instead of taking money from public schools, I ask you to restore funding and allow our teachers to continue doing great work for Texas kids.

Tami Copeland
self
North Richland Hills, TX

Please protect our already underfunded public schools by opposing any and all voucher programs. The children of Texas deserve quality public schools, please do not divert those funds to private, charter, or homeschooling.

Nikki Roberts
All public school teachers against vouchers
Claude, TX

Vouchers will not help public education. ALL students should have proper funding, you are taking money away from public schools. We are one of the worst states in regards to funding for public education and that is a shame. Shame on all legislators who are are not fighting for public education.

Cami Brewer
Self - teacher
Stephenville, TX

As a Texas educator in the public school system, I am certain that I am in the minority when I say that I fully support the use of vouchers for educational choice. Please approach this topic carefully and prayerfully, and understand that this will benefit both teachers and students.

Amy Conine
self
Corinth, TX

I am writing to let you know I oppose school vouchers. Public education should be fully funded, and an equal education should be offered to all Texas students.

Clayton Conine
self
Corinth, TX

I am writing to let you know I oppose school vouchers. Public education should be fully funded, and an equal education should be offered to all Texas students.

Amy Conine
self
Corinth, TX

I am writing to let you know I oppose school vouchers. Public education should be fully funded, and an equal education should be offered to all Texas students.

Susan Perez
Citizens for Education Reform
Lubbock, TX

As an educator for over 40 years, I never thought I would support School Choice, but woke indoctrination is rampant in schools across Texas — big cities, small towns, and rural areas alike. Students are being filled with sexually explicit content and even being taught to hate America. Beyond that, a lot of the education is not high quality and based on the most important areas that a child now needs to be successful in the world for their future.

I appreciate that Texas will be able to write our own Reading/Language Arts and Math Curriculum for K - 5, but that still leaves a lot of subjects like history and social studies, health science and sex ed classes to keep an eye on.

The main point is that the taxpayers are paying for this government education system. We should have the option to choose our own education for our children. Some legislators feel they need to control how the funding is being used, but do you really have control over it now? Look at all of the corrupted curriculum problems in education now. Parents would be more able to oversee the education for their own children.

States that have implemented School Choice show that the academics improved for students and the funding per student was not diminished.

Right now schools try to spend all of the federal money each year so they don't lose it. This is resulting in too many administrative positions. With some competition, schools would likely reallocate the money and efforts toward classroom instruction and improving teacher salaries so they could keep up with the competition academically. Right now, there is no real accountability. Even the 'test driven instruction' does not ensure students are learning to read by 3rd grade and are prepared for real world skills and college upon graduation. In fact, there is information that the literacy in Texas was 54% only 11 years ago and is now down to 18%. Why should we trust the government schools and the legislature with the education on our children?

I urge the select committee members to make ALL TEXAS families eligible for School Choice.

Natalie Juergens
Self; Educator
Houston, TX

No to vouchers. Vouchers are not the solution and will not ensure all Texas youths enjoy equal educational opportunity and the freedom to obtain quality education, regardless of circumstance.

Natalie Juergens
Self; Educator
Houston, TX

No to vouchers. Vouchers are not the solution and will not ensure all Texas youths enjoy equal educational opportunity and the freedom to obtain quality education, regardless of circumstance. A meaningful discussion will include funding public schools based on enrollment and the use of surplus state funds to fund public schools.

Nancy Forvilus Corvil, Mrs
Self /process server
Austin, TX

Dear [Committee Members],

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to urge you to take a strong stance against any proposed vouchers for public schools and prioritize the protection of children in our community.

As esteemed members of this committee, you possess the power to influence policies that can shape the future of our educational system. I commend your dedication to this crucial responsibility and would like to emphasize the urgency of defending public education as the bedrock of our society.

Public schools represent a fundamental pillar of our democracy, providing equal access to quality education for children from all walks of life. These institutions serve as a unifying force, fostering a sense of belonging and creating opportunities for children to learn alongside peers from diverse backgrounds.

The introduction of vouchers, which divert taxpayer dollars to private institutions, undermines the principles upon which public education is built. While proponents argue that vouchers offer greater choice and quality opportunities, the reality is often far from the promised outcomes.

programs that now have frequently led to the segregation of students based on socioeconomic status, compromising our commitment to diversity and inclusivity in education. Additionally, research has shown that voucher programs often lack the same level of accountability and oversight as public schools, potentially resulting in subpar education experiences for vulnerable students.

By firmly opposing the implementation of vouchers, we can ensure that all children have access to a high-quality education regardless of their socioeconomic status. It is our duty to protect the most vulnerable members of our society, and a strong public education system is essential in achieving this goal.

I implore each of you to consider the long-term consequences of supporting voucher programs. Let us join hands in championing the rights of every child and providing them with the best opportunities to thrive within our public school system.

Together, we can make sure that our public schools remain strong and continue to serve as a catalyst for positive change in our community. I appreciate your time and dedication to this crucial matter, and I trust that you will make the best decision for the future of our children.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to protecting the integrity of public education.

Sincerely, Nancy F

Nancy Forvilus Corvil
nancyleger@ymail.com
15406 Ecorio Dr Austin
78728 Tx

Sharde Davis
Ridge Creek Elementary PTA
Humble, TX

encourage this committee to protect children in public schools by standing strong against vouchers of any kind.

Mary Hengstebeck
self
Leander, TX

We need support our public schools by providing better pay for our teachers. We need to let teachers teach history and stop banning history topics

Jeaneane McNulty
self - yoga teacher
Austin, TX

Dear committee members, as a Texas parent of 2 school-aged children, I am deeply concerned about the fate of free public education in Texas. I condemn continued attempts to push my tax dollars to fund private religious and for-profit schools through tax breaks and vouchers. And I am baffled at the legislature's failure thus far to increase the per-student basic allotment or provide for increased teacher pay when we have a historic surplus of funds available to do so. When thinking about "school choice", please consider this: most parents (as evidenced that despite its shortcomings and challenges, 90% of Texas families send their kids to public schools) have little time or true desire to sift through dozens of educational choices. Those who can DO it because we are forced to and because we want what's best for our children and our communities. But we do not WANT to agonize over which of 30 schools in our area is the best fit for our child. We do not WANT to wrestle with the decision of whether to homeschool or charter school because our neighborhood public school has a shortage of teachers and has had to raise classroom sizes and isn't allowed to teach the whole of our history. We don't WANT to have to call on our children's aunts, uncles and grandparents to help with supplementing childcare so that we can make enough money to pay for private school tuition and extracurriculars and tutors. What the vast majority of Texas parents want, is a simple choice. We want to be able to confidently send our children to the free school that is right down the street, the one we are already paying for - that nearly all our neighbors' kids also go to. We want to know that it is fully staffed with great teachers. We want to know that it has the resources to provide a full range of high-quality curriculum, services and programs that will meet the needs of our children. We want to know that it will nurture their curiosity and instill in them a lifelong love of learning. We want to know that our kids will emerging from high school ready to pursue their dreams, contribute to their communities, and compete in today's world. Please fully fund our Texas public schools so they can be the simple, best choice for Texas families. Use our budget surplus to make them nationally and globally competitive. Give Texas parents a SIMPLE choice - make it no-brainer!

Ana Aguirre Garcia, Ms.
Self/Public School Teacher
Harlingen, TX

I vote NO vouchers. Vouchers are not going to guarantee our students a better education. Legislation for more funding for schools, revamping TEA, and higher pay for teachers is what we need!

Frank Busch
Retired Military and Grand parentd of Texas
GATESVILLE, TX

School Choice, Bottom Line up front Competition Works and improves quality.
Hello My Name is Frank C. Busch and My Wife's Name is Debbie A Busch we are registered voters in Coryell County. We are a retired military Couple who Spent 28 Years in the Army. One thing that was driven into us was the process of Assessment, Improvement, Execution and Reassessment. As we send our most Precious commodity, Our Children, to a place of implied trust, Public Schools, there is an expectation of continued growth and excellence and a willingness to improve that comes along with it. To paint with a broad Brush that expectation is not being met. With a 51% illiteracy rate we keep doing the same thing over and over again expecting the same results; definition of insanity. So how do we fix it? Well the first order of business is competition! Why do we not expect the same standard from our schools and our teachers as we do those who fix cars, install windows, plumbing or any other work we pay to get done? We do research, we ask questions, we get estimates and then we decide who gets the job. IF they do a great job we will use them again and recommend them to others. If they don't get the job done, then we make sure we don't use them again and we also let others know. The challenge is the Education system, from kindergarten to graduate school promotes itself. The Fox guarding the hen house if you will. As any institution is prone to defend their system and say, "How dare your question Us, we are the "Experts." Education system is not the Experts. The Places of employment are the experts. They know more than any the necessary qualifications they need for success. Also the Tax payer is the expert! If you are not producing a quality product for the money paid for you to do so, then the tax payer has the right to demand another producer of that product. The parent has the right to demand a better product. In fact if you completely fail we should have the right to demand our money back. School choice is that vehicle that will get the job done. It puts the money wear the rubber meets the road. It promotes competition and an outside source to evaluate the performance of each particular school. It requires those running these schools, to include school boards to be accountable for the product they are providing and hold teachers to a standard. That alone will be a significant factor for improvement! Think about it, does a person holding a welding helmet and a welding rod in their hand make them a welder? So why do we think a degree is what makes someone a good teacher. Yes you must master what you are teaching. But We must assess and improve their skills. School choice will be a tool that gets us doing that faster! In a continuing world that uses buz words, which mainly are meaningless in application. The word equity is no wear apparent in Schools. I would prefer to say equal opportunity that is not constrained by the failed schools some kids have to attend.

Joan Jobe
Self/retired RN
Lubbock, TX

Parents & children should have their rights for school choices free from indoctrination of sexual content

Gilbert Trevino, Dr.
self
Floydada, TX

Opportunities and freedom currently exist within our public education system. I do not support vouchers or ESAs in any form.

Kara Brown
Self, homemaker
Conroe, TX

Improved funding for public/charter schools focused on STEAM enrichment options makes quality education accessible for all. This should be our focus.

Diane Payne
Self
Bandera, TX

Please do not consider taking funds away from already underfunded public schools to fund private ones? Are these private schools going to include all religious schools—Baptist, Judaism, Buddhism, Scientology, Islam, etc? Separation of church and state needs to remain! In these times of violent school shootings, you need to be using funds to make our public schools safe. Since the legislature reduced funding for school safety from \$100/student to \$10/student, where will the public schools get the funds to build fences, cover windows, hire security? In our school district, Bandera ISD, our school bond that would've helped with this just failed. Do the right thing—protect our students and staff, don't give funds to private schools.

Perry Daniell
self, public school teacher
FORT WORTH, TX

Honorable Representatives,
It is the right of every Texas citizen to a free and public education. Texas public school teachers are some of the highest educated, most passionate, hardest working, and under paid citizens in our great state. Private and Charter schools are not even held to the same standards as public schools and, yet, are touted as a “better opportunity” for our students. Public school teachers are tasked with education equity for ALL students; we don't pick and choose. Here is what you can do to address the charges given you:

1. Fund public schools adequately and stop talking about “vouchers”, ESAs, or any other form of funding for any education institutions other than public schools. Texas is ranked 42nd in school funding, trailing the national average by \$4,000 per student.
 2. Increase the per student allotment to allow public schools to operate successfully in an inflated economy. We have experienced a 17-19% inflation since COVID without an equal increase in allotment.
 3. Stop giving mandates to education without adequate funding to support the necessary changes and structure.
 4. Support school districts' efforts to pass needed bonds by removing the misleading statement on the ballot regarding taxes. Bonds do not increase taxes; tax rates and appraisals do that.
-

Ruth Chryst
se;/retired
San benito, TX

Every young person I ask if they know their constitution ,or for that matter anything about American history ,none do. For that alone should be enough reason why students and parents should have the choice and not the schools.where they should be educated. It has been said that if you capture the mind of a child you have captured a nation. I believe this has been happening ,as they are so hostile to any conservative speaker, they are taught to disagree with any view other than what they have been taught. Indoctrination that is what is going on, rather than teaching them facts they are teaching what to think. this is dangerous for the future of our country,

Kelly Hammons, Mrs.
Teachers
Spring, TX

Texas teachers have not had a raise from the state in twenty years (since G. Bush). That's an embarrassment to our wonderful state. Invest in our students by investing in our teachers of public education! No vouchers!!!

Suzanne Scott
Self
Houston, TX

I am strongly opposed to educational vouchers. We should not be using public taxes to fund private education. That funding source should go directly to public schools to increase teacher pay. We have faced an extreme teacher shortage over the past few years and teachers need compensation that is equivalent to their education and standing. If teachers had better salary and benefits, it would decrease the teacher shortage and increase student success by having smaller class sizes. Fewer teachers means larger classes. I am also opposed to the amount of standardized testing. Teaching to the test does not equate to improving higher functioning thinking skills which is crucial to the development of independent thought and critical thinking skills. I encourage you to support decreased testing, higher teacher pay, and NO vouchers. Thank you for reading my comments.

Katrina Dickey
Self - Fifth grade teacher
Richardson, TX

Got it we do not want vouchers in Texas!

Suzanne Scott
Self
Houston, TX

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Sara Gray
Self
Wolfforth, TX

My husband and I sent our son to private schools starting in the 4th grade. He has ADHD and had trouble in the public school environment. Sending him to small private schools gave him the opportunity to get the individual attention he needed. He was able to participate in school sports which gave him a sense of team bonding. He participated in school plays and was the student director his senior year. Our son had a positive experience with people who supported and uplifted him. He is currently a Navy helicopter pilot.

Our daughter's experience was completely different. She attended Southlake/Carroll schools. She was in the band, rode horses, and graduated in the top 20% of her class. She attended Texas Tech and graduated Summa Cum Laude. She is an elementary school librarian in Lubbock, TX.

Each child's needs are different, and each child needs to be in an environment that promotes their growth in a positive and uplifting way. The current curriculum in public schools does not accomplish this. Rather it promotes separation and gives children sexual information that is inappropriate for their developmental age. Having the ability to send children to schools that best fit their emotional, scholastic, and spiritual needs is vital. Having the money follow the child would make that choice available to more parents who wish for their children to reach their full potential.

An interesting fact that has also been a result of states that have implemented school choice is a drop in teenage crime rates. This fact was discussed on the radio show "More of the Story" on Lubbock radio station KWBF 98.7 on Saturday, July 8th. You can check their website for more information, moreofthestory.org.

Elizabeth Caparoon
ATPE
Haskell, TX

No to vouchers!

Erica Meza
Self; communications professional
San Antonio, TX

Parents have many choices for quality education through public schools and public charter schools, which are paid for with state funds. This includes career & technical programs, fine arts programs, STEM programs, advanced placement, dual credit, and the list goes on. I am concerned that extending taxpayer dollars to private and home schools will lack accountability, transparency, and regulations. For example, private schools do not have to follow any of the regulations required of public schools -- no STAAR testing or accountability grades; no publically elected school boards; no requirements to serve special needs students; not school safety requirements; no requirements for teacher certifications or professional development; and no due process for parental rights.

Amanda Pullin, Ms.
Harper isd
Kerrville, TX

23 year veteran public school teacher here...it's time for pay raises; less testing, and NO school vouchers. Do the right thing!

Tami Lowrie
Self
Conroe, TX

The only way for the voucher system to be fair is to have the private school held to the same standard as public schools. They must accept the payment as FULL payment of tuition! No extra fees etc. They must be paid their "voucher" amount in the same manner as public schools are paid- based on attendance unless Texas changes to enrollment based funding for all. Do that and I can get behind the voucher system. Doing anything else is nothing more than giving those who have the money to send students to private school a tax break and reducing the opportunities for those less fortunate.

ESA's for homeschooling? I can't imagine the nightmare that might become. If the state is providing funds for homeschooling then the state needs to make sure those students are being taught the TEKS and learning them. How would attendance-aka teaching the TEKS be monitored? Start with vouchers to private schools that must accept it as full payment. Figure that one out before you create a system monitoring home schooling- which is essential if they are receiving money- and have a plan for that system before you come back to suggest giving money to parents that decide to educate at home.

James Bryant
self/public education
CANADIAN, TX

Lawmakers should not out-source quality public education. They should fix the problems that lead to families seeking to leave public schools. Some families still might prefer the choice of private schools or home schools. Public funds should not be given toward private schools that do not have the same standards and accountability as public schools.

Christopher Black
Self
Lakehills, TX

Vouchers should not be tied to teacher pay raises. Most Texasns do not support them. The governor only wants the so his rich friends kids can go to private school on the tax payers bill.

Katy Lockhart
Self teacher
Little Elm, TX

Teachers deserve a living wage, and the cost of living is quickly outpacing their salaries. These are college educated individuals who deserve higher pay.

Nathan Moye, Mr.
Ennis ISD
Dallas, TX

Please vote against school vouchers. Please support public education for all by increasing funding for schools and teachers.

Nathan Moye
Self / teacher
Dallas, TX

Please vote against school vouchers. Please support public education by increasing funding for public education and teachers.

Lagia Parker
Self
Garland, TX

Public Education is not public, if you can choose private . I am against vouchers. If you want private, pay for it out of your own pocket.

Karen Pelphrey, Ms
Self retired
Lubbock, TX

Stay out of Christian schools. Make no laws to interfere.

Holly Saucedo, ESL Teacher
Self
Cedar park, TX

I am a 2nd generation Texas teacher of nearly 20 years. I beg of you, please properly fund our schools, give teachers a much deserved pay raise, lower the testing and accountability burden, and vote NO VOUCHERS!

Jennifer Easley
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please keep vouchers out of our Texas educational system and consider how taking funds from already overburdened and underfunded public schools will hurt children throughout Texas. Please better fund our public school students so that we are able to attract and retain the best teachers and use innovative methods to best serve our students based on their needs. Let's provide a system that supports and encourages family engagement and doesn't create duplicity of systems to best serve our students to help them reach their potential.

Jennifer Easley
N/A
San Antonio, TX

Please keep vouchers out of our Texas educational system and consider how taking funds from already overburdened and underfunded public schools will hurt children throughout Texas. Please better fund our public school students so that we are able to attract and retain the best teachers and use innovative methods to best serve our students based on their needs. Let's provide a system that supports and encourages family engagement and doesn't create duplicity of systems to best serve our students to help them reach their potential.

Holly Saucedo, ESL Teacher
Self
Cedar Park, TX

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Teri Naya
Association of Texas Professional Educators
Fort Worth, TX

The Texas Constitution guarantees a free Public education. It does not state that government should provide other types of education. Parents have the freedom to choose a different approach but the government should not pay for it. Our system is shamefully broken and we should not send funding other places until it is fixed.

Betsy Brack
self - Educator
Buda, TX

To improve outcomes for Texas students, you must have qualified teachers in the classrooms. In order to have those qualified teachers in place, you MUST increase pay and show support for Texas teachers. You have not shown support or indicated priority for education to us this past session, and my peers continue to leave the most important mission field in droves. I'm not sure what could be more important than the futures of our children, but, from my perspective, less important issues have taken priority for political purposes, and I'm disheartened. Vouchers are NOT the answer to this issue. Qualified teachers in classrooms where substitutes are currently marking time would be a great place to start.

Laura Lumpkin
Self/Teacher
Tyler, TX

We do not need vouchers. There is no accountability for private schools to accept all students or provide the same services as public schools, such as special education. There are no requirements for their students to take the same tests or the schools to be graded by the same criteria. There is nothing insuring that private schools won't take voucher money and raise their tuition, making private school as out of reach as ever for most families. Instead of taking money away from public schools, we should be working to improve them.

Shawn Smith
Self
Centerville, TX

Teachers need pay raises... single parent teachers are having to leave the profession with the cost of living increases in order to support their families...
Testing in Texas schools has gotten so off track...way too much testing is being done amd the test itself is testing in a way that children (elementary) do not understand the significance of the test and the accountability it puts upon the teachers and schools... parents are having their children just hit submit without taking the test causing scores of zero as a means of boycotting against it with schools still being held accountable..
vote no to vouchers ... they will devastate the public school system..

Shawn Smith
Self
Centerville, TX

Vote no to vouchers.. they will be devastating to public schools

Jeff Clary
self
Spring, TX

A voucher, by any other name, is a voucher. As a voter, a retired teacher, and a grandparent of school age children, I ask you to please oppose ANY plan that removes public monies from public schools. If parents choose to leave the system and home-school or take their children to private school, I have no issues with that. But when we take MY hard earned money and give it away to private schools, I am completely opposed to that. I don't choose what roadways get my tax dollars based on which ones I drive on....and similarly, people shouldn't get a gift of money to pay for education. We, as a society, provide education...but whether a parent chooses to use that option is completely up to them. Just like I don't ask for a tax gift/rebate when I don't drive on a particular road that my tax dollars fixes, I expect those parents who choose another educational path for their children to not be handed cash, vouchers, gift cards, etc.

Maripat Herzog, Teacher
ATPE/teacher
Katy, TX

More pay for school faculty and staff. NO vouchers!

Jeff Clary
self
Spring, TX

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Janice Loewe, Teacher
Self/ Teacher
Driftwood, TX

Teachers need higher pay. We are well below the national average. We need less testing in the schools so that teachers can spend more time actually "teaching" kids. Vouchers should not be funded. That money needs to go to the public schools. My tax money should not be used to allow parents to send their kids to private schools.

Lisa Stapert
Self
Lumberton, TX

NO to vouchers!!! Private schools should not get tax payer money PERIOD!!! Students should attend home districts!! Private school is a choice that not everyone can afford!! MORE support for small school districts!!!

Hilary Toma
Self
The Woodlands, TX

As a constituent, know that I do not support public school vouchers in whatever shape or form you choose to label them. Use the surplus to fund public schools - raise the basic allotment for all school districts and give the staff and teachers raises across the board. Not bonuses, actual raises. Stop playing games with the surplus and fund schools at the level necessary to be a leader in public education funding in the United States. School starts in one month - fund our schools. And just say no to vouchers.

Jan Loewe
Self / Teacher
Driftwood, TX

Teachers need higher pay. We are well below the national average. We need less testing in the schools so that teachers can spend more time actually "teaching" kids. Vouchers should not be funded. That money needs to go to the public schools. My tax money should not be used to allow parents to send their kids to private schools.

Sharon Thornton
self
Lubbock, TX

The freedom to select the school of your choice.

Julie Hinaman
Cypress-Fairbanks ISD Trustee
Cypress, TX

Any organization receiving public funds for education MUST follow the same academic and financial accountability and transparency rules as traditional public schools. The state constitution REQUIRES the state to provide a public education to ALL students - Article 7 - but it does NOT allow for or require public funds to be used for private schools. NO VOUCHERS without full accountability/transparency tp all taxpayers!

Kristine Naiser
Teacher
La Grange, TX

Vouchers will catapult those who don't need an advantage and distance those in low socioeconomic even further. I'm against vouchers because we need to unite rather than separate further for our young people to be successful in the world.

When we started high stakes testing eons ago, my father was an elementary counselor & spoke out against testing. He was concerned that taking away "playtime" & physical movement in young ones would be detrimental to social skills, the learning environment, and the stress level of our young people. We now have high school and young adults with no social skills, a high suicide rate amongst our teens, and an epidemic of empathy in the learning environment. Sink the money into teacher pay raises and retention incentives, adding counselors to all campuses, ensuring safe campuses, IQ testing benchmarks, and do a needs assessment per each district to see how to best help students, teachers, and parents. Schools have become the "band aide" to fix societal issues, and we can't.

Chaim Lazaroff, Rabbi
Self, Rabbi & 37 branches Chabad in Texas
Houston, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,

I am writing to you today both as an individual and as a representative of the vibrant Jewish community and the 37 branches of Chabad Lubavitch of Texas. I urge you to support school choice and education equality in our great state.

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.

Please 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.

School choice is about providing parents with the freedom to choose the educational setting that aligns with their child's unique needs and learning style. No two children are alike, and their education should reflect that individuality. By embracing school choice, we can ensure that all students, regardless of their background or circumstances, have an opportunity to receive an education that meets their specific requirements.

Granting parents the ability to choose alternative educational options goes hand in hand with promoting education equality. It allows families who may be dissatisfied with their assigned district school to explore other avenues that better serve their children's educational needs. By doing so, we promote an inclusive system that accommodates a variety of learning approaches, teaching philosophies, and curricula.

Furthermore, supporting school choice is not only beneficial for parents and students; it also has positive implications for educators and taxpayers. By encouraging competition among schools, we foster an environment of innovation, improvement, and accountability. Schools will be motivated to provide the best possible education to attract students, leading to overall better outcomes for all involved. Additionally, school choice can lead to cost savings for taxpayers as funds are allocated more efficiently and effectively.

It is worth noting that nearly half of the states in our country have already implemented some form of a school choice program. By joining this ever-expanding list, Texas can demonstrate its commitment to educational excellence and ensure that our students remain competitive on a national level. Failing to act now risks leaving our state behind in the pursuit of educational progress and the fulfillment of our children's potential.

Rabbi Chaim Lazaroff
Chabad Lubavitch of Texas

Alana Ingram, Ms.
self
Vidor, TX

I'm a Texas public educator and I am saying NO to vouchers! Yes to teacher raises and Yes to reducing or eliminating student testing.

William Henig
self
Houston, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,
Please support school choice and education equality in Texas.
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.
Please 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.

Jason Sanders
Self/ teacher
BOERNE, TX

We already have a shortage of teachers in our great state. Funding to public education was cut when voters were hoodwinked to allow lottery to help pay for education. It should have been as a supplement, not a replacement to tax payer dollars. School vouchers have been proven to fail over and over again for the undeserved, at-risk, populations that can't afford to just go somewhere else. Vouchers will do nothing to help anything other than a select few individuals, while further widening the gap in education. Teachers are not allowed to strike according to Texas public school law, but teachers are getting fed up with those in office and their inability to do the right thing for ALL students and persons, rather than a few select agendas. Be ready for teachers to stand up and make their voices heard at the next elections for any legislation in favor of vouchers. Do NOT tie teacher raises to vouchers and think that educators are dumb enough to think that we didn't want a raise because we said we didn't want vouchers, and that we missed our opportunity. Do right by teachers. For heavens sake, do right by students and let common sense rule the day.

Raul Chavarria, Superintendent
Crockett County Consolidated Common School District - Ozona
Ozona, TX

Teachers, support staff and all associated with Texas public schools have taken notice as to how our elected leaders value education. Certainly a missed opportunity to address our teacher shortage and the future of our kids.

Robin Blocker
Teacher
Stockdale, TX

Teacher's need raises. Inflation is killing us. Smaller districts are suffering from not being able to find teachers because the pay difference between small and large districts is so big!!!! Please help us!!!!

Tammi Robinson
Self
Dayton, TX

No school vouchers! Please do not tie Teacher raises to vouchers. Teachers need raises without any strings attached. Additionally, what happened to HB 9 where NBC was going to put teachers on the top tier for TIA? Do something constructive with our educational funds!

Martha Mann

Self- I am a Special Education Teacher

Mesquite, TX

I agree that students should have educational opportunity and enrichment but NOT at the expense of public education funds. Taking money from public schools to GIVE money (vouchers) is no different than saying student loans can't be forgiven. If you have a debt you pay it. Well, the same should hold true for private schools. If you can afford to attend a private school then you can choose to go to a private school. If you can't afford it, then you should not be GIVEN money (vouchers) so that your child can go. If you want change at the public school level, invest in your teachers and schools.

The state needs to use some of the money from the rainy day account and pay for improvements at the district levels. Improvements include but are not limited to: quality technology for ALL students not just the students that attend academies. Also better pay and benefits so quality teachers stay. Having permanent subs, or just a warm body, instead of a certified teacher does not always equal quality education.

There are a total of 4,547 schools that are Title 1 eligible in the state of Texas with 3,959 that are Title 1. Information from DOE. The Senate's version of HB 100 would give parents who opt out of the public school system up to \$8,000 in taxpayer money per student each year through these accounts. The funds could be used to pay for a child's private schooling and other educational expenses, such as textbooks or tutoring.

Well, with the number of Title 1 schools, how will the "up to" \$8,000 (in vouchers) help the marginalized students?

From Texas Private Schools by Tuition: The average private school tuition in Texas is \$10,432 per year (2023). The private elementary school average tuition cost is \$10,064 per year and the private high school average is \$11,486 per year.

So, with those figures in mind, how will the marginalized Title 1 students get to a private school if they don't have bus service or parent transportation? Voucher money does not pay for transportation. Also, how will their family make up the difference in funds?

The Center Square contributor Mar 31, 2023:

From Texas State Comptroller Glenn Heger: "The revenue increases that we have seen truly have been historical and unprecedented. We have never experienced anything like this in the past, and I don't think we'll witness anything like this in the future," Heger said in a statement. "Although the ESF has a historically high balance, this money belongs to the people of Texas, and we must always be prepared to use those funds to address their needs." The 88th Legislature has "an unprecedented amount of money for general-purpose spending," he added, saying, he was "glad to see that lawmakers are giving careful thought to how this tremendous asset can be best put to work for Texans."

Please do what is right and properly fund your public schools and their staff.

Clay Wooten

Self/retired grandpa

midland, TX

Please protect our children and grandchildren from godless, immoral indoctrination and teach godly values that have sustain our country for 200+ years

Craig Rowland

Self

Abilene, TX

Education Opportunity & Enrichment

Cynthia Hipes, Ms.

Self

Dallas, TX

As an educator in the role of teacher, dyslexia therapist, regional service center teacher trainer, and someone experienced in both public and private school education, I also say no vouchers. I have been sent into the charter schools to do teacher awareness, and the quality of training in these charter schools is abominable. These people in our charter schools should not be working with or trying to educate children as the teachers need so much help themselves before joining educators. Do not undermine our independent school districts by shifting funds to those who cannot use them appropriately. Our schools are struggling to fund education for the children enrolled in our public schools. Do not undermine those of us who are doing a good job with less pay, less support, and a lower quality education in our public schools. We deserve your support!!!! No vouchers; raise our pay.

Ginger Potts

Self

Bay City, TX

No to vouchers!! Private schools are not held to the same standards as public education. They do not get graded and they do not have to accept everyone! Public Education steps up and tries to meet every challenge legislators push on it. No is the only fair answer for all students that must attend public education institutions.

Laura Klein Plunkett

Self

Georgetown, TX

School choice is badly needed for the future of Texas. Some of the benefits are:

Increased competition: When parents have the ability to choose between multiple schools, schools must compete for students, which can lead to improved academic performance and better services for students.

Customization: School choice allows parents to choose a school that fits their child's needs and interests, whether that's a school with a particular academic focus, a smaller classroom size, or a specific teaching style.

Empowerment of parents: School choice gives parents more control over their child's education, allowing them to make decisions based on their individual needs and preferences.

Innovation: Schools that are competing for students may be more likely to experiment with innovative teaching methods and programs.

Florida has implemented a variety of school choice programs, including tax credit scholarships, education savings accounts, and vouchers. These programs have been credited with improving student achievement and graduation rates, particularly for low-income and minority students. Indiana's school choice program includes a voucher program that allows students to attend private schools using public funds. Studies have shown that the program has led to improved student achievement, particularly for low-income students. Arizona has implemented a variety of school choice programs, including tax credit scholarships and education savings accounts. These programs have been associated with improved academic outcomes and increased parent satisfaction. Wisconsin has had a long-standing school choice program that allows students to attend private schools using public funds. Studies have shown that the program has led to improved academic outcomes for participating students.

Texas has thus far allowed other states to take the lead on this issue. It's time for Texas to do what we do best--provide our citizens with ALL of the opportunities and advantages of living in a state where the true meaning of Liberty is understood and supported by the Legislature.

Amanda Darby
Self/Teacher
Lubbock, TX

Please note that I am against vouchers. They do not give a choice to parents who could not afford a private education anyway, but they do take funds away from the public schools.

Robin Phillips
Self Attorney
Houston, TX

I am your constituent. This session and for all special sessions, please oppose all forms of private school voucher programs and instead focus on funding a meaningful pay raise for our teachers. We should focus on helping all students and fully funding public education. Polling, educator and stakeholder feedback and continuous legislative pushback all show that TEXAS DOES NOT WANT VOUCHERS OF ANY KIND.

Katheryn Kmiecik-Salley, Mrs
Self
Houston, TX

It is crucial our get a proper education. Talking to them about sex changes and drag queens putting on shows is insane. They need to learn the basic reading, writing and arithmetic. Person liberal opinions are up to parents to decide whether they want their children taught that. All children should have a right to go to whichever schools they want.

Amanda Darby
Self/Teacher
Lubbock, TX

Please not that I am against vouchers. They do not give parents a choice if the parents cannot afford a private education, but they do take funds away from public schools.

Cindy Bailey, Mrs
Self
North Richland Hills, TX

With the excess rainy day funds reaching 27 billion by 2025 and the huge budget surplus, how can the state not raise teacher pay? No to vouchers means support for public schools and its educators.

Linda Reynolds
grand parents
Kyle, TX

No Charter schools. Studies show that Charter schools are overfunded and self-serving to private industry. I suspect many Legislators are receiving campaign funds from these private companies. There is a Texas saying, " If it ain't broke, don't fix it." This applies to public schools and public school teachers; both are underfunded and have been since the '80's! This was profoundly demonstrated in a 2022 poll, "Eighty-nine percent of public school parents say they are satisfied with the quality of education their child is receiving, surpassing the comparable national figure of 80 percent from an August 2022 poll.": <https://charlesbuttdn.org/what-were-learning/2023txedpoll/>

Robin Phillips
Self attorney
Houston, TX

? We oppose any form of voucher including traditional vouchers, Education Savings Accounts, Taxpayer Savings Accounts, business voucher credits, and special education vouchers.

? We want robust public school choice programs such as magnet schools, career and technical programs, and transfer options.

? We support a parent's right to choose a private school or homeschool education for their child...but not by using our taxpayer dollars!

? We demand transparency and accountability for taxpayers, and we reject any program that would allow voucher schools to turn away a child based on their family income, disability, academic record, religious beliefs, etc.

? We support meaningful funding for students who need the most assistance, such as special education students in our public schools, as long as there is transparency and accountability.

Robin Phillips
Self Attorney
Houston, TX

? We oppose any form of voucher including traditional vouchers, Education Savings Accounts, Taxpayer Savings Accounts, business voucher credits, and special education vouchers.

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? We support meaningful funding for students who need the most assistance, such as special education students in our public schools, as long as there is transparency and accountability.

Gwendolyn Bell
Self
Fort Worth, TX

As parents, we need the ability to choose the type of education we want for our children. If we want them protected from the "woke" agenda, we need to be able to choose Christian education or other private institutions that teach our principles

Lee Moses, Dr.
Self
Little River, TX

No public funds should be provided to private schools without the exact measures of academic and fiscal responsibility our public schools are "graded" on.

Rebecca Rumney
Self, teacher
Houston, TX

All children deserve the right to a free and HIGH QUALITY public education no matter their background or income. If public schools were at the level they should be (well funded and well supported), no one would choose to pay extra to send their kids to school unless it's for religious reasons.

That in a nutshell tells you something is truly wrong with the system.

Vouchers will simply leave behind the poorest students in public schools creating an unbalanced population.

Fully funding and supporting public schools will encourage parents to choose public education. This will allow schools to be a rich mixture of backgrounds. Children will be better exposed to those who are different from them. They will learn, not only academics, but social skills and compassion for other people which creates better humans in the future.

Alyssa Sullivan
Public Education
Mexia, TX

They have OFFICIALLY lost their minds! Tying educator pay to vouchers is insulting to all of us Texas educators!!! We work hard and the pay does not equal the amount of time we dedicate to OUR or YOUR children. As a single mom, for most of my child's school career I had to pay for everything including supplies and meals. In public schools, we don't have a choice on the students we accept while private and charter schools have an option. Vouchers will not benefit the poor. The poor will still need to send their kids to the local public school. Why should private schools get taxpayers money when they do not serve all children? Very few private schools serve children with special needs, and they definitely do not keep children with behavior issues like public schools do. Private schools also do not have to give the STAAR like public school are deemed mandatory to give. It is ridiculous to tie teacher raises with vouchers. As a public school teacher, we are responsible for educating all types and labels...rich, poor, those in special programs, the abused, mental, and many others. There is nothing wrong with parents wanting to allow their children to go to private schools, but public educators should not be funding it. I am a highly decorated educator and live pay check to pay check. Educators are constantly having more added to their plates, stuffing class numbers, overwhelmed with behaviors in the classroom, and being verbally & physically abused. Why are we not valued? This could be a major reason as to why we are in the middle of a teacher shortage. Our profession doesn't make a salary anywhere close to other professions, yes we knew this going in, but it should not be necessary for me and other to obtain a second job to make ends meet. Our insurance (that we don't get to choose), along with other daily costs keeps going up. Put this money toward BETTER SALARIES, LESS TESTING, OTHER HEALTHCARE OPTIONS and NO VOUCHERS!!!

Jeff Howard

Self

Belton, TX

It is Time for School Choice

Question: Should taxpayer dollars follow the student and parents get to choose the type of education their children receive?

Premise: Government can do a good job of providing education.

Let us say the Government wanted to help hungry people, so to do this they opened 10,000 Government Grocery Stores. And you are going to be assigned a Grocery Store based upon address and your Zip Code or an arbitrary boundary set by a local Government Board.

When you show up to the Grocery Store, you won't actually shop for your groceries, the groceries will be put together by a government employee who will then hand it to you and the contents of the groceries will be decided based off of the government board who thinks they know what you need with respect to the needs of your household. Now, if you do not like something in your grocery bag, not a big deal.... you just need to go to the local Board meeting or perhaps your State Legislature in order to lobby the government to change the contents of your shopping cart, meanwhile the Macaroni and Cheese Lobby and the Oreos Lobby, the Smithfield Ham Lobby or the Vegetarian Lobby shows up to all make arguments why their products have to be in your cart. Oh...and none of these employees working at the government grocery store will be rewarded based upon creativity, ingenuity, or work ethic. They will be rewarded largely based upon seniority.

Does anybody think that would be an effective way to run a Grocery Store?

This is exactly what we do with Public Education. You are assigned to a government school based upon your address; you have little to no say over the curriculum that is used in the school. That is decided by government boards, Legislature, and oversight committees. You will have to go through a lengthy process with your local School Board, State Board of Education and State Legislature in order to make any changes, and none of your teachers are rewarded based off of their creativity, ingenuity or work ethic, they are rewarded largely based upon seniority within a government run system.

So, is this the best way to provide an education for our children? The best way to maximize tax dollars?

Education is a government monopoly with no competition, little accountability, and poor outcomes.

My local School District is touted as a "great" school district...with a 95% Graduation rate. Yet test scores show that High Schoolers only have only a 41% proficiency in Math and only 66% proficient in Reading.

41% and 59% are NOT proficient, these are a Failing Grade on any Grading Scale....yet we have a 95% Graduation Rate. How is that possible?

We are well past the time to allow School Choice for Parents. It is time to end the government monopoly on education and allow for the natural effects of competition in any industry. Competition breeds excellence and efficiency. And only those that provide an excellent product will survive in the marketplace of ideas and education.

Rebecca Lofton

Self

Magnolia, TX

As a former public school teacher and administrator, I beg you to make a strong statement to the parents and students of public schools that we want quality schools for our children. Woke and CRT nonsense has no place in our schools. The primary focus of school should be to teach reading, writing and appropriate academics. Literacy is at an all time low and Texas can be a leader in moving forward by giving parents CHOICE in where their children are educated.

Alyssa Sullivan
Public Education
Mexia, TX

They have OFFICIALLY lost their minds! Tying educator pay to vouchers is insulting to all of us Texas educators!!! We work hard and the pay does not equal the amount of time we dedicate to OUR or YOUR children. As a single mom, for most of my child's school career I had to pay for everything including supplies and meals. In public schools, we don't have a choice on the students we accept while private and charter schools have an option. Vouchers will not benefit the poor. The poor will still need to send their kids to the local public school. Why should private schools get taxpayers money when they do not serve all children? Very few private schools serve children with special needs, and they definitely do not keep children with behavior issues like public schools do. Private schools also do not have to give the STAAR like public school are deemed mandatory to give. It is ridiculous to tie teacher raises with vouchers. As a public school teacher, we are responsible for educating all types and labels...rich, poor, those in special programs, the abused, mental, and many others. There is nothing wrong with parents wanting to allow their children to go to private schools, but public educators should not be funding it. I am a highly decorated educator and live pay check to pay check. Educators are constantly having more added to their plates, stuffing class numbers, overwhelmed with behaviors in the classroom, and being verbally & physically abused. Why are we not valued? This could be a major reason as to why we are in the middle of a teacher shortage. Our profession doesn't make a salary anywhere close to other professions, yes we knew this going in, but it should not be necessary for me and other to obtain a second job to make ends meet. Our insurance (that we don't get to choose), along with other daily costs keeps going up. Put this money toward BETTER SALARIES, LESS TESTING, OTHER HEALTHCARE OPTIONS and NO VOUCHERS!!!

Rebecca Rumney
Self, teacher
Houston, TX

Voucher systems should not exist. If the public school system was well funded and supported, no parent would choose to pay more for their child's education. EVERY child deserves a free and HIGH QUALITY education. They shouldn't need a voucher to make that happen. Take care of your public schools, and there is no need for the voucher system.

Howard Feinberg
Self
San Antonio, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,

I'm writing today to ask that you please support school choice and education equality in Texas. 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 public school should have the freedom and the ability to choose an alternative that better meets their needs.

Please empower parents to make educational decisions that are best for their child. Putting parents in control 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 for your kind consideration.

Charles Evans
Lubbock Area Republican Women's Association
Slaton, TX

We are sick and tired of schools being forced to shove all this WOKE crap on our kids. We believe the WOKE Revolution is a form of brainwashing our kids to conform to ideology of christians, the same groups that don't want prayer, the American National Anthem or the pledge of Allegiance (One Nation Under GOD) in our schools. It's time for our Representatives to stand up for the rights of the citizens that are trying to save their children from being forced to swallow this garbage in order to conform to non Christian beliefs and values.

Thank you,
Charles Evans
American Citizen
And a proud Texan.

Dana Dana, Mrs
Self/retired teacher
Irving, TX

No vouchers! Public school teachers desperately need a raise as do retired teachers. Thank you.

María Gonzalez, ESL Strategist
LISD
Laredo, TX

Sad that teachers and other school staff are never taken into account when you decide to change or create laws that affect them. You talk too much about everything but never about improving anything for them. We have university degrees etc. Overloaded with long hours because a lot of the work is taken home. For once do something to increase their pay.

Lance Feldman
Starr Family School, San Antonio
San Antonio, TX

This bill will help every child needs to be grounded in the material they need to succeed as adults. As it increases a parent's ability to choose what is best for their children. It will not only lift private schools, but the increased competition will also be an impetus for public schools to improve as well.

Ryan Otero
SELF (teacher)
El Paso, TX

Dear Educational Opportunity & Enrichment Committee Members:

My name is Ryan Otero and I'm a teacher at IDEA Public Schools, a public charter school in Socorro, Texas. Thank you for serving on such an important committee and your dedication to Texas students. I'm writing to share about my experience with an important issue you can help resolve.

All public school students deserve safe school facilities designed for teaching and learning but students in public charter schools are being left behind. Public charter schools receive \$965 less per student, on average, than other public schools. That's mostly because of a huge gap in facilities funding, which is increasing because all public charter schools in Texas share a fixed pot of facilities funding, even as more children attend charters. This fixed amount hasn't changed since it was first set in 2017.

Public charter schools across Texas, including IDEA Rio Vista, help more students thrive.

My charter school is the only TEA A-rated middle school in our city, providing educational outcomes for students in the city they could not find in traditional ISDs.

So I ask you, why do our public charter school students count less?

Public charter schools like mine shouldn't have to stretch other parts of their budgets just to cover facilities costs. Funds should be spent on classrooms, teaching, and learning. And unfair facilities funding is an even bigger problem because all public schools are making important safety upgrades to their buildings.

Please help make facilities funding fair for ALL public schools. This is about making sure every child has the chance to thrive.

Thank you,

Ryan C. Otero

Carrie Jones
self
Dripping Springs, TX

Having the public pay for others' private school tuitions is detrimental to our goal of providing quality public education for ALL Texas children. We already have a struggling public education system and low quality instruction, due to decades of neglect by the legislature. Let's not make it worse. No vouchers or ESAs!

Rosana Hightower, Teacher
Self. Teacher
Arlington, TX

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this matter as a parent and as an educator. I understand that parents want to provide the best educational opportunities for their children. The question that I have is why but do we need to tie student vouchers to teacher raises? As educators we struggle financially just as other people do. We are all suffering the inflated costs that the current economy has produced and need the pay raise to help offset those costs. We bridge the gap spending our own money buying school supplies that are crucial to our students education that are not provided by our districts. The cost of living has gone up and a pay raise is in order. Please support us as we ask for this pay increase.

Amy Ingram

SELF

KAUFMAN, TX

My name is Amy Ingram and I've been a teacher/basketball coach in Texas for the last 24 years. I've been really concerned with comments about us indoctrinating kids and teaching kids to hate their country. I've worked in 7 different districts in Texas and have NEVER seen anything like this at all, EVER. What I have seen are dedicated people who are following the TEKS and curriculum as mandated by TEA. I do not understand why we would not want to lead in Texas with the best public schools in the Nation. Teachers deal with a lot today that we have to put up with in the classroom and it's only gotten worse throughout my career. What I've seen from teachers are folks who care...folks who use their own money to help kids be successful and their own time as well. We have kids missing parents, drug issues, violence, and many other things that have become worse in this last decade. We do not have the resources we need to help kids. As a basketball coach I also serve as a counselor to my kids because of all they face in this world today. Teachers are doing all we can with what we face today in our schools. The violence at schools has gotten worse and the disrespect we face is very troubling...I wish we could just teach but a lot of time is taken dealing with students disrupting classrooms or kids not being at school due to things in their lives. No teacher is perfect and no school but we need your help not the dangerous rhetoric coming from some of you. As a teacher who chose this profession because of great teachers I had in my life it is an absolute blow to me when I try to contact my elected leaders to invite them to my school or to speak with me about my experiences as a public school teacher and nobody responds with an email back or a phone call. Some of you are attacking great people who would give the shirt off their back to help a kid. Texas is a leader in what we do and how we structure our athletic programs and athletic periods in Texas, not a lot of schools do that and they want to come here. We can do the same thing and attract the best teachers to Texas by enriching our public schools. Fully fund our schools so that ALL public schools can meet the needs of their students. Pay teachers a fair wage with good benefits for what they do. Many of us put in a ton of extra hours and will continue to do so for our kids. Respect teachers and please say those things in public so people value this great profession. We are losing great teachers because they are tired and frustrated with your negative comments about what we do. I'm not the best writer in 3000 words but all I can say is you're breaking my heart because I love what I get to do for kids, I love teaching and coaching. I chose this profession because it means everything to me, it is my LIFE! Please think about ME & my STUDENTS as you work for US to HELP US not HURT US. God Bless you all...-Coach Ingram-Kaufman HS-Proud public school teacher!

Amy Ingram
SELF
KAUFMAN, TX

My name is Amy Ingram and I've been a teacher/basketball coach in Texas for the last 24 years. I've been really concerned with comments about us indoctrinating kids and teaching kids to hate their country. I've worked in 7 different districts in Texas and have NEVER seen anything like this at all, EVER. What I have seen are dedicated people who are following the TEKS and curriculum as mandated by TEA. I do not understand why we would not want to lead in Texas with the best public schools in the Nation. Teachers deal with a lot today that we have to put up with in the classroom and it's only gotten worse throughout my career. What I've seen from teachers are folks who care...folks who use their own money to help kids be successful and their own time as well. We have kids missing parents, drug issues, violence, and many other things that have become worse in this last decade. We do not have the resources we need to help kids. As a basketball coach I also serve as a counselor to my kids because of all they face in this world today. Teachers are doing all we can with what we face today in our schools. The violence at schools has gotten worse and the disrespect we face is very troubling...I wish we could just teach but a lot of time is taken dealing with students disrupting classrooms or kids not being at school due to things in their lives. No teacher is perfect and no school but we need your help not the dangerous rhetoric coming from some of you. As a teacher who chose this profession because of great teachers I had in my life it is an absolute blow to me when I try to contact my elected leaders to invite them to my school or to speak with me about my experiences as a public school teacher and nobody responds with an email back or a phone call. Some of you are attacking great people who would give the shirt off their back to help a kid. Texas is a leader in what we do and how we structure our athletic programs and athletic periods in Texas, not a lot of schools do that and they want to come here. We can do the same thing and attract the best teachers to Texas by enriching our public schools. Fully fund our schools so that ALL public schools can meet the needs of their students. Pay teachers a fair wage with good benefits for what they do. Many of us put in a ton of extra hours and will continue to do so for our kids. Respect teachers and please say those things in public so people value this great profession. We are losing great teachers because they are tired and frustrated with your negative comments about what we do. I'm not the best writer in 3000 words but all I can say is you're breaking my heart because I love what I get to do for kids, I love teaching and coaching. I chose this profession because it means everything to me, it is my LIFE! Please think about ME & my STUDENTS as you work for US to HELP US not HURT US. God Bless you all...-Coach Ingram-Kaufman HS-Proud public school teacher!

Cindy Haley
Texas parents
Houston, TX

I have been teaching in public education since 1991 and have seen a steady decline in what our children are being taught and the expectations that are expected. I've taught in both high and low SES and both are being affected negatively by people who do not know what is best for our children. I strongly support school choice for all children in order to allow parents to choose what is best for their children based on what the parents want and based on their personal beliefs.

Susan Stewart
self
Pflugerville, TX

FULLY FUND TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS SO ALL TEXAS CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO A WORLD CLASS EDUCATION. FULFILL YOUR CONSTITUTIONAL DUTY TO THE CHILDREN OF TEXAS. Show all of us that you actually do care about the kids. SAVE TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN.

NO TO VOUCHERS, EDUCATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS, PARENT EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS THAT TAKE PRECIOUS RESOURCES AWAY FROM PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN.

For many years, Texas legislators have underfunded and issued unfunded mandates in an apparent effort to destroy public education. Texas is a big business state, so you all listen to your corporate donors while repressing the vast number of Texans who make the economic system grow. It's time you realized you work for us all.

William Gooding
Self
Flower Mound, TX

I'm against school vouchers and anything that will take away critical funding for PUBLIC schools.

William Gooding
Self
Flower Mound, TX

I'm against school vouchers and anything that will take away critical funding for PUBLIC schools.

Pamela Torma
Charter Schools
Houston, TX

Dear Educational Opportunity & Enrichment Committee Members:

My name is Pamela Torma and I'm a parent at Aristoi Classical Academy Cypress , a public charter school in Houston. Thank you for serving on such an important committee and your dedication to Texas students. I'm writing to share about my experience with an important issue you can help resolve.

All public school students deserve safe school facilities designed for teaching and learning but students in public charter schools are being left behind. Public charter schools receive \$965 less per student, on average, than other public schools. That's mostly because of a huge gap in facilities funding, which is increasing because all public charter schools in Texas share a fixed pot of facilities funding, even as more children attend charters. This fixed amount hasn't changed since it was first set in 2017.

Make it personal here:

Public charter schools across Texas, including Aristoi Classical Academy Cypress help more students thrive.

Share your charter school story. You could describe:

What's special about your charter school

How your school helps students succeed/prepares them for future success

How your child has benefitted from your charter school

So I ask you, why do our public charter school students count less?

Public charter schools like mine shouldn't have to stretch other parts of their budgets just to cover facilities costs. Funds should be spent on classrooms, teaching, and learning. And unfair facilities funding is an even bigger problem because all public schools are making important safety upgrades to their buildings.

Please help make facilities funding fair for ALL public schools. This is about making sure every child has the chance to thrive.

Thank you,

Pamela Torma

Isha Archer
Self
Houston, TX

Dear Committee members,

My name is Isha Archer and I have two children in Houston ISD; one in middle and one in elementary. I believe that my children, like all Texan children, deserve the opportunity to attend the very best public schools that our state can afford.

Instead of stripping public schools of funds via a voucher program that enriches the "false profit\$" of the private religious schools that support these schemes (with no obligations to provide academic supports or transportation for the children that need it), you should invest in school choice and innovation within the Texas public school system. Our magnet system is one that we can be proud of and offers our students the freedom to choose from a variety of quality programs. These programs deserve to be invested in to improve the scope and rigor of the offerings, to ensure that ALL of our children have access to them and to attract and retain highly skilled certified teachers. Disappointingly, our state has denied our children the full potential of the public school choice opportunity by underfunding our public schools.

According to the US News & World Report, Texas ranks 8th among states in the economy (<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/economy>) but is in the bottom quartile for per student state funding (<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2022-08-26/which-states-invest-the-most-in-their-students>). In fact, according to the figures presented at a recent TEA superintendent meeting, it appears that the total statewide state funding has actually decreased in real terms (adjusted for inflation) from FY2012 to FY 2022 (pg4 - https://tea.texas.gov/system/files/tea-monthly-superintendent-call-june-15_0.pdf). Given the low level of state investment, is it a surprise that we rank 37th in K-12 education (<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/education/prek-12>)? Our spending is an indication of our priorities. Our children deserve better, and our state can afford to do better.

I urge you to reject the voucher program, and to instead invest in the school choice program that currently exists in our public school system so that more students can benefit from all the opportunities on offer. In order to do this, you must increase the the state's overall investment in our public school students and in public education programs. You must also create an automatic annual adjustment to the basic allotment to address inflation and growing needs of our schools.

Thank you for your time,
Isha Archer

Toscha Reeves
Self
Palestine, TX

All students should have the opportunities for free high quality instruction

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

Yeshiva Torat Emet
11333 Braesridge Drive
Houston, TX 77071
July 10, 2023

Members of the Select Committee
Texas Legislature

Subject: Request for Support of School Choice and Education Equality in Texas

Dear Members,

I, Jack Polatsek, am writing to you in my capacity as the Chairman of the Board of Yeshiva Torat Emet, a Jewish Day School in Houston with over 500 students. I urge you to support school choice and education equality in the great state of Texas.

It is our firm belief that every child, regardless of their background or circumstances, deserves access to the best educational opportunities available. We understand that education is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and not every school can cater to the diverse needs of every student. Therefore, it is crucial to provide parents and students with the freedom and ability to choose an alternative educational setting that better aligns with their individual needs and aspirations.

By empowering parents to make educational decisions that are in the best interest of their children, we will collectively contribute to a more prosperous future for Texas. When parents are placed in the driver's seat of their children's education, it benefits not only the parents and students themselves but also the educators and taxpayers of our state.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that nearly half of the states in our great nation have implemented some form of a school choice program. These programs have proven successful in enhancing educational opportunities, fostering innovation, and ultimately improving outcomes for students. It is therefore imperative that Texas joins the ever-expanding list of states that have embraced the concept of school choice. Failure to do so would risk leaving our state behind in the pursuit of educational excellence and equality.

In conclusion, I respectfully request your support for school choice and education equality in Texas. By allowing parents to choose the educational environment that best suits their children's needs, we can ensure that every student in our state has an equal opportunity to succeed. Your support in this matter will have a profound and positive impact on the future of education in Texas.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I remain at your disposal should you require any further information or clarification.

Sincerely,

Jack Polatsek
Chairman of the Board
Yeshiva Torat Emet

713.574.9900
polatsek@gmail.com

Doug Harper
Doug Harper Web Consultant
ALLEN, TX

I am one of many who support Universal Educational Freedom. We deserve the freedom to choose where we send our kids to school.

Herbert Wright
Self
McKinney, TX

I do not support any voucher option in any form. A properly funded public education is the only option for Texas. Providing vouchers will result in the desegregation of schools and only widen the gap between the haves and the have nots. I implore you to properly fund public education in Texas. Public education helped shape me into the citizen and father I am today. Public education introduced to me to diverse friends and cultures that I never would have been exposed to. I have life long friends from diverse backgrounds because of the public schools I attended in Lubbock, TX. Please fund our schools.

Doug Harper
Doug Harper Web Consultant
ALLEN, TX

I support Universal Educational Freedom. We pay the taxes and should have the right to choose where to educate our kids. In the 2022 primary election... over a million voters (89%) actually cast a ballot supporting school choice. That's when the public truly spoke... loud and clear.

Shana Prugh
Mckinney ISD
Mckinney, TX

Public schools are important! Teachers are doing a wonderful job educating Texas children. Don't listen to the loud voices of the minority. Funding public education is the equitable choice.

Shanice Hulett
Ciox Health
Diboll, TX

Free Education

Shanice Hulett
Ciox Health
Diboll, TX

Education Opportunity

Sharon Thornton
self
Lubbock, TX

Woke indoctrination is rampant in schools across Texas. Students are being filled with sexually explicit content and even taught to hate America. I urge the committee members to make ALL TEXAS families eligible for school choice.

Aryn van Steijn
self, teacher
Round Rock, TX

Dear Educational Opportunity & Enrichment Committee Members:

My name is Aryn van Steijn and I'm a parent and teacher at Chaparral Star Academy, a public charter school in Austin. Thank you for serving on such an important committee and your dedication to Texas students. I'm writing to share about my experience with an important issue you can help resolve.

All public school students deserve safe school facilities designed for teaching and learning but students in public charter schools are being left behind. Public charter schools receive \$965 less per student, on average, than other public schools. That's mostly because of a huge gap in facilities funding, which is increasing because all public charter schools in Texas share a fixed pot of facilities funding, even as more children attend charters. This fixed amount hasn't changed since it was first set in 2017.

Public charter schools across Texas, including Chaparral Star Academy, help more students thrive. Our small school serves K-12 students in one campus. Our students attend school for four hours, either in the morning or the afternoon, so they can use the rest of their day to pursue other passions. We are committed to small class sizes with our largest class containing 15 students. We are able to serve our students better by keeping class sizes small. I have taught at CSA for 15 years and in 2020 my children began attending CSA. My 1st and 3rd grade children have greatly benefited from the small class sizes and the small school community.

Public charter schools like mine shouldn't have to stretch other parts of their budgets just to cover facilities costs. Funds should be spent on classrooms, teaching, and learning. And unfair facilities funding is an even bigger problem because all public schools are making important safety upgrades to their buildings.

Please help make facilities funding fair for ALL public schools. This is about making sure every child has the chance to thrive.

Thank you,

Aryn van Steijn

Raelene Freasier, Mrs.
Self, my school and children in need of a successful education
San Saba, TX

Please take consideration for the tireless effort put into the educational system by classroom teachers. It is time to rise to the occasion and show support. Teachers need more pay and less testing requirements not more testing. Vouchers will not help.

Jason Mauss, Mr
self & educator
Houston, TX

Vote against Vouchers by supporting public education

Melissa Peralez, Mrs
Self- Texas Teacher
Royse City, TX

I do not believe vouchers would benefit smaller schools and especially Title 1 schools.

Jason Mauss, Mr
self & educator
Houston, TX

Support Public Education by voting against vouchers. Please Public Education by increasing funds to all schools & changing the financial recapturing plan.

Sandra Wright, Mrs
Self-retired teacher
Lubbock, TX

Please properly fund public school education with absolutely NO vouchers.

Daniela Lankford, Mrs
Self / High school librarian
Tomball, TX

Students can obtain an excellent education at well funded public schools. Please fund public schools, no vouchers, if parents choose to take their students to private schools that is a decision that they make that affects them financially, it should not affect other student by money being taken away from public schools. NO Vouchers!

David Williams
Self
Keller, TX

Please don't do vouchers. Your committee is for educational opportunity and freedom. Parents already have both of those. They are able to choose public schools, charter schools, private schools or homeschool. That is freedom and opportunity. Do not take funding out of public funds to send a child with a voucher.
Also we do not need to tie teacher pay to any of these plans. Teachers need a pay raise, not a voucher plan.

Desiree Strick
self, teacher
The Woodlands, TX

As a middle school educator, I am concerned about the voucher system that is being included in these discussions of increasing educational opportunity. First, the public schools are already struggling monetarily. I previously taught English in a public junior high school. We could not teach certain books because they had not been replaced in years and fell apart in kid's hands. Similarly, we had to use the same "consumable" textbooks for years, meaning the kids could not annotate. On another note, most of the children I taught were either in the special education program or had extensive accommodations. These children wouldn't be accepted into private institutions or struggle to find programs that fit their needs. These are reasons why funding can't be diverted from public schools and why I am concerned that vouchers may enable this to occur. Promoting freedom of choice cannot mean promoting the downfall of the public education system, which has and will continue to serve many students. The education system should serve everyone well, regardless of income or housing location.

Laura Jacobs
Self
Dallas, TX

It is freedom of choice and parents should have te right to send their child to the school of their choice NOT just to the public schools.

Joseph Wachsman
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,
Please support school choice and education equality in Texas.
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.
Please 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.

Joe

Kristi Harding
Johns Elementary School
Arlington, TX

Public Schools need the funding in order to keep quality teachers and provide the most up to date resources for our students. Charter schools don't provide that and even with vouchers, most families cannot afford private schools.

Jill Smith
self
San Antonio, TX

We support and promote transparency and parental input into the public education system in the whole state of TX. The principle and need for freedom and choice is essential for each student's needs to be met and to have a quality education.

Darlene Cowley
Teacher/ATPE member
Crystal Beach, TX

I want higher pay, less testing, and NO vouchers!

Laura Dietert
Self, LVN at a public high school
New Braunfels, TX

Please no vouchers. Please support existing public schools to offer an appropriate and strong education. Vouchers are not the answer. We should support and empower the current system. I am a Licensed Vocational nurse in the public school system for 22 years and the last ten years have gotten considerably more difficult with little increase in pay. Some years my paycheck actually went down due to health insurance cost increase being more than the raise given. Most of us in public school education want to be there to help nurture students and make a difference in their life. Please help us do that.

Robert Harberson
Self/ financial planner
The Woodlands, TX

I am a supporter of the voucher system. Competition leads to better results.

Karen Compton
self / Teacher (public education)
Plano, TX

no vouchers; higher pay for teachers

Lauren Shirar
Voter
McKinney, TX

I do NOT support vouchers both as a parent and a teacher. This is NOT the answer to what is wrong with education in this country. We will loose our competitive edge in the world markets if we continue down this path producing a work force with limited education. We are educating today's students for careers that don't even exist yet. Cutting or shifting funding is not the answer.

Kimberly Neill
Self
Burleson, TX

Parents absolutely have a right to be informed and participate in their child's education. The teacher every year plead they need to partner with me, so my child will be supported at home to facilitate the best outcomes. A partnership implies a two way street. Keeping me silent, in the dark and without a voice only hurts my child keeps my child from seeing a wonderful dynamic of school/parent working together. Although, many people say public school is a free education; property owners know that is far from the case. So any resident should be able to spend tax dollars for education of their child as long as tax dollars is how public schools are funded.

Edith Bruce
self
Houston, TX

As a parent I do not need a leftist people to brained wash was my kid. I want my kid to learn how to read, write, add, multiply and learns basic subjects. I do not anyone to indoctrination of any believe my kid will learned that from home. Parent we have the right to make all the necessary decisions from them and have the right to get any information we need from school.

Karen Compton
self / Teacher (public education)
Plano, TX

no vouchers; higher pay for teachers

Benjamin Tabaria, Dr.
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,

Please support school choice and education equality in Texas. Every child deserves the ability to seek specific 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. Please 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.

I moved from Florida almost 3 years ago where school choice was prolific and it enabled many students to flourish. The ability to seek alternative educational institutions will not take away from the current system but enable more options to bud and provide areas of aide. Additionally this may allow the current system more bandwidth to serve current students to a better degree.

Debbie Henning
Self
Goliad, TX

Public schools need NO vouchers, less testing and increased pay for all educators.

Leigh Blake
Texas Parent
Coppell, TX

As a Texas Parent of school age children it is very important to have your support and vote in favor of ESA's and School Choice for EVERY Texas Student.

Parents should have the rights to choose what is best for their individual children and their family situation. Parents deserve the right to choose a school that they feel best meets the needs of their children, and deserve the opportunity to determine this.

ESA's and School Choice will only strengthen public school education in Texas and help more children have more opportunities to succeed if given these options. A students education opportunities should not be limited/determined simply by school zones, etc. There are so many more important factors that should be considered besides school zones and vary per family that ESA's and Parental Choice would offer more Texas families more needed opportunities. We need your vote to make ESAs and Parental Choice happen for Texas Students. Our children desperately need these opportunities and need your support.

Lauren Shirar
Voter
McKinney, TX

No to vouchers on every level. I am both a parent and teacher. Please do not rob the Texas youth of their future.

Nachman Rosenberg
Self, sales
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,
Please support school choice and education equality in Texas.
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.
Please 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.

-Nachman Rosenberg

Noam Betesh
Self
Dallas, TX

I want school choice

Tom Sawyer
Self-Employed
Plano, TX

As in the Medical Arena, it would be nice if a Patient knew the Costs UPFRONT (Transparency), of the procedures both Providers and Hospitals were going to Charge a Patient, so would it be as Valuable for Citizens to know how their Children will be Educated in preparation for "the Real World"!
Reading, Writing and Arithmetic (as the saying goes), makes a lot more sense than Gender, DEI, ESG, CRT, and which Pronouns one should be referred to as.
Districts vary as to the Curriculum and the amount of Parental Involvement that is allowed. Seems to me that getting back to Basics will result in a Better ROI than trying to hide Transparency of Education to the Whims of Administrators (rather than to the Local Parents)!

Carin Taylor, Mrs
Self
San Angelo, TX

NO TO VOUCHERS!! Let parents pay for their children's education if they don't like pub Ed.

Tesslyn Mustain
Self
Humble, TX

No to vouchers no matter what they are called. The state is responsible for supporting public education in Texas. Vouchers undermine & damage public ed. If legislators have issues with public ed, removing funding is antithetical to fixing them. Let's work together on behalf of more than 5 million public school students in Texas.
Parents already have choices in education and it is not in our state Constitution to fund private schools who are not required to meet the same standards as public schools.

Grace Erkman, Mrs.
Self/ Librarian
Spring, TX

Our students have a right to a quality education in Texas. We have a surplus of money and it is a disgrace how low we are ranked nationally! We need proper funding for our public schools so teachers do not need to rely on writing grants for students to have access to a quality education. We need to raise the teacher pay to encourage our youth to want to go into the field of teaching. We need to lower the amount of testing so teachers have time to teach and absolutely NO vouchers!!!

Justin Marcrum
Texas Teachers
Devine, TX

Private schools should only utilize private funds, if parents want to take their kids out of public school that is their choice and their financial burden to carry. Taxes are for public use and need to stay that way.

Stefanie Davis
Self/Educator
Ennis, TX

Vouchers are not what is best for Texas. The powers that be keep raising the stakes for PUBLIC Schools using STAAR scores & empowering parents, while eliminating the ability for public schools to do what they were originally designed to do- serve EVERY child, of EVERY label, EVERY deficit, EVERY socioeconomic status, and EVERY gender. Increasing expectations but not increasing pay is counterproductive and driving educators out of education.

Daniel Ringelheim, Rabbi
Self
Dallas, TX

We are certainly looking forward to school choice and vouchers. That will give us the flexibility to choose the right education for our child

Becky Matlock
Self - teacher & school counselor
Bowie, TX

Education should be free! All children need to be in school. Vouchers will give parents money and many will "homeschool" their children without any curriculum or training. The voucher system will kill rural education by allowing students to attend larger schools. We know that in rural areas, parents struggle with transportation issues. The rural students will fall short on getting to other schools everyday and on-time.

Lynda Grimes, Ms
Self
Garland, TX

WOKE indoctrination is harmful to our children. Please consider what it is doing to children.

Mary Kellogg
Self! Medical Clerk
Canton, TX

Wake up. What they are teaching kids is WRONG and you know it. Do your jobs the American people are paying you for. Stand for RIGHTEOUSNESS. Stop Drag Queens and other RIDICULOUS teachings.
Parents have the right to decide what their Children are learning. These Children are not property of the Government.
We need QUALITY education and it should be Parents choice.

Kristie Carroll
Public school teacher/ Self
Floydada, TX

As an educator, I have never disagreed with a parent's decision to send their child to the school of their choice. I do however disagree with funding their choice with a voucher system or Education Savings Accounts. Contrary to what has been said about ESAs, I believe these payment systems will hurt public schools financially. Please do not pass a system of vouchers/ESAs in any form. Fully fund public schools instead.

Cindy Cashion, Mrs
Self
Italy, TX

Higher pay for teachers, no testing, and no vouchers!!

Monna Myers, Teacher
ATPE
Holliday, TX

No vouchers! This is ridiculous! You are trying to make teacher/students look bad!

Maribel Leos
Self
Brownsville, TX

Dear Educational Opportunity & Enrichment Committee Members:

My name is Maribel Leos and I'm a parent at IDEA Robindale, a public charter school in Brownsville. Thank you for your dedication to Texas students. I'm writing to share my experience with an important issue you can help resolve.

All public school students deserve safe school facilities designed for teaching and learning but students in public charter schools are being left behind. Public charter schools receive \$965 less per student. This fixed amount hasn't changed since it was first set in 2017.

So I ask you, why do our public charter school students count less?

My son is a special needs student and has been a student of IDEA since he was in Kindergarten. His chosen charter school has become his lifeline to what he should expect the world to treat him as; with respect and dignity in the choices he makes.

We picked a charter school because it was the best fit for my son's individual needs and it would be very detrimental to his learning experience to treat his chosen school any less simply because it has "charter" attached to it. Funding should be increased to further take his educational experience to the inclusion definition we all expect from each learning institution by simply increasing the funding to that of other schools. Many parent's with a child with disabilities will tell you that once we find a place that our child responds to and begins to grow from we hold very dear to our hearts because once our child begins the process of trusting and familiarity that is the beginning of their individual educational experience. Funding then begins the long necessary process of keeping the teachers who make the biggest impact and the ability to buy specialized equipment to build a life beyond school one day.

Public charter schools like mine shouldn't have to stretch other parts of their budgets to cover facilities costs. Funds should be spent on classrooms, teaching, and learning. And unfair facilities funding is an even bigger problem because all public schools are making important safety upgrades to their buildings.

Please help make facilities funding fair for ALL public schools. This is about making sure every child has the chance to thrive.

Thank you,

Maribel Leos

Grace Erkman, Mrs.
Self
Spring, TX

Our students have a right to a quality education in Texas. We have a surplus of money and it is a disgrace how low we are ranked nationally! We need proper funding for our public schools so teachers do not need to rely on writing grants for students to have access to a quality education. We need to raise the teacher pay to encourage our youth to want to go into the field of teaching. We need to lower the amount of testing so teachers have time to teach and absolutely NO vouchers!!! Educators should know how our students will be measured on state tests!! We give a STAAR test and have no idea what passing will be for students. This is wrong and the stress put on children in elementary school needs to decrease.

Gina Holland, Teacher
Self-Teacher
Grand Saline, TX

I believe the voucher system will hurt some schools. I do not think it is fair to All the students or All of the teachers/schools. Help the schools that are hurting. Help the families and by doing so you will help the kids and the schools. If private schools accept vouchers they should also have to give state tests also!

Samantha Barnett
Self, Proud Texas Educator
Burleson, TX

Public schools need higher pay, less and fair testing, and NO to vouchers!

Joshua Klinge
Empowering Parents
Frisco, TX

The time has come that the State of Texas gives us taxpayers the opportunity to choose the best education for our children. I moved to Texas, because Texas was know to be out in front in freedoms and choices when it comes to its resident. However, Texas has fallen behind many other states and School Choice legislation. We deserve the right to pursue the quality education our kids deserve and where we see fit. Our district is floundering, we are losing the quality teachers and the quality of education is degrading (STAR Scores prove it) and yet we currently can do nothing about it. Give us the choice and freedom to put our tax revenue into the school of our choice.

Samantha Barnett
Self/Proud Texas Educator
Burleson, TX

Public schools need higher pay, less and fair testing, and NO to vouchers!

Ryan Patton
Self
Frisco, TX

Greetings esteemed state committee members:

I implore you to consider that a voucher program will introduce an element of chaos into our public education system that could open the door for voluntary segregation, hyper concentrated schools athletic programs, emergence of competitive private school systems representing non American values, and/or monies distributed to highly unethical organizations attempting to siphon resources for personal gain. In addition, low socioeconomic families will still be unable to benefit from the voucher program due to logistical constraints. I applaud you attempting to make public education better, however taking the system apart will be another situation where the cure is worst than the disease. Thank you for your time and good luck!

Erika Tate
Self
Mesquite, TX

Teachers want/need/deserve higher pay, students deserve less testing, and NO vouchers!

Carrie Guerrero
Teachers
Conroe, TX

No vouchers, no more testing and just give us raises!

Jeremy Pelz
Self/teacher
Wichita Falls, TX

It seems that Abbott on his campaign trail spent most of his time in Christian based religious private schools. It seems the separation of church and state is not a factor anymore. Knowing that; is the committee considering this bill fine with the possibility that a private school not based on the majorities christian beliefs is able to accept money with no strings attached? If it is ok to teach beliefs based on Christianity, as well as those of Islam, etc? With no strings attached, can these schools host drag shows, teach sharia law, or indoctrinate students with ideas that Abbott and the school choice program seems to be fighting so admittedly.

Also, why is the state able to fund the students who choose to use vouchers more than those who choose public schools?

Debbie Ludwick
Lake worth isd
Haltom City, TX

No vouchers
Yes public teacher pay raises
No STAAR testing. Let teachers teach

Garrett Scott
Self
Houston, TX

The idea that a person needs a voucher to get a quality education is fundamentally opposed to the very idea of public education. Not to mention insulting to teaching professionals who do the job.

SUSAN STEWART
SELF
PFLUGERVILLE, TX

Texas already has educational opportunity and enrichment. You have already done that. FULFILL YOUR CONSTITUTIONAL DUTY AND FULLY FUND TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS SO ALL TEXAS CHILDREN CAN GROW AND THRIVE. “What we did is we compared ourselves to other districts that are similar size, similar geography. We’re a 3A district, which means it’s about the number of kids you have enrolled in your district, comparing ourselves to other 3A districts in West Texas. ... We received \$1,500 less funding per student than the average of all those other districts,” Rinehart said.

Sherri Nelson, Mrs
Self
Italy, TX

As a teacher of 36 yrs, both in public education and private- I will make this very simple- NO to vouchers!

Abraham Niman
Self, attorney
Dallas, TX

Competition benefits the consumer. Considering that in education the consumers are our children, it behooves us to encourage as much competition as possible for our children's education.

Please pass a school choice voucher bill in Texas so that the money follows the student and will lead to increased competition and a better overall education product. Thank you.

Richard Hayes
Self. Lawyer
Hickory Creek, TX

The goal of Texas should be excellence in education. Some ISDs do a wonderful job. truth be told, many do not. No single educational delivery system works for every student. Student performance has plateaued for the last 10 years (so we can't blame it on Covid). Unfortunately, less than 50% of students are reading at grade level. If our cars started just 50% of the time, we would not tolerate. If our electricity came on just 50% of the time, we wouldn't stand for it. Yet, we are to tolerate 50% not being able to read at grade level. Textbooks and curriculum have been taken over by the book publishers and include less than 60% of the Texas mandated educational teachings. Pornographic books have crept into our school libraries and when challenged, some school boards and librarians fight tooth and nail against removal. Discipline is lacking. Public schools have become a petri dish for social engineering with CRT, SEL, DEI, affirmative action (reverse racial discrimination), LGBTQ+, and a number of other alphabet ideologies. Some school district administrators and trustees have shut out parental involvement and have been hiding what's happening in the classroom and with their students contrary to the parent's rights to be the ones responsible for their children's upbringing. TASB has been infected with liberal ideology. The educational industrial complex is large and unwieldy. It took many years for Texas to find itself in this position. It will take many to reverse course and focus on the basics of reading, writing, arithmetic, science, and history. it is time to enable other educational opportunities. An excellent public school system is not mutually exclusive of educational freedom to attend a school of the family's choice whether it be public, charter, home school, private or parochial. Put the children of all of Texas first for a change. In the states that have adopted some or all educational choice, scores are up! And remarkably, no public school has gone out of business. So, I do not buy that educational freedom will spell the doom of public education. Please support educational freedom for all Texas school children (not just the poor or the developmentally disadvantaged or just the D & F school). Whatever perceived downsides there may be, there is more upside and pluses. it is striking to me that the opponents to educational freedom are led by the trustees, administrators, and teachers. Listen to the 70%+ parents that have had enough and want their kids to have the opportunity to excel.

Susan Dabney
Livingston
Livingston, TX

As a parent, grandparent and retired teacher, I strongly support parents' rights and parents' choice. It's not necessary to comment on the cultural intrusions into public education except to say that every moment devoted to them is a moment taken away from academic instruction. Students in my community and so many others have a far greater need for the academic, and that is more true than ever since Covid school closures.

Please allow educators to do their primary job of preparing students academically, and support parents in doing their primary job of preparing them socially and morally. Give students the education they need for success in an increasingly competitive world. Student academic success should not be adjacent to or take a back seat to anything else going on at school.

Garrett Scott
Self
Houston, TX

The idea of school vouchers is directly opposed from the idea behind public education. It simply lets people advance their own insular beliefs and undermines the institution of public education. End vouchers.

Susie Spencer
self-charter school parent
Corpus Christi, TX

Dear Educational Opportunity & Enrichment Committee Members:

My name is Susie Spencer, and I am an adoptive mom of two amazing kids-Allison and Christopher. They attend School of Science and Technology (SST) in Corpus Christi, and I wanted to share our experience with a charter school. Five years ago, we adopted our kids through foster care. We vowed to provide them a safe and loving home-a forever family. I'm writing to share about my experience with an important issue you can help resolve. All public students deserve safe school facilities designed for teaching and learning but students in public charter schools are being left behind. Public charter schools receive \$965 less per student, on average, than other public schools. That's mostly because of a huge gap in facilities funding, which is increasing because all public charter schools in Texas share a fixed pot of facilities funding, even as more children attend charters. This fixed amount hasn't changed since it was first set in 2017.

When it came time to enroll the kids in school, like most parents, we looked to the public elementary school down the street. We gave all their teachers a heads up regarding some of what scares them the most and how they react to certain situations. Understandably, we were told the kids would need to have a "504 plan" in place. Both kids have severe separation anxiety, PTSD and Chris has been diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder. Allison also has a cleft palate, lip and hearing loss. When she was younger you could only understand about 18% of what she said. Sadly, at Allison's first IEP meeting we were told she could either have speech therapy for her cleft palate/ lip deformity OR she could have a behavioral plan to help with her PTSD.

We should never have had to choose between resources for her, so we made the decision to find a school where both kids could learn in a safe and supportive environment. I called around to other elementary schools in our area and were told we could only go there if we lived in that neighborhood. BUT School of Science and Technology (SST) charter school is open to anyone no matter where you live in town. Chris was able to get in right away in kindergarten. But there was a waitlist for their Pre-K. I ask you, why do our public charter school students count less? We ended up pulling Allison out keeping her home until she could go to Kindergarten at SST too. Public charter schools like mine shouldn't have to stretch other parts of their budgets just to cover facilities costs. Funds should be spent on classrooms, teaching, and learning. And unfair facilities funding is an even bigger problem as all schools need extra safety features. Thank you for serving on such an important committee and your dedication to Texas students. SST has become an integral become an integral part of the team who help our kids thrive. Please make it possible for ALL kids to thrive by making facilities funding fair.

Thank you,
Susie Spencer

Eve MARGOLIS

self

Austin, TX

It is abundantly clear that vouchers, by any name, would be devastating to the future of public education, to communities, to our children and to our economy.

This is not news to most of you. You need no more information, no more testimony, no more rallies to understand this. You cannot feign ignorance that these policies portray a “charitable façade. Clearly, the goal is to enrich the wealthy while increasing division within our society.

For the few of you who may not be educated about the realities facing most constituents, please consider the results from other states that have enacted these policies and laws.

Carl Davis, Research Director of INSTITUTE ON TAXATION AND ECONOMIC POLICY, published “Tax Avoidance Continues to Fuel School Privatization Efforts”, reviewing multiple studies. Claims touted by legislators in Georgia, Oklahoma, Virginia:

- “A contribution made from a business owner may receive both the standard dollar-for-dollar tax credit as well as a deductible business expense on the federal side. Essentially, business owners may make money from a contribution.”
- The Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program touts the “double tax benefit” that results from claiming state credits and federal deductions,
- The Opportunity Scholarship Fund in Oklahoma advertises “BIG tax credits and deductions!”
- “Take advantage of double tax savings!”

We see you. We see your blatant disregard for your official responsibilities.

There is still time to listen to your conscience and your constituents.

Sherri Nelson, Mrs

Self

Italy, TX

As an educator of 36 years, both private and public, I will state this simply- NO to vouchers!

Kathy Barcroft, Mrs

Self. Retired public school teacher

Arlington, TX

I believe in giving parents the right to choose the best education for their children, and strongly support school choice, rather than being forced to submit to political and social indoctrination that they do not support.

Geoffrey Webster
Representing Self; self employed Attorney
Austin, TX

I began employment, post military service as an elementary math teacher having obtained a B.S. in education. I have been a classroom teacher, but many years ago. I raised 2 children in public schools and they are grown and now have children of their own. I remarried and have once again young children. After my experience with the first two's education I resolved to find a more classical education free of the dogma of the present day public education system. My children now attend private schools and we sacrifice to pay private school tuition and the huge annual property tax for a public school system that does nothing for us. We socialize with and our children have many friends who attend public school. The sharpness of the differences are apparent when a student transfers from a public school to a private school; in most subjects there is a vast gap between the public school transfer student compared to a long term private school student. In many instances as much as a 2 year gap in materials covered. Parents need and have a basic right to chose what works for their children. When public schools functioned best it was because of local control; when the US DOE was created education was set back decades as all federal bureaucracies resist change and consolidate power at the expense of local knowledge. Texas would do its schools and future students well to walk away from federal dollars and all the strings that come with those dollars. Put control of students in the parents of the students to chose their course for their family's future, and if better served outside a public school so be it. To perpetuate failure is to doom the students failure. In my business I years ago stopped interviewing anyone under 30 years of age. Generally they can't talk, do math, critically think, be open in thoughts, are unable to talk on the phone in a civil manner, carry a false attitude of self, are insincere, overindulged and I don't have the time, money, or patience to wait on them to learn how to work in the real world and make their own way. The public school system is broken because it refuses to adapt and is controlled from a distant agency pushing its agenda. Legislators stop listening to those demanding bureaucrats who seek first to preserve their pensions and tell parent to leave them alone. Every classroom should have a live feed so parents can watch what goes on in the classroom. Fund that!

Dor Gamliel
Self - Engineer
Dallas, TX

Education shapes a child's future, and our children are our future. A child's fate should not be decided based upon the jurisdiction in which his or her parents can afford to make home, nor should it be condemned to mediocrity for the inability of the sole local public school to accomodate a set of particular needs. School choice is more, not less, important in primary education than it is in university because children are much more impressionable in their developmental years. One child has not the same needs, values and aspirations as the child next door, so why is the stubborn will of the status quo and the shortsighted, selfish greed of overbearing Unions relegating the two to the same institution with the same curriculum and the same pedagogical structure?

Lani Caffey, Ms.
Self
Olney, TX

This bill will be devastating for rural public schools, and it will only help already affluent families. This bill hurts the very students it claims to help but draining money from already underfunded public schools.

Tiffany DiCarlo
Self-Children's Ministry Director
Houston, TX

Dear Educational Opportunity & Enrichment Committee Members:

My name is Tiffany DiCarlo and I'm a parent at Aristoi Classical Academy, a public charter school in Houston. Thank you for serving on such an important committee and your dedication to Texas students. I'm writing to share about my experience with an important issue you can help resolve.

All public school students deserve safe school facilities designed for teaching and learning but students in public charter schools are being left behind. Public charter schools receive \$965 less per student, on average, than other public schools. That's mostly because of a huge gap in facilities funding, which is increasing because all public charter schools in Texas share a fixed pot of facilities funding, even as more children attend charters. This fixed amount hasn't changed since it was first set in 2017.

Public charter schools across Texas, including ACA, help more students thrive.

Our family's journey to ACA started with my son Myles. Like most Texas families, we started Myles at the local ISD for kindergarten. It was so hard to see the struggles my son encountered at 5. This included bullying the district didn't stop, but allowed the student to stay in the classroom. He was assaulted. He was exposed to inappropriate content on a school issued computer and the teacher would not even return an email when I brought it to her attention. There was ZERO community. No PTO. Myles came out of kindergarten with no friends. The language he came home with from the school bus was disgusting. He was 5!

We had heard fabulous stories about the education that ACA was offering our community. While touring the campus, ACA stole my mama-heart when the director told me "we care about the whole person your child turns out to be". Character. They care about the heart of my child. Myles thrived from day 1. Myles has not been assaulted or bullied and the administration is so much more involved with EVERY student. The headmaster knows and calls him by name! The community is AMAZING. Parents and even grandparents are involved to work WITH our teachers. Myles has friends! The campus is also significantly closer to our home than our ISD campus was. We own our home. We pay taxes. Our local tax dollars skip my son and instead go to a school that failed him and had no interest in his character and the person he would grow up to be. Why does Myles count less because my husband and I would not tolerate how poorly our local ISD treated him?

Public charter schools like mine shouldn't have to stretch other parts of their budgets just to cover facilities costs. Funds should be spent on classrooms, teaching, and learning. And unfair facilities funding is an even bigger problem because all public schools are making important safety upgrades to their buildings.

Please help make facilities funding fair for ALL public schools. This is about making sure every child has the chance to thrive.

Thank you,
Tiffany DiCarlo

Iris Gonzalez
Aristoi Classical Academy
Houston, TX

Dear Educational Opportunity & Enrichment Committee Members:

My name is Iris Gonzalez and I'm a parent at Aristoi Classical Academy a public charter school in Houston. Thank you for serving on such an important committee and your dedication to Texas students. I'm writing to share about my experience with an important issue you can help resolve.

All public school students deserve safe school facilities designed for teaching and learning but students in public charter schools are being left behind. Public charter schools receive \$965 less per student, on average, than other public schools. That's mostly because of a huge gap in facilities funding, which is increasing because all public charter schools in Texas share a fixed pot of facilities funding, even as more children attend charters. This fixed amount hasn't changed since it was first set in 2017.

Public charter schools across Texas, including our Aristoi School help more students thrive. Watching your child grow not just academically but also gaining skills that will help be a better person in the future is priceless. Aristoi is more than a school is a community that supports each other. The staff really cares about the students. We need more Arisoti(s) parents should have the choice to send their children to a school that provides the quality of a private school curriculum with out worrying about able to save for college expenses.

So I ask you, why do our public charter school students count less?

Public charter schools like mine shouldn't have to stretch other parts of their budgets just to cover facilities costs. Funds should be spent on classrooms, teaching, and learning. And unfair facilities funding is an even bigger problem because all public schools are making important safety upgrades to their buildings.

Please help make facilities funding fair for ALL public schools. This is about making sure every child has the chance to thrive.

Thank you,
Iris

Karla Foreman
Self
Tyler, TX

As a grandparent of 10 who helps pay for their private Christian education, it seems equitable, and would be very helpful for our adult children to be able to take advantage of educational savings accounts especially since we have for 45 years we have financed with our taxes public education which we have never used.

Gene Shipp, Mr.
self
Lubbock, TX

There is nothing, to me, as important as having all of the decision making power and flexibility in choices, finances, and information to use for my kids. You cannot go wrong when you side with the rights of parents to decide where to school their kids; to decide how to save for the future; and to spend their money however they see fit over the demands of the state or a teacher's union.

Bryan Shipman, Mr.
Blackwell CISD / Superintendent
Blackwell, TX

The Honorable Representatives of the Educational Opportunity and Enrichment Committee,

I am writing you regarding School Choice/Educational Savings Accounts/Vouchers.

Regarding School Choice, when our public is asked if they support school choice the answer is "Yes." If the public were asked if they support public education tax dollars going to private schools/companies without oversight, accountability, voter representation, or transparency the public would answer "No." This is reasonable, as a society we value independence but also accountability.

Texas public schools have extensive oversight, accountability, an elected board for each district, and comply with the Texas Public Information Act. This system was created over time by some of you and those that came before us to protect children and take steps to ensure the children of Texas have the best education possible.

Any voucher/ESA/School Choice bill that does not include the same extensive oversight for any school public, private, or charter that accepts tax dollars, is not for the best interest of ALL students and is not about protecting children by giving them choice. Additionally, if the bill is about choice then private schools should not be able to deny any child presenting a voucher if the school accepts vouchers. The child's tuition, fees, transportation, extracurriculars and so forth should all be covered by the voucher to ensure poor families are not discriminated against by requiring them to pay additional costs beyond the voucher. Public schools can not deny any student that resides in their district regardless of available space or the schools ability to offer required services for the child. Choice should not simply subsidize existing students and allow for "cherry picking" by accepting only those students that are easy to educate. The moment any school accepts tax dollars they should be held to all the same higher standards and expectations that public schools are required to meet. Why would the public want any less accountability for our children at a private school than a public one?

Vouchers have a highly debatable effectiveness as seen in other states. The most probable long term outcome is a system of private schools that are out of reach for the students who need choice the most. Those same students are then relegated to a perpetually underfunded public school. Our states history includes the embarrassment of segregation with separate but equal based on skin color. If vouchers become the Texas way, it is likely we deepen segregation based on socioeconomic.

Please vote NO for education savings accounts and or vouchers.

Marla Box
Self
Carrizo Springs, TX

Please give our kids the opportunity to escape the disgusting agenda that is being pushed on them by teachers unions and others that want to control their lives.

Lynnese Graves, Texas Educator
Self
Boerne, TX

Teachers need higher pay! Students need less testing. Our raises should not be tied to anything, especially vouchers! We should not have to have part-time jobs to make ends meet. There is over 30 billion dollars in excess from where our raise would come from. Please give us what we need and deserve! The great state of Texas ranks 26th nationwide in teacher pay. This is unexcuseable. We should be at minimum in the top 10. Thank you!

James elbaor MD
Elbaor Family Office
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the committee,

I am concerned about the lack of focus on the basics in our education system. Did you know TEA found that only 19% of our public-school curriculum is on grade level? Sounds like a crisis of low expectations. Combining that with too many schools are indoctrinating students or exposing them to inappropriate content, and we have a recipe of failure for our next generation of Texans. Parents need the ability to leave their government mandated schools if necessary to help protect their children from hostile ideology or to help ensure their children have better academic opportunities. The only way to do this is to give parents access to Education Savings Accounts, which would ensure that every parent can send their children to the school of their choice – public or private schools. Please stand with me, and with parents across Texas, and please empower parents with ESAs!

Eve MARGOLIS
self
Austin, TX

It is abundantly clear that vouchers, by any name, would be devastating to the future of public education, to communities, to our children and to our economy.

This is not news to most of you. You need no more information, no more testimony, no more rallies to understand this. You cannot feign ignorance that these policies portray a “charitable façade. Clearly, the goal is to enrich the wealthy while increasing division within our society.

For the few of you who may not be educated about the realities facing most constituents, please consider the results from other states that have enacted these policies and laws.

Carl Davis, Research Director of INSTITUTE ON TAXATION AND ECONOMIC POLICY, published “Tax Avoidance Continues to Fuel School Privatization Efforts”, reviewing multiple studies. Claims touted by legislators in Georgia, Oklahoma, Virginia:

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- The Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program touts the “double tax benefit” that results from claiming state credits and federal deductions,
- The Opportunity Scholarship Fund in Oklahoma advertises “BIG tax credits and deductions!”
- “Take advantage of double tax savings!”

We see you. We see your blatant disregard for your official responsibilities.

There is still time to listen to your conscience and your constituents.

Jeanette Flores
Self
Harlingen, TX

Please support a universal ESA scholarship so that all Texas students can receive an education that best meets their learning needs. This type of program will help scholars with tutoring needs and financial support for scholars that would benefit for having one on one educational experiences.

Suzanne Riley, Mrs.
Self/public school teacget
Normanger, TX

No to vouchers. I teach in a small rural school and this will hurt us. Teachers need a raise and increase in health insurance.

Donna Seidel
Self, Retired
San Antonio, TX

I oppose this bill and any other similar bill! Support PUBLIC education!

Karen Hill, Mrs
Self
Pecos, TX

Higher pay for teachers, less testing, and no vouchers.

Cindy Middleton
Self
San Angelo, TX

Our kids' heads are being filled with drag queens, sexually explicit content and general hate towards America and our values.

And this isn't just happening in Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. It's in small rural communities like Rock Hill, Itasca, Keller, Rockwall and so many more.

We must return to teaching the foundational, classical basics of reading, writing, arithmetic, science and history. Also need to teach American Civics and the US Constitution.

All I ask is to give our kids the freedom to escape the disgusting agenda that's being pushed on them by the Educrats and Teachers Unions.

Cynthia Santos
myself (parent at Aristoi Classical Academy)
Houston, TX

Dear Educational Opportunity & Enrichment Committee Members:

Our family is a member of the Aristoi Classical Academy charter school which has campuses in Katy and Houston Texas. My name is Cynthia Santos and I would like to thank you for serving on such an important committee and your dedication to Texas students. I'm writing to share about my experience with an important issue you can help resolve.

All public school students deserve safe school facilities designed for teaching and learning, sadly and unfortunately, students in public charter schools are being left behind. Public charter schools receive \$965 less per student, on average, than other public schools. That is mostly because there is a huge gap in facilities funding. As you hopefully now know, this need for facilities is increasing because more and more children are attending charter public schools yet in Texas all public charter schools share a fixed pot of facilities funding. To make it even more challenging, this fixed amount of funding has not changed since it was first set in 2017.

When it came time to enroll for school, we looked into our ISD and sadly, it was not right for us. So we turned to a public charter school which has met our needs tremendously well. Public charter schools across Texas including Aristoi Classical Academy help more students thrive. For example at Aristoi, students learn the academics along with the virtues of patience, respect, honesty, charity, humility, temperance and magnanimity. Our Aristoi community shares the interest, dedication and commitment to seeing our students not only do well in school but also do exceptionally well in life. Our child has benefited from going to Aristoi Classical Academy in so many ways such as making friends with other students who are being guided into becoming citizens of good and virtuous character. Being a classical education school has taught our child "how" to learn as opposed to simply learning for the sake of a test or grade.

So I ask you, why do our public charter school students count less? Why do they receive less?

Public charter schools like Aristoi Classical Academy should not have to stretch other parts of their budgets just to cover facilities costs. Funds should be spent on classrooms, teaching, and learning. And unfair facilities funding practices are an even bigger problem because all public schools are making important safety upgrades to their buildings, while charter schools have to cut from other important areas in order to be able to do safety upgrades.

Please help make facilities funding fair for ALL public schools. This is about making sure every child has the chance to thrive.

Thank you,
Cynthia L. Santos

Cindy Middleton
Self
San Angelo, TX

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We need to return to teaching the foundational, classical basics of reading, writing, arithmetic, science, history, American Civics and the US Constitution.

This isn't just happening in Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. It's in small rural communities like Rock Hill, Itasca, Keller, Rockwall and so many more.

All I ask is to give our kids the freedom to escape the disgusting agenda that's being pushed on them by the Educrats and Teachers Unions.

Paul Ivie
Self - Information Technology Consultant.
Austin, TX

If our kids can't read at grade level by the third grade they will never be able to keep up with their peers. Testing has shown that the majority of students are testing below grade level in reading and math. Poor students **MUST** be given a better education to enable them to build a better life for themselves. I am highly in favor of school choice. At a minimum, we need students in the C, D, and F rated schools to be given Education Savings Accounts of \$8000 to choose a better educational option. New schools will arise to meet those needs. I will be especially watching Representative Hinojosa and Senator Eckhardt as they represent me. Thank you for your time.

DANIEL MONNELL
me
GALVESTON, TX

Texas public school system has been declining for decades. Get out of the politics and get back to teaching

Sandy Holdsclaw
Alvin ISD
Rosharon, TX

I am not only a principal in Alvin ISD, but I am also a parent of a student who just graduated from high school. My daughter is not your average student, she is highly intelligent but also has dyslexia. Alvin ISD met all of her needs and she is now entering college with 60+ hours. Her teachers didn't just see a girl with a disability....they saw a student who had some struggles but needed to be pushed and challenged. The amazing teachers she had have made her into a confident young lady who is ready to take on the college world.

I see stories like this everyday on my campus and across the district. Public schools, teachers, and paraprofessionals are shaping our future everyday and the state should be supporting them and their schools financially so that they can continue this amazing work. Teachers and students deserve better!!

Theresa Pena
Self. Retired teachers
San Antonio, TX

Pay the teachers what they deserve. The money is there. Pay the teachers and increase funding for the public schools of Texas. No vouchers!
Parents already have choices: enroll their children in public schools or pay to enroll them in private schools.

Elise Carter
Self, Yoga studio owner
Tyler, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to have a written comment. As a deeply involved parent, who prayed for children for years and now prays over them daily, I take it as no small measure of responsibility that I am their protector, guardian, and advocate. Without the ability to be the primary decision maker for my child, I am unable to fulfill that God-given responsibility.

As parents, we demand the legislature empower all us parents with ESAs. The “system” does not own it kids. The system is not prepared or qualified to make unique choices and advocate for our kids. Every parent should have the opportunity to select the best school for their child regardless of income. This is so crucial to the very fabric of society; we need to be able to provide our children with every opportunity to learn, grow and succeed, and only parents are involved enough to know what these choices should look like.

Additionally, every public school must be responsive to parents, not to union bosses. Every step in our education system that separates parents and teachers from making decisions about the very children they spend their lives with is a step that causes confusion, destruction and damage to our families and society as a whole.

Thank you for your time.

Elizabeth Brannon-Lopez
Self
Red Oak, TX

I'm order to enhance educational opportunity and freedom to obtain a quality education, implement the following:

1. A enhanced, proper funding for our schools,
2. A teacher pay raise,
3. A lower testing and accountability burden,

If these are implemented statewide, there is NO need for ESAs or Vouchers.
Please make these requests a reality

Kelli Widmer
Self
Temple, TX

School choice is bad for education. It will leave low performing schools even lower and sounds distinctly like the “schools of choice” after Brown v Board. Public school teachers are professionals and should be treated and paid as such.

Trish Harrison, Mrs.
Self Retired
Ovilla, TX

All parents should have the freedom to choose where their children attend school. Choice is the only way that is fair for all families and it will cause competition which will be good for public schools to actually compete than have a monopoly over all families and do whatever they please. Please allow school choice for all families in the State of Texas!

John Peterson
Self. Educator
Arlington, TX

STOP THE SHELL GAME!! NO to vouchers and Yes to Public Education!

Alison Cook
Self
Austin, TX

Vouchers subsidize wealthy children , they do not help low income children as their parents cannot commit sufficient funds themselves to attend other private tuition schools as the voucher is not sufficient to cover their tuitions in total, thus vouchers instead re-create segregation and inequality of opportunity. Special needs children and children with learning challenges do not get same considerations and supports in private or charter schools to succeed , instead they get told “ we don’t have the resources to address his/ her needs perhaps you should enroll them in your local public school”. Vouchers siphon off funding for public schools that are chronically under funded. Private schools will use extra funding for “shiny, fancy” looking, cosmetically appealing facilities and devices to “sell” parents on their school , not necessarily good/ better teaching as their teacher salaries and qualifications are not held to a higher standard and are not well monitored. No , no, NO to vouchers!!! Increase school funding and teachers and support staff to “ stop the bleed”/ loss of qualified highly skilled teachers!!! Using non certified teacher wannabes who do not hold teacher certification or training often result in suboptimal education of Texas kids for Texas’ future ! Kids from low income households are untapped potential, they need SUPPORT and investment by the Texas legislature, not dilution of funds to subsidize the children of the wealthy!!! It is unjust, inequitable and unfair ! Cease and desist on stuffing vouchers down the throats of the people who told you before we don’t want them! We want children who know other children in their communities and the mix enriches all by schooling together , not in “segregated silos “ of class , ethnicity that you will get with vouchers!

Lawrence Shafron, Dr.
Self. Physician
Dallas, TX

Please.....we really need to pass a School Choice Voucher plan. Here in Texas, we're burdened with high property taxes, and yet not one dollar of that school tax goes toward private religious parochial schools. Please allow us Texas citizens to direct our school tax dollars to the religious schools that our children must attend!

Twyla Allen
Self/Certified Teacher
Georgetown, TX

No to vouchers! Take care of educators by providing appropriate pay, training, and the necessary resources they need to teach the students. Compensation should not only be to employ new teachers but substantial increases should be provided to retain those teachers.

Raquel Steed, Mrs
Self
Liberty, TX

I am a teacher. Vouchers will hurt poor students and poor districts!

Vivian Menzel, Mrs.
Self Retired Teacher
Desdemona, TX

I oppose Vouchers for many reasons. They have not worked in other states, the money would go primarily to kids already enrolled in private schools, there would be no transportation, the amount of money wouldn’t be sufficient, private schools would not accept many students, rural areas have few or no private schools. Please strengthen our public schools and encourage our teachers instead of blaming them for things they are not doing. The Texas Constitution makes it clear that the Legislature is to provide a free, public education for all students. Thank you.

Jenna Holloway

Self

Houston, TX

My name is Jenna Holloway, and I'm a parent of three students at Aristoi Classical Academy, a public charter school in Cypress. Thank you for serving on such an important committee and your dedication to Texas students. I'm writing to share about my experience with an important issue you can help resolve.

All public school students deserve safe school facilities designed for teaching and learning but students in public charter schools are being left behind. Public charter schools receive \$965 less per student, on average, than other public schools. That's mostly because of a huge gap in facilities funding, which is increasing because all public charter schools in Texas share a fixed pot of facilities funding, even as more children attend charters. This fixed amount hasn't changed since it was first set in 2017.

Public charter schools across Texas, including Aristoi Classical Academy, help more students thrive.

We moved our youngest three children from our local public school to Aristoi Classical Academy during the previous school year. We were hoping for a more enriching and challenging education, and we got exactly what we hoped for. I distinctly recall a conversation my children had after school where all the of them, a kindergartener, a 4th grader, and a 6th grader had an in depth conversation about the Great Wall of China. They have become so engaged in their education, and their desire to learn is so much stronger now.

So I ask you, why do our public charter school students count less?

Public charter schools like mine shouldn't have to stretch other parts of their budgets just to cover facilities costs. Funds should be spent on classrooms, teaching, and learning. And unfair facilities funding is an even bigger problem because all public schools are making important safety upgrades to their buildings.

Please help make facilities funding fair for ALL public schools. This is about making sure every child has the chance to thrive.

Timothy Davis

Self Teacher

Willis, TX

School vouchers might sound like a great option at first due to the state public education is currently in but in reality it is avoiding fixing the problem and instead will just make private school more expensive. The public school system is ran by TEA and often makes decisions based off of making companies money or gets votes rather than what is best for students. This is evident when you look at how discipline codes have changed over time or how we did state testing still on years where the results wouldn't matter and even the school voucher system that is being proposed. Giving school vouchers isn't a solution for fixing the education system because the problems will still be there. The reason private schools are often seen as better is because they don't have the state running them and they can better choose who to accept and who to kick out. All implementing a voucher system will do is make alternative options more expensive. The same thing had happened to college and university with more options for potential college students to get help with paying for college. Rather than keep the same prices colleges started charging more because they knew potential students would have access to more money. All implementing a voucher system will do is allow private schools and other options to increase their prices by \$8000 or however much is given and they will still accept the same students 9/10 times while public schools potentially lose the remaining good students and parents they have. A better solution but likely not as popular would be to better equip public schools with solutions to actually improve the public school system, such as harsher penalties for illegal activities done on school grounds, punishment for constantly skipping school, and easier pathways for students to have actual consequences for continued misbehaving. I teach at a school where due to the current rules in place by TEA and the state students can do stuff such as walk out of the school when they are angry, spend the entire day refusing to leave the restroom, cuss out teachers, throw microwaves during lunch, and even hit the local sheriff and the schools hands are tied due to rules set in place by TEA and the state as far as doing any discipline other than sending the student to in school or out of school suspension, which in some situations students will actually intentionally try to get. Schools need better discipline options, more funding, and for parents to also be held accountable for raising their kids otherwise the public school system will continue to get worse as more and more kids turn to adults without being taught how to be productive members of society. School vouchers doesn't solve any of this. All it does is try to pass the problem off on someone else because the state doesn't want to look like the bad guy. This ultimately will lead to private schools being more expensive and public schools getting worse and worse.

Yesika Diaz
My Kids and ALL Texas Students
Houston, TX

Dear Educational Opportunity & Enrichment Committee Members:

My name is Yesika Diaz and I'm a parent at Harmony School of Advancement-Houston public charter school in Houston , TX. Thank you for serving on such an important committee and your dedication to Texas students. I'm writing to share about my experience with an important issue you can help resolve.

All public school students deserve safe school facilities designed for teaching and learning but students in public charter schools are being left behind. Public charter schools receive \$965 less per student, on average, than other public schools. That's mostly because of a huge gap in facilities funding, which is increasing because all public charter schools in Texas share a fixed pot of facilities funding, even as more children attend charters. This fixed amount hasn't changed since it was first set in 2017.

Public charter schools across Texas, including Harmony School of Advancement-Houston help my kids and more Texas students thrive. My public charter school has makes a huge difference for our families. I want ALL Texas children's who needs that kind of opportunity to have it.

Texas it's tme to make it happen ??????????????

future success How your child has benefitted from your charter school

So I ask you, why do our public charter school students count less?

Public charter schools like mine shouldn't have to stretch other parts of their budgets just to cover facilities costs. Funds should be spent on classrooms, teaching, and learning. And unfair facilities funding is an even bigger problem because all public schools are making important safety upgrades to their buildings.

Please help make facilities funding fair for ALL public schools. This is about making sure every child has the chance to thrive.

Thank you,

Yesika Diaz

Santiago Villanueva
srif
Harlingen, TX

No vouchers

Ashley Schilling
Odyssey Academy and TPCSA
Houston, TX

I am going in to my 4th year as a charter school teacher, after 6 years in a traditional ISD. In BOTH cases I have seen students with severe academic and social/emotional needs. Charter schools are not meant to be competition to ISDs. It is simply another educational opportunity. I want to confidently know and begin our school year knowing that that opportunity is easily and fairly available to EVERY student in Texas.

Chaim Summers
SELF Financial Analyst
Dallas, TX

Please support school choice and education equality in Texas!
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.
Please 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.

Jana Reid
Self
Granbury, TX

I am absolutely opposed to vouchers in ANY FORM in Texas. We do not support public education, and the thought of trying to support a separate and unaccountable education system is completely unacceptable. SUPPORT PUBLIC EDUCATION, NOT vouchers.

Stephen Wright
Public school teachers and parents across the state
HOUSTON, TX

No Vouchers -- use the surplus to fully fund PUBLIC schools and pay teachers fairly!

Kristen Harris
Self
McKinney, TX

Funding public community schools fully is the best way to provide opportunity and enrichment for every human in our state. Use the surplus to fund education fully, and we won't have to need "choice," because every campus will have everything it needs to serve its students, whether special education, poverty, advanced academics, or the like. Fully fund the teachers and give them a liveable wage that doesn't require them to leave for better pay and living conditions elsewhere. Stop the subtle building of responsibility and the lack of compensation for it that uses teachers' energy up and burns us out. Stop starving teachers and our schools, driving us out, and forcing families to find other means to meet their needs or go without.

Christina Gonzalez, Ms.
Self
Corpus Christi, TX

Against

Joseph Ravitsky
self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,

Please support school choice and education equality in Texas.

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.

Please 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,

Joe Ravitsky
Dallas, TX resident and voter

Jessica Toliver
Self/ Public School Assistant Principal
Brenham, TX

Vouchers would only benefit Texas children that come from wealthy families. I cannot even imagine the damage vouchers would do to rural Texas schools & children in poverty. Simply put, vouchers are welfare for the rich.

I am begging the politicians of Texas to rectify the damage they have done this session. In the largest surplus in state history, the legislature has refused to fund public schools; much less give educators a raise. It is clear that our public school teachers are not valued and the teacher shortage crisis will only continue to grow.

Jo McKibben
Self
Bonham, TX

NO TO VOUCHERS!!!!

Steven Cortez
Self
Rosenberg, TX

I write today as a parent and a public educator. School choice is already an option for all families in our state and our nation. As a parent, I have the choice right now to send my children where I prefer, that has and always will be an option for all families. As an educator that depends on the funding from the state, I am hopeful that you will choose to fully fund public schools the way that they deserve. Our livelihood depends on it, just like all the other state funded agencies that have already received extra funding to combat inflation. It is your duty fully fund public education and not send tax dollars to private organizations that won't have the same oversight that public schools do.

J Alison Chapin
Self
Houston, TX

Public Schools need to be fully funded and supported! ESAs/vouchers are not the answer to Texas' problems; only fully funding public schools, increasing public school employees pay, and providing rural districts with viable support will help Texas students thrive. Vote NO to anything that does not support public education. No to ESAs and vouchers.

Emily Russell
Self
Haslet, TX

Say no to vouchers or educational savings accounts.

Andrea Aguilar
Self
Brownsville, TX

Please support a universal ESA scholarship so that all Texas students can receive an education that best meets their learning needs.

Kristen Jones, Master of Arts
Self/educator
Needville, TX

Vouchers are not a solution.

Erica Fletcher
Self
Cypress, TX

Private school vouchers undermine our public education system, diverting funds and resources away from the schools that serve all students. Let's invest in strengthening public education rather than promoting exclusivity through vouchers.

Sincerely,
Erica Fletcher

Kevin Priddy
Self
Cypress, TX

Private school vouchers undermine our public education system, diverting funds and resources away from the schools that serve all students. Let's invest in strengthening public education rather than promoting exclusivity through vouchers.

Sincerely,
Kevin Priddy

Jenifer Smith
Self
Boerne, TX

This is an important time for Texas and its citizens. It is time for Texas to give choice and empowerment back to its people. Government has spent too long trying to do everything for everyone. People need to be allowed to choose what is best for them. This includes school choice. I was fortunate to live in a town with a marvelous school district whose focus was on what is best for kids. Not everyone has that option. To make our state strong and our future bright, our children need the best education they can get.

Sonya Morrison
Self
Houston, TX

No to vouchers! Pay raise for teachers!

Connie Fletcher
Self
Houston, TX

Morning,

Private school vouchers undermine our public education system, diverting funds and resources away from the schools that serve all students. Let's invest in strengthening public education rather than promoting exclusivity through vouchers.

-Connie

Roy Fletcher
Self
Houston, TX

Hello,

Private school vouchers undermine our public education system, diverting funds and resources away from the schools that serve all students. Let's invest in strengthening public education rather than promoting exclusivity through vouchers.

-Roy Fletcher

Rachel Behnke
Self
Leander, TX

Texas public education needs all of the funding it can get to help ALL Texas students have the best chance at a good future. Vouchers will damage our public education system by defunding public schools across the state. Just say no to vouchers of any sort to ensure EVERY Texas student has equal opportunity to a quality education.

Aydee Ruiz-Ufland
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am opposed to vouchers in all forms.

Christi Carro
Self, rules and policy senior specialist
Georgetown, TX

Texas school students would benefit from a voucher system that enables a child to attend the school of the parents' choice, at no cost. Schools should get federal and state funding based on the vouchers submitted for each student enrollment.

Dollucy Grainger
Self
Odessa, TX

I am against school vouchers. It is an idea that makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. This Vite of yours definitely will determine votes for the next voting opportunity.

Lisa Braddam
Self, teacher, parent of high school student
San Antonio, TX

Please allow me, as both a public school teacher with 28 years of experience and a parent of a public high school student, to urge you to drop any idea of vouchers. These vouchers would steal from already I'll-funded public schools and students—from students who depend upon our free public education system, which is they and their parents' right. Public schools and students are held to a higher standard than private and charter schools, all while accepting and servicing every student who comes through our doors. We serve the whole child, not just their academic aspects, by helping them stay fed, counseled, and cared for so that they CAN learn. Please hearken back to the early years of the pandemic, when public schools organized for both food and device distribution, servicing all our families—especially those most in need of food security. We public schools and educators are on the front lines for our kids every day, and those kids are the biggest part of our future. Please: Instead of stealing from them, truly support them!

Jamie Williams
Self
Oakwood, TX

There is plenty of peer-reviewed research to prove this is a waste of tax-payer dollars to invest in vouchers, ESA, or whatever the new buzzword for diverting public dollars to unregulated private schools. **JUST STOP!** You are there to do your job, which includes adequately funding our current public schools. Teachers are leaving in large numbers because **YOU** have continually disrespected them, questioned their qualifications, and continued to dump more on their plates through unfunded new laws. How is school choice going to help them? **IT WON'T!**

Terry Palin, Mr.
Self
San Antonio, TX

I support full funding for public schools. I do NOT support public funding for private charter schools. In other words, I do NOT support vouchers.

Students do receive a quality public education when the State fully funds public schools and pays teachers professional salaries for taking care of and education your children every year.

As an educator for 46 years until I retired in 2018, I have been appauled by how the Texas Legislature has seemed to go out of its way to harm public education and the teachers. From cutting funds to unfunded mandates, from not allowing teachers to help all students to banning books and changing textbooks to whitewash history, this is a sorry time for public education in Texas.

Public schools need the funds to help their students. Private charter schools should fund themselves. That's what is meant by PRIVATE; they can charge to cover their costs. No public monies for private schools.

No vouchers!

Fully fund Public Education and the teachers working therein.

Thank you.

Brittany Thomas
Self- educator
Lewisville, TX

Please fully fund public schools. Do not make the back bone of society even more defunded than you already have historically speaking. We expect so much of educators, yet the government is not willing to support them in the curriculum that you, the government, have given us to teach.

Belinda Hurst
Self
Boyd, TX

Please protect our children and do not give in to the indoctrination that is being forced upon us. Children can only thrive on being given the freedom to choose their education that will help them become successful and give back to this country as we once knew it to be great.

Ricky Riddle
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Teachers need raises, big raises not the puniest ones you have handed state employees. No vouchers for private schools so they can steal taxpayer money. Do your job and give the teachers the money they need to survive Texas.

Isabel Martinez
Self Public Ed Parent and Teacher
Edinburg, TX

Texas is embarrassing itself with how many ways our representatives are attempting to syphon public education resources for more privatization. Voting against any privatization tactics aka vouchers is the only way to ensure all students in Texas are given an opportunity to receive a better education. You shouldn't be voting to remove funds from public education, you should not be finding a legal segregated education system, texas should be fully funding public ed so that all public schools across the state are at the caliber and standard that you would want to send your own children. Fund public Ed like your kids were actually going to enroll. Say no to vouchers. We will be watching.

Cindy Miller
Self and Public Education Teacher
Lubbock, TX

Subject: Oppose School Vouchers

I hope this message finds you well. As a concerned constituent and advocate for quality education, I am writing to express my strong opposition to school vouchers and to urge you to prioritize adequate funding for our public education system.

Public schools play a vital role in our communities by offering equal educational opportunities to all children, regardless of their socio-economic background or ability. They serve as a cornerstone of our democracy, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among diverse groups of students.

While school vouchers might seem like a solution to address educational disparities, they carry significant drawbacks that compromise the principles of equity, accountability, and inclusivity. Here are a few key reasons why I believe our state should reject the implementation of school voucher programs and instead invest in strengthening public education:

Equity: Public schools are designed to provide education to all students, regardless of their academic abilities, disabilities, or backgrounds. Introducing school vouchers diverts public funds to private institutions, often leaving behind students who are most in need of support. This exacerbates existing inequalities and widens the opportunity gap, leaving some students behind.

Accountability: Public schools are subject to rigorous standards and accountability measures, ensuring that taxpayer dollars are used responsibly and effectively. In contrast, many private schools receiving vouchers operate with less oversight and fewer regulations. It is essential that taxpayer-funded education maintains the highest standards of transparency and accountability.

Inclusivity: Public schools embrace diversity and foster an inclusive environment that prepares students for the realities of a diverse world. Private schools, which often have admission criteria or specific ideological orientations, may not provide the same level of inclusivity and diversity as public schools. It is crucial that we foster an educational environment that values and respects the diversity of our communities.

Undermining Public Education: Diverting funds to school vouchers weakens our public education system, which has long been the bedrock of our society. Instead of investing in proven strategies to strengthen public schools, diverting resources towards vouchers can further strain an already overburdened system, leading to a decline in educational quality and limited opportunities for our children.

Therefore, I implore you to prioritize robust funding for public education in our state budget. By investing in public schools, we can ensure that every child has access to a high-quality education, regardless of their zip code or socio-economic status. I urge you to consider alternative solutions, such as targeted interventions, improved teacher training, and expanded educational resources, to address the challenges faced by our public education system.

Thank you!

Eric Rodriguez
Self
Haslet, TX

In reference to the select committee, regarding vouchers and education special session. First off vouchers are simply a modern day form of segregation and discrimination to all students who do not have the means to attend a private or Parochial schools. The current state of education is due to the inference of public officials and representatives who have forced political agendas and financial benefits to companies that stand to benefit financially from standardized testing. This bureaucracy has forced good teachers to leave the classrooms and in certain situations have allowed left wing liberals to come in establish woke politics and agendas. If our representatives were to actually take the time to listen to us as educators, they would find that a majority of us just want to do the job we have been hired to do. We have no agendas or opinions. We just want to teach our students without being told hold to do our jobs. Please respect us as trained and educated professionals that "You" have certified us to do. Invest in Texas Public Schools and teachers. Bring good teachers back to the classroom.

Rena Honea
Alliance of Dallas Educators (Alliance/AFT) Local 2260
Dallas, TX

As a veteran educator for 45 years, I want to express my concern and disappointment in a majority of the current elected body that you serve with. Your election campaign indicated that you supported and cared about the 550,000+ public school students in Texas. Yet, your actions have proven that your words were (and are) untrue. You've chosen to turn your back on the students and educators that count on you to hold up the constitutional rights of students for a quality education and the promises made to the educators during the election campaigns for an increased salary. At the historical time that our great state has a \$33 billion surplus, not one cent was spent on our students and educators. Your failure to meet your responsibility to these individuals is shameful, especially for those of you that are holding out in the name of your political party! Education is not a political pawn to be bargained with, yet it's the basis for the future workforce and leaders for our great communities, cities, and state. And you've said loud and clear that they don't matter and not worth your time!

Please restore my faith in our great state and do what is right. Instead of funding 3 educational systems (public schools, charters, and now vouchers), fully fund our community public schools and help us retain and recruit great educators. You have the ability to do this, but do you have the will? We're counting on you to be able to look in the mirror each morning and be able to say, I've done my best for the students and educators in Texas. And then be proud of doing what is right.

Thank you for your time and your service. Please make us proud.

Lorna Randle, Dr.
Self
Houston, TX

It is important for all of our children to receive a quality education. If schools do not have the equipment from computers, strong teachers, exceptional administrators and the support of the state politicians the quality education will not be attainable. Parents are already struggling with finances. Vouchers only cover some of the financial costs of attending private schools. What are parents supposed to do. Even if you allow their taxes to go the private schools it is still struggle. Next, the private schools will no longer have those classes as well.

Public school teachers are the most highly qualified professionals in any industry. Many have bachelor's and masters. They are certified and highly trained. They work hard for their students. They teach with dignity and honor each day. Instead of school vouchers providing funding that will those schools would be beneficial.

Instead of the Texas Senate and House make the decision, place it on the November ballot and allow the citizens of Texas make the final say.

Martha Hizfelder

Self

San Antonio, TX

State funded private school voucher is a violation of church and state. Using public monies from private education is the road to destruction of the public school system which is the basis of our democracy. The GOP has been leaping towards the destruction of democracy for the last 10 years.

Louis Bradly, Coach

Self, retired Texas classroom teacher and coach

Ft Worth, TX

How many times do we the people of Texas have to tell you NO! NO the so called voucher system. How many times does the State Legislature have to say No! This reminds me of a child that goes to Dad, then to Mom asking for something, with the hope one of them will give in to the child. Just like the parents who know what is best for the child, we again say NO!

Jaime Vega, Sir

Austin community college

Austin, TX

To whom it may concern

As a public employee

We need help

We dont need to be thrown by the way side

We dont need private schools to receive more help

Its been a struggle with less staff as is

Lyla Payne, Counselor

CFISD

Houston, TX

We need raises not vouchers

Tammy Owens

Self

Mount Enterprise, TX

Parents in Texas already have choices. They may choose to send their students to public school, private school or home school. Taxpayers should not fund options that do not call for oversights that public schools are held to.

Alma Silva
Self
Corpus Christi, TX

I understand the legislation is having a select committee on education meeting. I am hoping that this committee puts the future of Texas first by understanding the importance of protecting public education by not allowing school vouchers to take away public school funding and not allowing Abbott to take away more funding to schools.

The greater majority of students attend public education and need schools to be able to provide funding to help with the teacher-to-student ratio. A high teacher-to-student ratio limits the success of the class as a whole. This is especially true in the elementary years where a student's probability of success as an adult is highly linked to their success in mastering the foundational skills in elementary.

I beg the committee to not allow outside influences to shape or destroy our educational system. The strength of our state depends on it.

Please do the right thing.

Henry Harrity
Self, Engineer
Dickinson, TX

Hello,

I strongly believe that an educational voucher like program would be to the benefit of all Texans. This is because parents know their children and their needs best, and right now their options are very limited. Such a program would allow parents to choose a school that is better suited for their child and motivate all schools to be better to retain their students. It will give parents a stronger voice with their local schools and more options for their children. If most parents love their current schools then I don't see how this would affect public schools much at all.

I know there is resistance from smaller schools that are scared of losing students, but surely a compromise can be reached. Even a program offering half of what the state spends per student could make a huge difference for families. In a state where competition has created so much success, shouldn't we break the public school monopoly and give families a chance to make the best decisions for themselves?

Do the right thing and pass a voucher/educational savings account program!

Thanks,

Henry Harrity

Anna Chaney, Mrs
self
Irving, TX

Please give Texas parents the FREEDOM TO CHOOSE the best education for their children's needs and values.

Janine Henry
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Education Committee:

I strongly oppose school vouchers. Funding needs to be directed towards schools, not away from schools. As a teacher, I cannot afford health insurance for my family because it is 30% of my paycheck for a high deductible plan. Please look into finding schools, teachers, and our benefits over sending money elsewhere. Thank you!

Catrina Lotspeich
Self - Educator
Temple, TX

I have been an educator in the state of Texas for 31 years. I have worked in property poor districts as well as property wealthy districts. I have seen districts forced to cut vital teaching and support positions as a result of the failure of the state of Texas to fund public education. I have seen accountability systems put into place that are designed to set up public schools to fail. As an educator, I have been asked to go way beyond teaching students basic knowledge and skills. I have been asked to teach values and morals - but our society has opposing values and morales and I'm caught in the middle of a societal culture war.

I love working with children. I love watching them grow and that light-bulb moment when they finally grasp that concept I have been trying to get them to understand for weeks. We have diverse students with diverse needs and all of our students should have the ability to obtain a QUALITY education. If you want to provide funds for alternative/private schools, then hold them to the same accountability standards as public schools. How can parents make an informed decision if they don't know that the private school is not required to have fully certified teachers? How do they know their child will receive a quality education when that private school does not provide the special education support their child needs? How are they supposed to measure their child's academic progress when the private school does not take the STAAR test, or require students to meet CCMR requirements?

If you want to provide real school choice, then make the playing ground even - ALL schools receiving tax money to educate students MUST meet the exact same accountability standards - ALL OF THEM! If the private schools can't "afford" to meet those standards, then how are you guaranteeing a QUALITY educational opportunity?

Shandra COPELAND
Self- Texas teacher
Lubbock, TX

Properly funding public Ed is the only way to go. No to vouchers of any kind.

Also raises for teachers.

Hilarie Benedetto
Self Paraprofessional
Grapevine, TX

Please do what the Texas constitution requires which is fully fund our public schools. You need to increase the per student allotment & increase teacher & para pay as well as fund new safety requirements.

Texans are opposed to vouchers in all forms because they don't work to educate ALL students. Our school district budgets are in crisis. We should be at the top of the country's funding chart not the bottom. Do what is right for our staff & our students!!!

Hilarie Benedetto
Colleyville Heritage High School Campus Staff Assistant
Grandmother of a 1st grader (GCISD)

Cary Williams
Self
Cedar Park, TX

Why don't we seek to be the number one state in the United States in regards to education. Pay teachers! Quit looking at vouchers as a viable option. We should be saddened that our state is in the bottom 20% when it comes to education in our country.

Cary Williams
Self
Cedar Park, TX

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KELLIE LEE
Alief ISD
HOUSTON, TX

As an Special Educator for 30 years, and now an ARD Facilitator for the last 5 years in Alief ISD in Houston, Texas, I am imploring the Educational Opportunity and Enrichment House Committee to truly consider the decisions that have been made thus far, and future decisions that should be made regarding teacher and educational support employees pay raises. I hope you will consider how so many educators and employee support workers felt when they realized every state employee will receive a pay raise except us. We felt humiliated, devalued and speaking for myself just demoralized. I can not speak for every educator, but personally I love what I do. I love helping students with disabilities, and their teachers reach their fullest potential. I would venture to say the majority of educators love their jobs, but they also want to feel valued, and respected, and these past couple of years there has be a reckoning that cannot be ignored which is more and more districts are losing teachers and support staff because they have not felt valued nor respected in a very long time. One of the reasons is the lack of pay increases. It really is unfathomable that with the huge surplus the state has this year, the legislature cannot come to some type of agreement to give educators and support staff a significant raise that would not only bring Texas a step closer to eradicating the state's teacher pay gap with other states, but also making a pronounced statement that not only are educators valued but education is as well in the state of Texas. Just one more thought. I am currently at the top of my district's pay scale. I have in all intentional purposes maxed out my salary. I am not going to quit though because I love what I do, but it surely would be nice to know I could anticipate a pay raise, a real raise, in my salary for the 2023-24 school year. Thank you.

Kathleen Cook, Ms
Taxpayer
Houston, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers. I support adequate support of public schools

Luz De La O
Self - Parent, Educator and Taxpayer
EL PASO, TX

PLEASE VOTE NO ON VOUCHERS

"1 – Vouchers are expensive. We 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 significantly weaken local community schools and existing charters. Texas is already near the bottom of 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.

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 those with behavioral/emotional needs. By law, they are required to be open to all children, but in reality, some charters put up 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 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 and 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 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. And for those of us who do not have school-aged children anymore, we will be taxed but have no representation in these schools. Taxation without representation runs decidedly counter to American values.

If our state and nation are going to continue to thrive, we must not abandon our public schools and our democracy.

The stakes are just too high, the cost to Texans too great, and our children's future too important."

Chris Nelson
FBISD
Missouri City, TX

No Vouchers!

Frances Yeane
Self
Katy, TX

Vouchers are not the answer to improved public education; quality teaching is. To obtain and retain quality teachers you need to pay them more and provide quality training that is focused on the subject areas they are teaching.

Kenetra Doucette
Self
Austin, TX

Texans are opposed to vouchers in all forms and strongly support fully funding our public schools.

Andrea Whatley
Self
Lockhart, TX

Fund our public schools. As an educator and a parent there is no reason to hold public funding away from our public school system.

Barbara Sanchez, Dr.
Self
Lockhart, TX

You are elected to represent the voters of Texas and to adhere to the Texas Constitution. During the 88th session, the people spoke. We do not want money to go to vouchers in any form. We want public education to be funded totally by using an enrollment based system instead of by attendance. Fund raises for teachers because they deserve to be valued and paid for their service to students. Parents are already funding their own choices when they attend private schools because they have the means to do so. It is embarrassing to see the will of taxpayers ignored and autocracy is on the rise to do what is the choice of a select group of politicians that are intent on destroying public education for their own greed and bias. Texans are watching and those politicians will be remembered at the ballot box. Do what's right for Texas children and teachers.

Beverly Avila
AFT retiree plus
McAllen, TX

As a retired public school teacher, there is nothing more important for the future of our state than protecting our public schools and providing adequate pay to retain highly qualified teachers. I am strongly against vouchers. If people choose to attend private or charter schools, they should pay for it. Please vote to support our public education system.

Mary Murphy
Not provided
Mesquite, TX

Why is the legislature pushing school vouchers when the citizens have told you over and over they do not want vouchers? We want increased funding for public schools not vouchers that remove funding from public schools. The only people that benefit from vouchers are people that already send their children to non-public schools because they are the only people that can afford to pay the tuition and vouchers do not cover tuition, plus non-public schools are not regulated by the state and absolutely no public funding should be given to private schools that can pick and choose which students they want and which they will deny. The citizens of the Texas have told you several times in several ways they do not want school vouchers yet you keep sneaking vouchers into bills and have special sessions in which the public is not allowed specifically because you know you are hoing against the people. You want what you want what you want and the people you represent can be damned for all you care. Well guess what, I vote! I also convince others to get off their butts and vote! I will vote reps out of office if that continue to push school vouchers against public demands and for those that are not my rep that continue to push vouchers in defiance of the citizens you are supposed to represent, I will go to your districts and encourage people to vote against you.

Doug Heick
Fwisd
Fort Worth, TX

Vote no on vouchers

Sandra Calderon-Garcia
Educators
North Richland Hills, TX

I am a teacher in an urban district. I'm so frustrated that school vouchers are on a proposed bill again. We teachers have repeatedly told you that vouchers are detrimental to public education. Your constituents have told you as well. Please, fund schools adequately instead of continuing with this topic of school vouchers. With the record surplus the state is facing, this issue of not funding public education is egregious. Teachers need a living wage as well. Don't tie Teacher raises to a voucher bill.

Lauren Ehrlixh
Self, public education high school teacher
Weatherford, TX

Dear representative,

As an active high school teacher in our public schools and a graduate of Dallas ISD, I see the value of the public education system and the education of these public school students as the future of Texas. As a mother, I want my children to attend fully funded public schools so they and other students will work together in classrooms to succeed and better the future of the state of Texas.

Within the public schools, all students are taught and given needed support services needed to succeed. Private schools do not serve all students and do not have to provide needed special education services for students who need them. The private schools, funded will vouchers, will not have to have the same financial accountability, the same teacher certification, and are not required to accept everyone, nor do they need to take the STAAR Test Using tax dollars without accountability is nonsensical.

Texas public schools are incredibly valuable and are far more effective than they are given credit. I am concerned about teachers and administrators not receiving the compensation and support they need to meet the ever-increasing demands placed upon them. Please choose to support Texas public schools fully and not fund vouchers in any form including education savings accounts.

Please support current and future Texans and their futures, oppose vouchers and fully fund the Texas public schools. Thank you.

Rodney Rather
self / high-school teacher
Spring, TX

Please provide school funding and avoid school vouchers. If implemented, a voucher system would eviscerate public schools in the state of Texas, leading to a system that caters to the wealthy at the expense of everyone else. And this state is supported more by everyone else than it is the wealthy. Please do not wreck education for short-sighted politics.

Sandra Klein
Self/Teacher
Fredericksburg, TX

Thank you for your dedication with the second special session this hot summer. As I prepare for another school year, I think about the number of diverse students and parents/guardians I have had the pleasure of working with the past twenty-six years of my teaching experience.

When you consider voting on 'freedom to obtain a quality education' please keep in mind ALL Texas school children. Texas Public School Teachers are required to follow a student's Individualized Education Plan under federal law. Private schools do not. Public schools are required to identify students who are struggling academically, emotionally, and with behavioral issues. Private schools are not. Gifted and talented students are required to be serviced in Texas public schools. Certified Texas teachers are required to maintain yearly training for GT students. Private school teachers are not.

Texas public school teachers are trained to use the Response To Intervention to identify students struggling, to provide tiered interventions, to document growth or not, and to bring to committee to make the next step. Private schools are not.

Texas public schools service students who do not speak English as a first language. Most private schools do not.

Texas public schools have behavioral specialists to help with struggling students. Most private schools expel these students.

When you vote... please ask yourself is this 'freedom of quality of education'?

Thank you for your time.

Jennifer Ray
Self/parent
Alpine, TX

Educational savings accounts and vouchers are not the way to create opportunities or enrich education. Private schools will not provide opportunities for Texas's most vulnerable students. Private schools do not have the same accountability standards as public schools. Student's with disabilities and low income students will not benefit from ESA or voucher programs. Instead, focus on returning Texas to at a minimum the middle of the pack for school funding. Sitting at 40th in the country is not acceptable. Districts have not been given increases in the basic allotment to even help cover the rises in costs due to inflation. Increasing the basic allotment to at least the national average will ensure a quality education for ALL TEXAS Children regardless of disability and socioeconomic status. (What is the average expenditure per student for public education in the US? How much does the government spend on education? In the fall of academic years 2017-2018, the average school budget spent by the United States was \$14,891 per pupil enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools. Computed based on average daily attendance, per-pupil expenditure amounted to \$15,946 (NCES, 2020).

Irene Vega
Self
Frisco, TX

Education should be fundamental and foundational. Basics of reading, writing which should include penmanship and mathematics. Respect needs to be taught with the foundation of our founding fathers of this nation.

Suzanne Fulghum
Self
Conroe, TX

Texas needs to fully support and fund our public schools, including our students. This includes increasing funding per student, decreasing standardized testing, increasing teacher pay, and not funding vouchers.

Gary Sweet
Self
Lancaster, TX

School vouchers are brought up frequently but are never passed because the idea is terrible. Our public school system is designed to service all students, including those for whom English is a second language as well as those with Language and learning disabilities. Many, or few, private institutions are equipped to do so. Instead of removing funding from our public schools and giving it to private (or even charter schools) is a misguided approach. Please follow the wishes of the majority of Texans and take the concept of vouchers off the table.
Thank you for your consideration.

Mathew Bartley
self - teacher
Leander, TX

I really don't know how many times we can say "no vouchers", but I guess we need to say it one more time. You won't give schools the funding they deserve, but you're willing to siphon off millions to line the pockets of private interests and their goofy charter scams and voucher schemes. It's just wrong. I don't want my taxpayer money going to private institutions that have zero oversight.

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

None of the poorly designed copy/paste bills voucher submitted during the 88th Legislative session are well written, but they could be improved with 2 major changes. First, they should include the same Performance, Fiscal, and Regulatory accountability as required of public schools as opposed to granting autonomy from all accountability. Second, paired with accountability, any voucher bill should also include mandates for institutions accepting vouchers to take all applicants (using a lottery for oversubscription) similar to the way charter schools accept students. These two changes should be the foundational starting point for any voucher plan. Thank you for your consideration.

Sheila Schatzke, Dr
Self
Friendswood, TX

As I address the committee today, let's keep in mind that the citizens of Texas have expressed a resounding opposition to public school vouchers in any form. They believe in the potential and promise of our public schools and are committed to supporting them. Therefore, instead of diverting public resources to private interests through vouchers, our focus should be on fully funding our public schools, reinforcing their infrastructure, and ensuring that every Texas child, regardless of their background, has equal access to a high-quality public education.

Byron Clark
Self Accountant
Houston, TX

This is desperately needed.

Wendy Kirkpatrick
ATF
Spring, TX

Public teachers need a raise and no voucher.

Erik Sanchez
Self teacher
San Antonio, TX

Teachers need raises to attract and keep more in the profession. If income does not keep up with inflation, we will continue to lose highly qualified teachers.

Amy Gatlin
Self
Allen, TX

No Vouchers! Vouchers only benefits a very small number of students in Texas.
Vouchers HARM public schools and the majority of students in Texas!
Even Mississippi is doing better than Texas with education! How embarrassing! Fund our schools!
Expand funding for schools to offset inflation, fully fund mandates, increase teacher pay and invest in our students and state.
School funding and outcomes directly impact our economy and our opportunity to bring more companies to Texas.
You could be responsible for destroying public education or taking education in Texas to a higher level benefiting every Texan.

Adam Guenther
Slef
Austin, TX

I do NOT support vouchers. You must find a way to fully fund strong public schools and not the Govs pet schools. Don't divert money to the wealthy over minorities and rural students. We should care about favorable outcomes for all of TXs children, not just the privileged few. This is not school choice is an upward wealth transfer.

Margaret Soderholtz
Self / teacher
MCFADDIN, TX

Public schools need more support not less. Rural school districts and low income districts struggle to find and retain staff. School vouchers would use tax payer money to pay for private education without any accountability.

Public schools must accept all students who reside in their district, they are required to follow the TEKS, students must take state assessments and their results are used to rate districts and schools.

Private schools get to select their students, they select their own curriculum and they are not required to take state assessments.

Lou Ann Montana, Ms.
Self/Retired
The Woodlands, TX

I do not support vouchers for private or home schooling. Those schools are not required to accept a given student and will not be assessed and held to the same standards as public schools. I believe tax dollars should go to funding public schools that are accountable to both local and state entities.

Shlomo Gallor, Mr.
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,
Please support school choice and education equality in Texas.
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.
Please 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.

Rebecca Moone
Self/Teacher
Ft Worth, TX

I am writing in regards to school vouchers. It is my firm belief, that using the available funds to fund school vouchers instead of funding public schools will negatively impact education in Texas. As a teacher, I spend hundreds of dollars every year to provide my students with basic supplies and materials to enhance curriculum. If Texas schools continue to be underfunded, the need for teachers to spend their own money, will only increase. This is not sustainable as eventually we, as teachers, will not have the funds to provide supplies for our students.

I, personally, believe that there is a need for private schools. My grandson attends a private school because it is a better fit for his needs. I do not, however, believe that taking money from public schools is what is best for the students in Texas. Yes, vouchers will help cover the cost of private schools.

I do not think that school vouchers will have the intended outcome. I believe that vouchers will help to increase the education gap that is present in the state now. Transportation to and from private schools must be provided/arranged by parents. A household in which both parents are working, may not be able to provide transportation. Students in those homes will need to attend public schools. Those schools need to have full funding to provide quality education.

Kristen Pereira
Self
Mckinney, TX

Vouchers are incredibly detrimental to students and teachers. They particularly negatively affect the most at risk student including ELL and rural students. Also, Texas is already facing a teacher shortage and this will continue if vouchers are implemented. MOST Texans have spoken on this issue and are NOT in favor, regardless of how the governor cherry picks data.

Judith Wyble
Self retired teacher
Spring, TX

Vouchers hurt public education. No accountability and no oversight! This will decimate public education !

Patrick Betik, MR
Self
Grapevine, TX

I support the right to choose public, private, charter, or home education. I support the distribution of educational funds in a manner that they follow the student to any school, whether public, private, charter, or home school through means of tax exemptions and/or credits.

Please legislate in favor of this initiative. Thank you!

Yvonne Buckley, Mrs
Self
San Antonio, TX

No woke indoctrination!

Debra Vaughan
Self
El Paso, TX

I am OPPOSED to ALL school vouchers and FULLY support public education as should YOU!

Alison Norman
self
Austin, TX

Please fund our public schools! Please do not create a voucher program---studies show those mostly support students already in private schools and decimate the public schools. I am against vouchers in any form.

Webb Murphy
self. Teacher/coach
San Saba, TX

Parents already have school choice. Everyone already has the opportunity to be educated. Fund and support public education to make what already exists better.

Allison Craig, Dr.
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Like many Texan parents, I am deeply opposed to any form of vouchers or educational credits as a means of funding for our public schools. These systems perpetuate inequality, especially for rural and disabled students, and actually endanger parents' ability to choose a quality, free education for their children. Please leave vouchers out of this special session of Congress and instead pursue bills that fully fund our public schools, including pay raises for teachers.

Michelle Hernandez
Self
Flower Mound, TX

We do not want vouchers - public education is a wonderful. Enrich public education. Enrich education for everyone. Equal Educational opportunity for all. Public Education allows all children to thrive and allows all children the opportunity to become productive members of society regardless of political or religious affiliation. Enrich public education by funding public education at the levels to cover at least inflation. You cannot complain about public education when you refuse to fund it.

James Craig
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Like many Texan parents, I am deeply opposed to any form of vouchers or educational credits as a means of funding for our public schools. These systems perpetuate inequality, especially for rural and disabled students, and actually endanger parents' ability to choose a quality, free education for their children. Please leave vouchers out of this special session of Congress and instead pursue bills that fully fund our public schools, including pay raises for teachers.

Michelle Lorio
Self, teacher
El Paso, TX

I urge you to vote against vouchers. They take much needed money from hard working public schools, teachers, and students who strive to meet standards set by the state of Texas. It moves money to charter and private schools who do not have to follow the same rules, regulations, and standards that public schools do. That is not right! Public schools must and do accept any and all students who come to enroll. Charter schools get to and often do choose to turn away under performing students and students who are behavior problems. They should not get taxpayer money to turn students away. Instead of changing standards to make it appear that schools are doing worse when they really aren't in an effort to try to make vouchers look necessary, explain the truth and keep taxpayer money in public schools which are fighting every day for all the student populations of Texas. Vote no to vouchers! Thank you.

Cindy Clayton, Ms.
Self
Houston, TX

Once again, the choice is before you: to fully fund our public schools, or to turn your back on these vital institutions in favor of for-profit, unaccountable private education businesses.

You know which is right, and which is a misuse of Texans' taxpayer dollars.

Teachers and students are relying on you to act in the public interest, to lift up Texas' public schools as they struggle under a lack of adequate funding. Resist the pressure to siphon money off to private-school profiteers--instead, work to increase the basic per-student allotment for public schools, raise teacher pay to keep educators in our state, and give school districts relief from so-called recapture.

Texas' future relies on your commitment to quality public education. Please do the right thing.

Courtney Hejl
Self/Teacher
Harlingen, TX

I am against vouchers. Teachers everywhere need a pay raise. The state of Texas is already struggling getting special education teachers vouchers will only make it worse.

Jessica Grady
Self, Graphic Designer and parent of 5th grader
Fort Worth, TX

I am deeply opposed to any form of vouchers or educational credits as a means of funding for our public schools. These systems perpetuate inequality, especially for rural and disabled students, and actually endanger parents' ability to choose a quality, free education for their children. Vouchers hurt our public schools and communities across the entire state of Texas. Public dollars should remain in public schools. Please leave vouchers out of this special session of Congress and instead pursue bills that fully fund our public schools, including pay raises for teachers.

Lisa Rayburn, Ms.

Teacher in Texas public education, 15 years

Alpine, TX

I feel there is no call for tact or diplomacy at this point...

****Fuck ANYONE who pushes vouchers in Texas right now.****

Fuck Greg Abbott. He has become the leader of a domestic terrorist organization. You are part of an organized crime syndicate if you support him and these voucher shenanigans. Fraud!!!

The State of Texas has a CONSTITUTIONAL DUTY to provide their citizen's children a quality PUBLIC EDUCATION.

What idiots/zealots/organized thieves have done to public education here is unbelievably short sighted and damaging. Democracies don't work without educated populations, people. GOP has only been in power BECAUSE they actively resist educating Texans- be it illegitimate culture wars, defunding public education, sneaky line drawing, and not supporting the MOST IMPORTANT PART OF EDUCATION- the buildings, the people, and the art, itself.

Greg Abbott and his appointees like Mike Morath are making life worse for the general population. We don't need three STAAR tests a year- we need pencils and paper. We need aides and building repairs!

Public schools matter. Education (not indoctrination) matters. Literacy and basic math reasoning skills MATTER.

I am sending this from a cushy hotel in Austin and get this- it's on Pearson's dime! I can't get a decent raise or quality healthcare but these mega-educorps get bazillions of Texans dollars. Why? I'm looking at you, Pearson, Carnegie, Eureka, Amplify, and many more. These are cults and they are stealing money and opportunities from Texans.

Vouchers will be THE EXACT SAME. It may SOUND GOOD but it is NOT GOOD for our state- for our people.

You want healthy, happy, smart and capable kids? Listen to your teachers.

DO NOT COMMIT OUR HARD EARNED MONEY, COLLECTED FOR CHILDREN, TO PRIVATE ENTITIES.

It's wrong. It's immoral. It's repugnant.

And I AM WATCHING.

Properly fund our schools, dammit. Serve YOUR constituents- not lobbyists and non-teaching CEOs. THEY ARE PARASITES. Increase per-student allowances to \$15k, based on enrollment. Increase base pay for teachers to \$75k. Cover the costs of our benefits and make moves to protect us from burn out. We are your #1 resource against chaos. Help us help you! Limit class sizes to 15 in elem and 25 in secondary, counting at-risk at 1.5x. No teacher should be responsible for over 100 souls in a given day. We are NOT YOUR SLAVES. Pay us and treat us with respect.

Be the change, people. Take your damned hands off the throat of public education.

Stand up for what is right and good.

NOW.

TOMORROW.

AND SEPTEMBER!

It's time for some CONVICTIONS at the state level!

Francesca Romans

Self

Leander, TX

I write to you today as a parent and as a Texas resident concerned about the unconscionable lack of support for our public schools. While I was only allowed to choose one, my comments will apply to each of the three stated goals of this committee. First, I'd like to thank those of you who have been fighting for our public schools by rejecting vouchers/ESAs, by supporting our educators and recognizing their professionalism, and by advocating for full funding. It's been an incredibly difficult few years for education and your support is appreciated.

My husband and I are the products of Round Rock ISD and Austin ISD, respectively. Our educations - which began in Texas public schools - afforded us the life we now share. Both of my children - one designated special education and one designated Gifted/Talented - are fortunate to attend schools in Leander ISD. I mention their designations because if we were to go to a Charter or Private school, those same designations could be used to deny them admission to those schools because those schools are not required to admit students like mine. The public schools they currently attend, however, go above and beyond every single day to make sure my children receive a quality education. As I've said to this body before, I've watched my children's educators do incredible things in the face of insufficient funding and horrible, disgusting attacks on their character and their abilities. To see many of these attacks coming directly from our Texas Legislature has been beyond disheartening. To watch the representatives that should be supporting our public schools try to harm them instead is frustrating and sad. The teachers under attack are responsible for educating over 5 million Texas children who will be the future leaders of not only our state, but others. Education serves as the foundation for every other profession; it serves as the foundation of our democracy. It is mind-boggling that my children's teachers and administrators have to beg for leaders to support them. It makes no sense.

Texas teachers have been telling this body for years what they need - full funding, an accurate accountability system designed by actual educators, special education reform, a significant pay raise, and respect, among other things. This Legislature has the power to make Texas a leader in education, but instead, we concentrate on culture war-based laws that serve no purpose other than to keep us at the bottom. During these special sessions, I ask that you please start listening to the educators. Please give them the respect and pay they deserve. Please fully fund our schools like the vital institutions that they are. I am proud to be the product of Texas public schools, and hope that my children have the opportunity to say the same, but that will be impossible if the Legislature refuses to show up for our children in the same way that their educators do.

Josh Mauldin

Self, architect and parent of 5th grader

Fort Worth, TX

I am deeply opposed to any form of vouchers or educational credits as a means of funding for our public schools. These systems perpetuate inequality, especially for rural and disabled students, and actually endanger parents' ability to choose a quality, free education for their children. Vouchers hurt our public schools and communities across the entire state of Texas. Public dollars should remain in public schools. Please leave vouchers out of this special session of Congress and instead pursue bills that fully fund our public schools, including pay raises for teachers.

Elizabeth Paulette

self

New Braunfels, TX

Education Committee,

I urge you to give all Texas children more opportunities for a better education. The damage students suffered when schools were closed during the pandemic is insurmountable. Parents need options besides public schools. My daughter graduated from a charter school and it was the best choice for her, but my son went to a public high school and he enjoyed that experience. Today, fortunately, parents have more options for their children and passing a school voucher bill/amendment would continue to expand these choices of a quality education. School vouchers will give families more options while being able to stay close to home. Texas currently has public schools, charter schools and online schools that are partnering with universities, so adding school vouchers will give families yet another opportunity for their children to have a quality education.

Sharon Kinnison

Self

Fulshear, TX

Texans have repeatedly stated that we do NOT want private school vouchers. This bill will hurt lower and middle class students while funneling more money to our wealthiest citizens. The fact that certain politicians chose to pander school choice to rural citizens who would never have access to private schools is sickening. They will stop at nothing to promote private schools who can legally discriminate against many students while robbing most Texas students of tax dollars. How many times do Texans need to say NO to this scheme? We do NOT want vouchers. Stop trying to sacrifice our children for the sake of your political pulpit.

Nelda Turner

Self

Lubbock, TX

I am in favor of school choice .

Herman Mayberry

Myself

Pearland, TX

No vouchers

Sarah Edwards

self

Weatherford, TX

no to vouchers. Our own legislature, that funds and runs our public schools don't believe in it? Fund it properly and run it without testing, like at private schools.

Maggie Stern, Youth Engagement Manager
Children's Defense Fund of Texas
Austin, TX

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.

Texas needs to implement several policies to provide a quality and equitable education to all students, including:

- Fully funding public schools;
- Addressing the teacher and librarian shortage; and
- Ensuring valuable resources like books remain in classrooms and libraries.

Fully Funding Public Schools: 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.

Increasing Teacher Pay and Supports: High teacher turnover and teacher vacancies across Texas create unstable classroom environments, undermine trust between students and educators, and depress student achievement rates. The TEA has recommended more competitive wages and comprehensive benefits for educators. We echo these sentiments and recognize that supporting our educators is fundamental to a quality education. Teacher pay must not be held hostage to political gamesmanship. Texas must support our educators and staff with pay raises as well as additional professional development and mental health supports.

Supporting the right to read in public schools: The freedom to obtain a quality education requires the freedom to read. Yet Texas led the nation in banning books. Seven Texas districts banned 438 books in the last six months of 2022 alone, according to PEN America, with bans disproportionately targeting students in the LGBTQ+ community and students of color. Students already have limited access to resources that address issues like sexual assault and abuse, sexual health and wellbeing, and racism. These bans restrict those crucial resources even further, keeping students from often life-saving literature. All students deserve to see their stories reflected in their schools to promote literacy, free expression, and empathy.

Sarah Edwards
self
Weatherford, TX

No to vouchers. Fund our public schools properly and show that you believe in them. Make them as rigorous as private schools so that the only reason one would want to go to a private school is for religious reasons.

Jennifer Turner
Self - educator and parent
Humble, TX

I do not support vouchers, ESRs or any other name given to the idea of using public funds for private matters. Based on evidence from other states that have implemented programs that do this, vouchers will not help the students they are being touted to support and will only hurt students who are utilizing the public education system since it will remove valuable resources from public schools.

Sarah Ickovitz
Starr Family Jewish Day School
San Antonio, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,
Please support school choice and education equality in Texas.
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.
Please 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.
This would mean so much for our community!

Randle Moore
Self
Windcrest, TX

I do not support school vouchers. It is completely unacceptable to expect public school districts to expand services while withdrawing funds with which to operate.

Hillary Hickland
self
Belton, TX

Education is not a one-size-fits-all. Texas parents deserve the final say in the education their children receive, regardless of financial status. Many other states afford their citizens this liberty to the benefit of their students and taxpayers. Studies show the benefits are positive across the board, even for public schools. Please, when it comes to educating Texas children, choose families and not district employees.

Renota Rogers, Dr.
self, educator
Temple, TX

I am writing to express my opposition to the passage of any voucher legislation and ask you to do the same. The communication by some government officials regarding this topic has been misleading and deceptive in some cases, and it has taken away focus on the needs of public education, which the constitution charges to your responsibility. I am appreciative of all who have done the right thing, even at cost, and I implore all others to do the same.

Angela Groves
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Educators have not had appropriate state support to complete the already heavy mandates. So when we fail ... it's because our government has failed us .

I request

*No public tax dollars to private schools

*Give Educators the raise every candidate talks about during election season. We will be crossing party lines to get rid of those who are unfriendly to public education...

And note ... 28 days my campus spent on testing ... almost a full six weeks grading cycle .

You'll be in my prayers for the Lord to make your heart heavy until you do right by Educators and Students

Mary Jane Hetrick, Dr.
Self; school board trustee and performance measurement consultant
Austin, TX

As a sitting school board trustee, I have seen our expenses escalate due to the same inflation we have all experienced in recent years as well as costs associated with both legislative and parental demands. We operate under countless laws and regulations and it is not fair to compare public schools with private counterparts who are not subject to the same regulations. Vouchers/ESAs will hurt public schools and students, not to mention that parents lose rights and the protections of IDEA if they move their special needs child to a private school. Private and religious schools do not have the same level of accountability to the state as public schools do. How is it fair to allow private schools to receive taxpayer money without having to comply with the same curriculum or fiscal requirements as public schools? Adding insult to injury is the notion that private schools will do a "better" job of educating students, while not having to abide by the same rules. This is analogous to asking athletes to compete against each other with very different rules of the game, such as allowing one team to get three strikes per batter and the other team is allowed one strike per batter.

Dawn Pierce
Self
Nacogdoches, TX

Public tax money should be used to fund public schools, not for private school tuition or religious institutions. Privatization schemes are detrimental to public schools and to education in general, all that is needed is to look to our neighbor Louisiana and see how privatization was a failure. It served to further marginalize economically disadvantaged students and gutted the working conditions for hard working educators. As a parent of two Texas school children, I have seen first hand that private school isn't always better. My daughter suffered horribly at a highly recommended private school for a year before we moved her to public school where she has thrived. Private schools do not have to answer to TEA and there will be no oversight to ensure that public money is being used to adequately educate our children. Furthermore, diverting funds to private schools is just a way for the state to save money on education because a voucher is likely less than what it would cost to fund a child at public school. You are asking parents to pick up that added cost for a service that the Texas constitution already supposedly guarantees. The only people who will be able to benefit are those who already have the means to send their children to private school, a tax break on the rich. Fund public schools; do not line the pockets of the wealthy and the education privatizers.

Natalie Weston, Dr.
None
Austin, TX

As a lifetime Texas resident, Pediatrician, and an individual who obtained every level of their education through the public school system, I would like to remind the committee that Texans have already spoken about education vouchers. Texans are opposed to vouchers in all forms and strongly support fully funding our public schools. Stop wasting time trying to find thinly veiled ways to keep the poor uneducated and instead pay educators a living wage. This is ridiculous.

Thelma Collinsworth
Self teacher
Hewitt, TX

Support our public school teachers by voting NO to vouchers and yes to an across the board pay raise for ALL Texas teachers. Thank you for your support.

Chris Bray
Training Pros, INC.
Killeen, TX

The money assigned to a student should follow the student to the school they choose. This will create competition in our school system, help eliminate the complacent educators, and prevent students from falling behind should another COVID-type pandemic strike. This is ALL common sense, and should be a no-brainer.

Melanie Jackson
Self
Richardson, TX

I'm a mom who has 3 kids in public schools. I am active in PTA and on their campuses. I believe in public schools. Every child in Texas needs educational opportunity, and we already have a fantastic system of public schools that are in communities and countless neighborhoods. We don't need another system, we need to fund and improve the one we already have. Vouchers to allow kids "out of the system" is absurd. There are too many hurdles beyond getting accepted to a private school to count. We don't need more charter schools that experiment and do things that public schools can do. Instead, we need to fully fund and make sure every public school is not just supported but given the tools to succeed. Let's come together and work on the opportunities and improve those that are already there. Fund and give our schools more of a chance than they've been given in the past decade. I truly feel this will give Texas the access to education that we all desire.

Tonia Grubbs, Ms.
Self, teacher
Denton, TX

I want to start off by saying that I have been an education 24 years, and I have loved it with all my heart, however, the last few years have been very difficult with student behavior, and the lack of teacher raises, bonuses, and the lack of veteran teachers making more money than the new teachers coming out. To me that is a slap in the face! I truly believe that, instead of taking out vouchers and money away from the public education system, you should use that money towards teacher, raises and incentives!!

Megan Gaskins
Self, Conroe ISD Teacher
Conroe, TX

No to vouchers! Please stop trying to tie this in with other bills. The public has spoken. We don't want them. Give teachers the raise we deserve. Abbott and Morath put a committee together to figure out a way to retain teachers this past year. Pay was a huge factor. We have a record surplus this year and teachers take the backseat? How does this make sense?

Catherine Allen
Texas PTA
Beaumont, TX

Public School Funding System

Pursue legislation that raises the basic allotment and automatically adjusts it with the cost of living, funds public education based on enrollment versus attendance, increases funding for full-day kindergarten, and improves ballot language for school district propositions.

Vouchers

Oppose legislation that authorizes state funds to be used to pay for private school tuition and related costs.

Teacher and Staff Shortage and Retention

Pursue legislation that addresses teacher and staff shortages and improves retention

Student Mental Health

Pursue mental health legislation, including systems to identify students in need of intervention, and programs and services designed to help

keep students mentally strong and prepared to cope with personal challenge

A-F Accountability System

Pursue legislation impacting the state's A-F system. Advocate for an accountability system that more broadly reviews school performance

and includes a family engagement component.

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Debra Pryor
Self
Henrietta, TX

We need a raise, not vouchers. If you want to retain teachers, they need to feel appreciated. Most teachers have masters and some have a doctorate degrees. We are willing to put up with all the bureaucracy in order to educate children.

Jo Sugg
Self
Gatesville, TX

Please strengthen public education with funds. Increase the power of TEA to oversee the problem areas in education. No vouchers please. Thank you.

Mike Johnson
Self, teacher
North Richland Hills, TX

Please vote no on vouchers. They have given them a new name, but it is the same idea. Public schools get money with strings attached. Vouchers give money with no strings. This is not giving public schools a fair shake. I heard one superintendent say he'd like to see private schools even try to just follow all the rules we have relating to the cafeteria. Don't give in to the Governor on this one. He's wrong. He has no idea what he is talking about. Public schools need you to be strong and stand against those who want to destroy public education.

Barbara A Redenius
south waco elem. teacher
Moody, TX

Please note that as a teacher I am opposed to vouchers in all forms and strongly support fully funding our public school, please keep the money in our public schools and fund these schools.

Rita Santillan Perez
Self
McAllen, TX

Higher pay for educators, counselors, paraprofessionals, administrators, etc

Kellye Pritchard McGarry
self
Richardson, TX

RISD Graduate Profile - 75080

Krista Whitten
My self
Canyon, TX

I wish this whole freedom of education was dropped because it is a bunch of whoha! I am tired of hearing about freedom of choice/vouchers. I do not want any of my tax dollars or anyone else being put towards this voucher program. The tax money is put into place to fund the public school system. The private sectors are not mandated to follow any requirements to show learning progress, state standards TEKS, state testing, no accountable at all. They can and do teach whatever they want. They require church every morning, bible lessons and students to even preach lessons for a grade. This is only one thing that told by a student who had left the private sector to come to a public school because the credits he was receiving there would not match the credits in public school to get into the college he wants to attend after high school. The parents have no control on what is taught, how it is taught because the private sector makes all the decisions. My question is, would you like to have your pay raise attached to something that no one wants? Shouldn't you be worrying about the border crisis, drugs coming in our state, the power grid, etc. Use your time wisely and drop the voucher thing/freedom of choice because the ones that are in the sector can already pay the fees/tuition.

Kellye Pritchard McGarry
self
Richardson, TX

see tax compliance and employment practices at https://www.bing.com/maps?&mepi=0~~Unknown~Address_Link&ty=18&q=Pearce%20High%20School&ss=ypid.YN873x15869126188196187709&ppois=32.97258758544922_-96.76604461669922_Pearce%20High%20School_YN873x15869126188196187709~&cp=32.972588~-96.766045&v=2&sV=1

Martha Jennings
Sef
Texarkana, TX

I DO NOT support the use of public tax dollars to provide funding for private schools. I feel that public money should never be used to fund private institutions that have no or limited public oversight.

TERESA MARTINI
Self
Dallas, TX

Every student in Texas should be able to attend a quality public school. In order for these students to succeed, they need to have access to a public school that is well funded with teachers who are paid a livable wage and supported by their administrators, parents, and the state of Texas. This can be achieved by giving some of that surplus to the public schools to help cover the inflation that has accrued over the 4 years since the last increase in public school funding. Any voucher or ESA system will only cost the state more money and mostly only benefit those students currently in private schools. Texas has already spoken through our House Representatives and said no to vouchers. Focus on public school funding instead.

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Sarah Rivlin, Ms.

Self - teacher

Houston, TX

Texas is already underfunding its public schools more than almost every other state. Why do we support our world-class universities but completely neglect our K-12 schools? Do we want only non-Texas residents or private school kids to be able to succeed in Texas universities?

I am a teacher, and my school is completely understaffed, and we lose more teachers every year due to budget cuts. I don't know how we can continue to sustain this. Vouchers would destroy us.

Vouchers will not help my kids. The average private school in my area costs \$15,413. Private schools don't have to provide transportation or ESL services or special education services. And yet they have twice as much money per pupil as public schools have to work with.

Instead of taking money away from our heroic public schools, provide us with adequate funding and see what we can do.

Ana Galdamez

Self

Katy, TX

Anything outside of subject education should be avoided at all times. Whatever philosophy that is biased or one sided is incorrect. Please stop teaching children an agenda towards pedophiling! or being ok with transgender reading a story to children. Enough is enough! Keep it out of schools!

Sherri Kain, Mrs.

self

Arp, TX

Good Evening,

This August begins my 34th year as a public educator. I love making a difference in the lives of kids. The problem I have with vouchers is the requirements for private schools are not equal to public. I believe all should have the same standards and mandates. I would like to have a cost of living raise. In the last 3 years, teaching has changed and children have changed. I will continue being the instructor, nurse, counselor, mama, and educator that I have been for 33 years. I have asked numerous representatives and Governor Abbott to come visit my 5th Grade science classes and experience public school. Thanks for considering the big picture and the number of students who need strong public schools to help them grow a successful future.

Regards,

Sherri Kain

Arp ISD

Terri Stretcher
Self/School Counselor
Jacksboro, TX

Texas public schools exist to provide a quality education for all children in the state. Schools are forced to overcome many obstacles in their efforts to educate ALL children. These obstacles include, and are not limited to, financial constraints, societal restrictions, and the fact that public schools make an effort to educate all students, not just those that come from privileged. School vouchers would take valuable resources from the public schools and redirect them to private schools that do not need the money, are not subject to the same rules and regulations that govern public schools, and have the ability to simply refuse to educate any student that would place an economic or educational burden on the private school. Public funds should be used to strictly educate students in the schools that are established to serve all students, and this money should not be available to be used for private schools. The efforts of the Texas Legislature would be better served by providing appropriate financial support, as well as more public support, for the institutions which they have a Constitutional responsibility to establish and maintain. Adequate backing from the Legislature would strength the public school system reducing the temptation for parents to seek out private schools.

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Self/School Counselor
Jacksboro, TX

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Lisa Stone
self/educator
Houston, TX

I join all those Texans who are opposed to vouchers in all forms; I strongly support fully funding our public schools. Please use our taxes to provide PUBLIC education, for the benefit of individual students and our state's future.

Laurie Alexander
self- Human Resources
Cypress, TX

Our Texas public schools are already criminally underfunded, allowing even \$1 to be reallocated to ANY school voucher program is the wrong choice for Texas. If parents choose to take their children into private education they should be made to pay for that education. Allowing taxpayers to fund private education is a gross misuse of taxpayer dollars,; as there is no required state oversight of education programs and curriculum, no required state testing and no requirement for special education services these private schools should not be allowed access to tax dollars. If they wish to be granted access to tax dollars they should be held to the same state standards.

I have two students currently attending Texas public schools and hope our elected officials prioritize their education over political agendas. Vouchers are bed for Texas.

Jennifer Rinker
TCTA
Perryton, TX

Dear House Committee,

My husband and I have taught in Texas public schools for a combined fifty years. We've also had the privilege to teach in private international schools. We have taught in small rural schools from 2A up to recently teaching a 6A district. We've taught and worked with a variety of parents and students. The reality of vouchers is a nightmare for public education. Instead of trying to "close the gaps" among students of diverse backgrounds, it will only widen the gaps.

My husband and I have taught students who have been at private schools or homeschool. In a few areas, these students may perform better than their peers. Unfortunately, in areas of math, reading, and writing, these students are often 1-3 years behind public school students. There are few guidelines for private schools. They often hire uncertified teachers with little to no training. In rural areas, it is even more evident. We have recently returned to a small 4A rural school. There are two small Christian schools that have opened in the past ten years. When looking at the public school data versus the growth of these schools is "white flight". It's under the guise of having a Christian education, but almost the entire population of the schools is white. These are families can afford to send their children to essentially a segregated school.

Now our state legislature wants to pull money earmarked for public schools to give to these schools and families. Texas has ranked 42nd in per capita spending per student. In February, the Texas Tribune reported, "The state gives schools a base amount of \$6,160 per student, which has not increased since 2019." This means that you, as a state legislature, have refused to add any additional funds to public schools over the past two sessions. With a huge budget surplus, despite record-breaking inflation, you, as a committee, are deciding how much to add to public schools or to find a way to lessen the amount allotted per student. The tax rate has now been lowered for public schools. And yet, no additional funds have been allocated to fill the gap schools will lose to ease the property taxes.

Please use research and discernment when deciding if a voucher system the best solution for our public schools. Are you bowing down to get votes from only the upper middle class, or are you really looking for ways to fund our schools. We have great teachers and strong schools throughout Texas. Make sure the are properly funded to continue to grow.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Jennifer Rinker

Michael Hydak
Myself as a retired school district administrator
Austin, TX

Please oppose all vouchers.
Keep Texas public education public.
Church and state are separate.
Oppose all vouchers.

Aurora Bonifay
self teacher
San Antonio, TX

I am all for vouchers. Competition fosters excellence. I also am a public school teacher and we deserve raises. You do not realize the demands that are made of us. There is money available. Please compensate us. Also make it to where teachers can get their full Social Security that they worked for along with their full Teachers Retirement they worked for. Do not take our retirement away please.

Steven Begnoche

Self

Denton, TX

As a taxpaying citizen of Denton County TX, I am opposed to vouchers in all forms and strongly support fully funding our public schools.

Kathlyn McHenry, Director of State Government Relations

Early Care & Education Consortium

Austin, TX

The Early Care and Education Consortium (ECEC) is a non-profit alliance of the leading multi-state/multi-site child care providers, key state child care associations, and premier educational service providers, representing over 6,500 programs in 48 states. Here in Texas, our members operate more than 650 locations with current capacity to serve over 96,000 children, and employ around 10,000 educators and staff.

High-quality preschool is essential for children and families, is the underpinning for K-12 success, and is the foundation for a robust economy. In passing HB 3 in 2019, lawmakers clearly intended to ensure equal access to educational opportunity for young children from economically disadvantaged families and other higher-risk circumstances through Preschool Partnerships. Preschool Partnerships are structured to enable publicly-funded Pre-K slots to be provided in a range of settings - including high-quality community-based preschool programs - to ensure a wide array of providers can meet the diverse needs of Texas. Yet, preschool partnerships rarely happen in practice, leaving many families unserved.

Workforce issues continue to plague our businesses and our communities. Without access to high-quality, reliable child care, families are unable to fully participate in the workforce. When care for young children is offered only through public schools, many working families are left trying to piece together care outside of school hours and during school breaks. This lack of option means parents are often forced to leave the workforce. A recent U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation report found that a lack of reliable child care resulted in an estimated \$9.39 billion loss for the Texas economy.

Preschool Partnerships are the best and most effective way to maximize existing community-based expertise to support children, families, and the economy. Efforts to expand preschool should leverage this existing expertise and prior investment to maximize the number of families served. In North Carolina, for example, families at or below 75 percent of state median income and all military families have access to the state's diverse public Pre-K4 programs. According to the Bipartisan Policy Center, 48 percent of North Carolina's slots are in public schools, 38 percent are in center-based programs, and 14 percent are in Head Start programs.

Currently, Texas is under-utilizing its existing high-quality programs, credentialed teachers, and overall programmatic expertise, while families go unserved. The Legislature can and should incentivize school districts to participate in Preschool Partnerships, to ensure they work in practice and to bring the state closer to the preschool goals outlined in HB 3. By incentivizing partnerships between school districts and providers, Texas can expand access to high-quality, affordable, reliable preschool with minimal fiscal impact. We urge the Committee to consider options such as HB 2923 from the 88th Regular Session.

Maria Ines Trevino, Mrs.

Self

McAllen, TX

Please oppose to the approval of vouchers. Public Education needs your support.

Delaina Bishop

Parent of school age children in public schools

Austin, TX

Texans want proper funding for our public schools. Public schools support all Texas children in receiving a quality education, no matter their circumstances; giving all Texas children a fair chance for success in life. The state of Texas had an absurd amount of extra funds and pretty much none of it went to our Teachers and public schools. In fact, school districts like mine, will have to get even more creative and make cuts to be able to add funds for extra security measures the state just approved to require at public schools. No money to actually fully cover those costs was approved. This is just another way our state legislatures are trying to dismantle a fair and free education for all to its youngest constituents. Texans want a substantial teacher pay raise to account for growth and inflation. Teaching should be a top earning career- not many people are equipped to handle so many children and educate them all at once, Teachers are superstars and educate the Texans that will one day have to take care of the older generation, I know I couldn't do what they do. Treat them like the professionals they are. Another very important way to lessen the burden on children, teachers, and their parents and ensure success- is for the state to lower its mandated testing and accountability burden, yes, testing matters- but there are many measures Teachers use to monitor students growth, not just by teaching to a test. And finally, NO VOUCHERS or ESAs- NO PUBLIC or STATE FUNDS should ever be distributed to private schools, especially when they are not held to the same standards required of Public Schools! It boggles my mind that this is even being considered when most of the laws being written and heard is how Teachers and Public schools need a tighter leash and to be held even more accountable. Private schools can pick and choose who they accept, how is that good for children and Parent empowerment? Parents won't actually have a choice- the school admissions will! Your Voters will wake up and see the damage this will inevitably cause, please don't let our Governor bully you into a bad decision for ALL Texas children.

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Amy Lohse
Self
Temple, TX

My grandfather always said a deal is only good if it is good for both sides. We have yet to find the perfect school model in which all can thrive. Many children do well in the public school system, but some do not. We need options for these children. We should never sacrifice the good of some children for the good of others. We cannot thrive as a society unless we look out for everyone or at least let parents look out for their own children. Our child attends a new micro school where part of the learning is on an urban farm. He loves school and is learning so much. With the current levels of anxiety and self harm among our youth, I believe their mental health is at least as important as their academics. I have volunteered at the school, and I know the children. Many come from difficult backgrounds, far less sheltered than our child, yet the leadership at this school has fostered a space of kindness and respect, and these children are growing into who they are with purpose and beauty. This school, because it is catering to the marginalized, is struggling. Unless you are a private school seeking privileged families with deep pockets, it is a struggle to survive. Please help schools like this, because this helps our children and helps us all.

Kendra Camarena
My children
Houston, TX

Thank you for the work you do and thoughtful consideration of what is best for public education. Educators and parents, like myself, are all aware of the issues facing public education and some are an easy fix, while others are not.

Easy fixes would be:

- Fund public education. School districts across the state are pleading with you to properly fund their districts. For to long the state has burden local taxpayers with funding public education, it is time for the state to step up and pay its fair share.
- Increase teacher pay.
- Stop TEA from constantly changing the criterion. I have seen campuses and district consistently reach the goals of the state from TAKS to STAAR to STAAR 2.0. However, TEA is not acting in good faith. When a new test has been adopted, schools have always been provided a grace period until this year. To add insult to injury, the plans to retroactively apply the new criterion when district where not aware of this is absurd. Educators and students deserve better.
- Vote no on any voucher bills that will take state funding away from public schools as even our own state constitution describes that states obligation to public education. Not to mention, public schools serve ever child regardless of disabilities unlike private schools.
- Eliminate STAAR and move to a national norm referenced assessment.

Not so easy fixes:

The biggest constraint to learning is a child's experiences, usually outside of the classroom and school. It is the trauma they have endured, the lack of Pre-K education, food and shelter insecurities, unidentified student disabilities, and other contributing factors. If one is serious about improving education, then one begins to address these issues through specific resource funding for school psychologist and counselors, Pre-K 3 & 4 programs, community schools programs, and special education supports.

There is always room for improvement and you have the power to support public educators versus tear them down.

Cindy Nick
self- retired public educator
Tyler, TX

My message is very simple- public schools are not the best choice for every child in Texas and all parents should be empowered with the freedom to select the educational model that best fits their child. In addition, I believe the money allocated for education by taxpayer funds should follow the child in the form of Educational Savings Accounts.

I began my career as a Texas Public School teacher in 1981 and retired in 2019. I taught in both public and charter schools and most recently, a private Christian school.

While I continue to invest in making public schools better, I do not believe public schools are the best choice for all students. My oldest son, Cameron was intrinsically motivated and craved a setting that was academically challenging, highly structured and would ultimately lead him to a career as an anesthesiologist in the USAF. At the time, the public middle school in our neighborhood was academically failing while struggling to maintain discipline and quality teachers. My husband and I made the decision to send our son to a private middle school. While we certainly had the freedom to choose private school, it was financially difficult at the time. As a middle income family, we did not qualify for financial assistance or scholarships so we worked extra jobs and did what it took to pay the tuition.

While Cameron thrived in private school, my youngest son Chase, who was gifted in art and music longed for a different educational setting that valued his own creativity and encouraged innovation and self-expression. I watched with frustration as Chase tried to fit into a traditional academic model that was counterproductive to how he intuitively learned. Because we did not fully understand his educational needs, he often felt academically inferior and struggled immensely with his self-esteem. Chase began to hate school. He needed options we could not provide. Chase eventually achieved his dream of becoming a graphic designer, however, looking back, I now realize that I did not fully understand the scope and magnitude of his academic struggles or the effects that a “one size fits all” approach to education had on him. Contrary to what some might say, this is not a battle between public and private schools or even homeschool. This is about what is best for Texas kids. ALL Texas kids.

In closing, I am asking this committee to boldly put aside the misconception that a vibrant public school system cannot co-exist alongside educational freedom. I believe it can and I believe it will. And when it does- Texas kids will win.

Margarita Brashear
Self-speech language pathologist
Brownsville, TX

I am opposed to vouchers in all forms and strongly support fully funding our public schools.

Janet Machen, Ms
Self, retired Tx public school teacher
Lampasas, TX

Texas public school teachers need a well deserved, long overdue raise with less testing & NO VOUCHERS!

Pretty sure our Constitution says “free public education” - not bend over backwards to satisfy campaign contributors & our governor & lieutenant governor!

Sharon Allmon
I am a grandparent
Lorenzo, TX

I am a teacher and I support school choice. Please support the bill for school choice and give Texas children the best education possible. Thank you for all you do for us.

Stephanie Scheffel
Self, public school employee
Buda, TX

Members of the committee,

I am a public school employee, working with special education students ages 3-22 in the Austin area. I urge the committee to reject any consideration of vouchers and to fully fund our public schools. Texas public schools rank near the bottom of per student funding, and our students deserve better. As a public school employee, I see my teacher colleagues (and myself) pour not only our own money but also countless hours of time and energy outside of our contract hours into making school a welcoming place for all students and a place where they can learn and grow into informed, responsible young adults. Please reject any measure that cuts off funding for our schools or prioritizes the needs of a few students over the needs of the vast majority in the public schools. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Robyn Cantara
Teacher
Houston, TX

In this teacher shortage schools the state does not need to defund public education by giving rich people vouchers. Instead give public school teachers raises to keep public teachers in the classroom and incentivize new teachers to come to the classroom.

Alejandra Dawson
Self-Logistics support clerk
Houston, TX

I would like to be able to pull my children out of school and get vouchers to send them somewhere where the education is better. I don't understand why the vouchers keep getting turned down. If the education institutions are failing our children why are we still funding them? If they do well, then they have nothing to worry about. After all the money follows the child. Please listen to Greg Abbott, the democrats have been a constant disappointment. They're more worried about inclusivity, and gender ideology, than they are with well rounded education. Just look at how bad things went with Houston ISD.

Katherine Lehmann
Self
HOUSTON, TX

No vouchers! Fund the public schools!

Robyn Carafiol, Ms.
Self - Real Estate Agent
Dallas, TX

I am writing in support of fully funded public education in Texas. Children have the right to a good education no matter where they are born in Texas and no matter who their parents are. Taking money away from public schools and giving it to private schools is just plain wrong. You wouldn't take public tax dollars and create a private park or private country club! It's no different. Public tax dollars are for public schools. All children in Texas have the right to obtain a quality education. Say NO to vouchers.

Noemi Lopez
Self- teacher
Houston, TX

All funding should go to supporting neighborhood public schools. Private institutions are great for those wanting a religious education. Public schools are doing the best they can with very little funding and vouchers continue to take more funding away from the public school system. If it's a choice to attend private school, parents should find that solely themselves because they are CHOOSING to do so. ALL funding should go towards funding public school so that public schools have what they need to educate and support all students for free while providing the best education possible. Taking funds away makes that difficult and says that public education is not important.

Amy Russo
self - Human Resources Manager
Tyler, TX

My daughter and husband turned down an opportunity for advancement in his career because of where they would have to put their children in school. They can't afford private education and they are concerned about the indoctrination of inappropriate content within their children's classroom, my 9 year old grandson and 6 year old granddaughter's. This is personal and hits home your daughter and son-in-law have to decide on a promotion and better economics for their family in the midst of recession versus the effect that an ill-rated school system will have on their James and Maddox's healthy mental growth and development in school.

I am concerned about the lack of focus on the basics in our education system. Did you know TEA found that only 19% of our public school curriculum is on grade level? Sounds like a crisis of low expectations. Combining that with too many schools are indoctrinating students or exposing them to inappropriate content, and we have a recipe of failure for our next generation of Texans. Parents need the ability to leave their government mandated schools if necessary to help protect their children from hostile ideology or to help ensure their children have better academic opportunities. The only way to do this is to give parents access to Education Savings Accounts, which would ensure that every parent can send their children to the school of their choice – public or private schools. Please stand with me, and with parents across Texas, and please empower parents with ESAs!

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Rebecca Calzada
Self-District Library Coordinator
Leander, TX

I do not support the use of vouchers; public funds need to stay within our public schools. School vouchers will hurt our smaller, rural school districts significantly. School vouchers will impact minority students and families negatively as the vouchers will not fully fund 100% of costs. Our public schools instead need fund increases to support the daily rising costs to run schools and to pay our hardest working professionals, our school teachers, librarians, and administrators.

Brad Wilson
self
Tomball, TX

Fully fund Texas public schools and stop trying to subsidize private education. Private school vouchers will disadvantage Texas residents by eliminating resources much needed by our public-school students and will line the pockets of private school shareholders.

Michele Beard
Self
Richmond, TX

It's time to fully fund our public schools. Base the per student allotment on enrollment not attendance. The majority of Texans are against school vouchers. Do not use our tax money for vouchers of any kind.

Joel Enge
Kingdom Life Academy
Tyler, TX

I support education savings accounts for all students. Parents of K-12 students should have the right to choose the educational system that is best for their child. Thirdly, the money must follow the child to assure that the child's educational needs are met. I have 16 years of teaching experience in Title 1 schools of Tyler, Texas where the percentage of minority students ranged from 95-98% with the majority being second language learners. I witnessed many students with learning challenges fall farther and farther behind each year, only to eventually drop out. Since I live in the school community of North Tyler, I encounter many of them as adults and I hear the stories of their failure. In 2013, the Lord Jesus led me to start Kingdom Life Academy, a private Christian school that provides experiential learning for at-risk students from low income families in my community. Maintaining a 6-1 student/teacher ratio, Kingdom Life Academy focuses on the success of struggling students. KLA graduates that were enrolled in the Tyler Junior College Dual Credit Program have a 100% completion rate. With other graduates now serving in the U.S. military and in trades industries, the success of KLA provides evidence of the importance of parent's right to choose an alternative educational program that best meets the needs of their child. Education savings account will provide choice for all parents for their students as the money follows the child.

Moshe Naparstek, Rabbi
self/Rabbi
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,

Please support school choice and education equality in Texas.

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.

Please 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. I appreciate your consideration and thank you in advance.

Matt Brewer
Self, Secondary Public School Teacher
Commerce, TX

I urge you not to support school vouchers in any form. The State had an unprecedented surplus and did not provide additional funding for Texas' public schools. I have been a secondary public school teacher for ten years. Even if my students had access to savings accounts, vouchers, or whatever else you want to call them, almost all of them would not be able to attend another school. In rural Northeast Texas where I teach, there are not enough charter or private schools to serve all students. Vouchers would just benefit more affluent families in rural areas who can afford to transport their students many, many miles for school each day and students in urban areas. Most rural students would not have "school choice."

Removing funding from rural districts through any form of vouchers would decimate rural communities. Many people, including myself, love living in small town Texas. I teach in the district that educated me, and I am very proud of the fact that I am serving my community and, hopefully, making a difference. School districts form the backbone of many rural communities. They provide connection for citizens and often are the largest employer. In my hometown, our largest employers are a public university, the school district, and Walmart. The public university and school district provide many jobs for our residents, with or without college degrees.

Rural school districts need more funding, not less. Teachers have not gotten raises to our state base pay in years, despite rising inflation that has contributed to the unprecedented surplus. School districts are not just teachers. Our support staff need raises. Many of them work very hard but make very little. The State has recently made the STAAR harder and put more expectation on schools to help recover student learning after COVID. We need more resources if we're expected to meet these challenges. If you're really serious about helping Texas students, start by investing more into public schools that serve ALL students.

Thank you.

CASSANDRA MORRIS
self
MESQUITE, TX

I'm in support of fully funded public schools. I am against any form of vouchers, education savings account, or parent empowerment.

Lisa Kruger, Mrs
I am a tax payer!
Point, TX

We Texans deserve school choice for all children.

Rocky Kruger, Mr
Tax payer and concerned citizen.
Point, TX

Our children deserve the best education possible.

Gina Williams, Mrs.
Self
San Antonio, TX

This message is in reference to potential school vouchers for private school. As a public school educator and parent, I strongly oppose these vouchers. It is an attempt to defund public schools. In states that have okayed vouchers, the number of students entering the private school market did not increase much. Rather what happened was students already enrolled in private schools received a substantial discount. Currently enrolled public school students did not use them use them because they didn't cover enough of the costs. Charter schools have already substantially injured traditional public schools without much benefit to students and the community. Vouchers would be so much worse. Use this money to fully fund traditional public schools who serve all children regardless. Dismantling traditional public schools by stealing funding could be the death knell for democracy in our state. I ask you to look in the mirror and ask yourself who you represent. All children in the state? Or the special interests of a small group of parents. You know the right answer, so please vote accordingly.

Latisha Campbell
Self
Mount Vernon, TX

Vouchers will hurt rural schools and the poor and at risk students who most need our support. Vouchers are not democratic.

Natasha Moser
Self
Farmers Branch, TX

As a parent of children that attend Texas public schools I am adamantly against any proposal that would take money away from my childrens education. Vouchers do not work. They only contribute to the continuing division of our schools by the wealthy and the not wealthy. By defunding the public schools and not educating the poor and immigrant children we are only further contributing to higher crime rates in the near future. What we need is more opportunities for children to be educated not less! What about providing free public school lunch to all children. Free community college for two years so more high school grads can further their education and so have more job opportunities and at the same time we are strengthening Texas workforce. Please do not move forward with school vouchers for my children and so many other children in Texas that attend public schools

Ezzard Castillo, Mr
Self/Educator
Floresville, TX

As a legal immigrant who chose to serve this country, and had opportunities to pursue His dream I implore you to give Every child the right to be successful. Approve parental choice. My special needs daughter was told she would never be able to read but with special support and small classroom setting she was able to overcome and graduate to be a contributing member of society. My son who needed to be challenge was able to move ahead, graduate early, receive an appointment to the Naval Academy and is currently protecting this nation. These opportunities happened because as parents we did without and made sacrifices to give our children the private school education they needed to succeed. Parents not a union which has been failing Texas children for decades know what is the best education for their child. Give Texas parents real choice by passing parental educational choice.

Lyndalllll Waddy
Self
Mineral Wells, TX

I grew up in Mineral Wells and attended local schools through graduation. I have a Bachelor's degree in Business. I retired from Lockheed Missiles and Fire Control after 35 years. I am so concerned about public education today. I think the GOP, in particular, are doing everything possible to destroy public education. Our Texas Legislature MUST do everything possible to restore confidence in a public education system in Texas. First, our teachers must be recognized as the professionals they are. Teachers MUST be paid at least a living wage. Our public education system must be fully funded. When my husband and I retired, he drove a school bus for five years. Each legislator should drive a school bus for a couple of weeks ... why? to see the lack of support given to educators by parents. Parents, today, have no respect for school authority. And they pass this on to their children. I hear so many teachers say they are forced to teach to the STAAR Test. Curricula should be developed to ultimately give the student the ability to develop critical thinking and not just memorized facts to pass a test. Growing up, we had "achievement tests at the end of each year ... but there was no anxiety associated with the testing.

In summary, public education must be fully funded, with no monetary support of private schools, educators must be given the authority to teach without the interference of parents with agendas, and develop meaningful assessment tools.

Thank you.

Chelsey Brimer
Self/Recreation Therapist
AUSTIN, TX

Please, stop trying to pass vouchers. It is not what teachers, a majority of parents, or students want but for some reason it is being introduced yet again in our dysfunctional legislature. There was overwhelming support AGAINST vouchers no matter how it was spun during the legislative session earlier this year. Stop trying to pass vouchers and give teachers and school staff the raises that were promised during Gov. Abbott's campaign and during the 1 debate he participated in against the better choice for governor. Teachers and the rest of the school staff are the backbone of our society and they are not given the compensation they need or deserve. They deserve a monetary compensation that will keep them in the profession so our children can learn and thrive. PLEASE STOP WITH THE VOUCHER NONSENSE AND PROVIDE TEXANS WITH WHAT WE NEED TO SUCCEED-MORE MONEY IN OUR POCKETS.

Latisha Campbell
Self
Mount Vernon, TX

Better funding of public schools and better pay for educators increases opportunity and quality for everyone. Vouchers are not democratic. They will hurt rural schools and hurt students our most at risk students. Do not tie vouchers to increased pay for teachers.

Jill Mazza
Self
Belton, TX

I no longer have kids in K-12. My youngest daughter is an August 21 baby so her birthday was always on or around the first day of school. I wanted to send her to private school, after pre k, which we paid for full price. But with property taxes looming, we don't escrow, I could not afford \$4k to public school AND the same or more amount to private school. We were not on a position to make sacrifices and she has 2 brothers 8 years older than her, public school educated, so off she went to BISD. I strongly support education freedom in the great state of Texas! Unlike my spineless rep Shine.

Melissa Watson
self - Community -tax payer
Longview, TX

We need to fully fund public schools and not divide low funding that currently exists.

Dr. Alexander Harris
self
Spring, TX

Please immediately instruct Commissioner Mike Morath and SBOE members to restructure the TEKS by removing the teachings of the faith and beliefs of the religions of Atheism from our science classes and teach them in Social Studies. Currently the new Science Curriculum is being finalized and it is following the earlier path which we urgently need to stop this indoctrination under the guise of science, and we have a very short time to accomplish this!

Atheism is a philosophical school of thought, and the US Supreme Court in *Torcaso v. Watkins* (1961) agrees. Atheism hopes and believes that science someday will have the answers to the origins of the Universe and Life around us. Atheists have a constitutional right to practice their religious beliefs, however, the teaching of their faith and beliefs on,

1. Origin of the Universe
 2. Origin of Life and subsequent Darwin's Evolution by Natural Selection, which is the science of racism, CRT par excellence,
- under the guise of science in a public-school science class is unacceptable.

The major religious schools of philosophical thought can be uniquely classified into three distinct mutually exclusive classes – Monotheism, Monism and Atheism. These philosophical thoughts must be structured and taught under Major World religions in a Social Studies class. In Texas, our current TEKS and subsequent curriculum materials are promoting the faith and beliefs of the religions of Atheism in our cosmology and biology classes under the guise of science. This is a grievous violation of a student's constitutional right; however, this violation can be remedied by restructuring the teaching these TEKS of the faith and beliefs of the religions of Atheism in our Social Studies course under the study of the World Religions. Darwin's Evolution by Natural Selection, which is the science of racism, should also be included since it is part of the religion of Atheism.

Our nation was founded by men and women who believed in Our Creator who created all mankind Equal. Sadly, today we have pushed God out of our classrooms, replaced Him by teaching the faith and beliefs of the religions of Atheism in our classrooms under the guise of science, and racially segregated us!

Sincerely,
Alex

Regina Jones
44826
Cypress, TX

I am a Texas teacher aid who is opposed to all vouchers and I strongly support funding for our public schools. As a public servant for Special Ed p for the last six years, I have served my community well. We need public funding in our public schools!

Doris Marek
self
Temple, TX

I believe families should be free to send their children/grandchildren to private/church schools if so desired, even if they are unable to afford such schools, so as to provide the best learning environment without critical race theory.

Latisha Campbell
Self
Mount Vernon, TX

Vouchers will hurt rural schools. Vouchers will hurt at risk students. Vouchers will hurt qualified educators. Vouchers are undemocratic.
Respecting educators and funding public schools, especially new initiatives, increases opportunities and quality for all.

Ali Hendricksen
Self
Dallas, TX

Dear members of the committee,

I am concerned about the lack of focus on the basics in our education system. Did you know TEA found that only 19% of our public-school curriculum is on grade level? Sounds like a crisis of low expectations. Combining that with too many schools are indoctrinating students or exposing them to inappropriate content, and we have a recipe of failure for our next generation of Texans. Parents need the ability to leave their government mandated schools if necessary to help protect their children from hostile ideology or to help ensure their children have better academic opportunities. The only way to do this is to give parents access to Education Savings Accounts, which would ensure that every parent can send their children to the school of their choice – public or private schools. Please stand with me, and with parents across Texas, and please empower parents with ESAs!

Thank you,

Ali Hendricksen

Courtney Kinsey, Mrs.

Self

Gatesville, TX

As a lifelong Texan, a 25 year educator, and a public school parent I strongly oppose any form of voucher in which public tax dollars are used to pay for private school tuition. The solution to school problems is not to give up on them. There is much more at stake than an individual's preference for school choice. We're required to provide free compulsory education for all. It's one of the things that makes us The United States of America. We need an educated electorate and workforce. Taking money from public schools will not help achieve that. Allowing tax dollars to be used for students to attend sub-par, non-accredited schools is definitely not the way to achieve it. Public schools are the backbone of many rural and even urban communities. Taking money from them will force some to close thereby killing the community as well. Texas must decide to fully fund schools, pay teachers a salary they deserve, and protect and preserve the idea that we are a great state because we care about our fellow Texans. We want to be the greatest state in the country because we have the best schools and a well educated citizenry and workforce that can compete with any people anywhere! No vouchers!

Courtney Kinsey, Mrs.

Self

Gatesville, TX

As a lifelong Texan, a 25 year educator, and a public school parent I strongly oppose any form of voucher in which public tax dollars are used to pay for private school tuition. The solution to school problems is not to give up on them. There is much more at stake than an individual's preference for school choice. We're required to provide free compulsory education for all. It's one of the things that makes us The United States of America. We need an educated electorate and workforce. Taking money from public schools will not help achieve that. Allowing tax dollars to be used for students to attend sub-par, non-accredited schools is definitely not the way to achieve it. Public schools are the backbone of many rural and even urban communities. Taking money from them will force some to close thereby killing the community as well. Texas must decide to fully fund schools, pay teachers a salary they deserve, and protect and preserve the idea that we are a great state because we care about our fellow Texans. We want to be the greatest state in the country because we have the best schools and a well educated citizenry and workforce that can compete with any people anywhere! No vouchers!

Colin Shillinglaw

Self

Flint, TX

Thank you for taking the time to meet on this important topic. I oppose vouchers in any form. The reality is that schools will have choice, not parents or students. The focus should be on our public schools and not the few. I did go to a private school the majority of my K-12 education. It was my choice. To be honest. I would have probably received a better education at the public school as they had more opportunities for expanded classes. I am worried that students with special needs will not have the same opportunities that others may have. To give an example. I was at a middle school swim meet on a Saturday morning. Tyler ISD had a student that needed an aid for him at the starter stand to tell him when to go as he could not hear. Not sure that would happen at a private school but is mandatory at the public school. I would bet the school district had to pay her for those services. Please concentrate on providing meaningful funding. The state of TEXAS should not be 44th in funding for public schools. Our teachers have been abused by rhetoric coming from some politicians and is hurting moral. Please work with public schools to make them greater. It is one of your charter issues you must manage. Thank you.

Amby Clinkscale

Self--public educator

Cypress, TX

Equal educational opportunity means saying "NO!" to VOUCHERS. They divert funding from public schools to private schools. There is NO ACCOUNTABILITY NOR TRANSPARENCY ON THE USE OF THESE FUNDS WHICH IS OUR TAXPAYERS' DOLLARS.

Pam Tevis, Ms
Self
Dickinson, TX

There is no need for vouchers! Every child has the opportunity for a quality education in a public school setting. The average annual tuition for a private school is \$15,000-\$20,000 and the average cost for public education is \$6,000-\$7,000. Who is going to pay the difference? The only people who could afford to pay the difference are the ones who could pay the entire cost without taxpayer assistance. Vouchers would be more harmful to public education than it would be beneficial to those who could afford it. Shame on you for letting parents feel they can “choose” for their children to go to private schools strictly with a voucher. What you need to focus on is a better evaluation system for measuring student progress. It should be given back to local control. The amount of money and time being wasted on making sure students “pass the test” risks the rigor and relevance of a quality education! Again, shame on you! So many folks are profiting off these “standardized” test and districts are wasting lots and lots of money hiring master level teachers as testing coordinators ! I started out as a district administrator in 2002 working with maybe 10 instructional specialist and a supervisor. When I retired in 2017, there were close to 450 instructional specialist and content specialist as well as 4 curriculum directors all working to make sure students pass the test. None of these master level instructors had direct contact with students!! Instead of adding vouchers there needs to be a complete overhaul of how students, teachers, administrators, schools, and districts are evaluated. It needs to be at local control where parents have more input. I know it is probably easier to add vouchers than it is to do the hard work necessary to make much needed changes that would benefit everyone. You really need to gather the superintendents from all over the state and ask them how they would change the system. Rely on the experts in the field like all other successful enterprises do instead of allowing folks who don't know the inner workings of the educational system and have their own agendas!!

Lisa Cox
LARW
Shallowater, TX

Please make all Texas families eligible for school choice.

Lisa Chambers
Educators
Dublin, TX

FULLY FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS!!!! OUR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS DESERVE IT!!!!

Jessica Duncan
Self
Joshua, TX

Everyone should be allowed to obtain a quality education either in the public school or at home. Parents know their own children better than any one or anything else. Parents should have the freedom and the resources to choose if home school is a better option with out repercussions from the public schools. Grants should be allowed to families who choose homeschool or who are struggling to provide the resources necessary to get their children educated. Special attention need to be payed to low income areas. School in low income areas need to provide their students with more opportunities to join the work force as well as scholarships for college. The underprivileged schools need to be investigated and grants provided to better the schools. Low income children need to be offered the same opportunitys as everyone else. More equality and more availability for familys that are struggling so that the children can have a better life.

Tana Palafox
self / Teacher
Abilene, TX

I have been a teacher in Texas for 20 years. I am a strong Christian and was a missionary for ten years of my life also. I strongly oppose vouchers in all forms and strongly support fully funding our public schools. We have outstanding Christian teachers that want to minister to so many students who do not have a good family life and do not come from homes that give them any help. Suppose we take away more funds and leave schools bare with no resources for allowing all students to have what they need emotionally and physically. In that case, our country will lose thousands of future adults who cannot move forward as productive citizens.

Paul Dunk
Self
Katy, TX

The Texas Constitution is crystal clear when it comes to public education in Texas. The state is mandated to fund elementary and secondary PUBLIC schools. Private schools that are allowed to reject any child they deem difficult to teach, or inferior in some way, are thus NOT open to the whole public and thus are NOT public schools. Please do not use tax payer dollars to subsidize such a discriminator and exclusive system. The call for state support of PUBLIC education goes back 190 years to the very first proposed Texas Constitution (1833) and has been a major part of EVERY state constitution since then. The failure of the Mexican Congress to fund PUBLIC schools was also a major grievance in the 1836 Texas Declaration of Independence as well. At no time did the framers of Texas law call for the public funding of a private school system. SO please heed the wisdom of our forefathers and drop ANY scam to use public education funds to provide for a non-public system.

Michelle Kindred, Mrs.
Self
Spring Branch, TX

PLEASE VOTE NO TO VOUCHERS. The bill claims to give parents a choice, but parents ALREADY have a choice. They can currently choose to enroll their child in private or charter schools. The public should not have to pay for their choice. Vouchers will take away more funds from public schools that are already underfunded. Vouchers will negatively impact the majority of Texas students. Please vote against vouchers.

Paul Dunk
self
Katy, TX

The Texas Constitution is crystal clear when it comes to public education in Texas. The state is mandated to fund elementary and secondary PUBLIC schools. Private schools that are allowed to reject any child they deem difficult to teach, or inferior in some way, are thus NOT open to the whole public and thus are NOT public schools. Please do not use tax payer dollars to subsidize such a discriminator and exclusive system. The call for state support of PUBLIC education goes back 190 years to the very first proposed Texas Constitution (1833) and has been a major part of EVERY state constitution since then. The failure of the Mexican Congress to fund PUBLIC schools was also a major grievance in the 1836 Texas Declaration of Independence as well. At no time did the framers of Texas law call for the public funding of a private school system. SO please heed the wisdom of our forefathers and drop ANY scam to use public education funds to provide for a non-public system.

Denise Valuk
Self
Leon Valley, TX

Dear Members,

My name is Denise Valuk and my children attend Anne Frank Inspire Academy, a public charter school in San Antonio. Thank your for serving on such an important committee.

All public school students deserve safe school facilities designed for teaching and learning but public charter school students are being left behind. They receive \$965 less per student than other public schools. This is mostly due to a huge gap in facilities funding. This fixed amount hasn't changed since 2017.

My kids have thrived in our six years at our schools through our inventive inquiry based learning model. Our kids are challenged to be 21 st century thinkers and leaders.

My charter school and schools like mine should not count less.

Please make funding fair for all PUBLIC schools. Every child deserves an equal and excellent education.

Thank you!

Christy Wilbanks
Self
Killeen, TX

I am for School Choice all the way, because of how things are now, parents need a say in their children's education, because schools are pushing back saying "We know better than you" when in fact, the parent knows what's best for their children. Parents should have the freedom of choosing what schools would be the best fit for their children's needs and interests. Thank you.

Mark Saffer
Individual in Cypress Fairbanks ISD
Houston, TX

Equal educational opportunity means saying "NO!" to VOUCHERS. I am completely against a voucher program and providing any state funds for private education. Diverting funds and students from public schools to private schools simply weakens an already weak system. The legislature has created the system and now to say it isn't working and we should fund students to go somewhere else is counter intuitive. Increase the base allotment and help the current public education system.

Mary Mahoney
self-retired teacher
Texas City, TX

As a recently retired public school teacher and a parent of children who attended private school, I feel it is totally wrong to provide free education for private school education as you take the funds from public school. I accepted the fees and struggles I encountered to allow my students to attend private school. I received no assistance but it was my choice due to the fact that religion was an integral part of their school day and the option of having a school with the option of being dismissed if a student's behavior interfered with the education of others was very important for me. As a public school teacher, the funding and additional funds teachers have to provide for students is a daunting fact that most public school teachers face every year, day in and day out without any recourse of being refunded is a slap in the face of all of those dedicated teachers. The lack of proper compensation for these teachers and adding programs and or classes which are needed in public school should be top priority. The need to add more counselors, social workers, and school psychologists should be funded. The inability to dismiss students who are not allowing their classmates to be taught and the teachers who deal with those students day in and day out with any additional compensation, but we want to opt to pay for parents who are not properly preparing their children on school etiquette is ridiculous! For ALL public school teachers who have to be certified and private school teachers who do not go through the same type of training is unfair as well. I feel if a parent desires private school for their child, they should be willing to pay for this type of education! Do NOT DEPRIVE PUBLIC SCHOOL any longer!!

Liz Press
Richardson ISD
Richardson, TX

Vouchers sound great at first. However, look a little deeper & what you see are schools run as businesses. They only take the students they want- not the students with Medical Disabilities, Learning Disabilities or Emotional Disabilities. That's how they ensure the students performance is high. Students with disabilities need specialized teachers & curriculum not offered at most Charter schools & Private schools. Therefore, they cherry pick their students & this is in direct conflict with IDEA. Can they & will they provide equal support for students with Cerebral palsy, Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Emotional Disturbances and/or students from unstable homes? Based on my experience, the answer is an emphatic No!

A Smith
Texas Public Educators
San Angelo, TX

Why allow tax payer money to go to private and charter schools when they do not have to follow the same guidelines set forth by lawmakers that public schools have to? These schools offer employ teachers without a teacher license that ensures that know their material. Without the STAAR test, how can we be sure the students are getting a good quality education? That's what you measure public education by but other schools aren't held by those same standards. Plus, if a mass exodus of students go to charter/private schools because it is easier to pass (not because of a higher quality education), it will lead to public schools having higher percentages of problem students and students with special needs that will have to continue taking STAAR and dropping accountability scores even lower.

Sean Douglas
ATPE
Cuero, TX

Lawmakers public schools need higher pay, less testing & NO vouchers! Let me say that again public schools need higher pay, less testing & NO VOUCHERS!

Virginia Flores
self - athletic director for CFISD
Cypress, TX

Equal educational opportunity means saying "NO" to vouchers! They divert funding from public schools to private schools. There is NO ACCOUNTABILITY NOR TRANSPARENCY ON THE USE OF THESE FUNDS WHICH IS OUR TAXPAYERS' DOLLARS.

Equal educational opportunity means the elected officials will support our public schools by providing adequate funding for teachers and resources, allowing them to do the amazing work they already do with the kids that walk through their doors! Public education is the great equalizer but it can't be hamstrung by the policies that take away funding, take away quality teachers, and erode the system in place.

Melissa Wilson
Self/ educator
Prosper, TX

Please do not fund vouchers. It will take funding away from my children's public education. Schools that refuse to service ALL students, including SPED, and do not have to adhere to STAAR testing should not be able to receive funding. The private school in my town, Prestonwood Christian Academy, costs \$26,000/ year. How is an \$8000 voucher going to help me if I can't afford the other \$18000 (x2)?

David Cohen
Self asHutto ISD teacher
Austin, TX

I am opposed to tying teacher pay to vouchers.

Sarah Yeoman-Lomangino
Self
SANGER, TX

Keep public money in public schools. Don't subsidize private religious schools with no oversight. No vouchers!

Virginia Flores
self- athletic director - CFISD
Cypress, TX

Equal educational opportunity means saying "NO!" to vouchers. They divert funding from public schools to private schools. There is NO ACCOUNTABILITY NOR TRANSPARENCY ON THE USE OF THESE FUNDS WHICH IS OUR TAXPAYERS' DOLLARS.

Joseph Jones
self
Nolanville, TX

I believe that school choice would ultimately allow for more targeted opportunities for our students. The public school system is doing a good job catering to the needs of our students but allowing parents to evaluate different models of education would lead better outcomes in my opinion.

Jennie Freeman, Ms.

self - an assistant principal with 27 years in Texas public schools; PTA board member of Austin Elementary in Mesquite ISD
Rockwall, TX

Every child deserves the very best education! Education is the one thing that cannot ever be taken from you. I agree that there needs to be some change, but underfunding the public school system is not the way to create positive change. If a parent wants to choose a different educational path of their children is his or her right, but that doesn't mean their choice should affect every other citizen's right. Parents ALREADY have choices. There are countless public and private charter and Christian schools that are free of charge and available. Parents do not need to be given \$8000 per child to educate his or her child.

Free public education overall has done an amazing job with the tools and resources they have been given. Every year educators face incredible challenges and are making progress overall. If money is taken from the public system, then all private and charter schools should have to follow the same requirements as Texas public schools. This includes certified staff, open admittance, testing requirements, professional development, following all special education laws and providing accommodations. and all other laws and restrictions. This is where there is a huge problem. Parents are NOT aware that many of these private and charter schools are not following the same guidelines. Parents assume that these requirements are the same. Don't get me wrong, I understand there are some private and charter schools that do follow the same requirements, but not all. Parents are not aware they need to do research to understand the differences, they just see dollar signs.

Please help support ALL Texas children and educators. Think about what school districts could districts could do with these funds. Please support public schools and vote against vouchers! Vouchers are not the answer to all of the challenges facing Texas children. Let's keep Texas strong and support our children and educators.

Paula Vaughan

Self & Austin ISD PTA member

Austin, TX

I wish to request that consideration of vouchers for attending private schools be removed from any House Bill out of this committee. One of the foundational requirements when our country was formed on democratic principles was to develop informed and educated citizens. Thus, taxes to support public schools are for the mutual benefit of all our citizens and potential citizens. This is not to be diluted by any special interest approaches to education, i.e. not to support private schools. Since private schools are not monitored or evaluated on a public level, and they do not wish to be, then no public dollars should go to them.

To introduce vouchers into our school budgets and therefore reduce the dollars going to public schools could be an interpretation of violating separation of church and state, as well as, opening the question of all tax support being picked apart by various interest groups. Our public schools need the public money for which it is intended.

David Wills

self

Dallas, TX

Dear Members of the Select Committee,

Please support school choice for our children in Texas. Education for children is a top priority for Texas parents, as well it should be. No one is in a better position to determine which school is best for any child than that child's parents. School choice is essential to broadening access to education for our children and allowing them to attend the school that is right for them. Allowing parents to decide what school is best for their children will result in more efficient allocations of resources, better outcomes, and happy Texans.

Moreover, Texas may be left behind if it fails to act. States around the country have adopted and continue to adopt school choice programs. Texas is an attractive destination for young families--but the lack of school choice is an active impediment to a young family interested in relocating to Texas.

An Le
Self, retired
Watauga, TX

Our children's heads are being filled with drag queens, sexually explicit content and general hate towards America and our values.

Please give our kids the freedom to escape the disgusting agenda that's being pushed on them by the Educrats and Teachers Unions.

Joshua Cerame
Self, Teacher
Katy, TX

Equal educational opportunity means that there should not be a state voucher system. This will weaken our already struggling public education system. This will further divert funding away from our public schools and there is no accountability for the use of those taxpayer funds. Charter and Private schools are not held to the same standards as public schools and advertise "A ratings" and "Higher than surrounding schools scores" because they have freedoms and the ability to filter students since they can only accept and maintain a student body that is high achieving. Public schools take all children where they are and do not remove any students due to academic achievement or behavior challenges. Public school educators are much stronger educators due to the needs of having to meet these students and the higher requirements set by the federal government. Private and charter schools have more freedom in hiring less capable and less well trained teachers. By diverting funds to EAS's, this will place taxpayer money into unregulated schools that do not have the same high requirements as public schools. I believe that public schools function best when students have to interact with a wide array of others. This helps to create citizens who have empathy and understanding of those who are not like themselves. Public schools do more for our students than charter and private schools and provide them so so many more academic, athletic and fine arts opportunities. Please do not undervalue the public school system. The educators that I work alongside are amazing individuals who care greatly for each and every student.

Sarah Gray
Self
Austin, TX

I am writing to state that I strongly OPPOSE vouchers in any form and strongly SUPPORT fully funding our public schools. Study after study, public poll after poll, show that Texans DO NOT support vouchers. Let me repeat: Texans don't like vouchers! Enough with the shenanigans about the so-called "school voice" stuff. We all know what that means. It's time to put vouchers in the grave and fully fund our public schools, our public school employees, and our students the way they all deserve.

Tara Brandt
DAYTON ISD DAYTON TX
DAYTON, TX

No to vouchers!

Tara Brandt
Dayton ISD dayton tx
DAYTON, TX

Teachers need pay raises!

Christine Cupp, Mrs
Self, Registered Nurse
Plano, TX

Hello,

I am a constituent in zip code 75074. I took advantage of the public school system in Texas, as did my son who just graduated from high school this year. The comparison between my education and my son's has raised some concerns for me. One of the largest contrasts I see is in the area of school funding. The best way to improve public schools is to fully fund them.

The amount of funding for Texas public schools directly affects educational opportunity, freedom to obtain a quality education, and improves student outcomes.

Watching our state slip in national education rankings is a huge cause for concern. We must keep our public education system competitive nationally and internationally. I urge the committee to support fully funding public education and to oppose any form of vouchers or education savings accounts. Thanks for all your hard work to improve our public school system.

Christie Moran
Self
Montgomery, TX

I do not support vouchers. I support our public school system

Tiffany Gygi
ATPE
Saginaw, TX

Please lawmakers put what is best for public school children and educators first and put aside political agendas and say NO TO VOUCHERS!!! Also, show respect and support to educators and not hold raises and quality of life hostage to your political issues and work together to improve the critical teacher shortage!!

Kim Combs
Self/Teacher
montgomery, TX

Taxpayer money should not be used towards private schools especially if those schools do not have the same standards and requirements, such as the STAAR test. This is not what most people want. If something like this is to be done then public schools should have the right to kick out a student that is not following the rules at school.

Donna Cobblw
The students of Texas
Seadrift, TX

I feel that the voucher system is detrimental to the Texas Education System and to the students of Texas.

Louis Mascolo
Self
Kingwood, TX

Say no No NO to expansion of ESA's and No to Vouchers. Keep public schools, public. Give teachers a raise to help retention of these educators.

Jeannette LaFontaine

Self, retired

Austin, TX

Please say no to school vouchers!! Protect our public schools and don't succumb to the pressure and manipulation of Gov. Abbott!!

Helen Preston, Mrs.

Self

Abilene, TX

Whereas public school funding is by the taxpayers, and the public schools have failed to provide adequate education for students, substituting sexual content and woke indoctrination, causing our country to rank near the bottom of the world's test scores, it is time to make a change. I ask you to vote for school choice and allow parents to select the schools where their children learn best. Respectfully yours, Kay Walton Preston

Kevin Wooten

self

Livingston, TX

"School choice" is just a transfer of tax dollars away from where they are most needed (public school students) and to private schools with ZERO accountability. Studies in other states have shown most of the "voucher" money goes to parents of kids ALREADY enrolled in private schools. It is merely a subsidy for private/religious education without any accountability that public schools are held to. Please stop this fraudulent scam.

Cristela Rocha

Self - teacher

Austin, TX

Lawmakers public schools need higher pay, less testing & NO vouchers.

Abbie Geveshausen

Self -- Communication Specialist for Cypress-Fairbanks ISD

Cypress, TX

"Educational opportunity and freedom" really means vouchers. Vouchers divert critical funding from public education in the name of "school choice." There is no accountability or transparency tied to sending public tax dollars to private schools. That isn't very "conservative" to give money away without accountability. Texans already have the choice and freedom to educate their children how they so choose. By fully funding public education, you'll provide quality education to the more than five million students and families who rely on public education across the state. Public education educates EVERY student, not just the selected few deemed "worthy" by private schools and/or charters. According to Gov. Abbott, Texas is #1 for business, economic development and Fortune 500 HQs, so why are we in the bottom 40s when it comes to public education funding? Let's keep Texas #1 by fully funding public education. Vote NO to vouchers and/or education savings accounts.

Cristela Rocha

Self - teacher

Austin, TX

Lawmakers public schools need higher pay, less testing & NO vouchers.

Carl Garner, Mr.
Self
Wylie, TX

Please do not hold teacher's pay hostage to the unfair, unaccountable voucher (aka education savings accounts). The political maneuvering is sickening to this true conservative! Pushing a this voucher for pay raise is childish and unprofessional. Abbott is not the King of Texas but a duly elected governor elected to do the work of the entire state NOT his wealthy donors. He should not be using this fight to improve his national profile. The true losers if this fight are the students of Texas, not the wealthy donors who are only seeking to line their own pockets for the private school friends. This is not a true conservative idea to have government support any religion through vouchers to attend religious private schools. God forbid a regime change to liberals who will add all sorts of accountability measures to greatly affect what is taught in private schools. I have no problem with individual taxpayers to be allowed to use their own property tax amount or whatever method in the future to pay for private school tuition, but not thousands per student. Religious people should trust their God to provide, not a human government or governor.

Kelley Thomas
Self - Consultant
Richardson, TX

I am opposed to a voucher program in any format, including an Educational Savings Account that sends state funding to private school entities and vendors.

I believe that there is a Texas constitutional mandate in Article 7 to "make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools." To fulfill this direction provided to the legislature, only public free schools should be supported.

In my research on this subject, I found an article in the SMU Law Review of 1991, that is entitled, Public Free Schools: A Constitutional Right to Educational Choice in Texas. It was interesting to note that in this article, a historical take on the Texas Constitution was applied, especially to Article 7. There was a large focus on the phrase "public free schools," specifically in regard to how it was originally intended and what the phrase means today. The historical intention is explained in this section: A truly constitutional system of "public free schools" would allow three types of schools to exist in Texas. First, public schools would remain the same - state-funded and state-operated. Second, "free schools" would be schools chartered by the state as private enterprises subject to minimal regulation, which are public and open to all, and which accept state payments in lieu of tuition. They would be free - open to all; free - of government regulation and control; and free - tuition-free through total or partial reimbursement. Third, private schools would be completely unregulated and accept no state tuition payments. The "public schools" and "free schools" together would constitute the "public free school system."

With this information, I would encourage you to vote against any form of voucher payment that goes to a traditional private school because once they have accepted state funding, they can no longer be described as private. I would argue that in the great state of Texas, we are able to uphold the 1876 Constitution in its fullest intention by having both our traditional public schools as we understand them today and charter schools (or free schools as described in the law review article).

There is no need to offer any additional choice. I respectfully ask that instead of forming a non-Constitutional program of schools, you hold up the intent of Article 7 in its entirety and focus on the phrase - " make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools." - by increasing funding to all of the public free schools we have in Texas - Charters & Public Schools. Our public free schools are horribly underfunded and are by no means being provided for suitably. All of the progress made in HB3 of the 86th session is gone due to inflation. There is recognition that our system of public free schools is not efficient, which is a Constitutional mandate. This should be a focus before anything else.

Erica McCormick, Mrs.
Self / Teacher, Principal
San Antonio, TX

From my experience working with students who learn differently, I have seen that the students who enter private education from public schools are behind due to their learning differences. The Hispanic population is sorely misrepresented and prohibited from a better quality of education often due to financial restrictions. Students are often behind a least a year because they have not been properly diagnosed with regard to learning differences / issues. Students who struggle with reading and / or comprehension are the most affected and often manage to "get by" but never excel in academics and often end up with mediocre jobs or careers. I have seen students who leave the public platform for private school and not only catch up but exceed their peers when they have the proper instruction that is tailored to fit their learning needs. Parents must have the economic and political freedom to pursue the best education for their child.

Kelley Thomas
self/consultant
Richardson, TX

I am opposed to a voucher program in any format, including an Educational Savings Account that sends state funding to private school entities and vendors.

I believe that there is a Texas constitutional mandate in Article 7 to "make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools." To fulfill this direction provided to the legislature, only public free schools should be supported.

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Meredith Bowman
ATPE/parent/tax payer
Fort Worth, TX

I do not agree with any school choice bill or any voucher bill. We already have school choice in Texas. Repair Public Education instead of trying to repair education you don't belong or have authority to control. Please vote NO on these types of bills.

Deanna Hicks
self / public educator
Cypress, TX

Equal educational opportunity means saying “NO!” to vouchers. They divert funding from public schools to private schools. There is absolutely no accountability or transparency on the use of these funds, which is our taxpayers' dollars. In addition, equal educational opportunity requires adequate funding for public schools, beginning with an increase in the basic allotment to catch up with inflation. Meaningfully supporting educators requires an inflationary index in the state's funding formula to allow public school districts to keep up with costs and to provide teachers with better pay raises. Thank you for your consideration.

Katherine Urbanic
parent
Parker, TX

I am writing in support of school choice. Students should be able to transfer to any public school that has student capacity available and school districts should be prohibited from charging tuition.

I live closer to Lovejoy ISD than to my zoned schools, but Lovejoy's increasing tuition makes it untenable for my four children. Lovejoy ISD is trying to operate like a private school while still receiving public funds - not only hand selecting students to raise the district profile, but also charging an arbitrary and exorbitant rate beyond the cost to educate a student. Under the current system a new student transferring into Lovejoy ISD will pay \$117,000 from K-12 - for public school!

Charter schools receiving public funds are barred from charging tuition - a public school should be no different. This is also a matter of equity - ability to pay should not be a barrier to a quality public education.

I ask for your support of school choice and also support for the following issues:

- Prohibit public school districts from charging tuition
- Increase in basic allotment per student
- Fund public schools on the average enrollment instead of ADA

Thank you

Stephanie ODell, School Board Trustee
myself
McKinney, TX

Education

Texas has 5 million students who are only going to be as educated as the teachers you support. Texas has one of the largest economies in the world. If you want to keep it that way, we need to invest in our public schools. Support public education for all children and increase teacher pay. If you invest in our teachers, they will continue to invest in our students. We know that we need to retain our teachers and increasing their pay will help. Show teachers that you value them by giving them the salary they deserve. Our children are our future.

And if you want to see how valuable public schools are, come visit us anytime in McKinney ISD. I will personally give you a tour! Our students and teachers are amazing!

Holley Dupin
Self
Deer Park, TX

If you are going to provide funding for school choice, then even the playing field.....make EVERYONE in all schools take a state assessment! Why only public school children? And make private schools keep behavior kids. Why do they get to dismiss them? Public schools cannot do that.

Daniel Combs, Dr.
Alvin ISD
Alvin, TX

I pose to you that we are not asking the correct question when it comes to public education.

What is the societal outcome we desire from our significant investment in Public Ed?

I would assert that the perpetuation of our democracy and the continuation of our thriving free market economy should be that goal.

Historically, societies that persist and thrive, have a strong sense of shared values, and yet we are currently divided. The institutions that have been the standard bearers for our collective values are under attack. Public Education has served in this capacity for many years and formed the foundation for our national exceptionalism in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Currently, as the legislative body in the state of Texas, you have oversight regarding the broad direction of public schools.

Once public tax dollars are made available through a vouchers/choice tax credits you have effectively rendered our legislature constitutionally prohibited from having any limitations on how these tax dollars are used to educate....or indoctrinate.

Our God given right to free speech, the 1st amendment, and the clearly established Supreme Court precedent overtly prohibits the Government from viewpoint-based discrimination.

What does that mean?

Once public tax dollars are made available to private schools, religious schools of any kind, or those with a particular social or political leaning, this body will have abdicated its ability to ensure our public tax dollars are used for the intended societal purpose.

What will this committee, and more broadly the Texas legislature tell taxpayers when their public funds are supporting efforts that are inconsistent with these desired outcomes, and potentially even those that are overtly anti-American.

If we don't ask the right question about what we want as a society, we are going to get absolutely what we do not

Nancy Diebel
Myself
Port Lavaca, TX

I support public schools and public educators. Financially speaking vouchers would pull money away from public schools and the very students they claim to help would be the students most hurt by them. Within public schools there are STEM campuses and transfers that are possible now.

Cody Knott
self
Eastland, TX

Committee members,

As a Texas educator, I urge you to say no to vouchers. It will not fix the issues in Texas education.

The Teacher Vacancy Task Force gave you all a document that told you how to fix these issues.

Take the time to read it and understand where we are coming from in the classroom.

We do not need a voucher program in this state. We have seen what it has done in other states and it does not work. There is also no checks and balances system for those programs.

Less standardized tests and increased ADA, teacher, and paraprofessional pay. It is simple to fix.

Do not politicize teachers and our jobs, please.

Sincerely,
Cody Knott
Teacher

Susan Melinda Petross
Self, Substitute Teacher
Stephenville, TX

Thank you for your service to Texas!

Please use state funds to increase teacher pay & improve education for all students in the public schools.

Please do NOT use state funds to enrich private investors for “select” students ... NO VOUCHERS or “Educational Savings Accounts”!

We already have “school choice” ... public, private, home, online. Public funds should be used for public schools!

Thank you.

Patricia Bradfield, Ms.
Self-Employed Teacher for decades!
Royse City, TX

Make the RIGHT CHOICE!
INCREASE pay raises!
NO testing for K-2!
LESS testing grades 3 and up!
NO vouchers!

Terry A Willemin
self
Victoria, TX

I am a firm believer tax payers should have the right to choose the educational path for their children. School vouchers should be available to every family.

Yair Alan Griver
self - COO of a staffing company
San Antonio, TX

Dear members,

Please support school choice and education equality in Texas.

I believe that private education is the right choice for my child. I volunteer at his school. I spend a good portion of our income to ensure that he gets everything he needs - in school, camp, etc. I also pay the high taxes of a homeowner in Texas. While I support public school, I recognize that I am privileged to be able to afford (with difficulty) these things for my son. Other families are not so lucky. That is why I support helping parents choose the alternative that best meets their needs.

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.

Putting parents in the driver's seat of their children's education is a win for Texas parents, students, educators, and taxpayers. This is part of the freedom that makes Texas such a beacon to the rest of the country.

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.

Yair Alan Griver
Proud San Antonio resident

Susan Lippman, Ms.
Individual
Austin, TX

I respectfully ask the Committee to oppose any bill to establish a taxpayer savings grant program, voucher program, or any other program that diverts my hefty school taxes away from our public school system. It is a heavy tax burden that I bear, but willingly, because our free public school system is a benefit to all of society and all Texans. Unfortunately it is a zero sum game to allow the tax money of Texas tax payers to go to the funding of private schools, private for-profit schools, or schools established and run by religious institutions. In states with voucher programs, by far most of the taxpayer money that is allowed to be diverted from public schools goes to families that can afford to and would already send their children to private or religious schools. That is their choice, but it is not my choice for my tax dollars to be spent that way. Our public schools are staffed by educators and teachers who are doing their very best to provide excellent education but they are already dreadfully underfunded. Just because my tax money goes to an family first before it is spent at a for-profit or religious school doesn't mean that my tax money is not enriching that private corporation or supporting that religion's school.

I remind you that the Texas Constitution clearly states: "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." I ask you not to twist the meaning of free public schools. Thank you.

Susan Lippman, Ms.
Individual
Austin, TX

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V M Floyd
Self
Tomball, TX

Dear Texas Representatives,

Texas residents and those attending school are owed the best education possible. For too long the public education system has held a monopoly on receiving funds paid by taxpayers without motivation by competition to improve what they produce. This is evidenced by the strong growth of private schools and home-school programs. Frankly, Texas residents are increasingly voting against public schools with their participation in alternatives to public schools. These people need to be in charge of the school taxes they pay in the form of school vouchers so their tax dollars may be used to pay for the education that parents choose. As it has been for many decades, public schools use not only school tax monies but also frequently push for bonds to support their spending habits. The bonds are simply more taxes.

I ask for your support in passing bills that allow parents more choices on how their school tax monies are spent for their children. It is past time for public schools to improve their product and the better way of doing this is by having some competition in the market place.

Vernon Floyd
Self
Tomball, TX

Dear Texas Representatives,

Texas residents and those attending school are owed the best education possible. For too long the public education system has held a monopoly on receiving funds paid by taxpayers without motivation by competition to improve what they produce. This is evidenced by the strong growth of private schools and home-school programs. Frankly, Texas residents are increasingly voting against public schools with their participation in alternatives to public schools. These people need to be in charge of the school taxes they pay in the form of school vouchers so their tax dollars may be used to pay for the education that parents choose. As it has been for many decades, public schools use not only school tax monies but also frequently push for bonds to support their spending habits. The bonds are simply more taxes.

I ask for your support in passing bills that allow parents more choices on how their school tax monies are spent for their children. It is past time for public schools to improve their product and the better way of doing this is by having some competition in the market place.

Dan Micciche
self
Dallas, TX

Every Texas child deserves access to a high-quality education. It is incumbent upon the Texas Legislature to provide a system of free public schools that offers that high-quality education for all students. The state has not met its responsibility to adequately fund public schools to the point that many districts are now being faced with difficult decisions about which programs and services to cut or to fund through unsustainable deficit budgets that rely on fund balances.

The failure to adequately fund public schools limits educational opportunity and freedom for Texans. While some are looking to increase educational opportunity and freedom for parents through “school choice,” the mechanism of this choice—specifically vouchers—actually provides private and religious schools with the choice, not parents. Not a single bill calling for education savings account vouchers had a provision requiring private schools or other providers to respect a parent’s choice to place their child in that school and to do so for no more than the value of the proposed voucher.

The state does not have the resources to offer and pay for an individualized private school education or each of the millions of children in Texas, but it is in a position to adequately fund a system of free public schools that is available and accessible to each and every child. It is up to the state to ensure that each district and campus within that system is providing the best education possible.

To that end, the state should focus its resources—taxpayers’ collective contributions—toward investing in our public school classroom teachers and the programs that have demonstrable positive effects on student learning. Nothing impacts a student’s education more than the teacher in the classroom. The Texas Teacher Vacancy Task Force developed many useful recommendations for legislators, including increasing compensation, providing incentives for hard-to-staff areas, improving the teacher pipeline, expanding mentorship and leadership opportunities, and ensuring schoolwide culture and discipline supports. These are very real solutions that can be implemented if the state invests adequate resources.

By working together, we can achieve a top-tier public education system for all kids.

Wendy King, Athletic Director
Milano ISD
Milano TX, TX

Vote no to vouchers!! The public school system has long been the foundation of this country. Taxpayer money should be spent improving local schools in order to support communities in Texas. Our schools are the heart of our communities. Teachers are committing their lives to this system and vouchers are a dismantling of all we are working for. We need all resources working together. Vouchers will only serve to increase the gap between the haves and have nots. A voucher will not allow a poor family to pay for private school. We will be funding people who do not need taxpayer money yk send their kids to elite schooling still not available to all. Public education can and does work!!

Luis Maldonado
Self
Kingwood, TX

Public education needs funds to provide a quality education, I am a technology teacher and students don't have real world computers, we use only chromebooks that are nowhere to be found in real world business applications, we have been requesting windows and Mac computers and there's always the rejection because of budget, teacher salaries have not gone up to keep up with other fields. There is lack of support of representatives with education, private schools will not provide a comprehensive solution to the lack of resources that representatives are willing to provide. People want a beautiful house with the latest technology and latest gadgets, they put money into it. If people want a good education with the latest technology and motivated people, the representatives have to put money into it. There is a need to treat teachers and students with the necessary importance that is needed for our region/schools to succeed. Money should flow all the way down to classrooms and teachers, not administrators and construction companies.

Alison Colemere
Self/Teacher
Wichita Falls, TX

School vouchers would be detrimental to the public education system. Parents already have rights and access to the curriculum taught in public schools. Vouchers would divert public funds to private institutions that are not held to the same standards that the TEA requires of public schools. Vouchers are a slippery slope in terms of using public money to fund religious institutions. Vouchers would only serve to further the socioeconomic divide between public and private schools. This is NOT what is best for our children. Fully fund public schools --- give children the opportunity to learn with access to ALL available resources.

Patricia Bradfield, Ms
Self-Employed Educator for decades!
Royse City, TX

Make the RIGHT CHOICE!
INCREASE pay raises!
NO testing for K-2!
LESS testing grades 3 and up!
NO vouchers!

Yosef Marrus, Rabbi / Dean
Starr Family JEWISH Day School
Boerne, TX

Dear Members of the Select Committee,

I am a proud father of 6 Texans, and have been an educator in private religious schools for close to 30 years. While the private school experience is a wonderful education, the greatest challenge to this education is funding. My wife and I have sacrificed a great deal to give our children the gift of a private religious education. It was an absolute need for our family. We pay premium taxes for the public school system and then we pay again for our personal religious educational needs. It is an overwhelming and staggering expense. Parents ought to be able to choose what is best for their own families.

In my profession I see hundreds of students who benefit from a smaller, private and religious school education, but the costs are simply overwhelming. Some leave our school and fail in larger public schools. Other families are forced to move out of state to places where there is school choice and they can afford the education of their children.

I believe in strong public school for our students. I believe in strong private and religious schools for our students.

I believe that every tax paying Texan should have the choice and ability to give their child/ren the best education possible, based on their particular beliefs and needs. It is vital for every child to be afforded this life-saving necessity. Let's please pass school choice for the sake of our kids.

Respectfully,
Rabbi Yosef Marrus
Dean / SFJDS

Erin Mulholland, M.Ed.

Self; Global Manager of Cybersecurity Awareness & Training
Montgomery, TX

As a Texas resident, mother and former Texas certified teacher, I'm deeply concerned how the word freedom is being used to dismantle critical public education in Texas. Texas public schools need to be fully funded to provide quality education to every child, Pre-K to grade 12, no matter where they live in Texas.

The case to use taxpayer funds to send children of low-income parents to private schools is based on an expectation where the outcome will be positive. Research consistently points in the other direction.

School voucher programs divert public funds to private schools that are more racially segregated than public schools and discriminate against students based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, ability, and religion. Research on statewide voucher programs in Louisiana and Indiana has found public school students who received vouchers to attend private schools scored lower compared to similar students who did not attend private schools because private schools are not held accountable to any standards under state education regulatory authority. It's proven to literally be throwing money away when precious education funds are diverted to vouchers for private schools.

In education as in medicine, 'first, do no harm' is a powerful guiding principle.

Two studies have examined the effects of vouchers in Louisiana, one from the National Bureau of Economic Research (Atila Abdulkdiroglu, Parag A. Pathak, and Christopher R. Walters, "School Vouchers and Student Achievement: Evidence from the Louisiana Scholarship Program," NBER Working Paper 21839 (Cambridge, MA: December 2015)) and one from the University of Arkansas (Jonathan N. Mills and Patrick J. Wolf, "The Effects of the Louisiana Scholarship Program on Student Achievement After Two Years," (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas department of Education Reform, 2016)). The study of Indiana is by Joseph Waddington and Mark Berends, "Vouchers in the Crossroads, Heterogeneous Impacts on Student Achievement and Attendance across Private Schools in Indiana" (nd).

Voucher programs emerged in the nineties in Milwaukee, and later in New York City, Dayton, Ohio, and Washington, DC. Wolf (2012) summarizes the numerous studies of the Milwaukee program (<http://www.uaedreform.org/downloads/2012/02/report-36-the-comprehensive-longitudinal-evaluation-of-the-milwaukee-parental-choice-program.pdf>). Results of the New York City program are summarized at <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/projects/an-evaluation-of-new-york-city-school-vouchers> and results of the DC program are at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20104018/pdf/20104018.pdf>. A summary and comparison of the New York, Dayton, and DC results is at <http://educationnext.org/vouchersinnewyorkdaytonanddc/>.

Read the Executive Summary from Brookings, Evidence Speaks: RESEARCH - On negative effects of vouchers, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/on-negative-effects-of-vouchers/>

Thank you

Caitlin Dodd
431637658895
Grapevine, TX

School vouchers and educational savings accounts will pull money from public schools and not provide an equal opportunity for all students to learn. Private schools can reject students for any reason, while public schools can not. Therefore all public money should go to public schools that are regulated by the state, held to state standards, and are available to all students.

Jonah Nathan
self
HOUSTON, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,
Please support school choice and education equality in Texas.
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.
Please 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.

Elke Baitis
self/editor
Austin, TX

Please oppose any bill to establish a taxpayer savings grant program, voucher program, or any other program that diverts my hefty school taxes away from our public school system. It is a heavy tax burden that I bear, but willingly, because our free public school system is a benefit to all of society and all Texans. It is bad news to allow the tax money of Texas tax payers to go to the funding of private schools, private for-profit schools, or schools established and run by religious institutions. In states with voucher programs, by far most of the taxpayer money that is allowed to be diverted from public schools goes to families that can afford to and would already send their children to private or religious schools. That is their choice, but it is not my choice for my tax dollars to be spent that way. Our public schools are staffed by educators and teachers who are doing their very best to provide excellent education but they are already dreadfully underfunded. Just because my tax money goes to a family first before it is spent at a for-profit or religious school doesn't mean that my tax money is not enriching that private corporation or supporting that religion's school.

I remind you that the Texas Constitution clearly states: "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." I ask you not to twist the meaning of free public schools. Thank you.

Cody Pope
Self, Operations Manager
Midland, TX

As a Texas taxpayer, I would like to share my testimony in support of school choice and parental rights. I believe that empowering parents with the ability to choose the best educational options for their children is crucial for the success and well-being of our students.

Every child is unique, with different strengths, interests, and learning styles. It is essential that parents have the freedom to select an educational environment that meets their child's specific needs, whether it be public, private, charter, or homeschooling. School choice allows parents to explore diverse educational approaches and find the best fit for their child, promoting academic achievement and personal growth.

Furthermore, school choice fosters healthy competition among educational institutions. When schools are accountable to parents and students, they are motivated to provide high-quality education and innovative programs to attract families. This competition drives improvement, encourages innovation, and raises overall educational standards.

In addition to promoting educational excellence, school choice upholds the principle of parental rights. Parents are the primary stakeholders in their child's education, and they possess the unique knowledge and understanding of their child's needs, interests, and values. By granting parents the freedom to choose, we respect their fundamental right to direct their child's educational journey.

School choice also has the potential to address educational disparities and create opportunities for disadvantaged communities. By breaking down barriers and providing equal access to quality education, we can narrow the achievement gap and give every child a chance to succeed, regardless of their zip code or socioeconomic status.

Critics argue that school choice could lead to a fragmentation of resources and undermine public education. However, with proper regulations and oversight, we can ensure that all schools, including public and private, operate under fair and equitable standards. It is not about dismantling public education, but rather expanding the options available to parents and students.

In conclusion, as a Texas taxpayer, I firmly believe in the power of school choice and parental rights. By empowering parents with the ability to choose the educational path that aligns with their child's unique needs, we can foster educational excellence, promote healthy competition, and uphold the fundamental rights of parents. Let us work towards a future where every child has the opportunity to thrive and succeed, guided by the loving hands of their parents.

Danielle Washington
HFT
Houston, TX

I'm sure my words are falling on deaf ears and that the votes are in, and closed-door deals have already been made but I will move forward with my statement anyway. It seems like the agenda of the governor and this committee is to destroy the public education system. Now that Abbot has gotten his way by taking over Houston ISD, the largest school district in Texas, he not only plans to take away millions if not billions of dollars from the public school system by signing the new property tax bill, he, along with this committee are determined to take away even more funding in the form of vouchers. As an educator, I see the stress placed on teachers daily, and in the wake of COVID, it has tripled. Teachers are no longer just required to teach the curriculum, but they have also become counselors, parents, safety officers, social workers, truancy officers and more. But instead of giving them a raise you want to take money away and place more stress on them. Public schools only get about \$6,700 per student yet you are willing to give private schools \$8000 per student in the form of a voucher. This just doesn't make sense. Why are private schools entitled to more money per student than public schools? Additionally, while the average private school cost in the state of Texas is between \$10,000 and \$11,000 per year, the average cost of a private school in large metropolitan areas like Houston is over \$24,000 a year. So, who are these vouchers really meant to benefit? How is the average parent supposed to supplement the difference. Again, this just doesn't make sense. It's simply another ploy to destroy the public school system, which serves the majority of our children.

Laurie Duke
self, stay at home parent
FORT WORTH, TX

We have school choice as parents. I can choose to homeschool. I can choose the public school district that we reside in. I can choose 1 of the 8 charter schools that service students my children's age that are all within a 15 mile radius (*see on TEA website <https://tea-tex.maps.arcgis.com/>) Or I can choose a private school. I can choose an online or virtual education option. We chose our local public school. Choices abound. I oppose vouchers and it is my hope that this committee will oppose all manner of vouchers and invest in the common good by strengthening our local public schools ability to service all students/families; beginning with the recommendations of the Teacher Vacancy Task Force established per Gov. Abbott.

Gicela Salinas
Self-educator
Penitas, TX

I don't understand. You are providing ESA's to parents so they can choose a more tailored education for their children. According to the research done in other states using vouchers, that tailored education parents want for their children, include no standardized testing, smaller student to teacher ratios and less restrictive curriculums, to name a few. Basically, parents are tired of what public education offers for their children. If we take a look at our public education system, teachers, educational leaders and school districts do not have a say on what we teach or standardize testing. We have been begging the state for no standardized testing, smaller student to teacher ratios, and less restrictive curriculums. We want what our parents want, yet our state chooses to turn a blind eye on pressing issues in public school systems. ESA's are nothing but vouchers to stay away from public schools, which are managed by the state to begin with. What faith do you have in what you have designed? To any sound mind, ESA's are designed to kill the public education system. Why not give school districts the resources and freedoms to be able to tailor education for our students? Do lawmakers have an idea of how many parents are fit and unfit to choose what's best for their children, academically speaking? Why not allow professional educational leaders to find curriculums that will better reach our student populations rather than keep us in a box of "what not to choose for my child"? Give public education the autonomy to make our schools a place of learning where students thrive and parents want their children in. Invest in public education , don't destroy it. ESA's are a recipe for disaster if the proper accountability system is not in place. Give public education the freedoms you are advocating for the parents to have when it comes to their children's education. Educators are professionals that want the best for students and we are already being held accountable. Empower us, don't put us in the "don't want" pile.

Gicela Salinas
Self/Educator
Penitas, TX

I don't understand. You are providing ESA's to parents so they can choose a more tailored education for their children. According to the research done in other states using vouchers, that tailored education parents want for their children, include no standardized testing, smaller student to teacher ratios and less restrictive curriculums, to name a few. Basically, parents are tired of what public education offers for their children. If we take a look at our public education system, teachers, educational leaders and school districts do not have a say on what we teach or standardize testing. We have been begging the state for no standardized testing, smaller student to teacher ratios, and less restrictive curriculums. We want what our parents want, yet our state chooses to turn a blind eye on pressing issues in public school systems. ESA's are nothing but vouchers to stay away from public schools, which are managed by the state to begin with. What faith do you have in what you have designed? To any sound mind, ESA's are designed to kill the public education system. Why not give school districts the resources and freedoms to be able to tailor education for our students? Do lawmakers have an idea of how many parents are fit and unfit to choose what's best for their children, academically speaking? Why not allow professional educational leaders to find curriculums that will better reach our student populations rather than keep us in a box of "what not to choose for my child"? Give public education the autonomy to make our schools a place of learning where students thrive and parents want their children in. Invest in public education , don't destroy it. ESA's are a recipe for disaster if the proper accountability system is not in place. Give public education the freedoms you are advocating for the parents to have when it comes to their children's education. Educators are professionals that want the best for students and we are already being held accountable. Empower us, don't put us in the "don't want" pile.

Carol Scarbrough
Self-teacher
San Antonio, TX

No vouchers!

Hilary Pippin
Self
Tuscola, TX

Wanting the power to choose schools and taxes going to where your kids are actually attending school instead of the school district that are located.

Jessica Diric, Principal
The Starr Family Jewish Day School
San Antonio, TX

I have worked in both public and private school for the past 23 years in Texas. I spent 13 years in low SES schools. My two older children graduated from public high school in San Antonio in 2020 and 2021.

Ten years ago I left public sector because two sets of administration, as well as the school district, were involved in unethical practices. It was at this point that I was at a crossroads in my life: Continue to dedicate my life to good teaching practices or choose another career. A choice that parallels thousands of burnt out highly qualified teachers in this state and around the country. To continue my hearts path, I opted to joint the private school sector at The Starr Family Jewish Day School (formerly the Torah Academy of San Antonio).

Our school, which I have helped accredited twice with Cognia/AdvancEd, hires only State Certified highly qualified teachers. With the changes that continue to impact public schools, my husband and I chose to educate our youngest child in private school.

My former public school brain understands the impact on public schools that this bill MAY have. However, our public school system, locally and nationally, is broken. Parents in this State deserve choice in their child's education. For some, this choice involves home schooling, which in my career's experience goes for bad to worse, in terms of quality education. Families deserve to know that the taxes from their homes and properties, go to support their own children—many of whom choose to send to private school. Some of these parents take on part time jobs to pay for their children's private education. These families deserve state support with school choice vouchers to help ease the burden, and in turn, give many private schools added options to makes great private education outstanding.

Our country must find ways to support the education of the next generation of children in this country in order to compete with the education in other countries of the world.

Thank you for your time.
Jessica L. Diric M.Ed

Texas State Certified:
Prek-K
Generaliat 1-8
ESL K-12
Special Education K-12

Texas School Administration Certification, TBD Dec. 2023

Cynthia Henry
Self
Cypress, TX

"NO" to vouchers! Education opportunity and freedom will not happen through vouchers or educational savings accounts or whatever you want to call diverting tax funds away from public schools. It is not "their" money. It is "our" money and should be used to fund "our" schools. I do not support my taxes being used as a rebate to people who choose private or home schooling for their children. I support "their" choice of private or home school, but not with "our" taxes. It is not nor has it ever been in the best interest of our students for the state of Texas to fund more than one system of education. Especially, an additional system that has no accountability nor transparency on the use of "our" taxpayers' dollars. True equal educational opportunity requires adequate funding for public schools, beginning with an increase in the basic allotment to catch up with inflation not diverting funds to private and home schooling. "NO" to vouchers!!

Belinda Perez
Self
Pflugerville, TX

NO to Vouchers/ESAs. Public Education is key for ALL Texans! My son has selective mutism and social anxiety and we are currently on IEP for special services including special education. Our school is my son's safe haven. It should never be in jeopardy. Pay our teachers! Increase funding for public education.

April Phillips
Self- Public School Educator
Spring, TX

I have been a public school teacher in Texas for 36 years. I am writing to beg you to fully fund our public schools and to vote "no" on vouchers. The way to improve our schools is to decrease class size (which can only be done if districts have a larger budget), to reduce emphasis on the STAAR test, stop the culture war on teachers, and increase teacher pay so that quality instructors remain in education. Texas has a budget surplus and Texas taxpayers overwhelmingly support public education. It's time for legislators to provide the finances needed to our public schools. Thank you.

Lesley Guilmart
self, educator
Cypress, TX

Equal educational opportunity means saying "NO!" to VOUCHERS. They divert funding from public schools to private schools. There is NO ACCOUNTABILITY NOR TRANSPARENCY ON THE USE OF THESE FUNDS WHICH IS OUR TAXPAYERS' DOLLARS.

Equal educational opportunity requires adequate funding for public schools, beginning with an increase in the basic allotment to catch up with inflation.

Meaningfully supporting educators requires an inflationary index in the State's funding formula to allow public school districts to keep up with costs and to provide teachers with better pay raises.

Improving outcomes requires a more comprehensive accountability system that better measures a student's true academic performance and growth over the duration of the school year rather than on one testing day.

Modernizing the State's accountability system requires major reforms that better measure a school's and district's success.

David Konefal
Self
Conroe, TX

I am strongly opposed to vouchers in all forms and strongly support fully funding our public schools.

April Phillips
Self-Public School Teacher
Spring, TX

I have been a public school teacher in Texas for 36 years. I am writing to beg you to fully fund our public schools and to vote "no" on vouchers. The way to improve our schools is to decrease class size (which can only be done if districts have a larger budget), to reduce emphasis on the STAAR test, stop the culture war on teachers, and increase teacher pay so that quality instructors remain in education. Texas has a budget surplus and Texas taxpayers overwhelmingly support public education. It's time for legislators to provide the finances needed to our public schools. Thank you.

Deborah Leiber
self
THE WOODLANDS, TX

This bill is a sham!! This is just another name for vouchers that have been repeatedly rejected by the legislature. Parents already have a right to choose to send their children to private school or to homeschool. In no event should public taxpayer dollars be used to support private and home schools that are not held to the same requirements as public schools!!

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Robert Lee
Self
Bay City, TX

School vouchers will not benefit the majority of Texas school students. Using public dollars to fund private schools with restrictive admission policies and no accountability does not meet the Texas Constitution requirement to provide for "the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools." (Texas Constitution, Article) Furthermore, a new study from the University of Virginia indicates that that private schools do not provide a better education, especially to urban students. (<https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/new-study-confirms-that-private-schools-are-no-better-than-public-schools>) The studies described in a March 20, 2023 Fort Worth Star-Telegram article (<https://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/crossroads-lab/article273281180.html>) have shown that students in the Indiana and Louisiana voucher programs actually lost ground in math and had no clear benefit in English.

If we want the best for our kids, then let's make our current system of free public schools better. Giving money to private schools will only undermine schools across Texas. I have worked in Texas school business for almost 40 years, and I have seen first hand how hard schools work to make the most of what funding they have. Taking funding away will provide for a few at the expense of many. We have invested in our local public schools for over a hundred years, and we should not sacrifice them for a program that is likely to have a negative impact on many of the kids that use vouchers and on all of those left in underfunded public schools.

Christina Wilson
Self
Georgetown, TX

There should NEVER be a monopoly on public education. We should be allowed to choose which schools we send our kids to just like folks who are on EBT can choose which grocery store they can shop at. The majority of the country has school choice and it's worked well for select families who can benefit from those options. Texas needs to follow suit.

Helen Albritton
Retired Teachers
Corsicana, TX

No students education should be restricted by the beliefs of others. Teaching students to be discerning is more important today than avoiding information.

Amy Grotjohn
Self - Educator
Midland, TX

Vouchers will hurt Public Education and will cost taxpayers more money in the long run. It will also cause a school budget crisis. Do not support vouchers in Texas!

William Morgan
Self/Taxpayer
Cypress, TX

- Equal educational opportunity means saying “NO!” to VOUCHERS. They divert funding from public schools to private schools. There is NO ACCOUNTABILITY NOR TRANSPARENCY ON THE USE OF THESE FUNDS WHICH IS OUR TAXPAYERS’ DOLLARS.
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-

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-

Cindy Foster
Myself
Lone Oak, TX

I vehemently oppose a voucher system for Texas, as do most Texans I know. If the State Legislature would simply pay teachers a reasonable rate of pay in this age of extreme inflation, everyone would receive a quality education.

Evelyn Cherry, mother/guardian
Self and Sean, my profoundly retarded son
Garland, TX

Please include in HB 3731, the opportunity to receive Information (only if residential placement is needed) of our State Supported Living Center (SSLC).

My son, Sean lives at Denton SSLC in the Critical Care Unit. Sean is medically fragile and also requires many therapists' services provided at DSSLC. I had to fight to get Sean's DSSLC placement to meet his needs. I had to search for residential placements available for Sean and his needs. I was required to go to several locations and express my opinion why it would not meet his needs before I could finally see a SSLC. SSLCs were the last possibility of a residential placement they would tell me about even though I knew that it was what I wanted for Sean and would meet his needs.

I still had to fight to get Sean into DSSLC even with his level of needs. Sean requires 24 hour nursing and more that could only be met in a Critical Care Unit. I only considered a residential placement after Sean medical needs reached a point I could not get those services met in the community and physically I could no longer care for Sean. I weighed 98 pounds the last 3 years Sean was home and I was only one to care for Sean. On top of all this I had to fight to get a SSLC placement for Sean. My heart was broken but I had to fight for Sean to get all his needs met.

Please include in this HB 3781, the opportunity to receive Information (only if residential placement is needed) of our State Supported Living Center (SSLC).

Thank you for your time and dedication,
Evelyn Cherry

James Leiber
self
The woodlands, TX

I am strongly opposed to to "educational opportunity and freedom to obtain a quality education"! This is just another name for vouchers to divert public funds to private schools or home schools that do not have STARR testing or any accountability, no elected school boards, no requirements to serve special needs students, no requirements for school safety, certified teachers, professional development, or due process for parental rights. Parents have many choices for a quality education in public schools or charter schools that are paid for with state funds. There are career and technology programs, fine arts programs, STEM programs, advanced placement and dual credit, etc. Public funds should not be used to support private and home schools that do not have the same accountability requirements as public schools.

James Leiber
self
The woodlands, TX

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Frances Romero
Taxpayer in Cy-Fair ISD Community
Houston, TX

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

I am a taxpayer in the Cypress Fairbanks ISD school community residing in HD 148 and SD 7. Please consider the overwhelming majority in Texas who DO NOT support vouchers. Equal educational opportunity starts in our public schools. An increase in the basic allotment is desperately needed for districts to be able to keep up with costs and to offer their teachers pay raises. Vouchers would further divert funds from our public schools who educate ALL students. With NO accountability nor transparency on the use of voucher funds, there is an imminent opportunity for fraud and zero learning. This hurts our children and our education system in Texas.

Please recommend NO VOUCHERS or any other type of system that diverts funds from our public schools. Thank you for your consideration.

Frances Romero

Dovie Carrell
Self
Nacogdoches, TX

All students in Texas have the same educational opportunities and freedom to obtain a quality education through our public schools. Putting vouchers or ESA's in place will not benefit ALL students and therefore should not be a part of our educational landscape. 37% of Texas public school students live in rural areas where these programs will be of no benefit. Let's fully fund Texas public schools and put vouchers and ESA's to rest permanently.

Nancy Manuel, Dr.
Self --- Retired Professor of Business Administration
Jersey Village, TX

Governor Abbott visited with Cypress Christian School, in Houston, on March 21, 2023 and specified that it is his intent to help parents "return to being in-charge of their child's education." The Senate Bill 8 (which was not listed under this heading of Bills and Topics) appears to be relevant under Educational Opportunity & Enrichment, July 11 and 12, 2023.

This inquiry (regarding School Choice and the Implementation of the Texas Voucher System) is of great interest to multiple families not only in the Cypress/Houston area; but also, throughout the Greater Houston Metropolitan area.

When could this Legislation be passed to help families with education-related expenses? Certainly, the longer the delay the more hardship is placed on those who prefer to choose the proper school/education for their children; until finally their opportunity runs out and with no assistance.

This is of high interest to me, as well as for my family and many members of my community. I would be appreciative of information on the current status for School Vouchers and the outcome to-date. I can be contacted at my phone number 832.713.1959 or my address 15714 Honolulu St., Jersey Village, Texas 77040. Thank-you, Dr. Nancy I. Manuel, Ed.D.

Lisa Abuka
self (parent in Cy-Fair ISD)
Katy, TX

Equal educational opportunity means saying "NO!" to VOUCHERS. They divert funding from public schools to private schools. There is NO ACCOUNTABILITY NOR TRANSPARENCY ON THE USE OF THESE FUNDS WHICH ARE OUR TAXPAYERS' DOLLARS.

Equal educational opportunity requires adequate funding for public schools, beginning with an increase in the basic allotment to catch up with inflation as well as changing funding from based on Average Daily Attendance to Enrollment.

Meaningfully supporting educators requires an inflationary index in the State's funding formula to allow public school districts to keep up with costs and to provide teachers with better pay raises.

Improving outcomes requires a more comprehensive accountability system that better measures a student's true academic performance and growth over the duration of the school year rather than on one testing day.

Modernizing the State's accountability system requires major reforms that better measure a school's and district's success.

The USA and the Great State of Texas exist as we know it because of great public schools! 90% of Americans attend public schools. Good education requires adequate funding. Public schools are funded with tax dollars. Tax dollars require public accountability and public oversight. Just because Tim Dunn and Farris Wilks fund your campaigns and want our tax dollars to line their pockets does not mean that is what you should vote for!!!

Using the Texas Education Agency to make great public schools appear subpar is something that a third world country would do, not something Texas should be doing.

Lisa Abuka
Self (Cy-Fair ISD Taxpayer & Parent)
Katy, TX

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Using the Texas Education Agency to make great public schools appear subpar is something that a third world country would do, not something Texas should be doing.

Cynthia Stephens
Self - teacher
College Station, TX

Vouchers are not the answer to securing a quality education for Texas students. A school is not better by nature of being private. It is the teachers that make the difference. I taught at a private school my first two years in education, and am currently teaching in a public school for my 38th year. I guarantee you that my students receive a MUCH better education and school experience in my public school class now than my private school students did. NO to vouchers! Private does not equal quality.

Katherine Katherine, Dr.
ATPE
Nacogdoches, TX

I, as a taxpayer supporting our Texas Public Education System and as Texas Public School Teacher who has chosen to teach all children who reside in Texas who might come under my tutelage, want all of my taxpayer money to be spent on students who attend Texas Public Schools only. I oppose VOUCHERS in any form.

Serena Morello, Ms.
Mother
Austin, TX

Please allow the free choice for Americans to decide their children future by allowing our children to seek the proper education which in riches all Aspect of our life including spiritual education that reflects our nature .

Megan Clifton
Self
Temple, TX

Vote NO to vouchers! Funding public schools and offering teachers competitive pay is the only way to make quality education accessible to Texas students. Funding for public schools means better learning opportunities for students!!

Christi Caulfield
Self-Educator
Friendswood, TX

I am frustrated at the lack of progress on funding public schools. PUBLIC schools need basic funding to provide for our kids. Schools need adequate funding to retain teachers. This voucher push needs to stop. Members that have held this off have done so because WE THE PEOPLE have been begging them to hold the line. Move off of your voucher initiative and give public schools what they need. This is ridiculous! Teachers need raises, schools need appropriate funding and NO VOUCHERS!

Christi Caulfield
Self
Friendswood, TX

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Shantay Carter, Teacher
Self /Teacher
Houston, TX

I think Public Schools should be fully funded, I am totally against vouchers of any type for funding public schools.

Morgan Henrichson
self- teacher
Dallas, TX

No vouchers! Less testing! Higher teacher pay!

Brandon Kelsey
Self
Arlington, TX

Less testing, no vouchers and yes to higher teacher pay

James Lynch
Public School
Midlothian, TX

Public education needs more support not vouchers.

Lydia Hiatt
Social Justice Network
FT Worth, TX

Please do not allow vouchers. Please keep our public education an opportunity for all to receive an excellent education.
Thanks for your service,
Lydia Hiatt

Jennifer Ipson, Mrs.
Self
Arlington, TX

Vouchers are not the answer to improve quality education in our state. Vouchers will only deepen the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Please vote down any form of Vouchers. Let's find a real solution.

Debbie Choate, Counselor
Self
Huntsville, TX

No to ESA/Vouchers ! This will further hurt public education

Bruce Ebelt, Mr.
SELF
Kerrville, TX

STOP THIS "WOKE" madness !!

Cortney Gill
Self
Fate, TX

Vouchers are not needed!!! Texas teachers are doing an amazing job teaching the next generation. I DO NOT support vouchers.

Andrea Leinberger, Teacher/clinical psychologist
DFW Psych Medicine, Lufkin ISD
Burke, TX

As both a home school AND public school teacher, I absolutely support the ESA and have been to multiple rallies in East Texas with other parents who also support it.

I do not support taking money from our public schools, but we do not need to do that to also support our private/home schooled students.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION

Craig Rowland
Self
Abilene, TX

Quality education for our children is the very foundation to building and maintaining a free nation. Our children must receive an education that empowers their pursuit of life, liberty and happiness in a nation that allows school choice. Education is founded on principles, not cultural events. Thank you.

Luis Gonzalez
Self
Nacogdoches, TX

I support ESA as a public school parent seeking better options.

Melissa Holt, Ed.D.
Self
New Caney, TX

Respect the professionalism of public school teachers. Reduce testing, say NO to vouchers, and pay public school teachers as valued members of the system.

Nathan Zamora
Self, HS/MS Band Director
Round Rock, TX

As a firm Catholic, I am 100% for public education. There is no current issue in regards to families being able to choose the education of their choice. We need to properly fund Public education with it being the largest source of education. Pouring money into vouchers will not aid Texas in improving education.

diana sanchez
self
austin, TX

Please continue to oppose vouchers, and please consider how taking funds from already overburdened and underfunded public schools will hurt children throughout Texas.

Waynokia Jarrett
self-Teacher
Dallas, TX

I believe that education is a great opportunity for all students everywhere, however, within the education system the lack of Life Skills are not applicable for all students especially those who are in alternative school to graduate early with their high school diploma. Students need that set time to explore what they are interested in within the classroom setting because what is being taught in the school is no longer an interest of the students and is not equipping them for the future. We need to go back to teaching our students and have them love education again rather than it them in front of a computer with no social skills to combat that or other life skills to teach them the meaning of certain topics within the classroom setting. A student can learn about the history of MLK or learn to write a thesis paper through a video but without the hands on learning experience step by step teachings then the student is just going through the motions of learning and it becomes difficult for the students, parents, and teachers.

Kasey Hollon, Mrs.
self
Plano, TX

Private education shouldn't just be for the families who can afford it. Fortunately my parents could afford it, my husband and I were able to send all of our children to a school of choice (private, faith-based); and my daughter has been able to do the same with her children.

However, there are countless thousands of children living at or below the poverty line who could benefit from a school of choice if there was a means to affording the best education they could provide for their offspring. Why shouldn't we give a "hand up", and not just a "handout". Ours is a land of opportunity, but without the success of a quality education millions of people never realize that goal.

Please fund a school savings account for the least fortunate in our wonderful state of Texas.

Courtney Myers
self
Spring, TX

I know that Texas has a historic \$32 BILLION SURPLUS this year. I implore you to use this surplus to improve public education and vote against any "educational savings plan for freedom" bill presented to this committee.

I know that an "educational savings account" is a voucher.

I'm pretty sure you know that vouchers will create a two-tier education system in this state: Private/charter/Christian schools with glossy brochures for those who can afford it, and decrepit, failing, miserable schools drained of all fine arts and STEM programs for everyone else (I imagine football and cheerleading will survive the budget cuts.)

An "educational savings account" will not help the kid in subsidized housing who takes the bus to school every day. His family can't afford to the extra time away from work to drive him to-and-from school. His family can't afford the remaining balance of \$5,000+ per year after his voucher is applied, let alone the uniforms, book fees, required laptop, cafeteria lunches, etc, etc.

An "educational savings account" will not help a kid with disabilities who is rejected from all the private schools in his area. FULLY funding special education programs will. (By the way, is Texas still in violation of federal law ensuring students receive the tools and services they need in order to learn?)

An "educational savings account" will not hire new motivated and creative teachers for our classrooms. It won't give raises to hard-working Texas teachers. It won't fill the pension coffers of those who spent years in Texas classrooms.

An "educational savings account" will not employ desperately needed school counselors with the education, training and experience to help Texas children succeed in the classroom. (Unlicensed, religious chaplains just don't cut it.)

Mary Selby
Self
Austin, TX

Please continue to oppose vouchers by any name in the state of Texas. True choice comes from keeping our tax dollars in our public education system. As a parent of a child at AISD and a substitute teacher I urge you to support our teachers and students. Please keep the best interest of ALL children in the state of Texas.

Norman Seaton, Dr.

Self

Forney, TX

Greetings:

Thank you, Committee Chair Brad Buckley, and committee members, for the opportunity to provide information related to Texas education

Testimonial:

- My verbal presentation is a summary of the Academic White Paper.

Problem Statement:

- Currently each Texas-based academic institution operates as an independent organization. Prior to entering the workforce, students of all ages and backgrounds have thousands of options related to courses and completion certificates.
- Therefore, it is difficult or impossible, and expensive, to transfer academic credits among the various academic entities ranging from K-12 through post-graduate studies.

Proposed Solution (Proactive, Low budget, and efficient):

- The legislature requires Texas academic institutions to work together to serve Texas individuals as if it were a single educational unit.
- Individual academic institutions will be serving as one educational entity serving the local and/or regional needs.
- The academic community can work together by consolidating all course offerings into a single database that is readily accessible to everyone. Once the database is established, the various completion certificates and degrees will be revised based on the statewide faculty approved database information.

Expected Result:

After the three (3) year transformation has been completed, students of all ages will be able to select a direct path to success without any unreasonable restrictions and/or excessive cost.

Facts Related to Texas education:

- Individuals living in Texas are life-long learners and deserve the right to become informed consumers of Texas academic opportunities.
- Texas education has always been good, and it improves annually.
- However, the time has come for Texas to realign the academic environment to:
 - o Remove outdated traditional values and standards.
 - o Create a statewide Inventory of Courses with measurable learning outcomes for all levels of academic achievement.
 - o Design an indexing system for the proposed course inventory system that is accessible and understandable to the public.
- Incorporate the latest technology for course delivery and evaluation that includes:
 - o Database Management Systems (DBMS)
 - o Virtual Learning Environments (VTL)
 - o Professionally developed course materials
 - o Academic Freedom of Speech will be related to course delivery

The Academic White Paper contains detailed recommendations that can be implemented and completed within three (3) years.

- Please study the ten (10) page document and contact me if you have any future questions.
- Thank you for the opportunity to present this material.

I am now open for any questions.

Deborah Maddux, Mrs.
Self Teacher
Cypress, TX

As long as the public schools receive the funding they deserve for all children then the children will receive the best education. A teacher becomes a teacher because they want to help and educate. Definitely not for the money or respect which is not given.

Paula Singleton
self
Onalaska, TX

Parents and students should have a choice in which school a student attends. Kids belong to their parents, not to the state.

Maria Rey, Ms.
Self/Associate
Lubbock, TX

Public schools need more funding. Public schools give students access and opportunity to gain a quality education. School vouchers will not benefit underprivileged or rural students. Our Texas state leaders need to reject school vouchers because they will only benefit already wealthy students and families.

Rowanne Uselton, Mrs.
self
Livingston, TX

As a former teacher; military brat, who has lived all over the country, and overseas; as well as my adoptive home of Texas; I have been dismayed with the lack of opportunity afforded children in our communities! When a school is no good because of the lack of leadership at the top, it filters all the way down from the teachers to the student body. When that happens, the parents are stuck with a mediocre education for their children. I have taught in secondary education in HISD in River Oaks Alief Independent Schools and Cypress Fairbanks ISD. I could tell you stories that would have your head shaking! (I never had a bad review or was fired). As a grandmother there are even more comments I saw relevant to today's day and age!

Cynthia Foster
Self
Lone Oak, TX

Every child in the State of Texas has access to a quality PUBLIC education! Of course, all public schools are not equal because Texas Legislators have continually failed to provide monetary support to ALL public schools and to the teachers who work in them. Vouchers are not the answer! More testing is not the answer! You should consider fully funding PUBLIC education in Texas! If vouchers are passed, I pray to God that voters across this state will vote you and our governor out of Texas as soon as possible. You should remember that you are in your elected position because you are "supposed" to represent the people who elected you.

Kayla Lawson
ESA
Lufkin, TX

My son is being tested as autistic and I would love for him to be able to have the chance at learning equally to other children

Taci Kistler
Self / Substitute teacher
McKinney, TX

Everyone should have access to a quality education - not just those who can afford private school, or take drive their children to/from said school no matter where it is located. EVERY child should have. A voucher system will leave our middle class and lower income families with schools that are less funded, understaffed and therefore unable to provide the quality education that should be available to EVERYONE. Texas is already underperforming in education and vouchers will make it worse for the majority of students.

Taci Kistler
Self / Substitute teacher
McKinney, TX

I'm becoming ashamed of my home state of Texas and the arrogance, self-serving agendas that are plaguing our state. say NO to VOUCHERS!!! Vouchers absolutely will NOT result in educational opportunity for all. It will cripple public schools, result in a lost of teachers/staff and benefit only the upper-middle and upper class families. Vouchers = discrimination. Don't do it!

Margaret Betanco
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please fund our public schools. They are the foundation of our democracy.

Joshua Yanes
Ferris ISD
Ferris, TX

P-Tech and CTE Programs need more support, funding and teachers. Educator retention is becoming impossible with pay being so low and working educators are declining.

Richard Spurr
Self, retired CEO of Zix Corporation, previously a public company based in Dallas, now acquired
Dallas, TX

I am strongly in favor of School Choice. My tax dollars should not be directed to any school that the government chooses which is the case with the public school system. I want the parents of school age children to choose their child's school and use my tax dollars to help them if they are in need.

Cynthia Foster
Self
Lone Oak, TX

If you would fully fund Texas PUBLIC education, including substantial raises for teachers, every child in Texas would receive and obtain a quality education. We don't need vouchers. We need less testing so teachers can focus more on the actual curriculum. Teachers need a raise.

Ronda Norsworthy, Miss
Self
Arlington, TX

I am urging you to please support universal school choice.
As a parent, I am all for empowering all parents with the freedom to make their own education choices.

Kristina Schweighardt
Self
Cypress, TX

We need educational opportunities for everyone and No vouchers!

Donald Bennett
Self
Austin, TX

I believe every family should have the right and the ability to choose the best educational option for their family, and that school funding should follow the child. A family and child should not be condemned to a failing school simply based on their zip code.

Jeff Waltrip, Teacher
Self/Teacher
Kyle, TX

No vouchers! Support public schools and public school teachers or we will vote you out!

Heather McManus
Self- Army wife and mother of 4
Copperas Cove, TX

I have 3 children in the local public school. My 8 year old son is dyslexic and dysgraphic along with a vast medical history. The public school is failing him terribly! He has not made progress and can not read nor write. They lie about services being provided and shut down parent's voice in ARD meetings. They falsify documents stating he received services, including days he was absent. They take the funds and forget the student. The environment is toxic and has caused him extreme anxiety and distress. He has been assaulted by staff member's children and deprived of a fair education. I have fought tirelessly and have gotten nowhere. We need school choice and it can not wait! I know he is capable, he just needs the right environment, and the public school in Copperas Cove, TX has left him behind! Empower parents and give us choices because not every child thrives in the public school environment. We are a military family and don't have extra funds or the ability to move to a place of our choosing. If left in public school, my son will fail.

Pam Cantey
Self. Special Education teacher
Bryan, TX

Teachers need higher pay, less testing and more teaching, and no vouchers that would take away from our students opportunities to be successful.

Audrey Bollers
self
Rowlett, TX

Public schools need higher pay, less testing, and no vouchers.

Nema House
Self
Justin, TX

Save public Ed. Show teachers they matter to prevent the mass exodus. public schools need higher pay, less testing & NO vouchers!

Karmann Schackmann
self (citizen)
Frisco, TX

Please vote against any form of vouchers.

Karmann Schackmann
self (citizen)
Frisco, TX

Please vote against any form of vouchers.

Danielle Gunn
Self/public schools in Texas
Sachse, TX

Every Texan has the freedom to obtain a quality, FREE public education through the public education system. No to vouchers! They pull money away from public schools, specifically low income areas, and is a systemically inequitable program. NO TO VOUCHERS. Use the budget surplus to invest in educators and school districts!!!!!!

Janet Brown
Self
Belton, TX

I am for Parents to have a choice in the Education Opportunities for their child and support the use of Educational Savings Accounts to support that effort, whether this is a Public School or something outside of that system. Thank you.

Lou Luckhardt
self Officer Dallas AFL-CIO CLC
Ennis, TX

I reside in rural Ellis County, and my son graduated from Ennis ISD. As a parent and supporter of public education in Texas, I want to express how much I feel that any type of draining funds from our public schools through voucher programs is an attempt to privatize our public education system. I also am opposed to using public money to fund private religious schools.

I retired from work as a Probation Officer of 34 years, and witnessed how we tried to privatize our criminal justice system in Texas. The private jails we funded in Texas, like the Dawson State Jail in Dallas County, it was a complete scandal that resulted in it's closure. This is an example of a private company administration, driven by profit, resulting in bad delivery of public services. We have already experienced how privatization of public systems without proper accountability is a debterment to our public systems in Texas. Texas should fully fund our public schools to increase both quality and choice for students.

Megan Hart
Self- teacher
Wylie, TX

School vouchers are not the answer to public school equity. While the intent of vouchers is great, many parents don't understand how this could negatively impact our incredible public school systems in Texas.

Dorothy Mallona
Founders Classical Academy of Lewisville
Lewisville, TX

As a teacher in a classical charter school, we have nearly 1,000 students on a waiting list. Our students consistently outperform the local public school students on SAT and other college entrance exams. Our students graduate and garner more scholarships than them as well. Why can't all students have the same opportunities? Please support school choice. It is all of our futures at stake.

Michelle Christian
Texas Christian School
Houston, TX

We, the people (parents) of the United States are entitled to financial (taxpayer's support) freedom to choose quality of education for our children. As parents, we know that each of our children has different sets of skills and interests... needs. Therefore, having raised 3 of my own children, and having been a public and private sector Educator know 1st hand that not one brand of foundational education fits each child. Some thrive in public education, while others drown in it. We want the resources to enable us to choose, so that means giving privately schooled children their fair share of public school funding. Having tax-paying parents pay for private school education is a crime.

Kathleen Frost Fink

Self

Cypress, TX

Equal educational opportunity means saying “NO!” to VOUCHERS. They divert funding from public schools to private schools. There is NO ACCOUNTABILITY NOR TRANSPARENCY ON THE USE OF THESE FUNDS WHICH IS OUR TAXPAYERS’ DOLLARS.

- Equal educational opportunity requires adequate funding for public schools, beginning with an increase in the basic allotment to catch up with inflation.
- Meaningfully supporting educators requires an inflationary index in the State’s funding formula to allow public school districts to keep up with costs and to provide teachers with better pay raises.
- Improving outcomes requires a more comprehensive accountability system that better measures a student’s true academic performance and growth over the duration of the school year rather than on one testing day.
- Modernizing the State’s accountability system requires major reforms that better measure a school’s and district’s success.

I am a parent of a child on CFISD that has a 504 and with the special education my dyslexic daughter has completed, dyslexic teaching, and can read above grade level. The systematic education that has been provided by CFISD has been amazing. It needs more funding and the teachers need a raise the pandemic and the inflation afterwards has made it difficult for all students and all teachers. We need to support them and our public education vouchers will damage that. There is not a systematic or verified way for it private schools or home schools that would be taking the funding away from public schools and if that my daughter was in a private school that didn’t have those options, she wouldn’t be able to read or succeed in school. Texas has good public education. It can be better please fund that and please don’t defund our public schools. The children of Texas deserve better..

Anthony Elmo

self

Keller, TX

I do not support private school vouchers. I have three young kids in public schools in Keller. We need more funding for educators and public schools; no school vouchers.

Perla Muñoz Hopkins, Public School Mom & Teacher, USAF Veteran
Self: Educator, Parental Rights Advocate, Veteran
Leander, TX

Honorable Chair Buckley, Vice Chair Hawkins and Members of the House Educational Opportunity & Enrichment, Select Committee,

On behalf of the public school children of our 2,000,000 military veterans in Texas, I want to thank you for supporting HB 5167, HB 2892 & HB 4210.

Safety, educational opportunity and quality education are a top priority for military families.

HB 2892 passed during the 88th Regular Session. This bill honors the request of a service member to have their student transferred to a different school district upon agreement under Section 25.035. HB 4210 also passed, which allows military personnel appointed as School Board Trustees to continue the remainder of their term of service to the military installation upon retirement.

Unfortunately, proposed updates as outlined in HB 5167, did not pass every bill stage during the 88th. HB 5167 would have required that each school district and open-enrollment charter school post on the school's website an easily accessible link to information regarding the Compact. Language in HB 5167 also extended Compact provisions to the children of retired service members and those deceased while on active duty, from 1 year to 4 years.

The Compact or MIC3, both short for Education Code Chapter 162 "Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children," was signed in 2009. The Compact memorializes the agreement between the State of Texas & the DoD so that students of military service members who transfer from one state to another, have a seamless transfer at the receiving school district. It is a compact to help military-connected students overcome educational barriers, not to grant them favors. One student expressed this sentiment captured on the Military Child Education Coalition 2020 Survey (MCEC), "I am not a victim, I just want a level playing field when I transfer in."

Today, the TX MIC3 Commissioner Designee from TEA provided an "Overview" on the Compact through a presentation that I attended via the MCEC. The TEA Representative proceeded to present erroneous information regarding Education Code Chapter 162, as well as announced that the only bill affecting the Compact in TX is HB 5167 (1 to 4 yrs). This is incorrect, as HB 5167 did not pass the Senate Education Committee due to oversight. As soon, as military families were made aware that it was being held in the Senate, the language therein HB 5167, was salvaged by being unanimously voted onto HB 100 as Amendment F-12.

I am writing today to ask this body to help us navigate the path for these amendments (formerly HB 5167 Wilson/Flores et al.), to be added as an "item" for the Education Special Session.

At the Hearing on Educational Opportunity at JHR 140 today, I have provided further research and background:

- Needs Assessment
- Bill Analysis
- Matrices & Surveys
- Parent & SME Testimony
- Legal Research- 37,563 NGR Children
- Best Practices & Resolutions

Again, thank you for supporting our military children...they serve too!

Tammye Nash
self/journalist
Fort Worth, TX

Texas' educational system needs better pay for teachers and less arbitrary testing. Give teachers the time and resources they need to teach, and pay them what they are worth. What we ABSOLUTELY DO NOT NEED is school vouchers!!!!

JaLana Stewart, Teacher
Self/teacher
HUNTINGTON, TX

Vote no to vouchers!

Sandra Bounds
Self
Huntsville, TX

As a public school parent and teacher, I ask you to please support all students by supporting the collective in public schools. Please say no to any version of a voucher system.

Kimmi Le
Self - Teacher
Grand Prairie, TX

Public schools need higher pay, less testing, and NO Vouchers!

Grace Rivers
Self/Teacher
Wichita Falls, TX

While I wholeheartedly believe that all children should have an equal opportunity to education, I strongly oppose vouchers for the following reasons:

1. Parents who choose to forgo public education for private or homeschool options do so of their own will. Just as any other choice made by an adult, all choices have consequences. Why should those of us choosing public school education have to pay for other citizens' choice to send their children to a private school? If I wanted to send my daughter to a private college instead of a public one, I would pay twice the cost! No one is going to help me with that. It is a choice and I must be able to bankroll my choice.
 2. By allowing vouchers for homeschool options, I believe the State is opening itself up to a regulatory nightmare. While I personally know many families who have successfully home-schooled, I have seen a great deal more that have not been successful. Being a public school teacher for the past 26 years, I have witnessed many students who come from homeschool situations who are way behind the public school students academically and socially. In addition, there are so many online programs now that parents leave their children at home to do their schoolwork while they go to their jobs. How is that healthy and not child neglect? How will the State monitor all of the families who choose to homeschool? We don't have the resources for that.
 3. Finally, will the private school and homeschool students be held to the same rigor and standards that the public school students are? Will they have to take STAAR tests and be held accountable for their scores? If not, then there is no way we are talking about a fair and equitable education!
-

Carol Villarreal
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am a reading specialist at a Title 1 high school in San Antonio, Texas. Vouchers would really hurt our campus funding as a majority of my students would not choose to take the voucher and the lost funding would really hurt our ability to reach our students. Please vote NO to vouchers and instead vote YES to increase the student allotment.

Colton Pruitt
Self / Educator
Hallsville, TX

It is absurd to pretend that vouchers are Constitutional. This is a thinly veiled attempt to funnel tax dollars into churches and other interest groups by calling it "freedom" in education. Church and State should always remain separate. Pretending this won't happen is feigned ignorance. Furthermore, you've attached these measures to the idea of educator pay raises. How insulting to strip constitutional protections and hide it under a pay raise. Legislators are always allowed to vote free of consequence for their own salary, but educators must bend to the whim and policy position of lawmakers. If you want to make a difference in education, vote down vouchers and start authoring and supporting bills that make a difference in the lives of students and staff of our schools. Do not support documents that line the pockets of lawmakers and churches.

Elizabeth Paulette
Retired
New Braunfels, TX

I am a retired teacher and parent of two children that are products of public school education and a charter school. Texas public schools are a great choice for Texas families. I taught elementary school for 20 yrs. in Texas public schools, so I know first hand that our schools are functional. But parents should be allowed to have as many choices as possible. I wish I could of had that opportunity when my children were in school, thankfully Texas already had charter school options available at no cost to parents because that was the right choice for my daughter. Today, parents have the choice of sending their children to a public school, online learning, charter schools and God willing the option of school vouchers will soon be a reality. Even though Texas teacher unions are strongly advocating against vouchers making false claims that their school budgets will be gravely impacted, you need to remain strong and make sure this education bill has school vouchers as yet another option for Texas families.

Tracy Price
Self
Katy, TX

I'm sick of education being politicized. It's simple. We need to raise the student allotment and provide teachers with a substantial raise to keep them from leaving in droves. I'm a teacher and parent and I'm fed up. I will remember your actions at the ballot box, and I will use every connection and network I've built in my 15 years of teaching to encourage my friends and family to vote for pro-public education leaders
424/3000

Sarah Markette
Self
Houston, TX

I work for Spring Branch ISD in Houston, TX as an elementary school nurse. I see the effort our teachers and staff put in to give students the best education they can but they can only continue to that by getting the proper financial support to complement their effort. Schools can only do so much with inadequate resources. It is vitally important that Texas raises the basic allotment to help Texas' educators as they work hard to help prepare Texas' future society.

On a personal note, I have been told that this next school year that I will not be getting a cost of living raise as my district is having to trim its budget substantially due to an inadequate basic allotment increase in funding. I think it is disrespectful for Texas' legislators to undervalue its education workforce and allow us to struggle financially as we devote ourselves improving Texas' future generations.

Please increase the basic per child allotment funding by at least \$1000.

Brinda Gurumoorthy
Alliance AFT
Dallas, TX

I am a supporter of public schools and believe we need to support schools and staff who are educating our highest need students, especially with areas experiencing poverty in both urban and rural areas. There is a reason many democrats and rural republicans are anti-voucher; they both know that system diverts funding away from the public schools that need it most. Vouchers can go to schools that may not be regulated and may not provide quality education, while public schools get oversight. Please vote against vouchers and for public schools and Texas's children

John Strickland, Mr.
Self
Sherman, TX

Private school vouchers are incredibly harmful to public schools. The public school are in the state they are in because legislators refuse to acknowledge that teacher pay needs to increase to attract quality educators. Also, they refuse to decrease standardized testing. No public money should go to funding private schools (i.e. vouchers) and as little as possible should go to testing companies. Opposing vouchers is a step toward improving public education in Texas. A close second would be legislation requiring any person at the state level (commissioner of ed., committee members/chairs, etc.) with input on public education policy (standards, etc.) have a degree in education as well as experience in professional education.

Jessica R.
self
Palmer, TX

We do not want a voucher system. We want to invest in public schools. Taking away money from public schools hurts the majority of the population of Texas, especially those who are lower income. Public school teachers are some of the hardest working individuals, who some cannot financially survive on Texas base pay without the support of a spouse. Texas should support public schools and raise teacher pay.

Kara Koller, Mrs
Self
New Braunfels, TX

As Texans we already all have an opportunity for our children to receive a quality education. I moved back to Texas so my own children could receive a quality education. Both graduated from Klein HS and both are very successful adults.

That being said, this current organized attack on Texan public education is a slap in the face to those of us who work in education and those who enjoy the fruits of Texas public education.

I am a product of private schools and have the privilege of now teaching in a public school. My parents made the choice to send us all to catholic schools and never complained about not having the government help them pay the tuition. That was a choice they made.

I have had parents of my current students talk to me about their thoughts on vouchers and they don't know what they will be losing. They don't know the money won't follow their children back if they change their mind or are kicked out. They don't know that teachers aren't required to have certification or follow an IEP. They don't know that they lose rights afforded to them in public schools. They don't know that the voucher won't cover the entire tuition. One set of parents didn't know that there wasn't bus service.

Do not mislead parents. If they knew the real losses, they would rather fully fund their neighborhood public schools and fix what we've already built.

I've heard texlege complain about our failing schools when the latest data showed that this year, Texas high schools outperformed pre-pandemic scores. We are ranked 42nd in funding yet make miracles happen. Can you imagine what we could do if the schools were properly funded?

Forgive the length of this message, but I am very passionate about this topic and I am beginning to believe that our very own Texas Legislators don't remember that Public Education is guaranteed in our state constitution. Keep public money in public schools.

Maria Soria
SELF, paraprofessional
Pharr, TX

I'm a paraprofessional employee in a public school district, I have two sons studying in college, my salary is helping support them, even though it is not a big amount. Almost all paraprofessionals don't make more than 20,000 per year! We need law's to support our jobs and increase our salaries, not the opposite. Please take in mind thousands of families that belong to the middle class, those families like mine that don't receive government help. But, we love our jobs and want to maintain them.

Pitts Jane
Self
Oglesby, TX

I am the product of a transfer from a poorly performing school to a higher performing school. I attended Oglesby ISD from Kindergarten through the 6th Grade. TAAS test scores bottomed out starting 7th grade; i was also ruthlessly bullied day in and day out. Starting 7th Grade in McGregor ISD showed quickly that my parents had made the right decision. I ended up graduating salutation, although my diploma has the valedictorian sticker - my father had cardiac issues every six months my entire high school career. Agent Orange is slowly killing him; he's still alive actually. Anyway, I wouldn't have been surprised if the counselors had changed the stickers since the valedictorian was arrogant and had gotten into trouble a couple of times during those four years. I am all for students and parents being able to choose their educational setting. It made a world of difference for me. If I had stayed in Oglesby and endured the daily torture, I don't know if I would have made it. I'm a nerd by nature, so I clung to everything I learned while in school. I learned even more in McGregor and was able to participate in Band as well as some sports. Please vote FOR the choice!

Karina Anderson
self
Missouri City, TX

As a former charter school teacher, recruited to Texas to teach I was extremely disheartened by the lack of equity in "Public Charter Schools". From the marketing and motivational stories shared during recruitment and training I was inspired and motivated to make a difference. However, when I arrived on my campus in the historic 3rd ward district of Houston, I found a completely different reality from what was advertised. The school leaders decided those students did not deserve or "were not ready to learn any other subject besides reading and math". As the year progressed the access to the district support of resources and leadership was limited and staff and students were left to make "wish sandwiches" to develop the skills needed to become contributing citizens. It was apparent by the spring, the only thing that mattered was test scores in a mad dash to cram students with information called "STAAR Prep". I saw students mentally and emotionally burnt out from the lack of consistency, behavior and discipline felt like a prison. As a teacher, I did my best to provide quality instruction and enrichment, and a lot of my colleagues felt the battle was lost, knowing the true story behind this charter school. All charter schools are not created equal and lack the accountability at many levels which is not giving an equitable education to it's students. Public schools are a valuable option for students and parents when fully- funded and supported through state legislation. We have to do better to support public schools from which so many leaders, including myself, are products of as engaged contributing citizens.

Kristina Bolt
Self - Teacher
Montgomery, TX

Students who use the ESA are generally ones that would have been going to private school regardless. There are absolutely no requirements for private schools to service at risk or high need students such as students with special needs. Private institutions have an application process and do not guarantee that anyone can be approved for their programs. Private schools are not held accountable for student learning in the same manner as public schools.

People scream for equity, however, there will be less equity in the presence of the ESA. The ESA does a supreme disservice to the students of this state and will in fact, make the disparities between those with money greater than those without.

Dan Wright
Self - public school teacher
Cedar Park, TX

As a public school teacher with 20 years experience in Texas I cannot overstate the importance of increasing the basic allotment. We are talking about the future of our children! Also Texas teachers struggle to make ends meet. In no other area are professionals with bachelors and masters degrees expected to work for so little pay. This needs to change. On the topic of vouchers anything drawing funding from public education must be rejected. If private schools receive vouchers they will simply raise their tuition to increase their profits.

Kristina Bolt
Self - teacher
Montgomery, TX

Students who use the ESA are generally ones that would have been going to private school regardless. There are absolutely no requirements for private schools to service at risk or high need students such as students with special needs. Private institutions have an application process and do not guarantee that anyone can be approved for their programs. Private schools are not held accountable for student learning in the same manner as public schools.

People scream for equity, however, there will be less equity in the presence of the ESA. The ESA does a supreme disservice to the students of this state and will in fact, make the disparities between those with money greater than those without.

Neva Bottoms, Mrs.

Self

Corsicana, TX

Texas public schools need to be fully funded with no taxpayer money being used for any sort of private school. Support Texas public education and do not support any form of voucher.

Pitts Jane

Self

Oglesby, TX

I think I accidentally submitted my comments on the wrong date. But please vote for the right to choose a child's educational setting. It made all the difference in my life. In Oglesby ISD, I was not being challenged and I was also being bullied ruthlessly. Transferring to McGregor ISD made all the difference. I was also able to enjoy band (marching and concert) which was not a possibility at Oglesby. Recently, Oglesby lost their Bully Management Personnel. Their janitor used to watch me be tormented; he never did anything about it. However, after I left, my uncle stepped up and tried to stop anyone bullying another. He dropped dead from a heart attack. My dad, his brother, tried, but stubborn is as stubborn does. Give these students the right to choose! Sometimes their lives depend on it. Mine did.

Pam Taylor

Self

Cypress, TX

Please vote "no" to vouchers. Money should not be taken from public schools
For private schools who will not be regulated and have control over which students they allow to enroll. This can easily lead to discriminate as SPED students, at-risk students, etc which may require more resources will not be viewed the same as other students when it comes to enrollment and private schools will be given that authority and power to discriminate whether directly or indirectly by their choice in students they accept at their schools. Totally unfair and unacceptable!! Taxpayer money should not be used for this type of discrimination.

Chastity Kennedy, Teacher

Self

Midlothian, TX

Pay professional teachers more and public education quality increases.

Cynthia Scorzelli

None

GOODRICH, TX

our kids' heads are being filled with drag queens, sexually explicit content and general hate towards America and our values. Stop this nonsense!

Matthew Low
SELF-Teacher
Clarksville, TX

As an educator, I am beyond sick and tired of being denied pay raises that come anywhere NEAR cost-of-living increases. We say we "care about our teachers", but the Legislature's wallet says otherwise. Vouchers are just another mask for segregating schools based on race and financial standing. All of us are not stupid, we can see this very clearly. NO to vouchers! NO to more testing! Pay teachers like you ACTUALLY care about the quality of "our future leaders" education! Wonder why you can't attract or retain teachers?? Really?? I can give you 3 reasons: Taskforce be ready to write these down...(I'm sure you are waiting with genuine interest and not just here to check a box). 1. PAY US MORE so we don't have to get second or third jobs! 2. The amount of testing required to become a certified teacher is ABSOLUTELY INSANE. We are tested and trained and re-trained and see ZERO applicability of these tests to our actual field. 3. School districts have REFUSED to back their teachers because of any faint whisper of a lawsuit by parents. Are teachers sometimes at fault? Sure! The VAST majority of these cases in our SUPER-litigious society; however, are just the vendettas of ignorant parents against poorly under-paid, over-worked civil servants whose only crime is having to endure the daily onslaught of abuse from within and without. I know the Republican goal is to prove that government doesn't work and killing public education is a great way to prove that point. By all means, witness the FURTHER decline of our educational system by voting yes on all these moronic proposals. Your's untruly- Ticked in Texas

Chris Hawthorne, Mrs.
Refugio ISD
Refugio, TX

Vouchers will harm rural school districts, these students even if they would be willing to use a voucher, do not have the means to access a school that would accept the voucher. Vouchers will cause an imbalance within the education system--only the rich will be able to use them. No to vouchers.

Sharon Bell
ATPE
Fort Worth, TX

No vouchers. Find public education that supports all students

Melissa Pool, Ms.
Teachers of Texas
New Caney, TX

Vouchers will take money with schools that have great need. Please support an education system for all by saying no to the voucher system. We need to continue to support an education system that seeks to lift our communities as a whole.

Jamie Butler
Self
Temple, TX

We need the materials to teach and to instill the needs of the community, to develop good patriotic citizens.

Monica Tate
Self
Haltom City, TX

Teachers need higher pay, students need less testing, and no vouchers! Invest in student learning and value teachers.

Adam Bull

Self

Richardson, TX

I'm a teacher and coach at Plano East Senior High school and a proud product of Texas public schools. Public education is one of the only public services that is guaranteed for all, regardless of income, race, or nationality. Right now, this essential public service is being threatened by a lack of funding, a mass exodus of teachers from the profession, and a dangerous scheme to defund and re-segregate public education known as "vouchers" or "educational savings accounts". It's known that a lack of school funding combined with more inexperienced or demoralized teachers lead to worse academic outcomes for our students, and are some of the biggest factors that contribute to it. However, during this past legislative session our state government declined to increase the per-pupil allotment for public schools, and failed to provide substantial raises to teachers and support staff. I've already seen so many of my colleagues leave the profession these past two years, and see more responsibilities being added to our work loads this upcoming school year due to the lack of staff.

While academics are one important part of obtaining a quality education, another important part is socialization. I graduated from a public high school in a fairly white and affluent neighborhood. Though because public school is guaranteed for all, students from outside our school's attendance zone were "bused-in" to keep the school in accordance with federal civil rights laws that ban racial segregation. It was a big wake up call for me the day I hung out with a classmate at his family's apartment located under a major freeway in Dallas. I didn't know previously how a lot of my classmates lived, and came to understand and appreciate being able to interact with people from all walks of life, thanks only to my public school. I know that for me personally, along with students who were bused in to my high school, we benefited socially from interacting with each other, and received better opportunities than we could have otherwise. It is a major reason why I enjoy teaching and coaching as well. I cherish my students regardless of their background and believe we all have something to teach each other.

Vouchers, or educational savings accounts, threaten to re-segregate schools. Under the proposed voucher scheme, parents are incentivized with money from the state government to take their students out of public schools and send them to private schools. The proposed amount of money for parents is also less than the average private school tuition. This means that most of the benefits will go to those who are already wealthy. If wealthy parents can choose to surround their children only with other wealthy children at a private school, many will do so and thus deprive public schools of desperately needed funding, and students from crucial socialization. That is why I oppose vouchers and believe they threaten the freedom and opportunity to obtain a quality education for all.

Amanda Mullens

ATPE, Region 9, Graham Local - Public School Teacher

Graham, TX

All students should have equitable educational opportunities. This is not achieved with vouchers or ESAs of ANY shape or form. This starts with supporting teachers. Helping teacher candidates through educational grants instead of student loans. Requiring all teachers to be highly qualified and certified, and then increasing their pay to be equivalent to that degree. Vote NO to vouchers. Teachers are watching what is happening during this legislative session and they are preparing to use their voice at the ballot box.

Destiny Revercomb

self, teacher

Fort Worth, TX

- 1) substantial teacher's pay raise - \$20k+, quality teachers know their worth. Pay respectfully, and the pool of respectable adults to choose from will grow leading to more qualified teacher candidates. Competition breeds excellence.
 - 2) Drastically decrease standardized testing. It's ruining it for EVERYONE. Take money out of the equation. Standardized testing has sucked the soul out of education.
 - 3) Vouchers are a bad thing for the public school system. Funds are scarce. As vouchers rise in popularity, the public school system will deteriorate without adequate funds.
-

COMMENTS FOR Educational opportunity & freedom to obtain a quality education

Angela Williams, Teacher 29 years
Public schools/veteran teacher
Poolville, TX

Public school teachers do provide quality education. Vouchers will only harm not only education, but educators in the state of Texas, like myself that have devoted so many years to these children. Vouchers will take money away from my school and from my salary. Public education should be supported 100%. Please vote no on vouchers.

Michelle Reeves
Self/Teacher
LUBBOCK, TX

I want proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS!

Laura Musgrove, GT teacher
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Public schools need higher pay, less testing & NO vouchers! Vouchers will be the downfall of the Texas' education system. Why are our state leaders working to dismantle the Texas education system?

Johnathan Siefert
Self- teacher
Pinehurst, TX

Texas education does not need and will not improve by creating a voucher system. Private schools do not follow TEKS and are not tested through STAAR. Private and charter schools do not educate all students and those with the highest needs will not benefit. Public education is important and needs to be supported.

Elizabeth Paulette
Retired
New Braunfels, TX

I am writing to express my determination for school vouchers. Unfortunately, this crucial bill was not able to pass during the regular 88th. legislative session. I am a retired teacher with two adult children that went to public and charter schools. These were great choices for my children, but having yet another choice such as school vouchers will allow for more educational opportunities for all students. Presently, Texas teacher unions are strongly debating against school vouchers claiming that much needed funding will be taken from public schools and they are gripping that they didn't get any raises. We know that most school districts have already given teacher and staff raises. Please, I urge you to pass a bill that will give parents the choice for school vouchers.

Valerie Stewart, Mrs.
Self
Amarillo, TX

I strongly & honestly believe we the parents have the right to choose the school & education whether its public private or home school. The education system is horrible. Teachers can no longer teach. Oh they teach but they don't instill. The instill how to pass the darn test that's it. We the parents need to take control & now. Sad thing it's not the teachers fault. It's the state

Chelsie BRADLEY

Self, educator

Kilgore, TX

It's past time for proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS!

Alison Hawver

self, educator

Kingwood, TX

Stop this assault on public education in Texas, and vote "No" on vouchers.

Helen Williams, Special education teacher

self, Teacher

Houston, TX

Vote YES for more pay and NO to vouchers. Please invest in the students and teachers that we have currently and not in the hypothetical "would, could or should be".

Alison Hawver

self/educator

Kingwood, TX

Stop this assault on public education in Texas, and vote "No" on vouchers.

Justin Chen

Self

Dallas, TX

To whom this may concern, I am concerned that this is an attack on our public schools and educators. I am against charter schools and private schools funded with public money. The evidence of the last decade have shown that those schools have worse outcomes than our public schools despite their discriminatory student selection practices. They are bad for our students and our communities.

Angela Halbert

Self teacher

Houston, TX

As a teacher in Texas, I want proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS!

Angela Halbert

Self/teacher

Houston, TX

As a teacher in Texas, I want proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS!

Erin Morris
Self- elementary school teacher
Houston, TX

Giving all of the teachers premade lessons that are all the same gives each student the opportunity to hear a robotic lesson. Taking away teacher's individually will lower the quality of lessons rather than equalize opportunity. Making teachers into robots isn't what is good for kids.

Shoshana Role
Self/All teachers
Weatherford, TX

Students do have the opportunity to receive a free and high level education. Public education has its faults, but it is built with hard working teachers and administrators. School vouchers providing private education does NOT mean the education will be of a higher level. I have taught numerous students in my 18 years, and I will swear under oath that every private school student I have taught has been leaps and bounds academically BEHIND my other students. Why might that be? Because they are not held accountable to the state. Private schools have their place for specific skills to be honed in and learned, fine arts practices, smaller class sizes needed for some, and religious practices to integrate with education . However- Vouchers minimize our public school funding. Therefore what we will be left with is less funding for public school students, less opportunity, less teachers, and more students in private school that are not being held academically accountable.

Angela Halbert
Self/teacher
Houston, TX

As a teacher in Texas, I want proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS!

Michael Stampley
Self and the teachers of Texas
Rowlett, TX

No vouchers on taxpayers money. Give all teachers a raise based on experience.

Jonathan Ostrander
Tax payer
Coppell, TX

It's time to bring educational savings accounts to Texas. Government schooling is a failed experiment especially given the recent lurch left on all the LGBTTQQAAP propaganda. I believe in choice and this includes allowing parents to have the choice to take their kids out of their local government school, get their tax dollars back, and then send them to a school that is the best choice for the child (remember, parents know best, don't give me this crap that politicians know best). Lord knows all you politicians aren't sending your kids to the local government school down the street—please let us have this same choice (and give us our tax dollars back so we can pay for it!). Please keep fighting the good fight!

Donmonique Mason
Self
Arlington, TX

Teachers need higher pay, students need less testing. Please vote no vouchers! We are losing teachers at an alarming rate that has never been seen before. Please invest in student learning and value teachers. Vote No to vouchers and yes to higher teacher pay.

Donmonique Mason

Self

Arlington, TX

Teachers need higher pay, students need less testing. Please vote no vouchers! We are losing teachers at an alarming rate that has never been seen before. Please invest in student learning and value teachers. Vote No to vouchers and yes to higher teacher pay.

Kim Hare, Mrs.

Self/Intermediate Life Skills Teacher

Dublin, TX

Please give public schools the best chance of succeeding by funding them generously so good, conscientious teachers want to stay in the profession. Don't tie pay raises to vouchers that will for all intents and purposes re establish segregation in Texas Public Schools. Leaving low income children of all colors in more poorly funded public schools while good teachers are lured to private schools. Please give Texas teachers a raise. Say no to segregation and no to vouchers.

Amber Freeman

Self / Texas Public High School Teacher

Livingston, TX

Whether they are called "Educational Savings Accounts," "Vouchers", or something else, using public taxpayer money to fund private education will not benefit the students of this state, especially if these funds are being sent out with no accountability from the institutions receiving them. Studies done on the students that participate in these kinds of programs in other states have shown that they may do worse than their counterparts that stayed in a public school. Struggling schools or ones that may not be able to offer a lot of opportunities need to be supported, not defunded.

Therese Harrity

Queen of Angels

Dickinson, TX

There should be a way for tax payer's money to be directed toward the schooling of their choice. This will certainly be an adjustment and schools will see a flux in enrollment but we need to remember that we are here to provide the BEST possible opportunities for children and that may not be limiting them to public school due to funding.

Jo Danielson

ATPE

Round rock, TX

Teachers deserve a living wage. Vote for a decent pay raise for Texas public school teachers - we are one of the most poorly funded educational systems in the nation. Vouchers will drain much needed funds from public schools and only help the rich. Private schools are not held accountable to the same standards as public schools. If you want to attract and retain teachers you must treat them like professionals and give them a professional salary.

Pam Bessey, Mrs.

Self, Resource and Inclusion Special Education Teacher

Buda, TX

No to vouchers, yes to pay raise for teachers, especially the ones who have been dedicated to the classroom for many years. We are losing so many good, dedicated teachers because we are underpaid! We have so much responsibility attached to our job (student success, discipline, lack of parent support, closing the gap, paperwork, lesson plans). Our pay does not even keep up with the cost of living because usually the small pay raise only covers the insurance premium increase. Invest in our future generation so we will have EDUCATED individuals to take care of our future needs & lead our country!!

Jodi Theodore

Self

Fort Worth, TX

As a 15 year public school teacher I am frustrated and extremely disappointed that Texas wants to fund charter and private schools over public schools. Every school I worked in I have begged and written grants and spent money out of my own pocket in order to get things I needed to teach students. I have to do this because we never have the funds that we need. I love what I do and I love teaching in the public school settings. Let's be honest, we are set up for failure. We aren't given the resources, the support, and the respect that we need to be successful. I currently teach for the EMSISD and we currently are on a hiring freeze and were told that the positions left open will not be filled and that we need to be prepared to have more students in the classroom. I had 31 student in every class last year. How many more can I take? How is teaching a classroom of 40 possible? If the state would fund the public schools we would not have this problem. You are failing our students. Our public school students deserve a quality education, our public schools deserve the full funding. Please stop the voucher program and invest in public schools.

Mark Muller

self - patent attorney, electrical engineer

San Antonio, TX

How can one be exposed to educational opportunity? How is one free to obtain a quality education? The answer to both questions is the same: when you have a choice. If you can choose where you are educated, then you have an additional way to influence the outcome. After all, there are schools that prove their worth every day. Just as there are schools where management should be dramatically revised. This is no secret. If you have no choice, you get whatever hand is dealt to you. And if you happen to live in a district with a failing system, you are stuck in that system, struggling to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. School choice provides a way out. When parents can choose where their children are educated (and why shouldn't they have some say - after all, they've paid for it with their taxes!), real opportunity arises. The potential for competition and quality appears - just as it exists in every other area where services are provided to the public.

When schools that aren't performing begin to lose students, they will be forced to face the fact that they need to do something about it. Something concrete, instead of simply ignoring the bad ratings, or perpetuating an incompetent administration. Why should schools not be held to the same standards as any other business? Competition and comparison make real change possible, motivated by a marketplace. Colleges do this - why not elementary and high schools? There are no losers when educational choice is allowed - except those schools (and some teachers, sad to say) that choose to lose, and fail to reform.

I've actually taught at the middle and high school levels, as well as junior college and post-graduate university classes. I've seen a little bit of everything. And what struck me most powerfully was a young man that came to me to learn, trying so hard to understand algebra. He was the slowest in the class, but easily, the hardest worker. Unfortunately, when I met him, he couldn't earn a D on any reasonable examination, even with all of his effort and desire. After inquiring, I found out that he had been given A's and B's for years at the local public high school. What a shame! But I was told "they have to pass him - it's all about the money."

Education is too important to leave in the hands of poorly performing, incompetent people. Just a little thought makes one realize that a poorly educated child is one that has acquired a major disadvantage, one that will follow them throughout life. A burden that they don't want or need. That burden is one that will be shared by their parents, their future children, and society at large. This is completely unnecessary. With school choice, that burden can finally rest where it should - on the shoulders of the scholastic administration. Please consider making this choice a reality - by providing vouchers, or educational savings accounts - for ALL students in Texas. Our State is a great one, and we can make it even better, with school choice.

Stefanie Wright

Self teacher

Kountze, TX

Education funding in Texas is woefully inadequate and would be even more so if funding is divided. Public education is the best equitable system and should be fully funded. Vouchers undermine this and should be voted against. If you truly care about the state of education in Texas, you will decide against a voucher system and for any funding system that gives students the investment they deserve, and public school is the best delivery system of that investment.

Jessica Smith

Self/ teacher

Brookeland, TX

As a public school teacher I am saying NO NO NO to school vouchers and yes to higher pay! It's not fair to public educators and the education system to take funding away from public schools and put it towards paying for student choice of private school. We are losing teachers daily to unfair pay, increased insurance costs, new state requirements, student discipline, challenging parents, challenging admin and more. **HELP OUR PUBLIC EDUCATORS!**

Jim Rosebrock
Swlf
Belton, TX

I am not in favor of vouchers unless private schools have same accountability and also have to serve special needs children.

Mary Walker
Self retired teacher
Pearland, TX

They have this now with our public schools.
Allow teachers to teach their subject areas, eliminate STAAR testing, and try to remember what it was like when you attended school. That's what we want now!
I don't want my tax money paying for vouchers, when those same kids could go to a public school and get an excellent education!

Janeice Robinson, Ms.
Self
Magnolia, TX

It is an embarrassment that Texas public school funding has been held hostage by attempts at inserting private school vouchers into the funding bill to such an extent that school districts have held off finalizing much needed educational plans for the 2023-2024 school year. School vouchers do not belong in any bills deciding how public education funds will be spent.

Julia Mccomas
Self
Spicewood, TX

Teachers need to be paid more for their important work educating all our children that come to public schools. These students are welcomed, educated, and loved no matter their family background, ice, or need. Why would we dilute this by passing vouchers that take away from schools and communities. Public funds for public education. Charter schools and private schools don't have to play the testing game so why should our public education students have to be tested over and over. Students need to learn to think and reason with real life experiences not be tested and tested again.

Erin Morris

Self- elementary school teacher

Houston, TX

Basing a teacher's salary on anything other than the quality of that teacher (based on our current evaluation criteria) is ridiculous. There are MANY reasons for students to not be scoring high on state assessments (learning disabilities, other disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder and others, new to the country and the language, being foster children AKA trauma has a HUGE impact on a child's ability to learn). These factors aren't a reason for kids to not learn, but their growth should be celebrated rather than saying they aren't reaching the one bar that everyone regardless of life experiences should be able to reach.

First of all, state tests are developmentally inappropriate - especially in elementary. Asking kids to learn letters and sounds, how to read, write, process, and respond AND DO IT ON A COMPUTER in elementary school is unacceptable. They literally cry. Y'all should see it. They actually cry.... It's heart breaking- and not taking into account any of the previously mentioned factors is unfair. (Last year, I had an Asian student who was expected to reach masters because he's Asian, but he also has autism. So nobody is taking into account the fact that this child has other factors stressing him during testing like being in a different room with a new person for small group/oral admin, all while knowing this is a huge test and he has to do well on it, or the fact that english isn't his first language, or the fact that he thinks completely different than most typical brained children think...). This child is more than capable of high scores, but his disability prevents him from showing that on a standardized high stakes test.) I also have GT students literally falling apart because they are so stressed about doing well on this test that they are melting down. All of my students WANT TO do well, but what y'all are asking of them is too much.

Then, basing a teacher's salary on student scores is completely unfair. We are breaking their backs trying to get students to your high unrealistic standards, but if they kids can't pull off masters, the teacher isn't worthy of being paid more??? What about the disabilities, second language, and extreme stress put on them by YOU THE STATE (people who don't know much - if anything - about kids, people who haven't been in an actual classroom in a very long time or ever...). Y'all should be working closer with actual teachers and students before you pass these ridiculous laws. And this whole school voucher business shouldn't even be a thing! I know the state wants to make education into a business they can make money from, but all kids deserve to learn appropriately for free. If Texas would put more time and \$into meeting with teachers and admin of actual public schools in Texas, you could pass laws that were appropriate and helpful for students and teachers. Giving vouchers to go to private school instead of putting more into public education is unfair to kids, parents, and teachers in Texas.

Whitney Rutledge

Self/teacher

Malakoff, TX

Teachers deserve a raise in pay to recognize the work they do and the professionals they are in the workforce. Texas needs to get rid of state testing and school voucher program.

Rebecca Riggs

Teacher

Montgomery, TX

Please do not instate vouchers in Texas. We have seen how awful this has turned out for education in Louisiana and elsewhere. This is not the solution for failing schools. Public school is necessary to maintain democracy.

Kimberly Dennis
Self
Lake Dallas, TX

No vouchers. Pay teachers what they deserve and recognize as professionals and that is what you will get. As in any profession in America you get what you pay for. We are tired of being expected to give 150% but are treated like we are not good enough and are beneath all other professionals. Educators don't make the decisions for hospitals, technology companies or politics, I understand there needs to be unbiased balance but the people making these decisions rarely have firsthand experience as an educator. Until teachers and schools are compensated according the work they do the teacher shortage is only going to rise. NO one wants to teach any more. The pay the rest that are clearly a kickback and not about the educational success of our students. Do better and you will get better!

Connie Ragan
Snyder ATPE
Snyder, TX

As a public school teacher and a tax payer please vote against any type of school voucher program. Public schools need less testing for students and Teachers need a pay raise. Support our public schools, please.

Gina Rico
Self-Teacher
Beaumont, TX

If you are going to give public funds to private schools how do you intend to hold them accountable? Public schools are held accountable by a complicated grading system that includes testing. Are you going to hold those private schools that accept voucher money take STAAR tests? Instead of giving public funds away to private entities you should invest in Public schools and make them better! NO VOUCHERS!

Eric Sosa, Mr.
Self
Round Rock, TX

Support Texas students and educators. Legislators of the Lone Star state, it is imperative that you invest in Texas public schools. Our students deserve more and the current per student allotment in our state is shameful, we should be looking to raise per student spending by at least \$1000 to help our students and their schools have access to the materials they need to compete with others across the nation and the world. Also, our teachers deserve just compensation for the hard work they put in and the huge weight we put their shoulders of not only educating our children but also protecting them, guiding them, and inspiring them to help keep our state's economy and communities thriving and safe. A raise of at least \$5,000 for every teacher in Texas should be considered the minimum and a raise of \$2,500 for all other staff should be put in as well. NO TO VOUCHERS. Our limited public funds have no place in private institutions. Public dollars for public schools!

Stacey Gillar
Self - Teacher
Austin, TX

I want proper FUNDING for our schools, teacher pay raises, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS!

Arturo Trevino Jr.

Self, Music Educator of South Texas

BROWNSVILLE, TX

While educational means are provided in ensuring high quality education from both private and public agencies. The manner in how these students exercise their enjoyment and how they participate are separated even under UIL guidelines. So while the state's effort in providing fund per child being followed regardless of agency location, the parent is the ultimate responsible agent. Public education is provided at no cost to the parent, so are the meals. Why should we penalize public institutions when the private sector keeps students up to PIEMS snapshot and releases them back to charge of the public when their funds has been counted? Our accountability should be year round enrollment, and private schools should take the charge of behavior and putting kids through programs exceeding literacy needs. While our problems are complex, I hope we don't tie funding to private sectors, because these parents can afford it if they don't want them in public school.

Sue Vallejo

Self

Round Rock, TX

School taxes are for PUBLIC school NOT for private schools, I will refuse to pay my school taxes if you are giving even a part of them to private schools. Also our schools need more support and to eliminate state test that tie scores to teacher accountability & students passing.

Jennifer Brewer

Self

San Angelo, TX

Teacher retention can only be accomplished through increased pay, ncluding for para-professionals, decreased emphasis on STAAR testing, and a stop to book bans which limit freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

The persistent and unfounded attacks on teachers and school districts by the uninformed claiming "woke" ideology is being taught is causing unnecessary stress, leading to teachers leaving the profession. Public schools have not been protected from the very government which sets the standards and selects the textbooks we use in the classroom. In fact, Texas politicians push the lies, knowing full well that nothing is being taught that isn't state approved. Then you wonder why teacher retention is a problem, and you claim the solution is vouchers. There is no need for vouchers, by any name. Public schools will be quite good for ALL Texas children if they can get full funding and the complete support of the government that created them, regulates them, and is ultimately responsible for their success.

Vote NO on vouchers. Vote YES for pay increases.

Marianne Reap

Self

Round Rock, TX

Please increase student allotment to a minimum of \$1,000 a student and no funds to support private education. Public Education and support of teachers. Students and staff should be your priority. Please do not fall into the trap of supporting funding or vouchers for private school. That is a personal choice of education for our children that should come with a cost to our own families not the public. Thank you for the opportunity to share our families opinion.

Rosa Gonzales
Self
Brownfield, TX

Teacher needs higher pay, students need less testing, and no vouchers! Texas has always been at the top of education in the United States. Please pay the school districts more money. Don't let Texas fall behind.

Angela Honaman-Elizalde
Self, educator
North Richland Hills, TX

Please fund public schools and their staff memes so that it is possible to support the students that attend them. We always follow through with what the State has asked of us, and a part of the budget surplus should go to that. Vouchers will take away much needed funding that the state constitution also requires. If this is done, we will have better educational opportunities and provide quality education to our students.

LaShondra Stringfellow
Self/City Planner
DeSoto, TX

We have the freedom to obtain a quality education. We need the state to properly fund public schools. Do not siphon money to give to private schools and charter schools. Vouchers are not the answer. Everyone will still not have access to the most elite private schools. And the people behind vouchers know it.. I am beyond sick and tired of time and money being wasted on this measure. Fund our PUBLIC schools. KILL vouchers. And just so you know, I am the parent of a child who has been in private school the last 3 years.

Dawn Bjorge, Mrs.
Self; retired teacher
Austin, TX

I believe all education should be treated equally. Public schools have much oversight as to how tax dollars are spent. The public schools are accountable to a school board and to its clientele. Within a school district, schools may have different cultures. They are still regulated by state boards and federal mandates. If there are to be educational savings accounts, for parental rights for choice as to what institution is educate their child, the institutions must also have the same oversight as public schools. If this is not possible, then education savings accounts should not be appropriated to outside of state and federal oversight.

Public funds should not be taken from public schools to fund educational savings accounts. Funding should be increased to support the infrastructure of education as well as competitive pay for teachers. At this time, I would say no to educational savings accounts and yes to pay raises for teachers and paraprofessionals in the classrooms.

Hayley Coburn, Ms
self, public school educator
Tomball, TX

There are almost SIX MILLION students served through public education in Texas today while there are less than 400,000 students served by private schools. Private schools are wonderful opportunities for students whose families can afford them but the reality is this is not the case for most students in Texas, again SIX MILLION students served are through public education. The fact that this committee is meeting on the idea of "education opportunity & freedom to obtain a quality education" while dismissing public school educators from the conversation is a disservice to the SIX MILLION students who go to public schools.

As a resident of Texas and as a teacher, I have no problem with opening more opportunities for students that have otherwise been closed to them, that is what I do on a daily basis in my public school classroom. But the idea of defunding public education to push one man's agenda is not the answer. Republicans have been in control of public education standards for at least the last 20 years in the state of Texas, if you are unsure of what is being taught in public schools, then please step up and visit your public schools. Better yet, train to be a substitute teacher in these public schools. Then you may pass polices that would actually work to help fund public schools better to provide "educational opportunity and freedom to a quality education."

You cannot push one idea of educational opportunity while denying the one that serves SIX MILLION students throughout our great state. You want students to do better in public schools, you have to understand what is actually happening in public schools. This means you have to hear the stories of the public school educators, listening only to private school educators DOES NOT and WILL NOT provide you with the same insight into public schools. Private and public schools do not have to follow the same educational policies, standards or standardized tests at the end of the year.

Public school teachers put their heart and soul into their classrooms, into their students, and into their jobs because we love what we do. I ask that you stop barring public educators from the conversation about school choice and educational opportunities. I ask that CURRENT public school teachers are included in the conversation, in the meetings and their voice be heard just as much as those who push for private and charter schools. Public education deserves the funding and supplies to provide the best educational opportunities to students who cannot attend private or charter schools even with vouchers due to the ability to get to those schools. Public education deserves the recognition of what teachers do day in and day out with little supplies and little support. The students of public schools deserve the chance to grow and thrive in their public school setting as much as those at the private and charter schools. Public educators deserve to be a part of the conversation and the solution to educational decisions.

Jeanette Larson
Self
Round Rock, TX

Fully funded public schools provide educational opportunities to all. I ask you NOT to support vouchers and funding for private schools. Draining funds from public education would leave students who still can't afford a private education or who can't get into a private school as the only students in many public schools. This "brain drain" would be less challenging and inspiring to students. No vouchers. No tax dollars for private schools.

Laura Unnasch
None
Round Rock, TX

Pls vote NO to public funds for private schools! They are not inclusive of our most needy students & morally, that doesn't seem right!

Tracy Flowers

Self - Public School Speech Language Pathologist/ Kerrville ISD

Kerrville, TX

-No matter what an education voucher is called, the policy is the same. Vouchers divert public funds to private schools and vendors, and continue to undermine traditional public schools and charters, teachers, and students.

-There is a lack of public accountability with any voucher program, and with academic accountability of the schools that receive private voucher money.

-It doesn't matter what vouchers are called. Whether it's educational savings accounts (ESAs), special education vouchers, virtual vouchers, or a "bracketed" voucher set-up to protect rural schools from the impacts of vouchers programs, the vouchers will have a long-term impact on Texas. Vouchers hurt public schools because they impact the funding traditional public schools and charter schools receive from the state.

-Special education vouchers can hurt students with disabilities by weakening rights given to them under IDEA federal regulations. When a parent enrolls their child with special needs in a private school, they waive those rights.

-Public dollars should remain in the public schools.

Amanda Palmer

Self

Katy, TX

As a Texan who was the first in my extended family to graduate from college, I fully appreciate the necessity and value of educational opportunity and freedom. Despite my parents' deep love and commitment to my education, they could not provide the same experiences as my peers living in better educated (and therefore more wealthy homes). I had never gone skiing for spring break. I didn't know what real snow looked like when it stuck to the ground in winter. Sledding had no real conceptual meaning for me. I lacked background knowledge and vocabulary that my peers had better access to. Fortunately, my public school advocating reading for enjoyment and I had great teachers which allowed me to fill many of those gaps.

Those great teachers were the result of a well-funded public school system. A voucher system or whatever nomenclature we choose to use that equals taking funds from public school systems will dilute the learning opportunities that allow the tens of thousands of students like myself to make the critical gains needed to become the next first person in a family to graduate.

Texas has and always will be a fierce advocate of freedom. Our children deserve the freedom to pursue a decently funded, quality education. Those who wish to pursue private or religious alternates should have that freedom as well. The argument that a parent should get to choose where their child's tax money goes is asinine. Will this apply to all things? Do I get to decide what my sales tax will be attributed to? We're far more intelligent to this. Fund public schools. Cease this ridiculous pursuits of vouchers. Pay teachers their value.

Maricela Zuniga

self

MESQUITE, TX

A quality education is investing in your local public school. Look at all the other countries who are outperforming us. They make sure all schools are funded the SAME and students attend their local neighborhood schools. High stakes testing ONLY benefit the pockets of the companies and the officials they are donating money too. Quit making companies richer and invest in your local public schools, protect them like your right to bear arms.

Emily Barrera
Bellville ISD
Bellville, TX

It is not equitable and it is not right to provide public tax dollars to private schools and not hold them to the same standards as public schools.

I am a conservative voter in a conservative town, and I think it is a gross mishandling of public tax dollars to be given to private schools and not hold those schools accountable to that money. Not only should private schools receiving tax dollars be required to serve all types of students (special needs, bilingual, behavioral challenges, etc.), but they should also be required to demonstrate that they are putting those dollars towards the education and growth of those students. If the deemed accountability system that public schools are held to is indeed believed to demonstrate school performance and growth in educating students, all schools receiving tax dollars should be required to be held to the same accountability standard.

Furthermore, if the state would simply commit to fully funding public education, and not majorly on the backs of property tax payers, schools would be able to ease or eliminate the conditions that lead to “failing schools.” These conditions are created by a lack of proper funding on the part of the state. Instead of properly funding education, the state is throwing the students out with the bath water and standing of the precipice of destroying public education by creating a system of haves and have nots.

With ESAs, the state will be turning its back on the students of Texas. I urge you to reject ESAs and instead, fully fund public education.

Juliane Pairsh
Self
Amarillo, TX

As a public school teacher who has seen many children and families benefit from the public school system, I think it is absolutely wrong to push vouchers into the Texas education system. These take away from public schools and only help families fortunate to live in an area where choice is an option. Many schools have gone to open enrollment so families already have access to choice in this urban areas. Our taxes should only be going to PUBLIC SCHOOLS and parents who want to send their kids to private school can pay for that on their own, it should not be the public’s responsibility to pay for that. I say NO TO VOUCHERS!!

Juliane Pairsh
Self
Amarillo, TX

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Michael Mosesson

Self

Dallas, TX

Dear members of the Select Committee,

Please support school choice and education equality in Texas.

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.

Please 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,

Michael

Tracy Flowers

Self - Public School Speech Language Pathologist/ Kerrville ISD

Kerrville, TX, TX

-No matter what an education voucher is called, the policy is the same. Vouchers divert public funds to private schools and vendors, and continue to undermine traditional public schools and charters, teachers, and students.

-There is a lack of public accountability with any voucher program, and with academic accountability of the schools that receive private voucher money.

-It doesn't matter what vouchers are called. Whether it's educational savings accounts (ESAs), special education vouchers, virtual vouchers, or a "bracketed" voucher set-up to protect rural schools from the impacts of vouchers programs, the vouchers will have a long-term impact on Texas. Vouchers hurt public schools because they impact the funding traditional public schools and charter schools receive from the state.

-Special education vouchers can hurt students with disabilities by weakening rights given to them under IDEA federal regulations. When a parent enrolls their child with special needs in a private school, they waive those rights.

-Public dollars should remain in the public schools.

Justin Williams, Parent

Self/children

Montgomery, TX

The quality education lies where there are specific standards set forth by the state of Texas. Only public schools teach by these standards.

Tabitha Temple

Self

Lufkin, TX

I support this for families in Texas! My son attends St. Cyprian's and I have to apply for scholarship every year in order to help pay tuition. Tuition allows our school to purchase educational materials and equipment and keep our doors open. Any leftover goes towards our low teacher salaries. The teachers and students will both benefit greatly from this!!

Trevor Temple
Self
Lufkin, TX

My son attends a small private school. My wife chooses to teach there so we can receive a discount on tuition. I support this for all Texas families!!

Shannon Butler
Texas Public Schools
Granbury, TX

I am a certified teacher who works in public education. Teachers are leaving the profession in droves. The cause? Lack of respect, lack of autonomy, and the ever increasing demands on our time and mental health by school districts and parents who are convinced we are spending every waking moment trying to indoctrinate their children.

Teachers are expected to work outside of their contract hours. Some for wages below the poverty line in schools without proper funding and resources. Our unpaid overtime is what supports the public education system. Yet, rather than address these issues, the house is spending time discussing vouchers for private schools and debating on imaginary crises such as CRT and banning books and spending millions on revamping state testing to be even more developmentally inappropriate for the ages of the students being tested.

It is past time to put our faith and trust back into education. The state is failing its future voters by denying children access to quality education and supporting the public servants who have dedicated their lives to educating their communities' children.

Michelle Christensen
Round Rock ISD
Austin, TX

Hi there,

I am a parent of children who go to a title 1 elementary school in Round Rock ISD. There are over 40 languages spoken and a wide socioeconomic and cultural diverse differences, which we love but it also creates many challenges for teachers & students for a number of reasons. With that in mind, I'm asking for help from the government with the following:

- *using tax money to subsidize private schools;
- *improving student outcomes;
- *supporting educators and support staff; and
- *modernizing assessment and accountability.

I am asking for a much needed increase of at least \$1k per student in the basic student allotment as well as saying NO to private school vouchers & YES to our public schools who hold the future in their hands! YES to public schools not only means more funding but MORE SUPPORT for our public schools by focusing on early literacy & numeracy such as creating an Office of Early Childhood EC-2nd grade. Gosh, this is evidently needed.

Thank you.

Tracy Flowers

Self - Public School Speech Language Pathologist/ Kerrville ISD

Kerrville, TX, TX

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- Special education vouchers can hurt students with disabilities by weakening rights given to them under IDEA federal regulations. When a parent enrolls their child with special needs in a private school, they waive those rights.
- Public dollars should remain in the public schools.

Oppose voucher legislation by any name.

Georgina Williams, Mrs.

Self

EL PASO, TX

I am advocating against school vouchers and their impact on public education in Texas. School vouchers hurt Texas public schools because they direct funding away from an already critically underfunded public education system. By diverting funding away from public schools, vouchers exacerbate the challenges faced by these institutions, hindering their ability to provide quality education to all students.

Vouchers provide a choice for some, not all. Vouchers may provide an option for some families to choose private schools, but they are not accessible to all. Private schools have a profit motive to admit students with the fewest educational challenges. Vouchers are disproportionately accessible to students living in urban areas due to limited access to private schools in rural Texas. This discrepancy in access can further contribute to educational inequalities across Texas.

Vouchers do not address the many needs of low-income, at-risk students such as transportation, free and reduced-priced lunches, textbooks and other instructional materials, assessment of special needs, access to additional remediation programs, and full cost of tuition.

This lack of comprehensive support can further limit the opportunities for low-income students to access a quality education.

Vouchers do not provide an educational opportunity and freedom to obtain a quality education for all. Vote against any legislation that authorizes state funds to be used to pay for private school tuition and related costs.

Vote for prioritizing and investing in the improvement of Texas public schools and fund the education system to ensure quality education and equal opportunities for all.

Nathan Harvey
self / educator
Hickory Creek, TX

Public schools are the backbone of our communities. Using public money to support private schools, instead of using the massive surplus to help improve outcomes for our students is a disservice. The state of Texas ranks in the bottom 10 in per pupil funding. With the resources we have in our great state that seems impossible, but it's a reality. Educating students in modern classrooms is a much different job than it was 5, 10, or 20 years ago. These students have different needs, and our educators are leaving in waves because the compensation is barely livable. This legislative session had so many good opportunities to support teachers, students, and communities, but instead focused attention, money, and time towards the opposite. Educators need higher pay. Our schools need less testing, and this "school choice" voucher idea needs to never be discussed again. Thank you for your time.

Zachary Wardlaw, Mr
Self
Northlake, TX

I don't use public education teachers so why should I pay to have them teach somebody else's child? I pay for Christian schooling that believes in GOD and country! My kids are being taught right even though I have to pay extra for it! Pay the public school teachers out of the state funds and not my pocket!

Bev Gavenda, Ms
Self-Retired RN
Austin, TX

Public education is #1 driver of the Texas Economy and public schools need funding to support the students, teachers & schools suffering high inflation.

Zack Keenan
Self
Amarillo, TX

Teachers need higher pay, students need less testing, and no vouchers! Invest in student learning and value teachers.

Mimi Rivers
Self
Buda, TX

I am currently a special education teacher and strongly oppose vouchers in any form - they are NOT good for students and will not improve public education.

I strongly urge you to oppose vouchers in any form. Instead, I strongly urge you to fully fund public education.

Zack Keenan
Self
Amarillo, TX

Teachers need higher pay, students need less testing, and no vouchers! Invest in student learning and value teachers.

Candace Colschen
Self- Teacher (Year 19)
Montgomery, TX

I am extremely disappointed and sickened as an educator by the continued efforts of certain legislators to try and force Vouchers into Texas. Texas Public Education is underfunded and that is putting it lightly. Taking any amount of money from an already overworked and underfunded system is not in anyone's best interest. Trying to take money from an underfunded Public Education system to divert those funds to Private/Homeschool/Charter Schools that are not held to the same standards is absolutely absurd and sickening. Stop doing what donors want and actually represent those who chose you to have the seat you do.

You are an elected official who took an oath. It's time you represent the interests of those who voted for you and are counting on you to take care of the millions of children who rely on Texas public education as a stepping stone to their future. Every child in our state deserves the opportunity to thrive and that can only be made possible by funding public schools where all students are welcome properly. Stop using our kids as pawns and let the educators get back to work knowing you aren't trying to break the system they work in and steal from the students they are there for. Listen to your constituents- reread the hundreds of pages of public comments from the legislative session- WE HAVE SAID NO TO VOUCHERS!!! We are not okay with you taking money from our schools!

SUZANNE ATCHESON
self
Lubbock, TX

No vouchers!!!! No one wants vouchers! Fully fund public schools! Give teachers and support staff a significant raise!!! Again, no vouchers. Fund public schools and pay teachers a respectable salary!

Cindy Jumper
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Vote no on vouchers. Fund public education and give teachers and paras a cost of living raise.

Tomas Mora
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Public schools need to be fully funded. I am against vouchers that take money from public schools and are given to charter schools and private schools who don't support the students with behavior and learning disabilities.

Brittany McBrayer

Self - Finance Manager for Salient Solutions, Inc

Grapeland, TX

I am a product of the Texas public education system. My husband also is a product of a public education system. We are both successful in our careers. I personally graduated Summa Cum Laude as well as from the School of Honors from SFA with a B.A in Finance. We honestly never considered homeschooling our children or sending them to private school. However, when my daughter was born, I looked at the public school systems available to us, and after inquiring from teachers and administrators currently working in those school systems as well as other reputable public school systems around Texas, we were advised 100% of the time to get them as FAR from public school as possible. This is sad, and incredibly alarming. I haven't spoken to a SINGLE person employed by the public school system in ANY capacity, or any recently retired staff or administrators who have told me public school is a good choice. They have all informed me (even the most staunch public school champions) it has changed SO MUCH in the last 15 years, and none of it is for the better. I've done my own research (for example, TEA found that only 19% of our public school curriculum is on grade level), but this resonated with me more than any research I can view online. In 2020, we decided to send our daughter to a University Model School in Tyler, TX, which is an hour away from our home, and costs \$470 per month. She attends class 2 days/week, and we complete a homework syllabus created by the certified instructor the additional 3 days/week. We intend to send our four year old as well when he is old enough, so our cost will double. She is now going into 3rd grade, and from what I'm hearing from my other friends in public school (most of whom express desire to send their kids to another option if they could afford it) they are ALL unsatisfied with their children's' education, and terrified for the future of the public school system. When we compare our kids' school experiences over these last three years w/theirs, our experience has been a breath of fresh air in SO many ways. Besides utter academic failure I'm seeing en masse in public school systems, we also are concerned with what is being taught and allowed in public schools in regards to politics and sexuality. Parents need the ability to leave their government-mandated schools if necessary to help protect their children from hostile ideology or to help ensure their children have better academic opportunities. The only way to do this is to give parents access to Education Savings Accounts, which would ensure that every parent can send their children to the school of their choice – public OR private. If Texas prides itself in being (one of) the most pro-freedom states in the country that values parents & families being able to make their own choices for what is best for their families and their children, please actually create legislation that backs up that claim.

Stand with me, and with parents across Texas, and empower us with ESAs!

Mark Ivie

Self

FORT WORTH, TX

By continuing to try to force vouchers on the State of Texas' educational system, our congressional republican leaders are displaying a blatant disregard to represent the majority of Texans in favor of the pursuit of personal preference which is really geared toward the rich and privileged saving money while having their kids in private schools.

If you're really trying to increase educational opportunity and experience for students, you should respect the system you've created and provide the funding it actually requires to operate.

I'm starting to feel you are deliberately trying to sabotage and cripple the educational system so more people will be accepting of your pursuit of vouchers.

I have been a lifetime Republican voter. If my party continues to pursue vouchers and denies schools of proper funding, it will become necessary for me to vote with the other party in future elections.

James Kohlwes, Mr
self, teacher
Crystal City, TX

Vouchers are not the answer to getting quality education. Private schools can turn struggling or special needs students away, voucher or no, and leave those students to the public school system. This will make the disparities in education even more stark, not resolve them. If you wish to improve education, put more funding and resources into the existing education system!

Karen Chedotal
Taxpayer
Cypress, TX

No vouchers

Justin Williams
Self/Parent
Montgomery, TX

There has always been freedom for parents to choose schools as they see fit. There is quality education throughout the state. Economic/business growth isn't strong without an educated workforce.

Justin Williams
Parent
Montgomery, TX

Families already have educational freedom to attend school in Texas. As per the Texas Constitution, they are required to have this available, and they do.

Addison McKee
Self
Rio Hondo, TX

When our older children were going through school, we lived in an area zoned to Aldine ISD. Our children were constantly picked on. Verbal harassment, and damage to their personal effects was a regular occurrence. Regardless of how many times we spoke out on their behalf, the school continued to make excuses. With our financial situation at the time, private school was out of the question and homeschooling was not a viable alternative. With enough research, sacrifice and saving, we were finally able to afford to move into a better district across town. Even this put a strain on my husband, who then needed to spend a significantly larger portion of his day commuting to work. But at least our children were finally thriving in school. Financial support through an ESA program would have been a saving grace and helped ease so much of the pain we endured as we made choices and sacrifices to remove our children from a harmful school experience. Now that our older children have graduated, we have moved to a small town in South Texas. There are only two public school options nearby for our younger children, and school zoning restricts us to the closest district which has been on probation for poor performance in recent years. Though it has finally recovered as a district, there is a single public elementary school available to us and our past experiences have us understandably concerned about enrolling our children in public school here. I believe homeschooling my youngest children would be the right choice for them. I know they will benefit from the flexibility provided by alternative education options, and we have a very active social homeschool community in our area. Support through an ESA program would ease the financial burden of providing education for our children, a benefit we all help to provide for countless other families who utilize the public school system. Thank you for considering support for all families in Texas who wish to give their children different educational opportunities than what they are limited to by physical location and financial situation.

Chakravarthy Sayani
Self
Cedar Park, TX

I want my children to have better teachers in the school. Not being able to hire better teachers is cutting my child's quality of education.

Karen Golemon
Self/ Special Education Teacher
Corpus Christi, TX

I have heard parents commenting on their concerns with public education. I believe much of it has to do with classroom size. I have been trying to find the average student to teacher ratio for private schools. My search just takes me back to the public school of 22:1, if the child is in 4th grade or below. No cap is required on the older children. I know it is difficult to learn in a crowded classroom. You have one student whom "acts up" 3 others join in. This takes the teacher's attention away from the lesson. I have had students leave to go to a private school only to return, having been removed for discipline issues. Will this be the beginning of the public schools being the behavior intervention schools, since private schools are not required to allow them to attend? Will the school's taking the vouchers be accountable to the same mandates as the public schools?

Judy Parnell
Self
LEAGUE CITY, TX

This state that has the ninth largest economy in the world along with a \$33 billion surplus must do better for our children. Today, Texas ranks 44th in per student funding for public schools. Texas pays teachers \$7500 below the national average. The way to improve student outcomes is to fully fund our public school system. Vote to fund public schools. Vote no on vouchers.

Amy Donovan, Mrs
Self
Round Rock, TX

I am in support of fully funded public education and against any form of vouchers, education savings account or parent empowerment.
It seems self-evident that a state that has the ninth largest economy in the world along with a \$33 billion surplus must do better for our children. Today, Texas ranks 44th in per student funding for public schools. Texas pays teachers \$7500 below the national average. The way to improve student outcomes is to fully fund our public school system. Vote to fund public schools. Vote no on vouchers.

Sarah Lewis
Self
Kerrville, TX

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Krystal Huffman
Self
Athens, TX

Please vote against any form of vouchers. If you think making our public education system better is by removing accountability go ahead and remove it from the current system. Don't make our State a have and have not state. Show support for current and future teachers by giving them a pay raise and increasing the pay scale by 5 more steps encouraging more teachers to stay in the profession.

Krystal Huffman
Self
Athens, TX

Please vote against any form of vouchers. If you think making our public education system better is by removing accountability go ahead and remove it from the current system. Don't make our State a have and have not state. Show support for current and future teachers by giving them a pay raise and increasing the pay scale by 5 more steps encouraging more teachers to stay in the profession.

Jayne McRae
Constituent
The Woodlands, TX

I am absolutely against any attempt to move to school vouchers, no matter how many different names you come up with. I pay my tax dollars to ensure an access to ALL Texans to the same education. This attempted move to vouchers (yet again) is a not so veiled attempt to segregate education even further! This would make it next to impossible for rural schools to survive. Our Special needs students' needs would be threatened. We need more money going to schools and teachers, not less! Parents have always had a choice on how and where their children are educated. If you're going to give money to the parents to make that choice, then taxpayers should have a choice on where their tax dollars go, whether to the parents or to our public schools. Mine will be allotted for our public schools!

James Brown, Drive6
Atpe
Fort Worth, TX

We Don't need a voucher for raises we need that money to be put on our checks that's what we need as that is how it would serve us this and we also need for there to be less testing.

Jane Aguirre, MD
Self, retired physician
Temple, TX

It is unclear to me why taxed dollars do not automatically accrue to an educational account for each school child. It is well understood that children are individuals and learn differently, and some need different environments. Public school education has failed us for decades with very low achievement rates. Protecting the status quo and increasing the dollars accrued to the failing system will not result in better outcomes for the children of your constituents. The same arguments have been proffered for over 20 years, and no improvement has resulted.

I urge you to consider the welfare of the children and not the loud voices of the status quo, including those with political agendas to simply retain control over the social issues being taught in the schools.

Itze Bernal

I represent Texas educators and students

El Paso, TX

I am extremely disappointed with what has occurred this past legislative session regarding Texas public education. The fact that our governor and other legislators are ignoring our voices, the voices of the educators and families of this state, along with many other Texas residents, is very disappointing. We have spoken. We DO NOT want money going toward private education vouchers. We see what's happening. You're attempting to gut the public education system so that we are operating on bare bones and you can show families 'how terrible our public education is', and you can blame it on failing schools, educators, and administrators on the ground. My own children are in public school, and I, like the majority of Texas families, want an to give them and all of our children the best education possible. That can be done in public schools, that can be a reality for all Texas children if you stop trying to strip the schools of what they need to provide all children with a high quality public school education. You are stealing opportunities, equity and a strong educational foundation from millions of children. It seems as if you think that our children don't deserve it. As if only the elite deserve for their children to have a strong and quality education and tough luck for the rest. Even with a voucher, most families would not be able to afford private schools. Private schools are just that, private, because the expectation is that they are privately funded. Make the right choice for the Texas majority. Listen to the people who you represent, the people who voted for you to make the best decisions on our behalf. If you vote for these vouchers, you are deciding in favor of the minority and leaving the people who voted for you, out completely. We deserve better!

Lynette Wedig

AFT

Kerrville, TX

It seems self-evident that a state that has the ninth largest economy in the world along with a \$33 billion surplus must do better for our children. Today, Texas ranks 44th in per student funding for public schools. Texas pays teachers \$7500 below the national average. The way to improve student outcomes is to fully fund our public school system.

Please vote to fund public schools.

Vote no on vouchers.

Ramona Thompson

Self

Frisco, TX

It seems self-evident that a state that has the ninth largest economy in the world along with a \$33 billion surplus must do better for our children. Today, Texas ranks 44th in per student funding for public schools. Texas pays teachers \$7500 below the national average. The way to improve student outcomes is to fully fund our public school system. Vote to fund public schools. Vote no on vouchers!

Ramona Thompson

self

Frisco, TX

We MUST fully fund our Texas Public Schools. It seems self-evident that a state that has the ninth largest economy in the world along with a \$33 billion surplus must do better for our children. Today, Texas ranks 44th in per student funding for public schools. Texas pays teachers \$7500 below the national average. The way to improve student outcomes is to fully fund our public school system. Vote to fund public schools. Vote no on vouchers!

Sabrina Ball
Self
Fort worth, TX

Please reject any voucher scheme that creates a separate (but unequal) educational path. When I was a child, my parents were too busy and overwhelmed with work and life to pay attention to what was happening in public school. They trusted the system they grew up in would take care of me. When I had my own children, I chose public school as well, but I've seen the decline just in 10 years. Pulling money out of the system (more than the basic allotment per student) is NOT the answer. Please focus on improving the current public school system, so every child can benefit. Not just those with parents that have the time to explore and support a charter or private school system. If you don't like the current public school system, then change it to be more like the private schools you covet.

Paige Cunningham
Self
Allen, TX

Please do not vote for vouchers. Our public education system is desperately needed to ensure equality of access for all students. Our founding fathers knew the importance and value of public education. Jefferson warned against the "tyranny" of government that would follow unless "the people at large" were "educated at the common expence of all." I come from a large Catholic family of publicly educated people. We are teachers, nurses, engineers - hard workers who would be nowhere without our public schools. Vouchers will completely undermine our already suffering education system.

Stephanie Hofer
School psychologist
Richmond, TX

Public school education and teacher wages should not be tied to vouchers. Educators deserve higher pay, less testing, and NO vouchers. Not only do I work in the public schools but I was educated in both religious private schools and public schools in Texas. There is a reason our forefathers had septation of church and state. Other taxpayers should not have to pay for my religious beliefs which may be different from their own; however, all students deserve a quality education. Texas public schools are by and large amazing. I had a better education in a Texas public school than I did in a private one in Louisiana and Texas. Do not destroy the legacy that is Texas public schools. It is something to be proud of not to dismantle. Thank you.

Linda Evans, Ms
Self
Conroe, TX

"Educational freedom" is just another name for vouchers! Using public money for private schools is a scam. Parents already have the right to choose private, home or public schooling for their children. But the first 2 options should never be funded with tax payer money. Those 2 options are not held to the same standards as public schools and can accept or deny any student. Whatever name you call it, vouchers are NOT good for Texas. Support and fund good quality public schools for ALL students! Our future depends on it. No vouchers!!!

Kathy Turner
Self retired
Ingram, TX

Possible comments - It seems self-evident that a state that has the ninth largest economy in the world along with a \$33 billion surplus must do better for our children. Today, Texas ranks 44th in per student funding for public schools. Texas pays teachers \$7500 below the national average. The way to improve student outcomes is to fully fund our public school system. Vote to fund public schools. Vote no on vouchers.

Paul Laskoski
self
The Woodlands, TX

I have been incredibly disappointed by the continued efforts of certain legislators to try and force Vouchers into Texas. Texas Public Education is underfunded. That is a fact. To take any amount of money from an already overworked and underfunded system is not in anyone best interests. To try and take money from an underfunded Public Education to divert those funds to Private/Homeschool/Charter Schools that are not held to the same standards is absolutely absurd. I hope that our House reps will stop doing what the donors want and actually represent the interests of the millions of children who rely on Texas Public Education to mold their future. NO to vouchers. If you have absolutely any desire to actually give each child the most opportunity to thrive academically, fund public education properly. Stop using our kids as pawns and let the educators get back to work. Listen to your constituents- reread the hundreds of pages of public comments from the Legislative Session- No to vouchers!

Mary Morisette
Texas women for justice
Conroe, TX

This is of utmost importance to me & I don't appreciate allowing a single individual being allowed to begin the censoring of any educational material (via book, video or person)
This needs to be decided by impartial & without regard to religion or creed. Persons not able to do this must not be part of the conversation let alone decision making.

Lynn McConnell
Self/Retired
Austin, TX

I wanted to thank you for voting AGAINST school vouchers!
Public schools are the backbone of our society!
Texas can make sure that all children have access to high-quality education by establishing sustainable and predictable funding for schools.
Governor Abbott wants to recruit companies to Texas, but where will the workforce come from, if Texas fails to educate the children of Texas?
Education is a key indicator of the economic, social, and cultural success of any state.
Many private school teachers are not certified as public school teachers are required to be.
Teacher certifications are important. Public school teachers face rigorous requirements to attend training and to adopt the latest changes in curricula for important subjects like math. Without certifications and regular professional development, curricula can become outdated.
Thank you for your vote AGAINST school vouchers!
Vouchers take scarce funding from public schools and give it to private schools—institutions that are not accountable to taxpayers.
Moreover, there is ZERO statistical significance that voucher programs improve overall student success, and some programs have even shown to have a NEGATIVE effect for students receiving a voucher

Joy Fuller
Self/Teacher
Lufkin, TX

Education is power and the freedom to obtain it should be for all students. However, using tax dollars in the form of a voucher to pursue a private education is just wrong. 1. VOUCHERS are NOT the answer. 2. TESTING—Texas needs to fully support teachers by releasing the pressures of testing and allow them to do their job! There has to be a better way! 3. PAY— I think it is fair to say that most teachers do not go into the field of education to get rich. However, we should be paid a respectable salary. One that allows us to take care of our families and provide quality health care. Our educational battle reaches far beyond the topics here in this bill and a voucher is not the answer. PLEASE—NO VOUCHERS AND PROVIDE A RESPECTFUL PAY so that teachers will stay teaching. Our students need quality teachers but we're losing them by the minute because they are overwhelmed by the demands put on them through testing. How would you feel if you spent the entire school year as a teacher or student learning how to pass a test instead of hands on learning, real world applications and enrichment?? They're sick of it!

Jeannette Whitt
Myself as an Educator and member of ATPE
Liberty Hill, TX

Tax dollars should NOT be used for private funded education aka Voucher System Or Savings Accounts. Why? Voucher schools are not held to the same standards as Public Schools. They don't have to state test, don't require certified teachers and they select their students. How is this best for our students? How does a child with special needs get into these schools? Or a child with behavior issues? What happens when a student makes a bad choice and gets kicked out of the voucher school? Where do they go? Are these schools set up to help with the mental health issues our students are facing today or have the knowledge and training to deal with drug abuse, bad home life, pregnancy, abuse, etc? The intense trainings we go through as a public educator far exceed what these private schools are ready to handle. What about the suicide rate? Who foots that cost? How do you put our students into a situation that the adults don't know how to handle. How do you put a price on a lost life? What about home school parents that use up their voucher money and then decide it's not working for them? Where do they go? Who pays?

I work at a High School, I can't tell you how many students I have had to work with from home school situations who return to public school to recover credits so they can graduate. Some in senior year with less than 8 credits. We aren't miracle workers, but we are expected to somehow get them to graduate with their peers.

Also, many Voucher schools are held by large corporations under DBA's and LP', which are for profit entities. My tax dollars should NOT be paying their bonuses and perks!

Before you pass vouchers, I would like to know your answers, back up plans for the above issues. As an educator, I am thinking of students as a whole. I really do not see how we are including ALL students and their best interest when passing a voucher system. If the homeschool system is failing, and public education is in need of more funding and mental health programs, shouldn't we fix this first before we start an entire new set of issues?

Emily Levario
self; Executive Director of Finance at Anthony Independent School District
El Paso, TX

I have worked in school finance for 15 years and can attest that we struggle each year to adequately fund our operations. Each year we have to make difficult decisions around compensation increases, staffing, adequate facilities funding and funding student instruction and enrichment activities. We are not and have never been fully funded. Our students and staff deserve better and I am adamantly opposed to student vouchers until public schools are fully funded. Thank you.

Carmen Bento
Self
La Marque, TX

I just moved to Texas from a state that had invested heavily in vouchers (Indiana). Education there has suffered tremendously. The public system has had funds drained to fund vouchers and three private sector is littered with for profit "schools" that take voucher money in exchange for a substandard education. The best way for Texas to provide the best educational opportunities to ALL of it's students is to continue to invest in the public school system! Please do not pass a voucher bill!

Jason Keron
Self-Teacher
The Woodlands, TX

Teachers deserve much better pay for the work they do, especially those who have been bringing their passion and skill set to the classroom for many years. Students deserve lessons that are not designed to simply memorize an answer and submit to the state testing agency for grading, but rather enhance their communication and problem solving skills. They desperately need less testing, and would benefit most not from test preparations, but actual instruction. Community members as a whole need schools where we invest in, not a voucher system that encourages privatization. Vote for higher teacher pay, less state testing, and no vouchers.

Debbie Jones
self/Director of Finance for Palacios ISD
Palacios, TX

I have been working in Finance at a Public School District for 24 years. One area that I see as a failure in public school funding is salaries. Texas expects quality education for all students but sets no standards for the quality of teachers. Quality of teacher can definitely be measured by salary. Well educated personnel are going to go to a specialty area that pays the best. That is why no one wants to be a teacher any more. WHY can't salary funding be separate from other school funding. This will ensure that the funds are going where they should go. ANOTHER topic is school property insurance. Our insurance is over 1 million dollars because we live on the coast. This takes away funding for other needs - this is not something that is measured. It does not affect other districts that are not on the coast.

Judy Malandrucolo
Self - Retired Teacher
Plano, TX

Public Education is our most important tool in keeping Texas a free and vibrant state. Public schools accept everyone, provide accountability to the public, and are the single most important entity in many rural communities. Having taught and raised my sons in rural public schools, I have witnessed the effectiveness of educators throughout Texas. I never had time to "indoctrinate" kids. I was too busy teaching the basics of my subject matter. Teachers have a unique opportunity to be supportive of kids who might be struggling or have learning difficulties. Private schools do not have to accept all children - most have religious requirements that don't address every family in Texas. I am aware of the dwindling tax resources that Texas leadership have given public schools, and it is unacceptable. Vouchers are NOT the answer. Keep vouchers out of our state. It's either support Public Ed OR vouchers. Both cannot be supported by public tax dollars. Bring Texas spending per pupil back up. We should not remain in the bottom. Let's make our Public Ed schools the best!

Barbara Young, Ms
Kerr Demicrats
Hunt, TX

Please fully fund quality education in public schools.
Please say no to vouchers as they serve only a few.

William Swank
self
Houston, TX

School choice. Allow taxpayer money to follow the kid, not the school. Long overdue. Texas is behind in the school choice movement. Time to catch up. School choice to the max. Your voters will thank you. For the people. By the people.

Thank you.

~W. Reagan Swank

Jonathan Manrique
self
jers, TX

When is it going to be enough? i though that public service was for the public benefit.... We have seen this push in every "Republican" state..... Vouchers are not beneficial, especially when the population of the state is not homogenous. You want result or changes in public education but all teachers get is more requirements, more pressure, more BS from everywhere. Kids and parents complain and want to act as they own schools but most of the time, teachers do not see any help from anyone. Let's put punishment on parents that do not bring kids to school, that do not help kids in class! You have all this parent now in groups or non profits organization... it seems with too much time in their hands, but not to save their life they would go and volunteer their time in low income schools, or sectors that need help.... BUT we see as they want money from the state to pay for private school. Even the state pushing for this voucher, or charter schools. Why would the state create competition between private and public when there won't be the same set of rules? people has to apply for charter and private schools, if the child doe not behave or performs then he or she is out! **THAT DOES NOT HAPPEN IN PUBLIC EDUCATION!** give a break to teachers, that many times dedicate more time that the child's parents, when they even put aside their own kids for the BS the district, the TEA, and the state Goverment bring! increase salaries for teachers, NO vauchers!

Sophia Castillo
Self/Teacher
HOUSTON, TX

Hello,

Every student in the state of Texas has a right to a free and quality public school education. Every student.

“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.” Texas Const. art. 7, § 1.

Plain and simple. Please say no to vouchers and increase the allotment per student. Let the young people of this state know that they are important!!

Thank you for your time and for your service.

Sophia Castillo

Pamela Lienhard
Self
Kerrville, TX

Come in guys, vote to improve educational opportunities for ALL Texas children. Vote to increase funding for schools. Vote NO on school vouchers for the few

Laurie Patterson
Self-retired
Kerrville, TX

Students should be able to access the best school for them in any neighborhood or town in the state. The only way to ensure that every single child in Texas has access to a quality education is to FULLY FUND public schools. Taking money from public ed to support charters and private schools only drives division in our society ...the haves and the have nots. IF charter schools get tax payers money, they should be held to the same accountability as public schools-providing for SP-ED, 504, etc. Any school receiving public funds should also be required to use STAAR as an accountability measure.

Jeffrey Walters
Self
Baytown, TX

Everyone in the Great State of Texas deserves the opportunity to a quality education.

Anita Sigler
Self/educator
Manor, TX

Teachers being paid more will insure better educators because the teachers will not be working 2 jobs and have more time for their career instead of worrying about making ends meet. Please pay educators a living wage for their education and years of service that prepare children to be contributing and positive citizens of Texas.

Mujibur Khan
Self - Educator
Katy, TX

Vouchers will only erode public education and create a larger teacher shortage. Public money should not be used to help fund private schools. I as an educator am against vouchers of any type. No to vouchers.

Spencer Wagley, Mr.
Self/ Teacher
Cypress, TX

Resist School vouchers. They do not have public oversight like public schools. They take money out of the school system and reduce the funding that is already stretched thin.

Mujibur Khan
Self - Educator
Katy, TX

Vouchers will only erode faith in public education and create more shortages. Public money should not be used to fund for-profit schools. No to vouchers.

Melinda Buchanan
Self teacher
Sanger, TX

All Texas families have the absolute right to have their children educated in a fully funded, fully staffed Texas public school. Texas tax dollars must fund Texas public schools.

John Buchanan
Self self-employed
Sanger, TX

My tax dollars, and the tax dollars of all Texans, should never be used for vouchers, ESAs, or education tax credits. Texas tax dollars should only support Texas public schools.

Loretta Padgett
self
Canyon Lake, TX

I am a proud graduate of Texas public schools of the past. I oppose the use of public funds for private schooling. Texas is trending the wrong direction in student outcomes. How can the great state of Texas be 44th in the nation for student funding? How can the great state of Texas pay teachers \$7500. below the national average?

Stephanie Parker
Self
Little Elm, TX

Pay teachers a living wage and say no to vouchers. Let us do our job and teach. Stop using us as political pawns.

Shelby Jones
Self/ Teacher
Brenham, TX

No vouchers! Fund public schools!

Michelle Yanez, Ms.

Self

Kerrville, TX

Good morning! I am a teacher at Tivy High School and believe in the value of education. Schools have increasingly found themselves obligated to fulfill state and federal requirements without being provided the funds to do so. Texas is currently experiencing economic wealth and is sitting on a surplus of funds.

If Texas wants to continue to be competitive economically in the nation, we need to produce an educated citizenry. The only way to guarantee that is to fully fund our public schools.

I pray this is something that can happen this legislative session.

Ralph Gingell

Self

Houston, TX

Separate educational systems (public vs private) are inherently unequal, as they were for racially segregated schools. Using public taxes to support private schools ie vouchers, is a further blow to public education funding. The state should ensure adequate funding now to educate all our future citizens

therese McAteer

Kerr County Democratic Party

Kerrville, TX

The future of Texas depends upon today's students. Hispanics are becoming the dominant group in Texas. they are the future and must have quality public education if this state is to thrive and lead. So far, we are sorely lacking...fund public education to insure a strong future

Amanda Grubb

Self

Prosper, TX

As a public school educator and a parent I urge you all to vote 'NO' to vouchers and 'YES' to teacher pay raises. Teachers are fleeing education at a rate which has never been seen, this is due to 2 reasons, 1. Lack of pay for teachers. I will be entering my 15th year in education this year and only make \$5000 a year more than a first year teacher in my district. The amount of hours worked versus compensation is just not there. Teachers are learning they can make much more doing something else, which means we are losing good teachers, daily. 2. The lack of respect for educators and education is the worst it's been since I became a teacher. There is little to no respect for what we do and we are constantly vilified for things we are NOT doing, for political gain. I implore you to PLEASE begin showing teachers and your constituents that you truly DO care about educators, as you claim when running for elections, by voting for teacher pay increases. Additionally, you can show your support to the students of our state that you truly value them and their education by NOT voting in vouchers and allowing the money that districts need to successfully teach children to remain with the district and not be given to families for private education.

eddie earwood

self

Brackettville, TX

Teachers need pay raises not vouchers.

Mackenzie Lowry, Teacher/Dyslexia Specialist
Self-Teacher
Melissa, TX

Teachers in the public education system need a higher salary in order to keep up with inflation and provide for our family. Teacher shortage is a scary and real thing and will continue until we are supported effectively and financially.

Amanda Grubb
Amanda's House
Prosper, TX

Please vote NO to vouchers and YES to teacher pay raises. The vilifying of teachers for political gain HAS TO STOP! The state and our students are losing qualify teachers, daily. Please show that you truly care for educators and the students of our state by giving teachers raises and keeping public money where it belongs, with the districts.

Cindy Moses
Self
Henrietta, TX

There should not be a single dollar leaving public schools until they are fully funded. How dare anyone vilify, accuse and blame public schools for "failure" and suggest there needs to be a complete dismantling or even a re-imagining when they've never been fully funded to do ALL that they are asked to do. In addition, parents currently have a great number of school choices available to them, however, their choice for private schooling should not be paid for by tax payers. Please do NOT support any kind of voucher. And no smoke and mirrors will ever disguise a voucher in such a way that it doesn't truly cost public schools a portion of their funding.

Roni Mathis
Self
Hurst, TX

As a parent and grandparent of Texas children, I want to express my concern over the proposed voucher system in Texas. If the state can't even find a way to improve public education, how is a voucher system going to benefit ALL of Texas children? What would prevent private schools from denying entrance for disabled children, those with IEPs in place, or even those whose skin color, culture/religion, and neighborhoods don't align with the "goals" of these private institutions? Rather than trying to enrich faith-based schools with public funds, increase funds for the children and pay our teachers what they are worth. Upgrade facilities and technology. Add more trade type courses to high school curriculums. Texas currently ranks #35 in education, which is a disgrace.

Texas leaders: you need to be concerned with ALL of the children of this state, instead of trying to only benefit a certain subset of Texas children.

JoAnn Acosta
ATPE
Coppell, TX

The focus should be on our students and quality education for all, not vouchers for few. Quality education is provided by highly experienced educators, increase pay for retention.

jessica harper
teacher teachers
cypress, TX

No to vouchers, higher teacher pay please. Texas has always been at the top in education in the United States. Please pay the school districts more money and not let Texas fall behind. Less testing would be very much appreciated!

Belinda G Scott, Mrs
Self/Teacher
Garland, TX

Public schools need higher pay, less testing & NO vouchers!

Eva Castellanos
ATPE Region 20
San Antonio, TX

As a public school teacher & member of ATPE, I fully support proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS!

Gwen Johnson
Self-Retired Teacher and Granparent
Leander, TX

I strongly believe that we need to empower parents with ESAs. Whether parents want to choose an excellent public school, a Charter school, or a private school in their district, they should be able to decide which school best meets the needs of their children. Parents should have that inalienable right.

The "system" does not own our children. Parents, Teachers, School Boards need to be on the same team. However, many parents are being ignored or shut out. They have very little say about what their children are taught. Parents need to be heard and treated with respect. Thanks for helping our kids get the best possible education.

Rebecca Sova
Self
Kerrville, TX

The funding for public education in our state must be our top priority. I do not support in any way the use of school vouchers that direct funds away from the public school system. If I have to pay 10,000 dollars in federal taxes alone this year, I would hope that my child would be able to receive a quality education in our neighborhood's public school. Why would I want to pay an additional \$5,000 a year for private education when I have already paid so much in taxes? Even with a voucher, this would not cover the full cost of a year's tuition at the nearest private religious school. On top of this, even if I decided to enroll my child in a private or charter school, neither would have the resources to cover the hour of speech therapy my child needs per week for her disability. Which means I would have to seek additional help from a speech therapist out of my own pocket. These school vouchers would take more money out of my pocket than if funds were properly disbursed to public education in the first place.

Rhonda Wiley-Jones
Self, author
Kerrville, TX

Our public education is our path to the future. As I understand it, Texas is 44th in the nation regarding per student cost. How embarrassing, when we are the 8th largest economy in the world. The Texans for Strong Public Schools polled Texans: What do you want the Legislature focus on in a special election. 59% or 6 out of 10 people said, increase teachers' salaries or Additional funding for public schools. Support for "tax payer dollars for private or religious schools" or vouchers. What ever happened to the will of the people. AND what better way to spend a \$33 million surplus than on our future, which is the success of public schools. Please, please listen to the will of the people and support quality education for Texans. Public schools are the backbone and heartbeat of a thriving democracy, which is failing fast right now. Please invest in our children and the future of our economy.

Steve Rowe, Mr
Self
Arlington, TX

As a father of four Texas children, and as one who will fund (through taxes) countless other Texas children's education, I write to offer my unequivocal support for universal school choice in our Great State. The main effect of introducing even more competition into the school system will be an improvement across the board. Keeping in mind that "public" dollars are actually confiscated private dollars through taxation, most arguments I've heard against universal school choice are motivated by maintaining the status quo of funding mechanisms. This focus on funding rather than outcomes reveals a perverse motivation which should disqualify the argument.

Elsa Chavez
Self
Orange Grove, TX

No to vouchers, yes to pay raise for teachers, especially the ones who have been dedicated to the classroom for many years. We are losing so many good, dedicated teachers because we are underpaid! Our pay does not even keep up with the cost of living because usually the small pay raise only covers the insurance premium increase.

Elsa Chavez
Self
Orange Grove, TX

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Nicole Liebau
Self/Teacher
Boerne, TX

No vouchers!!! Public schools need more financial support to continue to improve quality at their schools. Teachers need a living wage. If there is enough money for TIA, there should be money to give all teachers a raise across the board. TIA is not equitable for teachers. Teachers are professionals but not compensated for our knowledge and expertise as other professionals are. We have to be certified and maintain certifications and ebb and flow with a constantly changing target as well as constantly changing society.

Stacie Smith
Self
Houston, TX

Public schools are the only educational institution with requirements to teach ALL children. Other institutions can refuse or not accept students they won't educate. We must fully fund PUBLIC EDUCATION to ensure all children in Texas have access. Say no to vouchers, education savings accounts and especially to tying teacher raises to either of the aforementioned private sector schemes.

As a special education teacher, I have been in charter schools and seen the special education efforts. It is abysmal. There is no oversight, no district review. We must continue to trust and fund our public schools.

Elsa Chavez
Self
Orange Grove, TX

No to vouchers, yes to pay raise for teachers, especially the ones who have been dedicated to the classroom for many years. We are losing so many good, dedicated teachers because we are underpaid! Our pay does not even keep up with the cost of living because usually the small pay raise only covers the insurance premium increase.

Greg Marquardt
Self
Kerrville, TX

Never vote for vouchers! Texas has the ninth largest economy in the world along with a \$33 billion surplus and must do better for our children. Today, Texas ranks 44th in per student funding for public schools. Texas pays teachers \$7500 below the national average. The way to improve student outcomes is to fully fund our public school system. Vote to fund public schools.

Elisa Garcia
Teacher
Corpus Christi, TX

Vouchers do not benefit anyone but private schools, who already get adequate funding. Instead try funding public schools better and giving teachers better pay will change our education system and draw more effective and qualified teachers. Make public schools more appealing like private ...smaller class sizes, more opportunities to explore there learning (like Montessori). Change is definitely needed in our education system but vouchers is definitely going in the wrong direction.

Amber Gabriel
SELF/teacher at Belton ISD
Gatesville, TX

I have taught in a variety of settings, both public and private, domestic and overseas. I believe that our Texas public school teachers are the best trained and best equipped to deal with the full spectrum of student needs than any other system. Any voucher system should have the same accountability standards for qualifying schools as public schools have. State funds should not be used at schools that teach values that are not aligned with state standards. State funds should only go to schools whose curriculum rigor matches the TEKS and who have certified teachers. A voucher system where anyone can start a school and collect funds would lead to widespread abuse and mismanagement. Please consider this when you analyze the data on school choice. Thank you.

Stephanie Siddall
Self - Teacher
Corpus Christi, TX

Using public funds for private education is not helping ALL Texans. I do NOT support school vouchers.

Keli Hinojosa, Teacher
Corpus Christi ISD
Corpus Christi, TX

Public education is the foundation of the American dream. Public schools carry the responsibility of high standards for teachers as well as students. Vouchers would gut our Public schools coffers, thereby making it even more difficult to meet these high standards. Our state needs well-funded, government supported Public schools. We do NOT need vouchers. Please, help us prevent this assault on public education.

Kathryn Bandas
Self-teacher
Corpus Christi, TX

Texans have made their wishes known regarding school voucher programs and yet our legislators continue to debate this issue! ESAs are a bad idea and will not improve educational opportunities for Texas students. Instead of giving away our tax dollars to religious schools, which families may choose to attend using their own funds, fully fund our public schools so that they may continue to support all students.

Lee Lewis
Myself
Cisco, TX

Until Texas Public Education students, Over \$5 million strong, and their over 400 thousand ISD employees are fully funded and empowered, this state has NO BUSINESS funding private schools. Our State Constitution has no stipulation that allows for that to occur. It is shameful that our Legislators have had the wherewithal to neglect the above mentioned, by underfunding them, ridiculing them, and then acting as if the very system that the Governor and his hand selected appointees & the SBOE administer, act as though they have nothing to do with the results. If these were your children, you ALL would have made sure things were done. But the fact is, even though they are your children, in the sense that you are responsible for their well being, YOU have let them down. Our schools are strapped for cash, which means our kids suffer. Schools can't afford the technology they need. They can't afford the transportation that each of you make dang sure your own children have, and they can't afford to pay teachers what they deserve, even after FIVE years since the last pay raise. You made sure EVERY State employee receive Ed a raise EXCEPT educators. That was a STRONG message about how you feel about them. It is EMBARRASSING and no, I will not sit idly by and watch you flirt with disaster on another terrible idea in a stack of terrible ideas the current administration has stumbled upon as it pertains to education policy, again. DO THE RIGHT THING. IF you fund ISD properly, they will rise. If you don't, they will continue to flounder. Ultimately, that outcome is on YOU ALL. Vouchers, Or whatever you want to call them, if the people want them, should be put on a statewide ballot. Period. End of discussion. Do right by these kids the same as you would for your own. I'm positive, they deserve it!

PAMELA VANWINKLE
self- teacher
IREDELL, TX

VOTE NO TO VOUCHERS!

Joan Diaz
self
Portland, TX

Vouchers do not solve the problems in public schools. It's yet another band-aid being used to make it look like the problem in education is being solved, when in fact, it is not. Instead of giving vouchers to have students go to a "better school", how about you go to the schools and find out what the problems are and spend that money to FIX them. All students deserve an education, but at this point, it sure feels like students and parents expect miracles with little to no involvement on their part. We ALL need to work together. Teachers need autonomy to actually teach and testing in elementary school grades should be eliminated or at the very least scaled way back! Throwing money at a problem, rarely solves it. At the same time, teachers are over-worked and therefore underpaid. The burn-out is real because we do much more in a day than we actually get paid for. I would much rather have some things taken off my plate as a teacher for the same money than be given more money and expected to do even more. This may not be the case in every district and I'm sure I don't speak for every teacher, but there are definitely many who would agree with me.

Susan McKinley
Self
Kerrville, TX

It is of paramount importance to fund public education, not provide vouchers for private schools. Our obligation is to educate ALL our children to achieve their highest potential. The future of our state is best served by providing quality education to the greatest number of students not serving the interests of an elite few.

Robbin Reininger
Self - educator
Beeville, TX

School vouchers are NOT the way to help improve public schools or better the education for all students. Not every city or county even has the ability or option for private/charter schools therefore taking money from public schools when not all kids have access is not even. Private and charter schools do not have to abide by the same standards as public schools so which means they can deny students admission based on 1) SPED needs, 2) behavior, and 3) soci-economic status.

Emily Petrisky
Self
Port Lavaca, TX

Vouchers are NOT the answer to education problems. If state money is going to private schools in the form of vouchers, then those schools should be held accountable for their curriculum (TEKS) and academic progress/results (STAAR testing), just as the public schools are. Also, those schools should be required to meet the needs of students with diagnosed disabilities that affect their academic abilities, rather than sending them back to the public schools. Please fund raises for public school teachers, not academic vouchers that will segregate students into the haves and have nots. Our future depends on it.

Alison Beam
Self
San Antonio, TX

Texas: 30 million residents; \$33 billion budget surplus; and a mecca for potential. Except that we DO NOT FULLY NOR FAIRLY FUND our public schools, teacher pay is abysmal and our youngest Texans are denied the opportunities they deserve to succeed to the best of their abilities. All public education funds need to be invested in our public schools -- families who choose to educate their children in private, tuition-based schools are free to make that choice, but not at the expense of defunding public schools. As a child, I attended public school through sixth grade with CCD classes on the weekend; from seventh grade and up, I attended private school -- through the help of extended family and sacrifices made by my parents, we were able to afford it. It wasn't easy, but we did it. It was unconscionable then and it still is now, to consider taking public school funds to subsidize private school tuition.

I am strongly against the use of public taxpayer dollars to support school vouchers or publicly funded educational savings account. Doing so deflects money from our already under-funded public schools. Alternatively, I support the use of personal educational savings account with the use of a family's tax-free private dollars, similar to widely used health reimbursement savings accounts.

Public schools are the backbone of communities large and small throughout the state of Texas, treat them with the respect and support they deserve. Please vote NO to school vouchers.

Richard Frauenberger
Self/principal
Grapeland, TX

Teachers need higher pay, students need less testing, and no vouchers! Invest in student learning and value teachers.

Becky Morrison
Self
Palacios, TX

Teachers need higher pay and NO VOUCHERS! This is a bill that will, in the end, only benefit a higher class. NO one is being DENIED access to a free public education! It is a CHOICE! Why would tax money be given to schools that are not held to the same GOVERNMENT standards as public schools. If you feel that charter schools and private schools are better, it's because they are paid better, have smaller class sizes, and are not held prisoner by government intervention. NO VOUCHERS!!!

Candice Armstrong
Self, Educator
Forney, TX

People have always had a choice when it comes to education. People who want to send their kids to private school will find the money for it. People who think public education is fine will take their kids there. The choice has always been there. Giving one leverage over another (vouchers) is not going to solve the issue of creating equal education opportunities. We do not know what the effect would be once we implement the vouchers. We may even create another type of problem. Can we really sustain vouchers for Texans for a long period of time? 10 years? 30 years? When would we stop? When would we look back and say that we have achieved what we were hoping for? Has there been research done of this voucher system in other states? What are the outcomes of other similar programs and representatives?

"Freedom to obtain a quality education" is a phrase used in this legislation. Are you implying that parents are now able to obtain a "quality education" through receiving a private school voucher? Does that mean that quality education is not found in public schools? Surely we must not imply that.

Candice Armstrong

Martha Luna
Self
katy, TX

No voucher and yes pay raise for teachers. Come on, we are building the future for America!

Sarah Breedlove
Self, reading intervention teacher
Tyler, TX

Public education is the back bone of our society. Invest in the future-NO to vouchers.

Jayne Simons
Self/Public School Teacher
Corsicana, TX

Public school Educators need higher pay, less testing & NO vouchers!!

Courtnei Jackson
Self Public School Teacher
Nacogdoches, TX

The playing field will not be leveled by supporting vouchers. . .educational opportunity can be provided by paying teachers a fair pay equitable with being a professional. Valuing teachers will create a quality education for all students because teachers won't be leaving the profession in droves.

Rick Briscoe
Self
San Antonio, TX

The proposals to allow any funding to remain with a school after the student leaves for another (school choice) are illogical. Why reward a school for being bad enough for the student to leave? It also penalizes the school the student is going to as they will not receive full funding for the student. Money, all of it, should follow the student.

Arethra Garrett
Self Teacher
Overton, TX

I am all for a parent choosing where their child is educated but not for taking money away from a public institution that is already underfunded and not supported by our elected officials. The private institutions are not held to the same standards as public, but you want to take public money to support a private/chartered institution. Public schools don't

Jennifer Hicks
Self
Amarillo, TX

Please pass ESA accounts to allow parents the ability to send their children to a school that fits their needs. Hopefully this encourages public schools to improve to keep students from leaving. I will be sending my 2 boys to private school because our public school will not remove inappropriate curriculum from our neighborhood elementary. This saddens me to leave what once was a great school, but now is against our values and beliefs.

Allysa Suleski
Self
Killeen, TX

Public schools need higher pay! No vouchers!!! Less testing!!!

Rachel Bollinger
Self
Austin, TX

Teachers need higher pay, students needs less testing, and we don't need any vouchers.

Melinda Brasuell, Mrs.
Self- CTE teacher
Lufkin, TX

Please support our Texas teachers. Vote NO to vouchers. Our public school teachers do amazing work and need to be compensated for that. Attaching a raise to vouchers is a slap in the face to educators. Increase the step levels to encourage those with experience to stay.

Brenda Boss
Self
Temple, TX

I have been a teacher for 20 years and recently widowed and I now worry if I can pay my bills. Teachers need higher pay, less testing, and NO vouchers!

Manuel Gibson Sr., Mr
Self/Teacher
Hewitt, TX

I think Texas teachers are greatly underpaid. I also believe that vouchers will do more harm than good and should be an independent issue from teacher pay.

Koln Wright
Self, teacher
Temple, TX

Vouchers will not improve education access for all. Vouchers will take dollars away from public education. Keep the state of Texas great by investing in public education. Better funding for supplies, raises for auxiliary and support staff, raises for teachers and administration. We sit upon a historic surplus, use it to bolster our public schools. Learn from other states that have enacted voucher programs and are now losing money, like Arizona. No vouchers, invest in public schools.

Koln Wright
Self, teacher
Temple, TX

Vouchers will not improve education access for all. Vouchers will take dollars away from public education. Keep the state of Texas great by investing in public education. Better funding for supplies, raises for auxiliary and support staff, raises for teachers and administration. We sit upon a historic surplus, use it to bolster our public schools. Learn from other states that have enacted voucher programs and are now losing money, like Arizona. No vouchers, invest in public schools.

Arethra Garrett
Self Teacher
Overton, TX

Public schools don't get the right to deny people if they want. We have to take the good with the bad. You tell us that we are important but then downgrade us as if we are not doing our jobs. As a public educator I demand that you deny this bill. If you pass this bill I demand these institutions be held to the exact same standards that public schools are held to with same pay, same standardized state testing, and all other loops that we have to jump through to please the state government. I want each of the members that vote for this to come and do our jobs for a year and see how you come out with the expectations and underfunded school.

Eric Haltom
Self
Arp, TX

Please vote no to vouchers and yes to public school pay raises. We are struggling in this economy. Public schools need higher pay, We need officials in office that will support us. We need less testing. Many private schools do not even participate in state testing which has been mandated to us. NO vouchers!

Roberto Plata
Self - Head Start teacher
Tyler, TX

As a Head Start teacher here in Tyler, TX, I understand the dedication, commitment, and passion that drive most teachers to help shape the future generations that will transform the world. In order to do so, we deserve a dignifying salary that motivates us to do our best for our underserved communities. In that regards, I am asking a teacher pay raise that is not tied to vouchers, a real incentive that reflects also the real legislators' understanding of the importance of the teaching profession.

Addison Fisher
Addison- Student
Grand Saline, TX

I do not feel this should be available to students. When I was in high school, a large portion of our students would have moved schools in a moments notice for their best sport. Coming from a small town I can see how schools would quickly become a certain sport, organizational, or academic school. This would cause a problem academically. While some schools would excel academically others would excel in other areas such as sports. Sports or academics would be the focus of the respective school. The school that excelled at a certain sport would continue to dump money into that area and academics would suffer. I can see this being a big problem for small towns who barely have enough students to make athletic teams or towns struggling academically.

Cheri Cheramie
Self / Educator
Lumberton, TX

Public schools need higher pay, less testing & NO vouchers!

Mary Hall-Benbrook, Mrs.
Self, Public School Teacher
Hawkins, TX

Handing out school vouchers to those who are refusing public school but want their children in private school is like someone saying they want taxes to pay for their country club membership, because they don't want their children playing at the local park. Say no to school vouchers and yes to teacher raises!

Chris Moore
self - public school educator
Orange, TX

Public schools need higher pay, we are losing a lot of quality educators. We also need less testing so Texas and America can start to make progress again in education. Absolutely no vouchers!

Dominique Flowers
Self/teacher
Beaumont, TX

Teachers need higher pay raises without vouchers we work hard and accomplish a lot and go through a lot in the process kids are the future and teachers help prepare the kids for future with a quality education. Teachers do not become a teacher for the pay but because we love what we do and the lives we change as well.

Irene Cardoso
Self - Educator
Dallas, TX

School vouchers are harmful to public education! Tax payers should not be fronting the bill for families to send their children to private schools. Public schools serve the most vulnerable populations of students including those with physical and mental disabilities. Because the formula for funding public schools places an increased burden on individual districts, the introduction of school vouchers will ultimately take away funding from ALREADY underfunded public schools. Why wouldn't Texas want to invest in its future workforce - the kids! Please, vote NO to vouchers!

Lausanne Wiatrowski
Bexar County Democrats
San Antonio, TX

Please count me in support of fully funded public education and against any form of vouchers, education savings account or so called "parent empowerment". Thank you

Zachary Whiting, Senator
Self; father
Buda, TX

I am a father of two children: a seven year old boy and a four year old girl. Our son has autism, and we were so disappointed in the public school services that we withdrew him and are currently homeschooling him. We would love to send him to a great private and/or specialty school, but it is a financial challenge. The opportunity and freedom provided by a scholarship program would make that a more affordable and realistic option for both of our children.

Kristi Gigliotta, Ms.
ATPE
Beaumont, TX

We need higher pay, no vouchers, and less testing

Cindy Helf
Self - preschool teacher
Fort Worth, TX

Do not take valuable resources and money away from Texas public schools to give to private schools. This will not end up benefiting Texas children. In fact, please adequately fund our schools so that they don't have to try drastic cost cutting measures that take away meaningful services. And, get rid of STAAR and give that money back to the schools! Thank you!

Kathryn Wall
self - retired
Tyler, TX

I support Universal Educational Savings Accounts for the children of Texas because I have 4 grandsons living in Texas and would like for them to have the same opportunities that they would have if they lived in Florida. The argument that ESA's would hurt public schools seems bogus since the data is in from Florida.....their low-income students in 1998 ranked #33 in the nation.....with choice, today they are #1 and college completion increased by 20%. Thank you, Kathy Wall

Leah Dossey
Self & Business Owner
Conroe, TX

Enrichment and educational opportunity is critical for the future of our state. With the the 9th largest economy in the world we have the means to provide every Texan in public school a world-class education and pay our teachers a professional wage. There is no need to create a voucher program. The best way to improve our student outcomes is to FULLY FUND TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Vote NO on vouchers.

Patrick Franklin
Self / Teacher
Longview, TX

Texad teachers need higher pay, with less testing and more respect. Texas schools, and the communities they serve, must be given the resources they need to thrive, and they definitely don't need vouchers bleeding those resources away to private schools for the benefit of the wealthy few.

Brittany Lessman
Self- Classroom Teacher
Marlin, TX

Schools need more funding to adequately compensate teachers, however, there should NOT be vouchers. Vouchers rob public schools of precious funds that are already lacking.

Leah Dossey
self / business owner
Conroe, TX

If Texas truly wants to improve student outcomes and support educators and institutions the only way to do this is to FULLY FUND TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Vote NO to vouchers. Vote NO to vouchers. Vote NO to vouchers.

Carolyn Newman
self, retired engineer
The Woodlands, TX

Regarding "educational freedom", this seems to be the catch word for vouchers. I think implementing a voucher program will decimate our already struggling public schools. Public money should NOT be used to support private and home schools that will not be held to the same requirements as public schools. Parents already have the freedom to choose private or home schooling for their kids—they should not expect to fund those choices with taxpayer dollars.

Public education is one of the institutions that made this country great. The great state of Texas should NOT BE UNDERMINING PUBLIC EDUCATION. Instead, use some of the Billions of dollars of surplus to increase support to public schools: teacher salaries, school infrastructure, programs for the underserved students, etc.

Christa Evans
Self, teacher
MOUNT PLEASANT, TX

I support school choice, but do not agree with school vouchers. Each student is provided an amount from the state which should go with them wherever they choose. Funds should not be taken away from one school to pay another. We are already underfunded.

James Matlock, MR.

self

hutto, TX

Educational opportunity & freedom to obtain a quality education

I am writing as a father of 4 kids that will all be in public education and a current school board member in Hutto ISD. State funding plays a crucial role in ensuring educational opportunities and the freedom to obtain a quality education in Texas. State funding determines the allocation of resources to schools and educational institutions. It helps ensure that schools have adequate funding for facilities, materials, technology, and qualified teachers, all of which are vital for delivering quality education. In a time where we have a statewide teacher shortage and districts are adopting deficit budgets with cuts to programs just to make ends meet. State funding affects teacher salaries and professional development opportunities. Adequate funding allows schools to attract and retain highly qualified teachers by offering competitive salaries. It also supports professional development initiatives, ensuring that teachers have the necessary resources and training to provide quality education to their students.

State funding can address educational disparities by providing additional resources to schools and districts that serve disadvantaged communities. This helps level the playing field and ensures that students from all backgrounds have access to quality education. State funding often includes provisions for supporting students with special needs. This includes funding for special education programs, services, and accommodations to ensure that all students receive an inclusive and quality education. If the goal of the committee is to address educational opportunities, the State needs to invest in districts and give them the opportunity to provide students with multiple pathways for success and opportunities to be successful without the proper funding students will continue to fall behind.

Judith Seymour

Self Teacher

Oglesby, TX

As a teacher in a public school district that is also rural, it is incredibly difficult to obtain educators because of the pay and strenuous testing. Most of the time we are working outside our paid time to give the most quality instruction possible and teach ourselves to be better. In recent years, we have had to also learn to defend our students against gun violence, being expected as the front line of defense in these situations. Instead of valuing your state employees in the public school workforce, our leaders are joining to take away funding by adding vouchers, while also not giving us a deserved pay rate. We will continue to see dedicated professionals leave teaching as a result of our poor choice of leadership.

Crystal Cervantes

Self, teacher

SULPHUR SPRINGS, TX

Please, listen to educators! We are trying so hard and we are drowning. We need support and better pay. We say no to vouchers.

Karmen Gore

Self teacher

Killeen, TX

Absolutely NO vouchers! As a parent AND a teacher, NO to vouchers. Funding needs to be invested back into the public school system. We need better pay, and quality programming.

Robin McCardell

Self - elementary teacher and future school counselor

Athens, TX

Counselors and teachers should be paid a livable wage that reflects the amount of work they are expected to do. I have been teaching for 16 years now, and I am currently in graduate school to obtain my master's in school counseling. My 23 -year-old son has been working for a grocery company for one year and makes just as much as I do. My job has a lifelong impact on children and is a valuable and important job, yet teachers seem to be at the bottom of the totem pole when it comes to payment and in the decision-making process about what is happening in the classroom and with funds. The saying that "Everything is bigger in Texas" should apply to our schools and teachers. Why not have the best schools with the best teachers, the best pay scales, and the best students? Currently, we are far from that.

Alison Colemere

Self/Teacher

Wichita Falls, TX

School vouchers will be the death knoll of public education. You have fantastic, caring, and expert educators working in your public schools. But the lack of funding and inaccurate, unfair testing practices have made teaching even more difficult. Fund our current public schools! Give us the opportunity to educate ALL students and show that you care for more than wealthy families.

Laurie DeField

self

Austin, TX

You may be concerned that if we pass school choice, not all kids will get to go to private school, there won't be room. Who will choose?

That concern implies all Texas school children would want to leave public school, that private schools are better than public schools. If that is what you believe, all the more reason to pass school choice. But you and I know that not all private schools are better, many, even the majority of kids will CHOOSE public schools, as mine did when they were given the option. So this concern that everyone would want to leave public schools is misplaced. This argument against choice is unfounded.

The answer is ALL kids, with their families, will get choice of where they go, they will each get to decide.

Public schools will still get the same amount of money per student as they would have without school choice and, they already have the facilities and infrastructure so they should be able to do MORE. The only difference is -- students who do not have a good fit with their assigned public school will have a choice.

I am baffled that anyone would vote against choice, against freedom, against kids. Against what the majority of Texas parents are asking for, including the majority of minority parents. It saddens me that politicians such as yourself don't have the courage to do what is right and prefer, instead, to maintain the status quo which is failing so many Texas school children.

I hope you will recognize when school choice passes Texas kids will ALL have greater opportunities for success, and all our schools, public, private and charter will be better. I hope you have the courage to be on the right side of this important issue. Choose choice!

Kathy Drinning, Special Education Teacher

Self-teacher

PALESTINE, TX

No to vouchers and yes to less testing and pay increases for teachers. A quality education does not mean vouchers, but it does mean equitable teacher pay and less testing.

Leanne Verner
self/teacher
Brashear, TX

Texas students deserve fully funded schools. All students are important.

Darell Hortman
self
Palestine, TX

The best way to ensure the freedom of every Texas student to have an equitable and quality education is to fully fund public education to the point of having smaller numbers of students per class. Many private schools have smaller classes, so if that is a good model, incorporate it into public education for all. In years past, public schools had smaller student class loads, also.

Webb Murphy
self. teacher/coach
San Saba, TX

Public schools need teachers to have higher pay and less testing. Say no to vouchers!

Sherri Blassingame
Self
Wichita Falls, TX

This language in this bill is misleading at best. Vouchers hurt public education which should be our state leadership's top priority. It disheartens me to know our elected officials seem to want to scam the public with this bill than bolster the system we have in place. As a Texas public school teacher, I do not approve of this bill.

Vicki Snyder
Self Teacher
Rusk, TX

No to vouchers! Teachers, especially rural area teachers need the pay raises promised. State testing is a waste of money.

Elizabeth white
Self, teacher
Hawkins, TX

I am a teacher in a Title 1, rural, conservative school district. I cannot overemphasize how important public school is. Please do not support vouchers. I have been a republican my entire life. But I will vote for whoever votes against vouchers. Thank you.

susan mintz, Mrs.
self
Wichita Falls, TX

Teacher pay and vouchers should not be linked. If that is the only way lawmakers can get it passed, then they do not have the will of the people behind them on vouchers. Give teachers the straight up pay increase they need so they can live decently instead of practically in poverty. The job has become more stressful than ever. Lessen that stress by making testing reasonable and as child centered as possible. Remember, you get what you pay for. You want resilient professionals who can deliver high quality instruction? Figure out the budget and pay for it.

Susie Moreland
Self special education teacher
Killeen, TX

We need higher pay for public school teachers, less testing, and no vouchers!

Dee Ford
self - teacher
Winnsboro, TX

Any voucher system that puts money into educating Texas youth apart from funding higher quality education practices and personnel in public schools DOES harm the public education system, regardless of the premise that funds will come from general revenue. The state should focus on supporting public education with those funds, so that the continually increasing demands for data driven instruction and trained, qualified, professionally prepared teachers for our classrooms can be met to ensure the quality of education available to all Texas students.

Susie Moreland
Self special education teacher
Killeen, TX

We need higher pay for public school teachers, less testing, and no vouchers!

Sherri Blassingame
Self
Wichita Falls, TX

I do not support this bill because of the vouchers which are included. If the politicians of the state of Texas would put our children's quality of education as a top priority, there would be no need for vouchers. Please make quality bills that bolster our education system, not tear it down.

Nancy Cooper
Self- educator
Cisco, TX

I think it's ironic that the legislature wants to fund vouchers when they created the nightmare we have now. Education should be left to educators, NOT politicians. Vouchers are a waste of taxpayer dollars and an insult to public school teachers.

Rebecca Mebane
Self
Snyder, TX

Teachers need higher pay.

School vouchers are a no! They will not help public education. Say no to school vouchers.

Brittney Teague
Teacher
Abilene, TX

No to vouchers!! Equitable public education for Texas students should be addressed before allowing the rich to opt out of public education and funding that with tax payer dollars. Improve public education including paying teachers the salary they deserve, beed and EARN everyday teaching youth. You expect teachers go jump in front of bullets in the case of a school shooter and continue to add more and more to their list of responsibilities meanwhile paying them a wage that for most, is not enough to live off.

Melissa Hutchens
Self High School Teacher
Henderson, TX

Private schools should not be publicly funded through vouchers or any other method.

Toni Contreras
ATPE, Texas Teachers, Texas Children
Waco, TX

No to Vouchers! Most teachers like myself have to work nights and weekends just to keep up with the demands placed on us with so much testing. We teach during the day and the little time allotted to us to plan and prepare is a joke since most of that time is taken up by meetings. Students are struggling now more than ever due to the last few years, and so the demands placed on us now are overwhelming. Every week I consider giving up because I can make more money elsewhere working the same amount of hours, but less stress.

Less testing- higher wages- NO VOUCHERS!

Megan Vosters
Self
Lumberton, TX

I have never been in favor of vouchers. I do not vote for politicians that support vouchers. Please vote no on any bill that includes any type of voucher system, such as educational savings accounts.

The most important reason is that vouchers have never been able to help the students they claim to help. The students that *need* vouchers rarely have transportation to a private school, the financial resources to pay the rest of their tuition, or parents that can help them navigate the application process.

To be clear, I don't hate private schools. I personally loved the ways prayer was woven throughout our day when I taught in the Catholic Schools, but that doesn't mean I think tax dollars should pay for private schools.

Private schools don't have to admit everyone, like public schools do.

Private schools don't have to offer any support for students with IEPs or 504 plans (some do, but they are not required by law to do so like public schools are). Side note for anyone not in education: you'd be surprised by the number of students with IEPs and 504 plans. (Both of my children have 504 plans.)

Public school provides a free appropriate education for every student that walks through our doors.

School choice already exists... if for any reason parents want to choose something different for their child than their local public school, they have always been welcome to choose private school or homeschooling.

As a parent, and as a teacher, I believe in public education.

I also believe Texas needs to find a better way to fund public education. There's plenty that's broken about the current system, but vouchers are not the solution.

I think we really just need to throw the whole school finance system in the trash and start fresh. I even have a few ideas!

1. Texas needs to fund schools based on enrollment, not this Average Daily Attendance crap. Schools are staffed and operate based on their enrollment. We don't require less teachers, curriculum, or electricity if/when students are absent.
 2. The state (not local/property tax) needs to significantly increase its contributions to public school. No matter which list you look at, Texas is in the bottom 1/3 of the states in per student spending. That is completely unacceptable for a large and prosperous state. If our great state did a better job funding schools, there wouldn't be such a big burden on local property taxes, which plays a large part in the inequity among school districts.
 3. Maybe spend a few less dollars on the STAAR testing (\$388 million over the next 4 years).
-

Megan Vosters
Self, Kindergarten Teacher
Lumberton, TX

I have never been in favor of vouchers. I do not vote for politicians that support vouchers. Please vote no on any bill that includes any type of voucher system, such as educational savings accounts.

The most important reason is that vouchers have never been able to help the students they claim to help. The students that *need* vouchers rarely have transportation to a private school, the financial resources to pay the rest of their tuition, or parents that can help them navigate the application process.

To be clear, I don't hate private schools. I personally loved the ways prayer was woven throughout our day when I taught in the Catholic Schools, but that doesn't mean I think tax dollars should pay for private schools.

Private schools don't have to admit everyone, like public schools do.

Private schools don't have to offer any support for students with IEPs or 504 plans (some do, but they are not required by law to do so like public schools are). Side note for anyone not in education: you'd be surprised by the number of students with IEPs and 504 plans. (Both of my children have 504 plans.)

Public school provides a free appropriate education for every student that walks through our doors.

School choice already exists... if for any reason parents want to choose something different for their child than their local public school, they have always been welcome to choose private school or homeschooling.

As a parent, and as a teacher, I believe in public education.

I also believe Texas needs to find a better way to fund public education. There's plenty that's broken about the current system, but vouchers are not the solution.

I think we really just need to throw the whole school finance system in the trash and start fresh. I even have a few ideas!

1. Texas needs to fund schools based on enrollment, not this Average Daily Attendance crap. Schools are staffed and operate based on their enrollment. We don't require less teachers, curriculum, or electricity if/when students are absent.
 2. The state (not local/property tax) needs to significantly increase its contributions to public school. No matter which list you look at, Texas is in the bottom 1/3 of the states in per student spending. That is completely unacceptable for a large and prosperous state. If our great state did a better job funding schools, there wouldn't be such a big burden on local property taxes, which plays a large part in the inequity among school districts.
 3. Maybe spend a few less dollars on the STAAR testing (\$388 million over the next 4 years).
-

Jen Melia
Self
Montgomery, TX

My children attended a school I taught at, even though we did not live in the district. After two years attending these schools, my children were denied the ability to apply for open enrollment—in fact no one is allowed to apply for open enrollment due to the influx of new residents.

I understand.

But what I do not understand is how ANYONE can say we have school choice in TX. We do NOT.

I am a single mother, a teacher, and I can NOT afford 10K a year to have my children attend a private Christian school. How is that a choice?

My only “choice” is our district’s FAILING schools or emptying my 401k for a private school.

I am urging you to do what this country’s parents have been fighting for for years and the school unions have been determined to thwart—Give the people you represent choice in how their school dollars are to be spent!

Vote YES on school choice and vouchers, vote YES on student opportunity, parental autonomy and competition driven excellence in education. Vote YES on school vouchers—thank you.

JANE PARAMORE
Teachers all over the state!
Denton, TX

Please do not connect teacher pay raises to school vouchers! These things are not alike and need to be considered separately! Teachers are desperately in need of a pay hike, especially in view of property tax increases last year! We do not want school vouchers because the state does not need control over private schools. Once people start taking these vouchers into the private schools, the state will want to regulate the private schools. Private schools are private for a reason! No state regulation!

Ralph Rogers
Self
Corpus Christi, TX

I am opposed to any of my tax dollars going to religious or other private education. No vouchers, no education savings accounts. Public funding needs to go to public schools where the teachers are accredited by the state and the schools are accountable to the public who pay for them. I support additional money for teachers (higher pay) and more money for the schools with less wasteful time (and money to corporate testing companies) spent on testing and more on instruction.

Ashley Turner, Mrs.
Self/ Teacher
Lumberton, TX

No vouchers! This is not doing any justice to the public education system

Michael Clarkson, Mr
Crane ISD
Crane, TX

NO Vouchers! Vouchers will lead to segregation once again. This is backward and not progress.

Julie De Leon
Self
Round Rock, TX

Texas Teachers deserve to live well and above the living wage. Please take care of our teachers and pay them well for educating our society in Texas. They need unattached raises and benefits for themselves and their families. Students also deserve a quality education it not through vouchers that will rob the public education system of the funding it desperately needs already. You represent many that are successful due to public education teachers and they deserve to be compensated (given frequent raises and cost of living increases in salary) for all they do for children of our great state.

heather roell
self
Austin, TX

No vouchers. They are not good for public education and private schools don't have the same rules placed on them.

Lenise Eidson
Self-teacher
Belton, TX

Students in public education already have the freedom to obtain a quality education. Please fund public schools and not private schools.

HEATHER CUELLAR
SELF, TEACHER
COMANCHE, TX

Republicans, say NO to vouchers or lose votes to democrats.

Kara Lane, Teacher
Sd
Sulphur Springs, TX

No vouchers!! Higher pay for teachers. I work 2 jobs to afford to live that means I work 60 hours a week every week so my family can live decent. This is not right.

Melissa Mortensen
Self, teacher
Georgetown, TX

Quality education is an important tool for helping students in disadvantaged circumstances. To do this, we must ensure that children in all educational formats receive an education that will help them become productive, law-abiding, self-supporting adults. The idea of school vouchers comes from a well-meaning place, but there must be accountability from the institutions that receive money from school vouchers, whether they are public, private, or home schools. This accountability should include inspections to ensure there are appropriate school facilities for the number of students enrolled, that voucher money is spent responsibly on local education needs, and that all students have regular contact with mandatory reportors, among other concerns.

In recent years, there have been despicable examples of financial fraud and waste in American charter schools, including charter schools located in Texas. If the state is going to fund these entities, the state must install safeguards to ensure that those funds are used to educate children.

In addition, a responsible voucher program must also consider that in any community in which vouchers are widely used, public schools will still be responsible for educating the remaining children, and there is a strong possibility that the children left in the public schools will be those who have the most needs and are therefore the most expensive to educate properly. To combat this, public schools will need increased funding and options to support students with uninvolved parents, behavioral problems, and special education needs.

Lenise Eidson
Self-teacher
Belton, TX

Students and educators in public education should supported with the full extent possible. Please fund public schools and not private school vouchers.

Robin Bobo
Breckenridge ISD
Breckenridge, TX

Vouchers are a scam. Vote no to vouchers. Less testing and less weight on the STAAR tests. They are developmentally inappropriate, testing students on a higher grade level than what they are in, and demanding they perform in ways they cannot at a young age (computerized testing, paragraph answers to type in on elementary level) Let teachers TEACH and not do "test prep" all year long. Use the testing money to fund classrooms and pay teachers.

Bonnie Bollinger, Mrs.
Self/Teacher
Bryan, TX

NO VOUCHERS! If parents want to send their children to another school, the parents should PAY for that PRIVILEGE. As a public school teacher I am required to do MUCH MORE work with less parent support etc. than those students in private school. Private school should NOT be given public school funds. Teachers pay raise should NOT be tied to anything else. As a widowed single parent there is no way I could support my children on my salary alone. My children are now 18 and I am faced with trying to live and support my children through college on just my teachers salary as they no longer receive death benefits. NO VOUCHERS!! Teachers deserve a raise.

Nicole Clark
Brenham ISD
Navasota, TX

I believe the voucher system is inherently flawed. It is not ok to use public funds to fund private entities, such as private schools. Also, this is taking money away from public schools that are already struggling to survive. Teachers are filling their classrooms using their own funds already. If a parent wants to send their child to private school, they already have that option, or they can homeschool their children. This is not going to help our students or our public education system.

Emily Dominguez
Self
Bastrop, TX

As a bilingual public school teacher in a rural area, I am certain that increased allotments for public education and increased wages for all school staff will provide the best education for underserved communities and help retain the excellent professionals I work with in public education. Increasing funding for public education will also ensure our children's education is provided with enough oversight to prevent discrimination and ensure quality education for all children, including those with disabilities or limited English. It is my understanding that schools financed with voucher programs will not have such oversight and outreach. The economic structure they exist in seems rife with opportunities for corruption and personal financial gain at the cost of students who have no choice but to continue in traditional public education. Historically, voucher programs educate far fewer children at far greater taxpayer expense than traditional public education. No to vouchers! Yes to increased allotment for public education! Thank you.

Amy Donahoe, Teacher
Self - teacher
Lufkin, TX

Absolutely NO to vouchers. As an educator it's simply demeaning that an increase in pay is not being taken more seriously. Our future depends on education! We need resources, we need staff that have degrees or have the industry experience. You don't get that by offering a pay scale lower than the cost of living. It's so vital that we make motions to move forward for better learning environments too!

Myrna Horan, Mrs.
Self / Educator
El Paso, TX

As an Educator who has been in the public school system for 22 years, I strongly encourage the committee to understand that we are preparing our future.

I deserve a raise! I know several people who work in jobs as contractors, warehouse, workers managers at restaurants who make more than I do.

These people only hold a high school diploma GED, or did not even graduate from high school. They are making over \$60,000 that is outrageous. I have 22 years in public education, a veteran teacher, and I only make \$60,000. I have a masters in my field. This is outrageous! People don't understand that a teacher doesn't stop working or has a 9-to-5 job as others do because we take home work like grading and writing lesson plans.

A standardized test does not prepare a student for college readiness but only takes away from an enriched curriculum. We have more students dropping out of high due to testing even though they have high grades in core subjects. Leave the testing to students who want to further their education. We meaning forty years or older we're not educated to pass a test. This committee that is deciding what is best for teachers and students did not have to take a test for future endeavors.

No to vouchers and yes to raises! Standardized testing is rote learning! No to standardized testing as well!

Erika Melero
Self, teacher
San Antonio, TX

- I support fully funded public education
- Please vote against any form of vouchers, education savings accounts or so-called “parent empowerment” measures
- Texas has the ninth largest economy in the world, along with a \$33 billion surplus and must do better for our children
- Texas ranks 44th in per student funding for public schools
- Texas pays teachers \$7500 below the national average
- The way to improve student outcomes is to fully fund our public school system

The notion that competition is necessary to make schools better is ridiculous, because in a competition, someone has to lose, and that would be kids whose schools aren't fully and fairly funded. Education should be a cooperative investment, not competitive segregation

Kyle Verner, Mr.
self
Brashear, TX

Please fully fund our public schools.

Robert Wagner
1
Victoria, TX

No voucher more pay.

Christy Chambers
All public school teachers and staff
Tyler, TX

As a public school teacher for 30 years, I am so disappointed that our state is continuing to consider a voucher program. It is very demeaning to our public school system to say that students and their parents can use taxpayer money however they choose to in regards to education. Most private schools lack the accountability and scrutiny that our public schools are placed under. They are able to pick and choose their students, which will undoubtedly lead to discriminatory admission practices. Of course the private schools will appear to perform better than the public schools because they can admit the best and brightest, and leave out those that struggle - the English language learners, those with learning differences or physical differences that don't meet their standards.

Those who choose to send their students to private schools are welcome to do so, but it should not be done at the detriment of our public schools who continue to serve everyone that comes in the door. Most private schools offer scholarships if needed, and that should be the route taken by those that choose to attend them if need be. Please use our tax dollars to support our public schools and our teachers with the increased funding that is desperately needed so that they can do what they need to do to ensure that ALL Texans receive an outstanding education.

Traci Dunlap
Self, Teacher
Austin, TX

My name is Traci Dunlap, and I am a teacher in Austin ISD. If we want to prioritize "educational opportunity and freedom to obtain a quality education," then we must fully fund our public schools and reject vouchers of any kind. Our public schools are the foundation of our democracy. Public schools welcome ALL students, are accountable to taxpayers, and are governed by democratically elected school boards. Public tax dollars should NEVER be used to send students to unaccountable private schools that pick and choose their students, and should certainly not be used to offset tuition for any sort of religious school! Please support our public schools, teachers, and other school employees. Texas children deserve well-funded public schools!

Denise Hudson
Self
Nederland, TX

NO VOUCHERS! support the public school teachers! Allow private school parents to pay for their schools with their own dime.

Linda Smith
Voter
Kerrville, TX

It seems self-evident that a state that has the ninth largest economy in the world along with a \$33 billion surplus must do better for our children. Today, Texas ranks 44th in per student funding for public schools. Texas pays teachers \$7500 below the national average. The way to improve student outcomes is to fully fund our public school system. Vote to fund public schools. Vote no on vouchers.

Heather Farmer
Self - Retired English Teacher/Instructional Dean
Center Point, TX

Texas has the ninth largest economy in the world, along with a \$33 billion surplus, and yet, Texas ranks 44th in per student funding for public schools and pays \$7500 below the national average teacher salary.

The way to improve student outcomes is not through vouchers, or education savings accounts or other so-called "parent empowerment" measures. The way to improve student outcomes is to fully fund our public school system and raise teachers' salaries.

The notion that competition is necessary to make schools better is founded on a false premise, because in a competition, someone has to lose, and that would be kids whose schools aren't fully and fairly funded and whose teachers are poorly paid. Education should be a cooperative investment, not a competitive segregation.

Vote to fully fund Texas public schools and invest in public school teachers, and allow them to create the educational variety and excellence that all parents are seeking.

Craig Wilson
None
Malakoff, TX

Say NO to vouchers.

Christina Sabisch
self/school social worker
Austin, TX

Please strengthen Texas public schools by properly funding them. Voucher programs are harmful to all students. We don't need to subsidize private schools with no accountability. Similar programs in other states do not offer better outcomes.

Beth Talley
Self, teacher
Amarillo, TX

I want proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS!

Melinda Cavanaugh
Self
Hubbard, TX

Any money denied public education at this moment in history, i will regard as a purely political act. Our children were traumatized educationally and regarding mental health during the two years of educational chaos due to the covid epidemic. What is needed now is an extraordinary spending bill for staff to meet each child's educational need and staff to meet each child's mental state every single school day. School years should be extended to include the amount of time recommended to make up the learning gap that was created by the pandemic. All of this will cost lots of money but it is time to face facts: our children fell way behind in their education goals because of the pandemic and there is no way to make the trauma of those 2 years just vanish except with much more staffing in the schools.

Dianne Collom
--None--
New Boston, TX

Higher pay for educators, COLA for retired educators , more money for public schools, less testing, more teacher involvement in test development, and not vouchers

Earl Bryan
Self
Woodville, TX

No to vouchers

Keri Healey
Self
Conroe, TX

Public schools need higher pay, less testing and No vouchers! I am afraid that you are going to run the rest of the public school teachers out of the schools. I am frankly frightened for the future of Texas if this passes.

Melinda Cavanaugh

Self

Hubbard, TX

The loss experienced by our school children during covid is tragic but not supporting that same population with the funds needed to meet that tragedy would be criminal in a year when our state has extra money in their coffers. Our children need more teachers, classroom aides, and many mental health professionals as well as more time spent in school during a calendar year. That will demand lots more money. It is beyond time for our politicians to do the right thing and stand for what it takes to right our children's ships with the funds to provide them the support they need to begin to make up for 2 years of education lost to the pandemic.

Lori Adamczyk

SELF

Spring, TX

All students, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, gender, or other factors deserve a high quality education. This means ensuring that schools are funded equally, and that students who face greater obstacles are given the necessary resources to thrive. Students also need to be protected from discrimination and diversity must be allowed and celebrated.

Brett Bothwell, Dr.

Self, professional educator

Spring, TX

No vouchers, higher pay for educators, less testing, affordable health insurance, free/reduced tuition for teachers & teachers' children at Texas public universities and cancelation of loans to educators.

Rebecca Robertson
Texas tax payer
Dumas, TX

I am writing to express my concerns and advocate for necessary changes within our public school system. As an engaged community member, I strongly believe that addressing key issues such as higher pay for educators, reduced emphasis on testing, and the elimination of vouchers can significantly enhance the quality of education for our children.

First and foremost, it is crucial to recognize the invaluable role that teachers play in shaping the future of our society. Yet, many educators are burdened by low salaries that do not reflect their dedication and hard work. By increasing their pay, we can attract and retain talented individuals who will be motivated to deliver exceptional education and invest in the growth and development of their students. Higher salaries will not only boost teacher morale but also contribute to the overall well-being of their families, ultimately fostering stability and a strong sense of professional fulfillment.

Additionally, the prevalence of excessive testing in our education system has become a cause for concern. While assessments have their merits in evaluating students' progress, an overemphasis on standardized tests hampers the holistic development of learners. We need to shift the focus towards a more comprehensive and inclusive educational experience that encourages critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration. By reducing the burden of excessive testing, we can create a conducive environment for students to develop a genuine passion for learning and explore their individual strengths.

Furthermore, the implementation of school vouchers poses a threat to the stability and effectiveness of public schools. Vouchers divert public funds towards private institutions, leading to a decrease in resources available for public schools. This undermines the principle of equal access to education for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds. Instead, we should strive to invest more in our public schools, ensuring that they have the necessary resources, facilities, and support systems to provide a high-quality education to every student.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the importance of higher pay for educators, reduced emphasis on testing, and the elimination of vouchers in our public school system. By prioritizing these aspects, we can create an educational environment that empowers our teachers, fosters the growth of our students, and upholds the values of equality and excellence in education.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I look forward to seeing positive changes and working together to provide the best possible education for our community's children.

Katie Maybaum
Self
Round Rock, TX

As a public school educator in Texas, I am not in favor of school vouchers. The success of our schools occur because of diversity. Private schools segregate and exclude. They are also not held to the same standards as public schools. Vouchers won't benefit low socioeconomic populations but wealthy populations, who already have a choice in schools. Vouchers will only take more resources away from public schools and you will see a teacher shortage even worse than we have now. This is not the right path for our state. Help us educate our future populations and create a system that will fund education and support the people giving their blood, sweat, and tears to a thankless profession.

Mary Sandoval
Self/Retired Educator
San Juan, TX

No to vouchers
Raise the basic allotment

Rebecca Robertson
Texas Tax Payer
Dumas, TX

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Kurt VanWormer
Myself
HOUSTON, TX

School choice is necessary to create competition to the TEA and NEA. Both organizations have a monopoly and both are not focused on the student being educated to their fullest potential.

Geoffrey Hollis
Self & Centerville ISD
Apple Springs, TX

HECK NO to vouchers. This will destroy lots of schools, including mine. Absolutely ridiculous.

Will Burks
Self
Lubbock, TX

If the Texas legislature as a whole or any member therein feels that private school vouchers will improve education in the state of Texas then he or she should author a stand alone bill to fund private school vouchers. If that bill will stand on its own merit then it should be passed and signed by the governor. If the bill won't stand on its own merit then it has no business being attached to a public school funding bill. Funding private school vouchers out of public school funds is the surest way to lower the quality of public school for all students.

Ali Pierce, Mrs
Self/teacher
Abilene, TX

I am a teacher entering my 6th year of teaching with public schools, I have worked in schools in the metropolitan area predominantly in title 1 schools for three years and then moved to teach in a school in a smaller city. With my experience I do favor voucher to be available for tax paying people, if the state is paying close to 10,000 dollars per child in public school but still failing to show passing results for test and attendance then the money the state takes from parents should go back to parents so they have choices available for their kids and education.

Every student has unique needs in learning and sometimes the public school setting is not the correct style to facilitate learning for the student. Setting up an ESA for each student, parents would have more choices to educate their child with homeschool, private, or public school. ESA would also give parents more financial power to pay for extracurricular activities in sports, music, and arts.

I also think it would be good for our public schools to have to compete in the market with private and homeschool. If school board committees and administrators would listen to their employees and their community they would know what kind of service both teachers and parents want for our students. If a school fails to provide a service then a school should have to suffer the consequences like a failed business.

Now a few concerns do come to mind in regards to ESA. I am concern that homeschool programs and private schools would inflate their cost similar to what has happened with college tuition, if Texas does the voucher system I would implore you to safe rail legislation to prevent the cost of k-12 education from raising above the year to year inflation rate of 2%.

I am also concern about neglectful parents using funds from the ESA to finance things other than their child's education. To prevent this I would again encourage laws that outline strict and clear punishment for parents that choose to use the money in ESA from its intended purposes. Though I am more in favor of small government I do not mind Texas creating a a specialize group that would be focus on investigating and auditing ESA activities.

Will vouchers fix all the problems with education, no. However it will give more financial power to the parents and families that do value their child's education. Many issues that happen in schools is unfortunately an issue with what is valued in the culture. Personally for me I would love to send my child to a school that focuses on Socratic style of teaching; unfortunately that is not available for my family because my husband and I do not make enough to send our child to a school like that.

Matthew Diehl
Self (Pastor)
Round Top, TX

I support to INCREASE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL TEXAS CHILDREN THROUGH PARENTAL CHOICE LEGISLATION!

Parental choice program such as an Education Savings Account will help Texas families whose children need an alternative to public school.

Alyssa Armendarez
Texas Teachers
Denver City, TX

Texas educators do not want vouchers. This will only hurt Texas public schools in all areas but especially rural areas which is much of Texas. This will harm families with lower socioeconomic status. Vouchers do more harm than good. We need to pay teachers more, so we can hire better teachers to teach our students. Teachers are leaving left and right because of the clear under appreciation we receive from our government. Men and women whose careers are to entertain are taken more seriously than those men and women who choose careers in education. Our livelihoods are based on standardized tests that children from ages 8-18 are forced to take. Again, our careers are based on test scores from children. We need less standardized testing, and instead, put that money towards higher quality public school teacher. We, Texas educators, are profoundly against vouchers, demand a respectable, higher pay, and advocate against standardized tests.

Megan Wilcher
Texas Tax Payer and Mother of children in Texas public school
Amarillo, TX

As a concerned citizen and advocate for quality education, I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the current state of public schools and the urgent need for reforms. Public schools play a vital role in shaping our society's future, and it is crucial that we invest in our educators and prioritize the well-being of our students.

Firstly, I would like to address the issue of inadequate compensation for our dedicated teachers and staff. These individuals work tirelessly to educate and nurture our children, yet they often face low salaries that fail to reflect the value of their work. It is disheartening to see such an important profession being undervalued in our society. By providing higher pay and improved benefits, we can attract and retain highly qualified educators who are motivated to excel in their roles. Investing in our teachers is an investment in our children's future and the prosperity of our nation.

Secondly, the excessive focus on standardized testing has become a significant concern in our public schools. While assessments can provide valuable feedback, the current testing culture has become counterproductive, placing an excessive emphasis on test scores rather than fostering holistic education. Students face immense pressure, which stifles their creativity and limits their exposure to diverse learning experiences. By reducing the frequency and importance of standardized testing, we can create an environment that encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and a love for learning.

Lastly, the issue of vouchers poses a threat to the integrity and equity of public education. Diverting public funds to private schools through vouchers undermines the purpose of public education, which is to provide equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Public schools are the foundation of our democracy, and they must remain accessible to all students, regardless of their family's financial capabilities. Instead of diverting funds away from public schools, we should focus on improving their resources and infrastructure to ensure that every child receives a quality education.

In conclusion, I urge you to prioritize the following reforms in our public school system: better compensation for educators, reduced reliance on standardized testing, and protection of public schools from voucher systems. By addressing these issues, we can build a stronger, more inclusive, and equitable education system that empowers students, supports teachers, and prepares our future generations for success.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I strongly believe that by working together, we can create positive change in our public schools and provide a brighter future for our children.

Evalyn Elliott
Self -- Public School Teacher
Carrollton, TX

No to Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) and public school vouchers. Please fully fund public schools and give teachers and staff members a raise/competitive pay.

Billie Cospers
Self teacher
Amarillo, TX

I agree with higher pay for teachers, less testing BUT I also AGREE TO HAVING VOUCHERS. Private school parents pay taxes as well. They should have a choice as to where their children attend school. This is only FAIR. It may or may not be best for public school but I guarantee if a non Christian parent was forced to put their child in christian private school they would throw a fit. Any parent should have the right to choose and not have to subject their children to the beliefs and actions that take place in the public school system. Thank you

Heidi Miceli
Self
Spring, TX

Say no to vouchers and yes to public education! Teachers follow the TX state curriculum, TEKS, and do not have a separate agenda. The testing is failing our students not the teachers.
Raise teacher pay and provide districts with money for resources and proper training! No to vouchers!

Megan Wilcher
Texas Tax Payer and Mother of children in Texas public school
Amarillo, TX

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Chris Coulomne
Self, building trades teacher
Lubbock, TX

Vouchers are not the answer to educational opportunity. Remove school district boundaries if that is the goal you are after and fully support the system we already have. What is the point of having our Texas education system if you decide to fund an alternative instead of doing something like allowing public school choice?

Andrew A, Professor
Self
Spring, TX

Why even attempt to disguise the funding this way? Vouchers are not the way to go by any means and school funding should not be tied to it either. Vouchers for schools have shown to be misused and essentially take money away from public schools for charter schools.

Yes funding for teacher pay should be increased m given the amount of money raised every year in taxes it is astonishing how teacher pay has not kept up with the cost of living.

Justin Houser
Self
Lubbock, TX

Stop playing politics with our children. Stop with the voucher nonsense. Stop wasting money on commissions to tell you what you already know - you have a teacher shortage because you underpay us, try to make us compete with our colleagues for fair salaries, and clearly do not understand the educational needs of Texas children, teachers, and schools.

Jennifer Bloomer
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Parents should be allowed to choose schooling for their child. However. They should not use public funds for private schools. This violates a private religious schools right to teach what they want. Separation of state from church. If parents choose a school outside of their zone they should have to provide transportation etc themselves and not rely on public funds.

Sylvia Licon
Self
El Paso, TX

No voucher's , less testing and more support for us teachers is needed. Better pay is needed to keep up with cost of living educators are having to get 2 jobs to make ends meet.

Josien Knigge Malloy, Editor-in-Chief
National School Chaplain Association
Conroe, TX

Our children are our future. For the past decades, liberal and nonconservative influences have had their opportunity to train and prepare our children. Looking at the results relating to the preparedness of our children, (which are going rapidly down hill) they have done a terrible job. I am of the opinion their time is up. Parents need to have the power to decide concerning the well-being and education of their children. And each child is different, so parents might choose different options, taking each of their children into consideration. Government provides options and parents choose what it best for their child. Please give parents the right to choose the best education for each individual child. Thank you.

Melissa Owings
Self / Teacher
Lubbock, TX

Teachers need to be taken seriously and receive major pay increases! No one values a teacher until they are all gone.

Jacob Stephenson, Coach
Public School Teacher
Comanche, TX

No vouchers, less testing and higher public teacher pay

Beth Bush
Montgomery ISD
Montgomery, TX

Public schools need HIGHER pay, LESS testing and NO VOUCHERS!

Marain Harris
Texas Tax Payer
Dumas, TX

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the current state of our education system and to advocate for three critical reforms: higher salaries for teachers, reduced emphasis on standardized testing, and a firm stance against the implementation of school vouchers. As a concerned citizen who values the future of our nation's children, I believe it is essential for our elected representatives to prioritize these issues and work towards positive change.

First and foremost, I would like to address the issue of teacher salaries. Teachers are the backbone of our society, dedicating their lives to shaping the minds of the next generation. Yet, their compensation often fails to reflect the immense value they bring to our communities. Inadequate salaries lead to teacher shortages, demoralization, and high turnover rates, all of which have a detrimental impact on our children's education. I implore you to support policies that ensure teachers are fairly compensated for their hard work, dedication, and the vital role they play in shaping our society's future.

Additionally, our education system has become overly fixated on standardized testing, which has adverse effects on both students and teachers. While assessments can provide valuable feedback, the current excessive testing culture stifles creativity, narrows the curriculum, and places unnecessary stress on students and educators alike. It is crucial to shift our focus from rote memorization and test preparation to fostering critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a genuine love for learning. I urge you to support reforms that promote a more holistic and well-rounded education, where teachers have the freedom to inspire their students through engaging and meaningful experiences.

Lastly, I want to express my firm opposition to the implementation of school vouchers. Our public education system plays a vital role in fostering equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status. Introducing vouchers would divert crucial public funds away from public schools, potentially exacerbating inequalities and leaving behind those who are most in need. Instead of allocating resources to private entities, we should focus on strengthening and improving our public education system, ensuring that every child has access to a quality education.

I respectfully request that you use your influential position as a member of Congress to champion these vital reforms. By advocating for higher teacher salaries, reduced emphasis on testing, and opposing school vouchers, you can actively contribute to improving our education system and ensuring a brighter future for all children.

Thank you for your attention to these pressing matters. I trust in your commitment to serving the best interests of your constituents and the nation as a whole. I am eager to learn about the steps you will take to address these concerns and bring about positive change in our education system.

Katie Semmler
Self, teacher
Tomball, TX

No to vouchers. Increase pay for teachers and reduce required state testing. Do not cater to the wealthy—support every student's access to quality education.

Marian Harris
Texas Tax Payer
Dumas, TX

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the current state of our education system and to advocate for three critical reforms: higher salaries for teachers, reduced emphasis on standardized testing, and a firm stance against the implementation of school vouchers. As a concerned citizen who values the future of our nation's children, I believe it is essential for our elected representatives to prioritize these issues and work towards positive change.

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Nancy Tarpley, Teacher
Round Rock ISD
Leander, TX

We should not be spending public funds to allow people to go to private schools. You should visit more public School classrooms and see how hard public School teachers are working don't undermine our public school system help them please!

Angel Pantoja
Self/educator
Plainview, TX

No to vouchers, yes to teacher pay raise

R T
Self
Hurst, TX

Teaching is the most important job! We deserve a liveable wage with increases to match the cost of living increases each year as other professions get, not just vouchers! Testing is not beneficial to teachers or students.

Mary Ellen Summerlin
self
Kerrville, TX

The top priority for the budget surplus should be full funding public education in Texas. Please vote no on any form of vouchers!

Melissa Sharp
Self
Lubbock, TX

No to vouchers!

Steven Zewe, Sr
Self/Retired
Columbus, TX

Parents should have the biggest say in how their children are educated, not the state or federal government. If they are not satisfied with the curriculum or how and what their children are being taught they should be able to enroll them in other schools including religious schools. I would also let them home school! My sister in law home schooled her three girls and two of the three got their PHD's! Giving them a choice and letting the money follow them would be the best thing for a lot of families.

Regards,
Steven Zewe Sr
Columbus Texas

Melissa Duncan
SELF/TEACHER
San Angelo, TX

Public school teachers need more pay, less testing and NO Vouchers!!!!!!

Jennifer Flores, Teacher
ATPE
Waco, TX

Public schools need higher, less testing, and NO vouchers!

Mary Malmberg
Self teacher
Lubbock, TX

Teachers pay should be tied to the fact that we are willing to show up and educate, care for and listen to our students.

It should not be tied to:

Vouchers
Test Scores
anything else

Stephanie Wlodkowski
Self, teacher
Conroe, TX

If you're going to do vouchers, institutions that accept them should have the same accountability. Also, invest at least the same amount per student in public schools! Teachers need pay raises to accommodate all of the extra work we do on top of the school day!

Amanda Smith, Mrs.
Self - Special Education Teacher
Lubbock, TX

Vouchers are threatening jobs and families but is being pushed and advertised to the public as a hero of choice by people who have never set foot in a classroom past their student years. Public education is a right that brave men and women fought and died to provide our children regardless of sex, race, religion, economic status and disability. Public schools are regulated, funded (in middle-high class communities at least. Please consider fixing this problem too and fully fund ALL public schools), mandated, reported on, by, and to the state. Skills to be taught are determined by the state. Teachers are required to have schooling, degrees and certifications to be allowed to teach. We aim to be inclusive of all children and teach them, unbiasedly. Private schools do not require a single one of those things to happen. Private schools can and do hire people to teach that hold no certifications or degrees. Private schools don't have to teach what the state requires. Private schools can turn any child away for any reason and are legally protected in doing so. Private schools are not legally required to provide access to a quality education for those with disabilities, not even transportation. What happens to our children in rural communities then? Vouchers are a first class seat on the way to legal discrimination, indoctrination of our children through privatized and possibly unethical curriculum (Anglo-positive history exclusively, no separation of church and state, politically aligned in either direction), and incredibly insulting and demeaning to educators who have worked tirelessly and at our own very high expense (low pay, questionable benefits, no assistance, public scrutiny trying to accuse public schools of the very things the vouchers provide, struggling mental health due to the aforementioned issues, and having to pay out of pocket to stock our own classrooms) to meet your requirements. Educators, children and families are real people who deserve better. Take all of the money that has suddenly been found to make this debate possible and fully fund ALL public schools as well as raise teacher and support staff pay. The constituents who made it possible for you to be where you are and to make these decisions deserve that, at the very least.

Kristi Sterling
Self/Public Educator
Lubbock, TX

Never did I imagine as a public school educator that I would have to defend my occupation. I want my constituents, especially those who are representing Lubbock Texas to understand what you have chosen to put public educators through. You claimed you supported Education and would do everything you could to support us but unfortunately you said what needed to be said to get the votes, yet you left educators in the dark to get what you wanted! Teachers are not the enemy. There are great teachers like myself who strive for student success, who work way past contractual hours to help students and families in any way that we can. What has this given us? Our government dragging public education in the mud, a continuance of being overworked, under appreciated, and underpaid. Not all districts have a starting pay at 60,000. I work for a district who starts in the 30,000s and it takes about 20 years before you start to see a decent pay because of the step scale that they use. Rent, gas, groceries, and medication have gone up. This is a full time job and then some but yet we're expected to get a second job when we're already drained from the state, school district, and school administration expectations. We're drained from giving 110% Monday-Friday when we're teaching, dealing with behaviors, being a counselor, nurse, and so much more. Yet we're giving a "deal with it" attitude from our government and a THREAT of pay raises hanging in the balance and tied to vouchers. Seriously? Do you know how upsetting it is to give it your all every school year only to get a 3% raise, only this year, we don't get a raise because of what is going on with the decisions not being made by our government. By the time everything is taken out of our checks, we have nothing. I only have 4 years as a certified teacher under my belt and that's after giving 14 years as a teaching assistant. I am still stuck with the decision of "Do I get gas today or get \$30 worth of groceries (which is nothing)?" I can't see a doctor or a dentist because I don't have any money left due to paying bills. You have a choice to speak up and show support for ALL Texas public educators, especially educators like me who live paycheck to paycheck. It's simply not fair. We deserve the pay of doctors, lawyers, etc. We have to stretch our pay check in order to get paid over the summer. Teachers don't get summers off. We're at trainings, conferences, and summer ARDs. Say "NO" to school vouchers and say "YES" to higher pay for teachers and support staff!!! When you pay teachers, you retain teachers!

Cristie Read
Self
Henderson, TX

Each student within the state of Texas already has access to a quality education. Offering vouchers will take away from this. Schools will recruit students and athletes. This will lead to some students having parents or even districts that are willing to travel further distances in order to bring the student to that school. Which that sounds great. But what about the kids that don't have someone who is willing or able to do the same for them? They won't be able to play football or run track at the school an hour away that has a winning record. Those kids will suffer but the wealthy kids will have advantages. Vouchers will destroy our public school system.

Teri Evans-Palmer, Associate Professor Emeritus
self
San Antonio, TX

All parents are charged with the responsibility of educating their children. Any governmental entity taking that charge away from parents is not liberty, not freedom and not the governing body of a republic. The US is a constitutional republic!

Brian Campbell
Self/Educator
Mesquite, TX

Keep funds in public schools and NO to vouchers. Invest and show appreciation to teachers by increasing their salaries and in turn validating their worth to society!

Donald Dwyer
self
Waco, TX

I am in full favor for school choice and parent involvement our children's education. Texas needs to get on board as have other states like Florida with a school voucher system for both public and private schools.

Madison Hanks, Mr
Self
Seabrook, TX

A quality education comes from teachers who are paid well and a school well funded. Allowing this turn of funds will not help our children. It never has shown any clear evidence if working. This unconstitutional bill to allow government funds to flow into religious schools is unacceptable.

As a teacher I employee you vote no on any voucher system. As a voter I demand you vote against a voucher system. As a parent I beg you to find out schools and stop with making my children the political football dejour.

Kathy Olson, Teacher
ATPE
Conroe, TX

Our schools need less testing and NO VOUCHERS!

Christy Spitzer
Public school teacher for 30 years
Longview, TX

Public schools need higher pay, less testing & no vouchers!

Derek Spitzer
Self /Game Warden
Longview, TX

Public schools need higher pay, less testing & no vouchers!

Teri Evans-Palmer, Assoc. Prof. Emeritus
self
San Antonio, TX

Every child learner entrusted to teacher are on this earth to achieve their God-given destiny. As a retired teacher, I believe it is a teacher's task to observe, discern and guide them in developing their skills, talents and gifts. To this end, parents must have the liberty to select the school of their choice where teachers can accomplish this life-supporting task. Education is not indoctrination. A good teacher directs education according to the needs of a child. Public schools have become "learning mills" where look-alike learners are mass educated to meet the needs of a governmental society. I know because I was a teacher educator and student teacher supervisor for 18 years at a Texas university.

I believe parents are seeking teachers who are servant leaders, humbled to honor their calling by designing excellent curriculum, teaching with clarity, guiding students in a safe and structured learning environment where a moral code of conduct is in place.

Terri Welch
Self
Lubbock, TX

As is the case now, private schools are allowed to select their students. Why would someone think that just because they have a voucher they would be allowed to attend any school they want. Many of the student's at our public school are dependent on bus transportation. How will they attend any school besides their neighborhood school?
The voucher system will also hurt your public schools that lose even your average student. What type of students will be left?
Many schools have free and reduced meals. Will private schools still be eligible for these opportunities? If not, how will many of these children eat?
In theory, it sounds great, but I think there are many things people and lawmakers have not thought out.

Mary Stimson
Self
PEARLAND, TX

Vote no on vouchers and any tax dollars going to charter, religious, or any other private schools. Ridiculous violation to 1st Amendment! Stop using my tax dollars to promote your bigotry.

Dylan Farmer
Self
San Antonio, TX

Texas has the ninth largest economy in the world, along with a \$33 billion surplus, and yet, Texas ranks 44th in per student funding for public schools and pays \$7500 below the national average teacher salary.

The way to improve student outcomes is not through vouchers, or education savings accounts or other so-called "parent empowerment" measures. The way to improve student outcomes is to fully fund our public school system and raise teachers' salaries.

The notion that competition is necessary to make schools better is founded on a false premise, because in a competition, someone has to lose, and that would be kids whose schools aren't fully and fairly funded and whose teachers are poorly paid. Education should be a cooperative investment, not a competitive segregation.

Vote to fully fund Texas public schools and invest in public school teachers, and allow them to create the educational variety and excellence that all parents are seeking.

Edel Molina
Self
Midland, TX

I want higher pay, less testing, and NO vouchers! We all went to college . That was the purpose of also obtaining a certification. Why is it that Abbott and the school district have thrown this other at us? When will we be able to just teach?

After many teachers going through The reading academy , all have said the same thing about it. It looks and sounds like that CRT being shoved down our throat again.

If it walks like a duck, we'll.

Half of the staff are gone . More than half left. long term subs and substitutes are running the schools.
Do away with this READING ACADEMY FOR TEACHERS!

Jose Vasquez, TSgt
Self
El Paso, TX

Vote no to school choice and charter schools. Fund our public schools! Quit enriching educational profiteers!

Joshua Dwelle
Parent/teacher
Dallas, TX

I am vehemently opposed to the proposed school voucher program. In every state where this has been implemented, the cost has been astronomical. Diverting public money to private institutions with no real oversight into what those schools are teaching is unconscionable. That those schools do not serve all students is further reason to reject this proposal. To even propose such a move while Texas ranks near the bottom of the country in funding for its public schools would be laughable if it weren't so cruel and short sighted. We are already losing our place as an industry and business leader in the country. To give away taxpayer money on such a flawed scheme will only put us further and further behind. Public education has its problems, but this does nothing to fix any of those issues. Our legislature's time would be better spent addressing real problems instead of just creating new ones.

Michelle Smith
Self - Childcare Provider
Justin, TX

I would support this unilaterally if public schools were funded first. Private and charter schools do not have to take every child and my neurodiverse children would still not have full funding in public school or not be admitted to private school. One in four kids are dyslexic and only one person on my child's campus is trained to teach them. Private schools will not admit them or I wouldn't be able to afford the new rates that everyone would charge with new vouchers. Help us!

Tandaly Szczurek
Self - teacher
Hawley, TX

Please pay teachers affordable wages! Teachers need better pay. We are a two income household and could not make it on my teacher salary if something happened to one of us. Our students deserve to have the best education we can give them. This includes paying teachers what they are worth. So many great teachers are leaving the field because they can no longer afford to stay in education. We are allowed to have contracts that add extra hours on, but we are not compensated for those hours. We work hard to provide the best education to our students, but the workload does not equal compensation. The raises teachers receive, if any, do not compare to inflation rate/cost of living.

We need less testing! The tests do not help students at all. Moving the tests to only online does not help either. If you care about the development of students you will reconsider all state testing.

No to vouchers as well. You are only harming schools, not putting the students future into consideration. Please reconsider if you are actually trying to help the public school system and most importantly our students!

Helen Hanks, Mrs
Self, parent, chemical engineer
Seabrook, TX

I am extremely concerned that implementing a voucher system is going to effectively defund public schools. My daughter is part of a special needs program that is only available through public schools. It is vital that we protect funding for state schools because not every child is capable of attending a private or charter school. These schools are not obligated to cater to the most vulnerable students.

Lesha Renee Kloesel
Texas Teachers /teacher
Georgetown, TX

Teacher pay raise
Cut property taxes for Texas teachers

Tandalyn Szczurek
Self - teacher
Hawley, TX

Please pay teachers affordable wages! Teachers need better pay. We are a two income household and could not make it on my teacher salary if something happened to one of us. Our students deserve to have the best education we can give them. This includes paying teachers what they are worth. So many great teachers are leaving the field because they can no longer afford to stay in education. We are allowed to have contracts that add extra hours on, but we are not compensated for those hours. We work hard to provide the best education to our students, but the workload does not equal compensation. The raises teachers receive, if any, do not compare to inflation rate/cost of living.

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No to vouchers as well. You are only harming schools, not putting the students future into consideration. Please reconsider if you are actually trying to help the public school system and most importantly our students!

Melissa Quiroz
Self
Brownsville, TX

Parents should have the right to send their children to a school of their choice and not necessarily a public school. Vouchers should be available to parents who prefer private schools.

Callie D. Kersey, Mrs.
Self Texas educator
Valley View, TX

I disagree with the voucher system and school choice. It is a political ploy to sound good to voters uneducated about what it will really accomplish and the rhetoric makes it sound like it will make better schools in Texas for all students. How will encouraging people to take their children out of underperforming public schools help the public schools? The voucher system will reduce funds to public schools and weaken most, if not all, public schools, yet not really provide students with enough money to enroll in a private school,. Therefore saying they can attend ANY SCHOOL OF THEIR CHOICE will only be true if the student's family can afford to pay the balance of private school tuition. It is known that schools in lower income areas as a whole tend to perform lower and those families will probably not have funds to pay additional tuition for one or more students. It also will push for charter schools which have much less regulation and oversight. They will not have to follow regulations of transparency with their funding and how the money is spent in their charter school. Please do not support school choice and the voucher system!

Jason Rucker
Self
Conroe, TX

In a career of teaching an employee must be flexible to survive. As an educator for 22 years, I have seen a lot of changes in Texas education. I remember in 2008 that many teachers were laid off due to state budgeting issues. I remember the change over from TAKS to STAAR testing. I remember the evaluation of teachers changing from PDAS to TTESS. There is a new change that is happening now and it is unfortunate to see. We have many selfish people trying to implore their opinions onto the state legislatures. It is important to do what is best for students.

We obviously need more teachers and more funding for programs. This is what public education is all about. All children are entitled to a free education. We want them to have a quality education. We as educators need you to join us in what we need most. Please be fair and honest when considering education financing. Yes, my livelihood depends on it but most important the students quality of education depends on it. My vision as an educator is to teach all children that any dream is possible to accomplish, just as someone spent time teaching you when you were younger. Please join me in making this opportunity happen by passing a fair budget. Push politics aside about vouchers, which only affect a small percentage of students and focus on the big picture.

WHAT IS BEST FOR CHILDREN?

Sincerely,

Jason Rucker

Yaqui Helms
Self Teacher
Brownsville, TX

No vouchers, students should go to the school where they are zoned. There is very capable educators all over Texas that do teach from the heart but we need to invest money on the instructional materials and supports that the teachers need to help students accomplish the best.

Denise Evans, Ms.
Self
Rockdale, TX

Public schools struggle due to the demands put on them from the Texas legislature and TEA. End state testing so we can teach to the child. Teachers are teaching skills that students aren't ready for because you say we have to. I am against vouchers as charter schools because they aren't held to the same standards as public schools. I have taught in public school for 21 years and each year the bar gets higher and higher for kids. I invite you to go spend a little time with a teacher in a public school to see what happens daily. Public school teachers love their kids and work hard for them. The powers that be need to stick to appropriate grade level content and make a fair test that is actually on grade level and we public schoolers will do just fine.

James Swindell
Self / teacher
San Antonio, TX

I want proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS!

Allyssa Kuchler
Self-teacher
Spring, TX

We need proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise to match the rate of inflation, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS.

Allyssa Kuchler
Self teacher
Spring, TX

We need proper funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise to match the rate of inflation, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS.

Charlotte McHale
Self- Teacher
Houston, TX

Public schools need higher pay, less testing & NO vouchers! Public schools are already entitling all students a solid education without vouchers. To use vouchers would make the system as disorganized and biased as private school admissions. Vouchers, therefore would ultimately limit school choice, thereby ultimately doing an injustice to students.

Melissa Martin
Self
Cypress, TX

Public funds must be utilized for public schools. As long as private schools have the right to decline to accept certain students, they should not be able to access public funds.

Moving forward with any type of voucher program will inevitably result in segregated schools, both racially and cognitively.

Jamar Raftie
Self
Katy, TX

Higher Pay!! Less testing!! No vouchers!!

Kyle Norman
Self
Dickinson, TX

Funding should be allocated in its entirety to our public schools. Siphoning funds away to schools with little to no voter oversight is irresponsible and undemocratic. Every student deserves a quality education, regardless of their ability to pay and no voucher would adequately fund a private education. Private schools can admit or deny any student they wish, forcing out students who have the greatest needs both academically and behaviorally - where is their choice? The only way to ensure that every Texas student has access to the best education possible is to adequately fund our public schools.

John Williams
Cypress Fairbanks ISD
Houston, TX

Teachers are underpaid and need to receive a pay raise and less testing.

Erick Vallarino
Self. Teacher
Brownsville, TX

Subject: Support for Higher Pay, Reduced Testing, and Opposition to Vouchers for Public Education Teachers

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

I am writing to express my strong support for several crucial aspects of educational reform that I believe are essential for fostering a better learning environment for students and promoting the well-being of our public education system.

Firstly, I wholeheartedly advocate for higher pay for our dedicated public education teachers. These professionals play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our society by nurturing young minds. By adequately compensating them, we can attract and retain talented educators who are motivated to deliver the highest quality education to our students. Recognizing their expertise and dedication through increased compensation is not only fair but also vital to the long-term success of our education system.

Additionally, I urge you to prioritize reducing the emphasis on excessive testing. While assessments have their place in measuring student progress, an overreliance on testing can hinder effective teaching and learning. By providing educators with the freedom to focus on comprehensive instruction rather than solely teaching to the test, we can foster a more holistic and enriching educational experience that encourages critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

Furthermore, I firmly oppose the implementation of vouchers within our public education system. Redirecting taxpayer dollars to private institutions through voucher programs can undermine the accessibility and quality of public schools. Instead, we should focus on strengthening and investing in our public education system, ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to thrive academically, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge the committee to prioritize higher pay for public education teachers, reduce the burden of excessive testing, and reject the implementation of voucher programs. By doing so, we can work towards an educational system that values educators, empowers students, and nurtures the talents and potential of each and every child.

Thank you for your attention to these critical matters. I trust that you will consider the voices of concerned citizens like myself as you continue your important work in shaping the future of education.

Sincerely,
Erick Vallarino

Lisa Rayburn, Ms.

self, teacher in public education for 15+ years

Alpine, TX

Please vote NO to vouchers/ESAs or any other hastily created nickname for educorp's attempts to further privatize Texas' public education. Kill off the parasites and watch the host recover.

Every student in our state DESERVES A QUALITY EDUCATION and guess who can give it to them, IF WE ARE PROPERLY FUNDED AND NOT UNDERMINED AT EVERY TURN? You guessed it- caring, adequately trained, and educated educators. We exist. We want good things to happen for our state and children. We can't be replaced with software, people. I don't care how good they make it sound.

People teach people.

Period.

We know what's up! And what's up is over the past two decades, Texas GOP and educorporate lobbyists have intentionally poisoned the well so that they could stand back and shout, "The well is poisoned!" If the hands around public ed's neck were to suddenly fall limp, today, we could be doing so much more for our fellow Texans- starting tomorrow. Right now, our teachers are overworked, underpaid, and under respected across the board. We deserve adequate pay, benefits, resources, decision making authority, and protection from the ridiculous culture wars thrust at us on the daily. The actual personnel at schools, in classrooms, that matter the most for student achievement, well being, and positive futures are the new "maids and stable boys." That is backwards. We, and they, are the ones on the front line of the war against ignorance and chaos. People send their kids to school to become capable adults; not to become profit.

I want capable adults in this state; now and in the future. And I think- no, I know- that private enterprises and yacht boy shareholders have ruined lives and opportunities in this state since I've been paying attention. Call me. I'll talk you through it! I've got some free time tonight, 7/12/23, and I would LOVE to dispel any notions of "we need school choice in order for parents to be happy." No, we need properly funded and resourced schools on every corner of this state for TEXANS TO BE HAPPY.

Public educators can do what private entities can do but at a fraction of the cost and with all of the rewards.

I want you to think back for a moment about any teacher from your past that made a positive impact on your life. What would that person want in this scenario, do you think? Do you think they'd want their job, their CALLING, to be outsourced to increasingly stronger conglomerates that give no shits about their and students' welfares?

So many of these companies that have been suckling the education fund teat may have started out with a pure intention but, sorry, once profit is introduced...The game changes.

Fund schools. \$15,000/student, regardless of absences. Fund teachers. Make the state minimum salary at least \$70,000. Fund students. Breakfast and lunch, supplies and field trips.

OUST GREG ABBOTT. I wholeheartedly believe his integrity is compromised on this issue. Fuck that guy and his appointees!

Sandra Dwyer

Self

Houston, TX

I do NOT want you to even consider vouchers. They undermine the future of Texas and they are racist. They absolutely hurt poor children and they are a money grab for those the unethical

Christopher Johnson
Self-Teacher
San Marcos, TX

Voucher proposals are clearly an attempt to take money from schools that serve all young Texans and give it to schools that do not.

Any school that does not conform to state regulations regarding public schools should not receive state funding. Any school that cannot comply with the IDEA and McKinney-Vento acts should not receive state funding. Any school that is not accessible, affordable and welcoming to any appropriately aged student should not receive state funding.

No school that receives state funding should be allowed to compel religious instruction overtly or covertly. No school that receives state funding should be allowed to manifest bias against any student due to citizenship status. No school that receives state funding should make a student unwelcome because they do not conform to gender expectations. Those are our children too, and the state ought not pay for our young people to be shamed for not complying with with the tenets of another person's faith. Realistically, the state has neither the apparatus nor the inclination to regulate private schools, nor will most private schools be interested in conforming to meaningful state regulation.

Vouchers are not a solution to the problems faced by the students and parents of Texas. At best, the voucher movement is misguided. At worst, it is a cynical attempt to divest from the real public good of our school system in favor of limited private interests.

John Litzler
Texas Baptists Christian Life Commission
Dallas, TX

Texas Baptists' is a convention of more than 5,300 autonomous Baptist churches across the state of Texas. We greatly appreciate the work of the Educational Opportunity and Enrichment Select Committee and urge this committee in the strongest terms to increase funding for public education in our state. While we have many concerns with a private school voucher, tax credit, or Education Savings Account, our primary concern involves religious liberty of all Texans.

Taxpayer dollars shouldn't be used for religious learning. The funding for an ESA will come from the taxes paid by Texans whose kids aren't enrolled in private school. That funding will come from Jewish Texans, Muslim Texans, and Atheist Texans who should not be compelled through taxation to pay for our Texas Baptist schools to teach children about Jesus. Our schools teach students about Jesus. We aren't reluctant or ashamed of it. But tax money shouldn't be used to fund the type of religious worship which occurs in private school chapel and worship services. Many Christians do not want to pay for a student to attend an Islamic academy and be taught that Jesus is not God. Many Muslims don't want to pay for a Christian parents' child to attend a Christian school to learn that Jesus is God.

Many of our cooperating churches have indicated that their private schools would not accept ESA funds because of these religious liberty concerns and concerns about government intrusion with their schools. This is not surprising. During the pandemic when Congress offered paycheck protection program (or PPP) loans, many Texas Baptist churches rejected those funds for a similar reason. Those same churches have heard Governor Abbott say that there will be accountability and that the state can impose accountability on any institution that receives government funds, and these churches and schools don't want any part of that governmental intrusion.

Additionally, many of our Texas Baptists churches are located in rural areas where public school teachers, coaches, and administrators comprise the backbone of the local church. There may not be a single Texas Baptist church in Texas that wouldn't be negatively affected by what an ESA program would do to our public school system.

Some describe ESA programs as "educational freedom" but in reality, those proposed programs are an affront to religious freedom. To compel any Texas taxpayer, including parents, to fund religious teaching and instruction that violates that individual's religious conscience violates religious liberty.

Jodi Verner
Self Teacher
AMARILLO, TX

ALL students need access to a quality education. Vouchers are not what our state or our students need! Public education needs to be funded in such a way that ALL students can receive the education that they deserve. Public education was designed so that all citizens would have access to a quality education. Our education system needs to be supported by paying teachers a higher wage. Teachers work diligently for student outcomes and often have to pay for materials to be able to teach their students due to low funding of our schools. Many teachers also have to have a second job to help support their family because the wage earned does not pay their bills. In addition, state testing is not the answer for our students! The amount of money that is spent on testing is not appropriate and the tests do not truly measure what a student has learned! Tests are not developmentally appropriate for our students. I took a release test for 3rd grade reading several years ago. As a college educated ADULT, I had to question which answers would be appropriate! How is that a measure of a 3rd grader's academic ability? The tests are a moving target and teachers and students alike should not be subjected to the MASSIVE amounts of stress associated with the tests. Please consider listening to the EDUCATORS that are in the classrooms and working with students on a daily basis. Making arbitrary decisions about education when you either have never been a teacher, or you have been out of the classroom for so long that you do not know the rigors associated with today's classroom from a personal standpoint, is not a responsible or fair way to lead our educational system. Take time to visit classrooms & stay for more than a few minutes. Stay for a day or 2 - or a week. See what is really happening in our classrooms and help us to support an EQUAL education for all citizens of our state. Thank you.

Doris Prince
VFT
Victoria, TX

Please pass the bill for educators. We deserve this pay raise. We constantly have went above and beyond on our teachers duties. We have given over 100 percent on everything required of us. Please do the right thing.

Terry Rickmon
self
Killeen, TX

More money for public education and none for vouchers . . . Do the right thing not the "bought and pad for" thing

J Goodnight
Self
Elm Mott, TX

1st - today is the 12th; isn't it a little late to be sending this out. It should have come out the 9th or 10th so "educators" can be prepared on the subjects with research. Remember teachers are supposed to be researchers by nature not lambs being told what to do.

2nd - Texas citizens have always had a right to choose what school their child will attend whether public, magnet, private, homeschool, online, charter, etc.

3rd - public school educators have almost always made more in salary than private school educators. This being said "ALL" educators should be paid a comparable salary tied to their education & experience level aligned with a government pay scale employee (GS) if we are wanting to look at what's fair.

4th - educator's pay should never be tied to testing! We do not test doctors or lawyers on how well they have done their jobs. In tying testing to passing undermines the education students receive & the system of checks/balances school systems have in place to monitor any employee.

5th - if we take away the voucher then that will automatically restrict school of choice, which in turn will keep all students in the public schools whose districts already are fighting to keep educators due to too high student to teacher ratios which are in fact driving our good teachers away from education, leaving a shortage & increasing the students per teachers even more.

This seems to be a vicious cycle, but maybe we should not be looking at this as a "command economic system" and more of the "market economic system". As we all know the command economic system is designed for a communist economy where the government oversees all decisions.

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Lisa Chambers
Self- Educator
Dublin, TX

Fully fund public education, teachers and the future of Texas deserve it!!!!

Riki Atkins
self
fort worth, TX

Teachers need better pay. We work hard on a daily basis and are only paid on contracted hours. I take home work on a daily basis in order to have done what I need to for the next day. The demand for teachers is high and it is only going to get worse if you do not show them you care. The voucher system is not going to help any of that! I want to be there for my kids and make a difference. But with the added stress and regulations it gets harder and harder.

Steven McBrayer, Mr.
Wylie ISD
wylie, TX

I support this bill. Students should have the right to attend any school they are capable of getting to. The money should follow the students. Voucher systems will hopefully make school systems work harder.

Heather Lucas
Self, Qualified Teacher
Round Rock, TX

The way to elevate the education of our Texas children is to pay livable wages to qualified teachers. If you pay them, they will come....

AND STAY!

Wendy Archer, Teacher
Kellerisd
Fort Worth, TX

Teachers need less standardized testing of students so students can be taught more information to retain. Higher pay for teachers, we have more than teaching to reach students where they are and help them progress further. We do not want vouchers instead of higher pay, if vouchers are to be given they should be in addition to higher pay, teachers have families too that we have to support especially the single moms!

Lauren Muskiet
Self/ School Counselor
Spring, TX

Texas lawmakers need to step up and support our public schools by voting no for any voucher program going by any name. Private schools and charter schools do not accept all students, do not provide all services, and do not have to play by the same rules as public schools. Our taxpayer money needs to be used to fully fund our public schools which serve all students, no matter what. The state also needs to raise the student allotment by \$1000 to account for inflation. As a public school teacher for 25 years, I am ashamed that Texas is letting down our students, families, educators, and taxpayers by failing to fund our schools. Shame on any lawmaker who fails to see the importance of public schools and the support and services we provide families.

N Broadhurst
self
Ft. Worth, TX

Every parent should have the choice of where to send their child for school. In many places, public schools are not providing quality education and parents shouldn't have to send them there.

Paul Riser, Dr.
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am writing to express my strong concerns about the current educational voucher initiative. This proposed measure runs counter to the principle of providing equal access to high-quality education for all Texas children.

The concept that competition improves schools is flawed within the educational context. In a competitive environment, there will inevitably be losers - in this case, the students attending under-resourced and underfunded schools. Education should not become an arena of competitive disparity but should be a cooperative investment designed to uplift every child.

Furthermore, proposals labeled as "parent empowerment" are often misleading. These initiatives, although seemingly beneficial, frequently empower a select group of parents, leaving others at a disadvantage. True parent empowerment should mean providing every parent, regardless of their background or circumstances, equal access to high-quality education options for their children.

Despite having the ninth-largest economy worldwide and a surplus of \$33 billion (Texas Comptroller), our state distressingly ranks 44th in per-student public school funding (National Education Association). Additionally, our educators' wages are approximately \$7,500 below the national average (Bureau of Labor Statistics). These stark contrasts highlight the urgent need for reform in our education funding.

I respectfully urge you to vote against any form of educational vouchers, savings accounts, and misleading "parent empowerment" measures. Instead, I advocate for your full support of public education as the most effective means to improve student outcomes and elevate the teaching profession in our state. By focusing on the futures of all Texas children, we contribute to the growth of a stronger, more educated society.

Thank you for your careful consideration and dedication to the students of Texas.

Cyndi Cruz
Self / teacher
Round Rock, TX

Everyone deserves a proper education. Public schools need your support to help achieve this goal. We must increase the funding per student so school districts can continue to provide the necessary resources and support.

Dede Fox
Dede Fox
The Woodlands, TX

I am a retired educator with 40+ years of experience. I have two grandchildren in exclusive private schools and two grandchildren in public schools so I feel like I'm well-qualified to recognize what's needed for the children in Texas. I am absolutely NOT in favor of vouchers and firmly believed that public education is the best way to meet the needs of all students. What I've learned about private schools:

1. The good ones cost over \$30,000 a year per student. To parents who can afford that, it's a drop in the bucket.
2. Religious schools may cost less, but religious institutions don't pay taxes and they don't off religious freedom or equal opportunities to obtain quality education.
3. Private schools rarely accept students with learning differences unless that's the only population they cater too, ie. a school for those on the autism spectrum, and those are prohibitively expensive too.

What I know about public schools:

1. My grandsons, 29 week twins, have dyslexia and other learning differences, but they are boys with good character who respect and are respected by the staff in their K-6 school. They have made great strides thanks to programs to meet their needs, and as 6th graders are growing up to be good citizens and workers as adults. They will be capable of working compassionately with anyone because that has been their experience.
2. Diversity builds bridges of understanding and lessens "us versus them" attitudes.
3. My former students are now doctors, lawyers, bankers, etc. who attended the finest colleges in the United States and they are a diverse bunch who went to K-12 public schools.

Public schools are definitely the way to create education opportunity and freedom to obtain a quality education.

Chris Ramirez
Self
Plainview, TX

How can you take public funds and give them to private companies. That's totally wrong! It's not right, and you know it.

Lindsay Olenick
Self, classroom teacher
Corpus, TX

NO VOUCHERS! I want proper funding for our schools.

Michael Collins
Self teacher/coach
Canyon, TX

I think approving vouchers is vitally important. It is not favored because it is new and different and humans fear change. Look at our college system. FAFSA money can go to public or private schools and it is a competitive environment. I've worked in the college system over 12 years and Texas public schools over 6. The competitiveness in colleges, in my experience, has lead to; less wasteful spending, better education, more meaningful training, specialization to students. Competition is everything to free market economics. Approving vouchers will make public schools become more competitive and operate better. It gives students with less means a chance to choose a school that's a better fit for them. I think it would help give students a purpose to school and lead to less behavioral problems. Less parent problems as they can pick a school that's a better fit. If we see a decrease in behavioral problems and issues with parents I think you'll also see an increase in available teachers and not have to look at major pay raises.

R. Phares
Self/Teacher
Amarillo, TX

Teachers are leaving in droves because the pay is not where it needs to be, the retirement is terrible, the micromanaging of how we teach and what we teach is outrageous, the kids are tested way too much, and the supplies we need to be effective just aren't there. Now you want tie vouchers to giving teachers some of what we need?

We don't need, or want, vouchers. We want to be allowed to teach our students what we spent tens of thousands of dollars on college to be trained to teach. We want to be respected and not scrutized for what and how we teach. We want to be able to live comfortably and not have to take on second and third jobs to pay the bills. Vouchers will destroy the profession and the institutions that tie communities together. During the pandemic, we were being acknowledged for how we stepped up and made it work when no one else knew what to do. Now we are the targets and that makes no sense!

Don't sabotage us...SUPPORT US! PROTECT US! Say no to vouchers and yes to the teachers!

Jayne Serna
self--educator and member/volunteer leader for the Association of Texas Professional Educators
Leander, TX

Since the vast majority of Texas students will attend public schools, and Texas public schools currently rank near the bottom nationally for per pupil funding, it is past time to properly fund our schools. Do not divert public money to private schools. Lower class sizes, decrease or eliminate as much standardized testing as possible, and no vouchers under any circumstances. Vouchers lead to school choice for schools, not students, as non-public schools can reject students for any reason and are not mandated to provide assistance to students with special needs or learning differences.

Joyce Shirley
Self
Texas, TX

I am supporting Education Savings Accounts. I want the money to follow the students with no control from the local school districts as to who qualifies to choose schools other than the public schools. I believe this freedom for parents and students to choose where and how they get their K-12 education will be good for all. The public schools will benefit from the competition and the teachers will be free to just educate their students. Other states have this education freedom and it works. Please give Texas children the same choice for a good education.

Thank You, Joyce Shirley

Lindsay Sanchez
TVAH
Hurst, TX

I support this because not all schools support all children. My children go to 2 different schools. One goes to public and the other 2 are online at home because of special needs. My family is thankful for educational opportunities and freedoms.

Lee Ann Troncoso
Self/Teacher
El Paso, TX

Teachers deserve to be paid enough to support themselves and their families. Without qualified teachers who are paid a reasonable salary, the entire educational system will suffer.

Kimberly Kreamer, Teacher
Self, teacher
College Station, TX

Vouchers are not the answer!!! Raise teacher pay and help retain the teachers we still have while also attracting new talent. Many teachers have their masters and have devoted their life to their students! I've seen so many wonderful, experienced teachers leave in the last 3 years! Why are we attacking public education? Our students and parents love their local ISD's! Why is public education under attack? Let our teachers spend more time teaching and less time on standardized testing!

April Shanafelt, Mrs
Self
Valley Mills, TX

No vouchers.
If vouchers only created a system that supported the free education of all students, then I would support that totally. I am all for freedom. However, our rights as citizens should not impede on the rights of others. Vouchers would only create a system that hinders the rights of many students with special needs. Vouchers could also negatively impact already struggling rural districts. The payoff to vouchers is not worth the negative impacts.

Faye Holland
Self
Austin, TX

Please fund Texas schools so that Texas can be in the place to lead the nation in the future. We are not adequately funding our schools we are ranked in the 40s for states and starting a voucher program will funnel more money away from Texas students. Many places in the state do not have private schools that would even have a that a student would be able to attend with the money that you are providing. If you continue to invest in our public schools you have a huge return on your investment for the local economy. It is the right thing to do.

Jodi Duron, Dr,
Texas Association of Midsize Schools (TAMS)
ELGIN, TX

On behalf of the Texas Association of Mid-size Schools, we appreciate the opportunity to address this agenda item. In order to ensure all students enjoy an equal educational opportunity and the freedom to obtain a quality education, we would encourage this body to address the funding gaps that exist within our current system. Currently, Texas is ranked 43rd in the nation in per pupil spending, it is approximately \$2B short in funding for special education, and the basic allotment for our spending has not increased since 2019 when HB 3 was passed. With ESSER funds going away and with double-digit inflation, the cost of educating our students has become increasingly difficult without increases to school funding. The impact of our currently underfunded system is exacerbated in districts our size due to the diseconomies of scale and the fact that schools are forced to spread the same costs for facilities, transportation, administration, and instruction over a smaller revenue stream. Investing in our public schools will allow districts to maintain and add programs to meet the educational demands and needs for our students and provide new opportunities and programs to prepare students to be "life ready" after high school.

Jana Raymond
Limestone Christian Academy
Groesbeck, TX

In rural counties of Texas, choice is paramount. Truth must be taught in Texas! We implore our representatives to vote for school choice.

Micheal Stidham
Self Retired
Nacogdoches, TX

We must follow our state constitution and provide free public education for all students.

Holly Vick
Self
Hawkins, TX

No vouchers, better teacher pay not connected by bonuses/stipends only... not requiring accountability for vouchers to be paid and giving responsibility to the parents to pay is educational suicide!

Stephen Mercer
None
College Station, TX

Teachers need higher pay, No vouchers

Jennifer Vincent
Na
Round Rock, TX

Public schools need to be fully funded and teachers need pay raises now.
School vouchers should not be considered until public schools are fully funded.

Melissa Moehring
Gullett Elementary PTA Parent
Austin, TX

We must invest in public schools. The voucher system is not equitable for families with limited means & puts lower economic classes at an educational disadvantage. The State of Texas needs to recognize this disparity. Public education and increased teacher pay is where we need to invest. Our public schools are in terrible shape, especially in Central Austin. Help!

Karen Childers
Self
Midlothian, TX

Please do not approve a voucher system for Texas. It will take away much needed resources from public schools!

Robert Gray
Self, Self-employed
WOLFFORTH, TX

The lack of meaningful school choice prevents parents from obtaining the best education for their children. Because public schools receive tax money regardless of outcomes, there is no incentive to improve. Even worse, organizations such as NEA and AFT espouse policies that are anathema to the overwhelming majority of parents. Sadly, these organizations have departed from a focus on education and now are little more than shills for a grab-bag of left-wing Marxist policies, including DEI, LGBTQIA+, gun control, climate change, Supreme Court packing, and a host of others.

When parents have options, they are able to select the best option for their children, and accommodate disparate learning styles. Perhaps more importantly, competition will require schools to produce real results. It is time to stop the band-aid approach to fixing our broken educational system. Only significant change, putting parents firmly in control of the education of their children, has a chance of returning quality to Texas education.

Donna Curtis
Self - retired teacher/diagnostician
Hewitt, TX

Please do not tie any teacher pay increases to any kind of stipulation. Teacher pay increase should stand alone; it is badly needed and well past due.

Herb Cox, Dr.
Self
Waco, TX

Texans have had enough.
Enough games being played by our Governor holding public schools and Texas professional educators hostage.
Enough politics while Abbott and Patrick are more concerned with satisfying the demands of their billionaire donors than they are with working for actual Texas residents and the 5.5 million kids who attend Texas public schools.
Enough of touting the success of private schools that serve less than 400,000 kids total and get to cherry pick their students.
There are some amazing private schools in Texas; I am working directly with many of them in my current position.
However, by their own admission they cannot, do not, and will not serve all kids.
Texas public schools serve ALL of God's children.
This is what the state of Texas requires to continue to be the greatest state in America.
1. Fully fund Texas public schools. We currently sit at 47th in the nation in per pupil funding based on our state allotment of \$6,160. That is embarrassing and shameful for a state like ours.
2. Pay our teachers a decent living wage. We are currently at 43rd in the nation in Teacher salaries. Many of our teachers work a 2nd job just to make ends meet so they can continue their "calling" to teach
3. Fix TRS. As a retired Texas teacher, along with my wife, mom, dad, father in law and mother in law, I can tell you this system has unbelievable flaws. One would have to teach for 41 years in order to retire with a full salary.
4. Provide a COLA for all retired Texas teachers. The cost of living and inflation is literally eating up their retirement on their fixed income.
Texas is currently sitting on literally billions of dollars that would allow them to fix every single one of these issues.
If I could leave you with just one thing from all of this it would be:
No vouchers in Texas!
Not now, not ever.
The vast majority of Texans absolutely LOVE their local community schools.
Fix it for everyone.
Fix it for the 450,000 Texas professional educators.
But most importantly, fix it for our most precious natural resources; the 5.5 million students that attend Texas public schools.
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Preston Tirey
Self - College Math instructor
Canyon, TX

No ESA Vouchers for Texas! FULLY FUND our schools. Get us out of the bottom 10 in both teacher pay and per-student funding! With out economy, we should be in the top 10, not the bottom 10!!!

Gabriela Flores, Mrs.
Self
Laredo, TX

Parents have every right to educate their children with Christian values. The goo has no right to infringe upon each parent's rights to protect and guide their children from radical ideological indoctrination...

Nancy Nichols
Personal
TYLER, TX

I am in support of this bill.

Martha Rogers
self
Austin, TX

I support it.

Shannon Thomas
Self - Mother, Former Teacher
Georgetown, TX

I believe the most equitable way to ensure educational opportunity is to maintain a robust, well-funded, highly-trained public school system. Using public funds for voucher systems (aka education savings programs) will severely impact the already strained finances of the public education system. I do not support voucher systems or education savings accounts. Instead, I would love to see legislation aimed at investing in our public school systems for long term growth and success, rather than short-term quick fixes. The best way for our children and our communities to have sustained growth, enrichment, and progress is to have equal educational opportunities, regardless of zip code. And the best way to achieve that is to ensure that ALL school districts have the funds needed to thrive!

Leah Stephanow
Self
Cypress, TX

I recently retired as a Texas teacher after serving 33 years. I do not believe a voucher system is going to solve the problem of educational opportunity & freedom to obtain a quality education. Since most Texas students attend a public school, the state needs to fully fund, keeping up with inflation, the public schools and provide adequate funds to districts so they can pay teachers for the amount of work which is expected & required to provide a quality education for all students. Even if a voucher is offered, not all parents will be able to use it because of high tuition rates, transportation costs, school uniform cost, and other school fees. The other concern I have is if a voucher system is put into place, why would students attending private schools be funded at thousands of dollars more than one attending a public school? They should be funded exactly the same. Private schools also do not have the same accountability responsibilities to be good stewards of taxpayer money. If you want better quality and outcomes in public schools, fund them and their employees adequately to attract the best talent and supports.

Stacy Hansen
Self
Victoria, TX, TX

As a teacher, I feel that students should go to the school in their zone, unless a parent opts for a private school. If they CHOSE a private school, then they are choosing to pay for private school. I feel that allowing them to choose where ever lends to people not trying to better themselves to obtain their goals. As a single mom, I slowly over the course of years made choices that would allow me to be in the best public school for my child. I can not afford private school and I am okay with that. I do the best I can. Let's not enable parents to not do their best by giving them a chance to not use a zone they didn't earn. Furthermore, I choose to teach in a very high socioeconomic school because I feel as I can impact those students the most. A poorer zone doesn't mean a worse education. Let's empower people to be better, not enable them to be complacent.

Diana Licatino
self - Retired
Port Arthur, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

Debra Payne, Mrs.
Self
Denison, TX

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Thank you for your participation on this important subject.

Mark Klyn
Mark
Henrietta, TX

Everything has already been said to you by now related to education savings accounts. They will harm public education, particularly inner city and rural public schools by siphoning resources to private and parochial schools. Support and fund public education. No public funds for private and parochial schools. No to vouchers!

Wallace Knight
Self / carpentry/artist
Nacogdoches, TX

Need continued monetary support for our public schools.

Kim Lookabaugh
My Texas Home Broker
Marble Falls, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

John Pfaffenberger
Self - Information Technology
Cypress, TX

The best way to ensure educational opportunities and quality educations for all Texas children is to say "No!" to vouchers and ensure robust taxpayer funding for public school districts. Taxpayer dollars should be managed by ELECTED school boards which are required to follow Open Meeting and Public Information laws ensuring transparency into how the dollars are spent.

Redirecting scarce taxpayer dollars to private schools with no accountability to the electorate sets Texas backwards and will reduce educational opportunities available to our students.

Finally, it is important that the Texas Legislature ensures that they adequately budget for public schools, including factoring inflation into their recurring budget allocation bills to ensure that Texas teachers retain competitive salaries with other states.

Kathie Hyde, public school teacher
ATEP
Mabank, TX

I have taught math in high school for 50 years. I do not support the voucher system. It will deprive public schools with needed funds which will contribute to the teacher vacancy problem. Our system needs to be re-vamped but not at the expense of destroying public education. The only way you will solve the teacher vacancy dilemma is with pay raises. True teachers, I believe are "called" but they still must LIVE!!! Please act wisely on this bill,

Mary McCleary
self. Retired college professor
Nacogdoches, TX

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Lisa Almstead
Self
San Antonio, TX

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Angela Martinez
Self
Lucas, TX

I have been an athlete all my life and always enjoy competition at any & all levels. I always looked forward to the big competitions where I would get to compete alongside the best in the nation as I knew this would make me rise to another level of performance. I believe that we can also see the same effect in our schools through providing more options to families & students. By providing families the flexibility to seek out the best learning environment for their students(s), it makes every school have to raise their game in order to retain their students and attract new ones. More importantly in this case, however, it provides parents with the power of choice as they truly do know what their students most need and the environment in which they would thrive most. This could be another public school district, private school, or charter school. Whatever the choice, it places the decision where it belongs- the parents. I encourage each of you to be bold and understand that we believe choice is a positive thing in most every other aspect in our lives. Choice in schools should be viewed as a positive as well. Please support ESA system and bring some competition back to our education system,

Mary Lincoln
self, small business owner
ingram, TX

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Whitney Siddons

self, self employed again in place specialist

Frisco, TX

We will graduate our children from 3 different high schools while living in the same house in the 75034 area. That is because our children are individuals with aptitudes, learning styles and needs that are unique to them and different to those of their siblings. Though it has been our choice to tailor our children's education to their person, it is a choice that creates a financial burden. We believe that the chance to provide the best school for each or our children and the outcomes that result from a good educational "fit" make that burden and the sacrifices necessary to achieve this model worthwhile in the end.

Let's face it though; this is what all parents want for their children. Maybe we have prioritized personal school choice more than other families. Perhaps we are more tolerant to the cost of going without non-essentials for the greater good of our children. As a moderate income family in Texas, we certainly recognize that we have more resources than many lower income families who have the same educational desires for their children that we do. And this is where the State of Texas can help -- let educational tax dollars follow the child to their school of choice and that of their families.

You wouldn't provide a child with an inappropriate medication when they are sick just because it was the closest one to arms reach; giving them a baby aspirin because it is nearby when they need an antibiotic? But that is exactly what is being done with their education. "You will go to this school because it is the nearest one to you and is in the tax base your family pays into." Whether that child would be best served by a school with smaller class sizes, or more STEM, or more art, or whether they and their families prefer a faith based education or a holistic Montessori approach should be the most relevant factors in determining where a child goes to school. But instead it is as arbitrary as a sequence of 5 numbers, their zip code.

We work multiple jobs, pay hefty property taxes to fund our "top" local schools, and pay private tuition in addition to that when those "top" schools are not good enough. That is the financial penalty imposed upon engaged parents who are cognizant of their own child in an age without school choice. Texans are happy and grateful for the recent legislation that will help to amend the over-taxation of property. But that was also long overdue, and I would challenge you that it is a job half done. The second part that your constituents are crying for is school choice and the reallocation of educational tax dollars to lessen the economic burden that families like mine feel and to allow lower income families the joy and reward of being a decider and stakeholder in their own child's education.

Nikki Henrichsen

self

Sugar Land, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

susan tignor

self-American Patriot

andrews, TX

Provide maintain and supervise academics essential to equip students for a quality education.

David Feigen
Texans Care for Children
Austin, TX

Any strategy to meaningfully improve student outcomes in Texas must include a plan to boost the academic performance of Emergent Bilingual students, put them on a path to become strong readers by 3rd grade, and ensure they master both English and their home language. Emergent Bilingual students comprise over 20 percent of Texas students and currently have only a 78 percent graduation rate, significantly worse than the state average of approximately 90 percent. Emergent Bilingual students also face a gap in terms of readiness for life and the workforce after high school.

Recommendation: Require TEA to create rules for a robust monitoring system for bilingual education and special language programs. The rules would require TEA to review programs to ensure they are meeting student needs, closing learning gaps, and engaging directly with the school districts offering programs to improve student outcomes.

--Aligns with language in HB 2164, which passed the House, and TEA's Emergent Bilingual Strategic Plan released earlier this year

Another critical strategy for improving student outcomes is to strengthen early learning environments for young children with disabilities and developmental delays. However, current Texas pre-k eligibility criteria omit children with disabilities, despite inclusive pre-k programs being beneficial for all children who attend.

Recommendation: Clarify pre-k eligibility to ensure students with disabilities have equal priority to attend full-day pre-k programs if their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and parents decide it is the best option for them.

--Aligns with language in HB 3318 and SB 1977

In 2019, HB 3 required that school districts provide full-day pre-k but continued to only fund it directly on a half-day basis. The other half of the school day was to be funded with Early Education Allotment funds. However, the allotment can also be used to fund other required programs and services designed to improve student performance in reading and mathematics in prekindergarten through third grade, leaving districts struggling to provide high-quality full-day pre-k programs and meet other early literacy needs.

Recommendation: Establish dedicated full-day pre-k funding and/or boost funding through the Early Education Allotment

--Aligns with language in HB 4137 and HB 11, which passed the House.

The Legislature should build on its initial steps to bolster pre-k partnerships between school districts and community-based child care programs to better support families' pre-k needs including through HB 3 (the 2019 school finance bill).

Recommendation: Create a grant program through TEA to support and incentivize pre-k partnerships between child care programs

- Aligns with language in HB 1614, which passed the House.

David Bauman
self
Austin, TX

As a retired public school teacher/administrator, I believe school choice is needed to meet the diverse needs of students/families and stimulate innovation. The on-size fits all government run school monopoly should end. Please fund kids/families not systems.

Julie Martin

Self

Austin, TX

I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education. Please help to pass this legislation.

Barbi Petty

Self - retired public school teacher

The Woodlands, TX

I'm urging the committee to not pass ESA's aka vouchers, public education is severely underfunded in Texas & subsidizing private schools with ESA's will erode further vital funds needed for Texas children to receive a quality education. Texas already has school choice & the Texas Constitution states public funds can not be used for religious schools. ESA's will have a negative impact on rural communities bc the public school is usually a major employer in the area. The public school is the center of the community in rural districts also. The Texas House has voted down ESA's 3 times this session they have protected & spoken for their constituents it's time to use the budget surplus to fully public schools & give public educators a much needed raise.

Allystair Jones

Self: Department Chair Sciences

Odessa, TX

Sometimes, the system(s) we create teach our students far more about the importance of education and the value of education than any classroom curriculum ever could.

When we talk Education we have to ask ourselves; Education for whom and for what? Is education just to get a job or is there a more lofty intrinsic value to education? Should we be egalitarian or elitist with education?

Education creates intellectual freedom. Liberties can be taken away by authorities but intellectual freedom can never be taken and will continue to create dignity for that person throughout their lives.

So we must ask ourselves, is freedom for everyone or just a few? Does everyone have the right to freedom even if it cost much time, effort, and money or should intellectual freedom only be given to those whom talk, think, and behave the way we believe they should?

How someone treats those they deem lesser speaks volumes about their morals and values. Are there lesser humans or should we use an egalitarian approach?

Thank you for your time

Jessica Turner

Self - Principal Leon ISD

Marquez, TX

As a mother, former teacher, and current principal, I am sad, disappointed, angry, and frankly terrified about the state of public education. It is time for our state leaders to rise to the occasion and protect every child's right to a quality education. You cannot provide a quality education without appropriate funding and the most important resource, teachers. The sad part is the solution is so simple. Pay these professionals professional pay, address state testing to be what it should be - a quick check of GRADE LEVEL MATERIAL that a child is learning throughout the year and only serve as a guide for LEAs to determine how to address a student's learning deficits; NOT a money making scheme, and finally standing up and saying NO to vouchers.

Sharron Larrison
Self/Education
San Antonio, TX

No vouchers; they are detrimental to our youths' educational access.

Jackie Edwards
self-na
McKinney, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

Danielle Jackson, Dr.
Self/ Principal
Sugar Land, TX

Texas is currently \$4,000 behind the national average in per-pupil spending, and the basic allotment for our spending has not increased since 2019. With double-digit inflation, this means our education dollars do not go as far as they used to, and it is time to push the Texas Legislature for an inflationary adjustment to the basic allotment. An increase to the basic allotment will allow our school districts to maintain their facilities, invest in innovation, and guarantee raises for teachers and staff every year. Increasing public school funding in Texas is a sure-fire way to ensure our students have the education to keep Texas among the leading economies in the nation. When we invest in our public schools, we invest in our future.

Vouchers:

Once again, Texans must reject voucher schemes that:

- reduce fair access to educational opportunity
- cut into already inadequate public-school budgets
- disproportionately hurt our rural schools
- weaken rights for students with disabilities
- expose taxpayers to fraud

But a growing body of credible research about school vouchers finds voucher programs often fail to serve students from disadvantaged or marginalized backgrounds, and the impact of vouchers on student achievement is either insignificant or mixed. Look at voucher programs in other parts of the country that have failed:

Consider the Milwaukee voucher program. It has been around for about 30 years and has produced no improvements in student achievement outcomes for students receiving vouchers while harming the local district due to a loss of enrollment and funding. Voucher programs in Louisiana, New York City and Washington, D.C., also have all failed to produced improved outcomes and in some cases led to significant declines in achievement, especially for low-income students whom policymakers argue vouchers are intended to help.

As a parent and an educator here in Sugar Land, I urge you to support public education. In my community 40% of our families do not speak English at home. These are not only first generation college goers but first first generation students to achieve an American high school diploma. These families chose to live here and obtain access to our public schools. Do not continue to give us less and expect us to do more. These students deserve equity and access and the answer is not vouchers.

Sandra Sherman
TRTA
China, TX

NO Vouchers

Patricia Cordrey
Sel
Houston, TX

My public tax money should be used only for public schools . Giving out \$5000 vouchers or Education savings accounts to unregulated private or charter schools may benefit a few well-off parents, but it will definitely hurt the ability of public schools to properly educate all the rest of the children in our state. Any school (or any group that homeschools) that accepts state tax dollars should be required to follow the same regulations, curriculums, and Special Ed requirements that public schools must meet. Anything short of that does not create “healthy competition “ as I have heard some legislators argue. Instead, it creates a ‘stacked deck’ against already underfunded public schools in Texas and our children will be the losers.

Stacye Anderson
Self
Houston, TX

I am not a parent of school age children but as a taxpayer and conservative voter, I am adamantly opposed to Vouchers/ESAs/any use of public funds to pay for private, parochial or home school education. These entities have no accountability for how these funds will be spent and no guidelines for what must or must not be taught. There is no transparency so the public can see how their money is spent. Traditional public schools are open to all students and if funded more adequately would be able to better address the issues that are holding some students back. Schools have become the place where the basic needs of kids are being met so that they can learn which diverts \$\$s from basic curriculum and teaching funds. Increase the basic allotment and put an inflation adjustment in place.

Casey McCreary, Associate Executive Director, Education Policy
Texas Association of School Administrators
Austin, TX

July 13, 2023

Comments by The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) on the Select Committee Charge #1: Educational opportunity and freedom to obtain a quality education

A long-standing position for our membership is to oppose any state plan that would use vouchers, tax credits, taxpayer savings grants, tuition reimbursements, or any other means to divert public tax dollars to private entities, homeschooled students, or parents, with little or no academic or financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or local communities.

Considerations for the Select Committee:

- Choice already exists within the public school system: Districts have transfer policies, magnet schools, career/tech academies, and more options. Charter schools offer additional choices for families. Communities that want to expand choice can do so by asking their locally elected boards to take that action.
- Private schools don't have to accept all students; they can pick & choose which students to serve. This type of legislation is about the private school's power to choose students, not the parent's choice of schools.
- Vouchers/ESA's defund public schools. Small schools have fixed costs. If you take 4 students out of a class of 26, you still must pay the teacher of that class the same salary. Other states' experiences with vouchers have shown that costs for such programs often grow well above projections. TX can't afford to fund 3 school systems – community schools, charters & private with 3 different sets of rules.
- Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers. They don't have elected boards, are not subject to open meetings or open records laws, and don't assess their students with standardized state academic assessments. Private schools are not required to report student achievement data to the state. Our neighborhood public schools, managed by locally elected school boards, are subject to laws related to transparency in operations, and are accountable to taxpayers for the academic growth of their students and the management of their finances.
- Texas already ranks 40th in per-student spending, according to the Education Law Center. State funding of public education has been stagnant since 2019, while the rate of inflation since 2019 is 14.5%, per the State Comptroller. Texas should fund public education rather than syphon funds to private schools.
- No credible research exists to suggest ESAs or other forms of private school vouchers improve academic performance. Evaluations of voucher programs in Louisiana, Indiana, Washington, DC, and New York have shown that vouchers have no positive impact on academic achievement — and can often have a negative impact. According to a report by the Center for American Progress, the use of school vouchers is equivalent to missing out on more than one-third of a year of classroom learning.

Respectfully,

Dr. Casey McCreary,
TASA Associate Executive Director, Education Policy

Janeva Wilson, Grad student
Self
Austin, TX

Texas public schools, students, teachers, and faculty deserve all possible opportunities to succeed. This cannot happen if funds are taken away from public schools. If the legislature truly cares about educational opportunity for all students, that starts with funding parity in public schools.

Kathleen Ward
Self / Strategy Consultant
Austin, TX

Students in the state of Texas deserve the best education possible. As a Texas resident and a proud recipient of a public education, I believe that these bills attempt to undermine children's opportunities to gain that education through the public school system. While some children may receive a better education in a private, charter or alternative school, there is no circumstance in which a high quality public education should not also be available to them. A high quality public education system needs teachers that are appropriately compensated for the hard (and often thankless) work they do. They also deserve to be provided with the resources they need to further their professional development. The fiduciary support proposed is important as well—families should receive financial support to ensure that their students receive the best education possible, but this should not be at the cost of incentivizing parents away from public education. I am submitting this comment to speak wholeheartedly against school voucher programs and the punitive fiduciary measures that come with assessment and accountability. I advocate for spending the surplus budget of the legislature to make meaningful change in the lives of students, their families and teachers across the state of Texas by bolstering public education with the support and resources they deserve.

leslie currens
self, software
Austin, TX

I do not agree with private school vouchers. Spending taxpayer money on unaccountable private schools is wrong. In order to provide great educational opportunity for every student, the state must instead increase funding to public schools. There is no need to siphon off money for unaccountable private schools. Parents who want to send their children to private school or home school are already doing it. The state provides funding for charter schools. The state provides funding for public schools. Private school vouchers, private school savings accounts and any other use of taxpayer money for private education is taxpayer abuse.

Nancy Jones
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please vote no to vouchers. A free public education by regular public schools ensures our democracy will continue strong.

Christine Lowak, Mrs
myself, educator
Bulverde, TX

Vouchers are expensive. They also have a track record of helping the privileged. I also strongly disagree with sending my tax dollars to a private institution that is not held to the same accountability and curricular standards as my neighborhood school. This is pandering at the lowest level and intolerable to a well-informed democratic nation

Jacqueline Lousier Austin
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am strongly opposed to vouchers and I am outraged about the states failure to meet public Ed's basic finances.

Margie Cleere
Self
Whitehouse, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

CHRISTOPHER GRUBBS
Self / Commercial Aviation Program Manager
Sunnyvale, TX

As Texas school districts face record inflation and an ongoing teacher shortage, the Texas Legislature should not invest its time and resources in programs that fail to support all of our 5.4 million public school students. Texas students benefit from an already robust list of public school choice options ranging from Career Technical Education (CTE), magnet programs, charter schools, and virtual education that offer students a choice across the entire state with robust public accountability for the resources being spent. And even yet, while we have all of these quality public school choice options, there is always room for improvement.

As the select committee begins to make recommendations for school choice options that are accountable to taxpayers, we ask the members to consider two suggestions in your decision-making; any school choice option should prioritize the needs of students and maintain their protections, and any education program should have both educational and financial accountability for parents and taxpayers that is easily accessible.

Recent legislation that looked to create a private school voucher, also known as Education Savings Accounts, did not sufficiently meet the bare minimum standards of maintaining student protections for special education or provide the necessary data reporting for parents and taxpayers to make informed decisions. More importantly, voucher programs like the ones proposed in this session do not help our students improve academically.

For decades, Texas has been a leader in holding public schools accountable. Parents and other stakeholders deserve consistent and comparable information about school performance. Voucher proposals have not required private schools to serve all students and meet the same accountability standards as public schools.

Greg Everett
Mesquite Independent School District
Mesquite, TX

Please vote AGAINST school choice (vouchers & ESAs). Charter schools and private schools are not held to the same standards and requirements of public schools and should NOT receive public funding!

James Hamric
self
San Antonio, TX

We should NOT offer any sort of public funding for private schools. Say NO to any voucher schemes and use our \$30+ billion budget to fully fund public education and its educators.

Julian Poynor
Self Retired Texas Educator
Granbury, TX

Public education is one of the last remaining elements of our society that ties us together! With every attempt to diminish public education by offering alternatives like vouchers, American culture and society is diminished! If vouchers are approved we will have a large exodus from the public schools and a far less educated public. Vouchers would be very detrimental to our way of life and common core interests.

We need to bolster public education by adding necessary money and training to the teaching profession. The dollars spent to provide enhanced building security at the schools and trained armed personnel to the schools takes away dollars that would be more beneficially spent in added teaching and counseling personnel. Educators can teach when properly trained, given the resources needed and time spent in teaching rather than having to be substitute parents and police officers! Thanks for the opportunity to voice a considered opinion.

Kate McDonald
Self Business Operations
Leander, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Leander ISD lacks accountability and I hear often of examples how students do not have the skills they need to thrive as an adult. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education. Leander needs competitive schools that give students the best education not one that rewards students for compliance with social standards. Give parents the ability to hold their student accountable by giving parents a choice of schools and principals that believe in accountability.

Kim Smith
Self
North Zulch, TX

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for taking the time to read comments regarding the use of vouchers as an educational opportunity.

Members, this issue has been voted down multiple times this past session. Holding another session at the expense of taxpayers is not fiscally sound especially when voters have voiced their opposition to the use of vouchers, ESAs, and/or tax credits.

The use of vouchers or any other name is just another attempt to further segregation - not necessarily by race but by wealth. The wealthy already send their children and I don't feel the need to subsidize them.

The heart of rural communities often lies within the walls of the local school. I have seen firsthand the effect of losing a community school.

The average tax payer pays around \$3500 in property taxes. If parents' tax money follows them, this isn't enough to afford a private school. However, Gov. Abbott wants to give each student \$8K. Member's, this is reprehensible. Public schools would get less. Why not adequately fund public schools to a level it was in the past? Arizona applied the same money value. Voters were told their "choice" would cost \$60 MN but, in reality, it's costing \$900 MN. This is not fiscally sound.

Perhaps, the biggest blunder is telling people we need "choice" . There is choice. Parents can send to private, charter, public schools (transfer to another public school) or they can homeschool.

If tax money is to be given, then all type of schooling should be subjected to the same standards and accountability of public schools. So far I have seen nothing regarding accountability.

I also want to point out that public schools accept every student regardless of ABILITY, gender, wealth, religion, or race. Why not give public schools the tools and funding it needs to truly make TX the great state I believe it. Be the state to say, we will fund public education and start that process by listening to EDUCATORS - not someone that has never been in the classroom-that are in the classroom across all socio-economic neighborhoods because one size does not fit all. We need more educators in the elementary grades where concepts are first presented. It is where educators can notice where extra help is needed.

Thank you.
Kim Smith

patty casey, mrs.
Americana for Properpetiry
Jacksonville, TX

Education Savings Accounts

Patty Casey, Mrs.
Americans for Prosperity
Jacksonville, TX

Please vote yes on the ESA bill

Nancy Beck
Self
New Braunfels, TX

Of course I'm for educational opportunity and I feel our current governor isn't. I am completely opposed to vouchers.

Sonya Letson
self / retired City Judge
Claude, TX

I oppose using public tax dollars to fund private educational institutions, no matter how much accountability is built into the system. All students should have the opportunity to attend a high-quality public school that is well-funded and governed by a locally elected board of trustees. Those who want a certain type of education, such as religious instruction, already have the opportunity to attend a private school of their choice. We all benefit from an educated populace and the children who attend public schools are the workforce of the future.

Daryn Polanco, Mrs.
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am a public school principal. Public schools have done amazing job of educating students with huge achievement gaps due to Covid 19. ESSER funds were helpful but are now gone. My school will be very short staffed this year due to budget cuts to help give teachers a raise. If we want ALL students to have educational opportunity and the freedom to obtain a quality education, then we MUST invest in our public schools. We are tasked and embrace educating ALL students, no matter their ethnicity, disability, religion, or socio-economic status. If we ship funds to private schools that have no state testing accountability, attendance accountability or oversight where the funds may be really be going our state is destined to fail. Let's put our money where our mouths and futures are and fund public schools to levels of pre-pandemic times.

John Cornelius
Self Teacher/Coach
SudN, TX

No to Vouchers - to receive tax payer money and state funds you have to adhere to the same accountability guidelines and standards as the public institutions. If not then you have no right to state funds

Brooke Green
self
Richardson, TX

I am a public school parent in Richardson ISD. I do not support public tax dollars paying for private education without accountability measures like those used for public schools. Just like any government program, we need more transparency when it comes to public funds. Our teachers need raises and more support when it comes to retirement, health insurance and benefits. Let's do everything we can to improve our schools without taking funds away.
Thank you.

Angela Groves
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Find public schools appropriately and we won't need charter or private schools
No public dollars for private schools

Genevieve Rodriguez

Self

Elmendorf, TX

Support public schools. Vote no to vouchers.

Donna Stevens

Self

NRH, TX

Let's spend our tax dollars and support public schools. Why are we not creating and innovating an ultra rich educational environment for all of those in public schools? We have the basics! Let's make them the best in the world. Taking vouchers to small private schools, where the tuition will not cover more than a third of the cost, drains our public schools of the resources they need. No to vouchers and yes to creating Texas world class schools in EVERY community!

Angela Coussirat

Self / Stay At Home Mom

Houston, TX

We are a hardworking family of 5 living in Houston Texas and feel so distressed about the state of our public schools in Texas. We contemplate daily the idea of moving because of it. A free education to all is the great equalizer. Helping all children learn only secures a better future for us all. Please increase the allotment and fully fund our schools! Do not support vouchers or ESAs! Please come up with better accountability than STAAR alone! And finally consider each of these issues separately. Thank you!

Linda Guy

self

Austin, TX

As a native Texan educated in the public school system myself & parent of 2 successful young adults who attended public schools through high school, I am a passionate advocate for supporting & funding public schools. I DO NOT want my tax dollars to go to private schools, or anything smacking of vouchers, ESA's , etc!! The public school community is vital to building & preserving community connections all over this great state & is especially important at this time of great divisions within our nation & state.

Ann Thompson

Self

Hurst, TX

Much research must be done before the state should implement a voucher program. There is too much uncertainty about the quality and equity students would receive in private or home schools. Accountability is owed to taxpayers who ultimately would find such a program. I am strongly opposed to a voucher plan at this time.

Kala Schlaegel

Self and public education

Mansfield, TX

Texas continues to underfund public schools and it would take at least an additional one thousand dollars per student added to the basic allotment just to keep up with inflation since 2019. It is paramount that the Texas legislature fund our public schools before it starts handing out public funds to unaccountable private schools. We need an increase in the basic allotment, and oppose diverting public funds for vouchers or ESAs for private schools, and support diversifying the accountability system, and implore you to consider each issue separately on it's own merits

JERI ROSS, Teacher

Self - Public School Teacher/retired

WIMBERLEY, TX

Public schools have been modifying and diversifying their curriculum for years in order to offer the most choices possible to students with varying interests. There is no way that a private school or a home school can offer opportunities that a unified public school system can offer students through their magnet school programs when given proper funding. What private school can offer choir, orchestra, band, dance, engineering, medicine, construction academy, architecture, communication arts, multiple languages, computer science, art, and every sport imaginable? Talk about school choice! The voucher system proposed is nothing more than a proposal to sequester the best and brightest away from the average. As a result, average students lose roll models for intellectual advancement. Charter and private schools are not held to the same standards as public schools; they pick and choose their students, rejecting students who need more assistance. Vouchers give parents some choices, but private and charter schools are not bound to honor their choices. When are you going to level the playing field for this so called competition? Our children are not only learning what is expected, they are learning to be kind, respectful, responsible human beings. If you fritter away our educational dollars on anything and everything that's out there, you dilute the power of our dollars. Education can do nothing but become more mediocre if you spread the money too thin. State funding for charter and private schools is a fad that will do nothing to educate our children properly. Give Texas a proper, fully-funded educational system, and let private schools continue as they always have, giving scholarships to needy students who want to attend with the support of their communities.

Ann Teich

Self-retired educator

Austin, TX

As a retired public school educator, I think it is very important that the State of Texas increase the basic per pupil allotment by \$1,000. Texas ranks in the bottom of state spending on public education. I oppose vouchers. Public tax money should be spent on public schools. More money should be allotted for public school teacher salaries. Without quality teachers, there is no quality education.

TODD SCHULTZ

Self

Willis, TX

Oppose any educational organization that is not graded and held to same standards as public education!

Dennis Hataway

Self. High School teacher

Hewitt, TX

1. Increase funding for public education. 2. Increase educator salaries to attract well-educated candidates from diverse backgrounds. 3. No vouchers, EVA'S, or other means of diverting funds from public schools to private schools that don't have the same stringent regulations.

Linda Howard
Self
Canyon, TX

Funding public education is imperative to the future of our state! While I agree, all children should have equal opportunities for their education, taking funds away from public education is not the answer! Properly funding public schools and allowing the local school boards to provide guidance for their students will produce better results than a small group of individuals determining what is best for a large group. Small rural districts still have the same “small town values “ they had 50 years ago and want to continue to educate their children with those same values and without big city values being pushed into their schools. Teachers in all schools need raises and need to be supported by giving significant pay increases as well as providing better benefits!

Eddie Hesseltine, Mr.
Superintendent Orange Grove ISD
Sandia, TX

Orange Grove ISD has been losing up to 1 million dollars in funding for 6 years straight, on a 16 million dollar budget. We need to be fully funded. If not we will go under and eventually taken over by the State through no fault of our own. Please pass this bill and grant so we can survive. Punishing school districts over CAD/Comptroller issues is not fair. We have no recourse over any of them. Please amend SB1064 and help us and the other 148 school districts in Texas.

Jennifer Current, Mrs.
Self. Teacher
Klein, TX

Texas must increase the allotment for Texas students as well as give public education teachers raises in order to continue to give Texas students quality education. Teachers are over worked with the burden of testing scores falling on their shoulders as well as expectations of attending to students emotional as well as educational needs. The pressure ia too much. The work load is too much. The expectations are too much. The pay is woefully insufficient.

Mary Jane Tatum
Individual
Wimberley, TX

Please continue to support public education! As private schools are allowed to “cherry pick” students, what will happen to those left behind?
Our public schools are held to such high standards with required tests, inclusion for all students from every walk of life, required teacher certifications and continuing education. Yet private schools do not have these same requirements. We need to show our Texas students that.... Yes!... the expectations are high, just as we value our public schools by making the investment needed. We need to Fund Their Future and the future of those who will become our next generation of Texas voters. Public education for ALL students is too important to take shortcuts. We can make no greater contribution to the state of Texas than to fund our public schools adequately.

Anya Lucas
Self - Business Owner Cypress, TX
Cypress, TX

Equal educational opportunity means saying “NO!” to VOUCHERS. They divert funding from public schools to private schools. There is NO ACCOUNTABILITY NOR TRANSPARENCY ON THE USE OF THESE FUNDS WHICH IS OUR TAXPAYERS’ DOLLARS.

Equal educational opportunity requires adequate funding for public schools, beginning with an increase in the basic allotment to catch up with inflation.

Diana Freeman
self
Hamilton, TX

Thank you for the time you are giving to consider education of our Texas school children. I want to state as clearly as possible I am not in favor of any kind of vouchers. I want you to do your constitutional duty and fully fund a free education for our population. Choice exists now in the form of transfers, private schools, etc. As a school board member in a rural community, the loss of funding resulting from vouchers would put our already stretched budget in a more precarious position.

Michelle Strickland
self
Plano, TX

First, I'm so frustrated that taxpayers time & money has been wasted this session as party representatives played politics instead of coming together to provide funding for the real issues (I'm hearing it's costing about \$9 million for every 30 day special session). Here's what I'm asking for...

1. Increase funding to texas public schools now with no strings attached.

Through its inaction during the regular session, has—at best—delayed funding that would address the 19% increase in costs experienced from inflation during the last 4 years. Every school district has been forced to absorb this inflationary increase without any help from the state's surplus. School districts did this by reducing costs and by adopting deficit budgets that now jeopardize the prosperity of Texas and risk the ability to supply a talented workforce over the long-term. (For example: Dallas ISD adopted a \$135 million deficit budget).

2. Oppose all forms of vouchers or ESAs.

Vouchers are a money grab for the rich. They are a cash grab for lobbyists' rich buddies. Almost every parent who wants to switch to a private school will have to supplement the vouchers with thousands of dollars every year. This is not how we grow our state's economy or the futures of the 90% of Texas children who attend and count on and love their public school. And, it appears that the public has told their elected officials they aren't in support of vouchers. The only one who keeps pushing this (and wasting everyone's time) appears to be the Governor. I don't understand how this is allowed?

Jennifer Stewart
self
Round Rock, TX

The art of communication is fundamental to a democratic society. Citizens need to possess solid writing skills to draft responsible legislation as well as verbal abilities to clearly debate and discourse. For our democracy to continue and flourish, the next generation must know how to read and write. Because reading and writing are essential skills to an educated society, all possible revenues that teach language arts must be presented to the parents. Prior to this generation, America has responsibly and dependably provided a quality education to its youth as our leaders have understood that without teaching the art of language, democracy and freedom perish. While many lawmakers have joined in the education debate for many reasons, few would honestly argue that all of America's public schools provide a safe, clean environment where all children learn to read and write at grade level. Because reading and writing are so, so important, I'm asking Texas lawmakers to open up all avenues for learning, including public schools, charter schools, homeschooling, and private schools/ESAs. Thank you so very much for your time.

Ann Davis
Self
Sunnyvale, TX

No vouchers. If you'd find schools correctly they could do better

Sara Stevenson

Self

Austin, TX

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 \$10,000 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. A local private school admissions director once told me that the school did not accept children with discipline records. In contrast, public schools are required to serve every child who comes through the door. Furthermore, most highly-rated private schools charge far more than \$10,000 per year at the secondary level. Who will make up the difference?

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. (<https://www.privateschoolreview.com/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. https://usafacts.org/articles/which-states-pay-teachers-the-most-and-least/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=ND-Education-Childcare&gclid=CjwKCAiA19efBhAkEiwA4ToriqWaJPxdFAToBAVBHAD5o060JdVII6FUnu8Kh951ZqqCT48JuFJrlxoChiEQAvD_BwE

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?

Do children receiving private school vouchers or ESAs perform better on standardized testing, an objective measure?

According to the Brookings Institution, "Four recent rigorous studies—in the District of Columbia, Louisiana, Indiana, and Ohio—used different research designs and reached the same result: on average, students that use vouchers to attend private schools do less well on tests than similar students that do not attend private schools." <https://www.brookings.edu/research/more-findings-about-school-vouchers-and-test-scores-and-they-are-still-negative/>

While utilizing an ESA to put a child in a private school may please individual parents, it doesn't translate into an objective improvement in learning outcomes.

Bryan Davis, Mr

Self

North Richland Hills, TX

Texans have had the ability to choose home schooling, private, online and charter schools for many years. The proposals coming from the 88th legislature change nothing in that regard. Instead, they seek to take taxpayer money from public schools and divert it to private school owners with no accountability. This is immoral, unconstitutional and reeks of corruption. Lawmakers should instead focus their energy and time on fully funding our struggling public schools.

Cherrise Thomas

Self

Vidor, TX

Education in Public Schools needs to be funded, not vouchers. As a teacher with 28 years of experience, so many rules and regulations are constantly changing, but not funded or fully funded. More and more students require additional help, but more students are placed in rooms. If vouchers get approved, the same testing requirements, same classroom requirements, same educational requirements/expectations of TEA need to be in place and follow any public education money! There should NOT be a double standard for our public money or our students. Our teachers work very hard with the little we are given. Please fund public education so all students in Texas have equal opportunity and access. Hold TEA accountable for what they do too. They need to make financially responsible decisions. Thank you.

Karen Matt, Dr.
Self - Educator
Pecos, TX

I am opposed to this and any form of voucher for students to attend private schools. Tax money should be spent on public schools. There are already a number of school options including free public charter schools, inter and intradistrict transfers, magnet schools, and academies. Private schools are not required to accept students, and they are not held to the same level of accountability as public schools. This would primarily benefit families whose children are already enrolled in public schools while taking away from students in public schools. Our students with the greatest educational challenges are generally served in our Texas public schools

Kiki Paschall
self-retired
Dallas, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

Cassandra Weaver
Educator
Ennis, TX

As an educator of 29 years, many of which in a title 1 district, I urge you to not vote for vouchers. This will take money from schools children who will not be able to afford the step fees of private education. We need the Texas Legislature to support public education. There are teachers who are pouring their everything into these students to help move them forward in life and taking funding will be a detriment to Texas children. Pleaser feel free to reach out to me and I will gladly share the needs of a public school children and teachers.

Regards,
Cassandra Weaver

Dorothy Smith
SELF
Nacogdoches, TX

support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

Thank you for your participation on this important subject. Through you, TFRW continues to build strong leaders for the future.

Regina Williams
Parents/Teachers
New Boston, TX

No vouchers! Honor our state constitution by supporting and fully funding our public education system.

Catherine Granger
Self
Beaumont, TX

I Vote no to school vouchers! Support public education

Vivian Bennett
public education school/community member
Houston, TX

I say, "No to vouchers". Vouchers divert funding from public schools to private schools. There is no accountability nor transparency on the use of these funds which is our taxpayers' dollars.

Vivian Bennett
public schools/community member
Houston, TX

Equal educational opportunity requires adequate funding for public schools, beginning with an increase in the basic allotment to catch up with inflation.

Gary Shafferman
Private citizen
Georgetown, TX

I would be saddened to see our state funding private vouchers. It is stated that this would allow all to have choice in their education. I, however, believe it would merely allow the rich to choose. Most quality private schools are very expensive. The subsidy would not cover expenses. Provide public education better funding options. Allow parents to choose the public school within their district that best suits their child's needs. Continue some form of accountability. Don't lower standards. Support public schools instead of bashing them. This country became strong partially due to an education for all.

Jonathon Salama
Parents in texas
Austin, TX

Please approve the vouchers to give families a choice. Good since competition since most of the big school districts are corrupt and refuse external audites. The PTA the unions are preventing equal education for all in accordance with State and federal law.

MONICA CARSON
Self
Bastrop, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

Bonnie Seelig
Self/Retired
Spicewood, TX

I was a student and a teacher. My parents paid tuition to a Catholic school for the first 8 years of schooling. The high school years I spent in public schools. The differences between a private school with 30-50 students in a classroom and a public education with 25-35 students in a classroom were DISCIPLINE AND FOCUS ON READING, WRITING, AND ARITHMETIC. No school time sports, themed celebrations and pep rallies + a million other "special assemblies" occurred in private education. The point was education. These "fun activities" are great for kids and teachers who wanted to "goof off" but not so much for those who wanted to spend their time learning and have free time for their choice of activities after school hours.

When I became a teacher in the 70's, the school districts i worked for made it very clear: You are here to TEACH, NOT TO TALK ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, YOUR POLITICS OR YOUR RELIGION. Each teacher knew the curriculum from the district and the materials that supported that curriculum. More than enough resources were provided to teach children to think, not recite facts, but to allow them to use the facts that they learned to become critical thinkers and future adults who moved through the world expanding their WISDOM!

What has happened today is a class of teacher who wants to entertain himself/herself and an administration that is too weak to discipline and a school board who wants to be re-elected and be friends with "special people." There is a reason other countries have well educated children. They have parents and schools who care enough about the students and their future and the future of our country to limit "screen time" and demand school districts set the standards of excellence, not "let's try to achieve" to the lowest level possible.

With our Public Education sinking fast, why would anyone want to subject one's child to a "waste of time" day after day. All parents and students deserve to find the school that offers the opportunity to reach the highest potential of each student. The school that enriches the mind and the spirit with the thirst for knowledge and pride in being a citizen of a nation that gives them so many opportunities IS the school that each parent and child should have the right and responsibility to find for themselves.

Ted Smith, Dr.
Salado ISD
Belton, TX

My children transfer into the neighboring school district. We have school choice in public schools. Vouchers would not be conservative or Republican. Please listen to your constituents and vote no to any vouchers.

Terry Kosobud
Retired
Austin, TX

Texas is the 9th largest economy on Earth. 186 countries have a smaller economy than Texas, however Texas funds its public schools at 42th in the US where 41 states do a better job than Texas. What's wrong with this picture. Instead of fixing this problem with underfunding, the Governor wants to make the problem worse by implementing a voucher/educational savings account. Texas needs to stop undervaluing our kids and instead raise teachers pay by \$7,000 and increase funding to public schools by \$4,000.

Athan Swick
Self, Student & Assistant Manager
San Antonio, TX

I attended both a public and charter school. Moving from a charter school to a public school the first difference I noticed was the food. My peers would tell me that the school's food was disgusting, perhaps even inedible. I would vehemently disagree. Oftentimes eating seconds and thirds when at my old school I couldn't even finish a single serving. The biggest difference though, was that of teachers. At my public high school, there were a few teachers who it honestly felt as though they didn't care about their students, but so much more who did. They would work tirelessly, day and night, to ensure that every single thing was finished and accounted for that day, and that every single student emerged with an opportunity to be better. I remember famously my senior year that a certain admin/teacher would start out the day sending emails and reminders at 7am and would continue to send out emails and reminders until 11pm. The emails would contain everything from links to free study resources, scholarships, internships, programs at the school, and much more. Further, as a public school, there were so many more programs available to me. I never truly knew what a school football game, band, theater program, or debate program was until I went to high school. At charter school, we had a meager athletic program whom only garnered views through the parents of the athletes. At public school it was incredibly different. There was real community to be found by attending and watching those sporting events. My life would've been irreparably different had I continued in charter school. I'm glad I didn't. I you want to give all a quality education? Invest in public schools.

Samantha Souza
Self and homemaker/homeschooling parent
Sabine pass, TX

Please support a universal ESA scholarship so that all Texas students can receive an education that best meets their learning needs. I have 4 children myself and have been homeschooling them all for the past 4 years. This year it has come to our attention that a bill has just passed that public schools will now receive even more funding per child they have in their school. \$15,000 each child to be exact. Now while I know it takes money to teach a child I believe some of those funds should be allocated to families who choose to homeschool their children instead. I also know all of our children have flourished since we have started homeschooling and actuqly have learned and retained information versus memorize. We pay taxes already and that's where a portion of the funding is coming from. The families that choose to homeschool or send to private school, should recieve the funding that schools are getting if the children were to be in the public school system. If the funds are there (which it is since the bill has passed) we have the right as american citizens to homeschool or send to private schools because we know our children best and know how they learn best. Those funds should just allocated to the families who choose their right to homeschool.

Michael Rackley
Greenville ISD
Greenville, TX

I am a life long resident of Texas and a graduate of public education. I firmly believe that public schools provide a quality education in spite of the unfunded mandates that are levied on us by legislative actions. I am totally opposed. to any type of school voucher system. I believe that this would further place public education at a disadvantage. I live in an area where we have a quality Christian School that provides K-12 classes and works with our school district in a positive way. Additionally, we have a charter school in the district as well. I find it unfair to our students in GISD that these others are not held to the same standards and requirements that our kids are. I find this very ridiculous.

Stuart Reichler, Dr.
self
Austin, TX

The Texas Constitution says that, "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."

That seems pretty straight-forward. Our founders understood the critical importance of free and equitable public education. The idea that we would take public funds from our public schools, and give them to private institutions is ludicrous. It is madness. Our public schools are woefully underfunded. I do not understand where the legislature imagines Texas's future innovators and entrepreneurs will come from if not from our education system. We have a state full of promise, yet you squander it by underfunding our schools and threatening to allow private institutions to use public resources for their own benefit. We already fund private education through the State's charter schools, and that has been an abject failure. While a few charter schools may be doing well, most do no better than nearby public schools, and many actually do worse.

If we follow the Texas Constitution, then public education funding should be reserved for public schools. That is the beginning and end of this argument.

Lynn Tinney
myself / software developer
Austin, TX

Dear Committee Members

Thank you for your service to Texas!

I urge you to support a parent directed voucher system for Texas students. Monopolies never serve their clients well in the long run. By giving parents the right to choose the best quality schools for their children, you can improve the quality of education both for the children who choose to use the voucher to attend an alternative school and for the children who remain in the normal public school system since the public schools will then need to compete for students and thereby improve their quality. As I understand it, in other places where vouchers have been tried, the majority of parents tend to leave their children in public school unless there is a compelling reason to move them. In cases where the public schools are truly failing their students, parents should have the right to find a suitable alternative for their children. That's good for the kids and it's good for the community.

Thank you!
Lynn

George Jordan
Self
Dallas, TX

The people of Texas want you to SUPPORT Public Schools! We do NOT want vouchers!

Randall Campbell
Self/airline pilot
Ft. Worth, TX

Increase the basic allotment to compensate for inflation. A minimum of \$2000.

Gabrielle Gordon
myself
Fort Worth, TX

I support our public schools and believe our tax money should go to public schools not charter and private schools. I believe all child from urban to rural areas no matter their socio economic level must be supported by traditional public schools. Public schools offer many programs like speech therapy, help for slow learns and those with dyslexia, special needs children, etc. There is not enough oversight to protect and make sure all children are given equal opportunities if our tax and other money go to charter and private schools. I also want our tax money for a pregnancy support program in every school district, and this does not mean shipping girls away or forcing them to take classes on line. A dedicated program for pregnant and new mothers must be available for all expecting mothers not added to a counselor's already existing duties. Pro life means time and resources for these girls and their babies to obtain a high school education, help to find child care, WIC, child support, counseling (especially in cases of rape and incest) and other life skills programs. Pregnancy is the number one reason why girls quit school and without a high school diploma how will these girls support their families as many will be single mothers. Thank you for this opportunity.

Patty Martin
self
Keller, TX

Hello, I am writing to urge our legislators to stand up for our Texas Public School System; our teachers and students. I am opposed to diverting funds from our public schools, just say no to school vouchers. Show your support of our Texas public schools, and represent the people in which you serve. We do not need politics in our school system. I am in favor of raises for teachers, and good quality education for ALL students in Texas. We can and must do better.

Susan Greig
Self - retired teacher
Bloomburg, TX

In reviewing the data on school district pass/fail records, the vast majority of districts passed with an A or B and when you add in C the scores are overwhelming. Our districts are not failing. Setting up a second educational system requires another funding stream and another administration only this time it will be run by the private sector. Sure, the comptroller will have oversight but the funding and operations are in the hands of private industry. To be sure, there are plenty of these companies working in other states that would love to get their hands on Texas' monies but it makes no sense to set up another tier of education, with different accountability measures, when we could work on addressing the problems that exist in the current system. Failures are occurring in low income areas where they struggle to keep qualified, experienced educators. There are deeper problems that need to be addressed including parent/guardian involvement, teacher shortages, and a system of testing that is quite frankly, ridiculous. Research the "Best of..." in education and implement those methods in the 'failing' districts, revamp the STARR test methodology (one day testing, and 5-hour tests will never adequately demonstrate true mastery for these kids), get parents invested in their students' outcomes, and continue to support the public education system.

Christina Ramirez
Self
Katy, TX

Vouchers are NOT going to help low and middle class kids. It's only going to help the wealthy. Put that money in public education!

Catarina Wylie
self
PITTSBURG, TX

I'm firmly AGAINST the proposed voucher program. Friends and family members have been public school teachers and they warn siphoning off money from the Texas public school system will deal it a mortal blow. That's especially true for rural school districts. Texas ranks #35 in education. At a time when Texas parents want MORE investment in their children's education, the Texas legislature is proposing a two-tier system - one that leaves the poorest, least advantaged children in deteriorating buildings in under resourced school districts. Teachers are quitting and recruitment efforts are fruitless because already tough circumstances are becoming untenable due to BS culture war issues. Texas politicians can't brag about the business friendly economy and ignore the impact of a poorly educated workforce. The two must go hand in hand INVEST money in public schools, raise teacher salaries to attract and retain professionals. Do not siphon off the "best" and abandon the rest. It's not only a longterm recipe for disaster, it's morally wrong and certainly not Christian. Again, please, do not vote for vouchers - no matter how politicians have tried to rebrand it.

Darleen Druyun
Self
Lucas, TX

Texas ranks much lower in the education ratings for our schools for grade schools, intermediate and high schools when compared to the other 49 states. Educational funding is a critical need for our public schools to produce well educated students. As a parent/grandparent we are failing in this task. The school our child is scheduled to attend in the DFW area ranks in the 25th percentile...which is in the "F" category. Parents and their children have validated that the education at this school is dismal and to find another school so our child can receive a quality education. If Abbott is serious about quality education and school funding why aren't parents given the opportunity to send their children to a public school that is closer to their home that is a high performing school? We are currently being forced to send our children to a failing public school that is 3 times further from our residence. Every parent in our neighborhood is asking the same question. Parents want options to send their children to either quality public schools or private schools. Many parents can not afford to send their children to private schools even if given a voucher to help pay the tuition costs of a private school.

It's time for our legislators to give parents real school choices which must include attending a better performing public school vs a failing public school. We are tired and frustrated with the limited legislative school option of only a "Private" school voucher. Parents should be able to use a school voucher for either a higher performing public school or private school. The citizens of Texas believe it's time to force public school ISD's to shut down the failing schools and allow children to attend high performing schools. School vouchers for both public and private schools will help Texans begin the transformation of its low performing schools. Texas needs both public and private school choices.

Josephine Sullivan
self retired educator
Richardson, TX

It is not right to spend taxpayer money for private schools. Money should be used for improving and supporting our public schools.

Jocelyn Rigel
Self
Garland, TX

Please do not pass a voucher program. These vouchers hurt our communities and public schools. Every parent should have a right to send their child to a school of their choice but that is then on the parent to pay for or the school to provide a scholarship, not something that is at the expense of the public good or at the additional cost to the taxpayer. Public schools benefit everyone even if your child does not attend them directly, most of your police, firemen, engineers, teachers, and doctors all received some public education.

Janet Ward
Self, retired educator
Grapevine, TX

As an educator for 31 years, I have witnessed quality education and services provided for all students regardless of where they live, or how much money they have. Our country has provided educational opportunities for a diverse group of students from all socioeconomic backgrounds, and it is the public schools that have provided for this. I disagree with the voucher system. Look to California and Arizona for what charter schools have done for their educational system. Test scores have shown the students perform better in public schools. We need to continue to support and fund our public schools and let parents who want to choose their school, attend a private school.

Rita Hogan
Coryell County Republican Women
Copperas Cove, TX

As a Mother and Grandmother of 5th generation Texans I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students (Marling and Houston are just 2 examples of public school districts that have failed their students!). . Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

Thank you for all of your hard work!
Rita Hogan

Mark Foster
Self
Austin, TX

Stop defunding my public school, you already won't pay public school teachers enough to live in major city centers so no wonder quality of education is low. Keep your greedy hands off the public money and stop trying to hoard all opportunity for your kids, or else you will realize the consequences of declining education in your general population

Karen Greaney
Self
Cypress, TX

No vouchers!!!!!! This will divert funds from public education - as funding is based on attendance - so do not try to say otherwise. A free, quality education is one of the cornerstones of our democracy & should not be undermined in any way.

Courtney Velek
Parent on behalf of Raise Your Hand Texas
Fair Oaks Ranch, TX

I am vehemently opposed to "educational freedom"/vouchers. As the daughter of a public school teacher and a parent of two kids in public schools, I feel that passing a voucher bill of any kind will seriously negate the value and funding for public schools. Educational freedom is a politically motivated, conservative idea that applies to a very vocal minority of kids and parents. Our kids, teachers and communities deserve more from our legislature. Increase the per student funding and give teachers raises. Do what benefits the majority instead of the minority and political ideologies.

Glenn Decker
Self and Family
Rockwall, TX

As a parent, one of the things I want most for my child is a good education, which I believe requires the flexibility and freedoms to do so. I believe school choice and the idea that the money should follow the child/family, not the school/district/etc is critical to this idea. We, my family and those I seek advice from, should have the ability to decide where to spend my tax money on education for my child. Each child is different - for example, I struggled in the traditional public school system. The 8+hour day spent sitting in a desk, listening to a teacher speak, answering questions and taking tests, was a prohibitive way for me to learn. I can't sit still, I need to move around, to get hands on. I was able to get thru traditional school models, including college, but it wasn't until I went and got my MBA, where learning involved internship/consulting projects/etc, where i could be active, moving around, hands on, learning in different ways (reading on my own, talking to others, doing the work and getting feedback) where I began to get confidence in my abilities.

Our family didn't have the ability to provide alternative education structure, topics, etc for me, and so I struggled, and was probably limited by the way we fund education.

I deserve the right to choose how to educate my child, and how my tax dollars are used to do that.

I'm excited that the tides of this discussion are/have turning, and those that don't; support this will not be in their position long as they find themselves on the wrong side of history. School choice, and funding following families is happening. It's when, not if. I appreciate and will support those who fight for that.

Margery Pinson, Ms.
N/A
Galveston, TX

While a school property tax reduction for Texans is appreciated, I fear Texas is dropping the ball with regard to ensuring "educational opportunity and freedom to obtain a quality education" for Texas' youth. Surely some of that huge financial surplus should be used to strengthen our public schools.

It is public knowledge the basic allotment per student in Texas public schools falls for below that of other states. I urge your committee to seek ways to bring the basic allotment in line with inflation, at a minimum, and preferably in line with other states.

Efforts to divert public funds for vouchers or ESAs for private schools should be addressed as a separate issue and should be opposed. The purpose of the proposed vouchers is clearly to weaken or destroy public schools, not support them. Instead the focus should be on making Texas public schools competitive.

Finally, the accountability system for Texas schools should be diversified. Local city and county governing bodies are better able to gage the needs of their students and schools, and should remain responsible for allocating public moneys to best support public schools

Each of the above issues deserves to be addressed separately on it's own merits.

Madeleine Baker
none
Galveston, TX

I am a product of the Texas public school system. I come from a small town in the Valley, and had I not received a good education there, I would never have been accepted into a college, could never have entered the profession of my choice, would never have been a productive member of the citizenry of this state. It is an embarrassment to me that Texas ranks near the absolute bottom of the 50 states in education, particularly when we know we have the money to do better, much better. Please increase the basic allotment of funds per student in the public schools. Please do NOT use public funds to support religious schools. Please raise Texas from the bottom of the educational pile!

Martina Strbuncelj, Dr.
Self stay at home parent
Houston, TX

As a parent of 3 children in Texas public schools, I urge you to invest in our future and drastically increase the basic allotment so our public schools can prepare our children for future employment. It's shameful that Texas public schools are grossly underfunded. Schools are a public good- it is wrong to divert public funds to private schools in the form of vouchers. Please do what's right for our teachers, children and communities- invest in our public schools.

Carla Kerske
Self - educator
Springtown, TX

I am OPPOSED to any form of voucher or redistribution of taxpayer funds from public schools schools which charge tuition of any kind; or schools which may prohibit enrollment to students due to attendance or disability and/or schools which charge tuition of any kind to enroll.

Becky Tucker
self, Principal at Arrow Academy
Bedias, TX

I currently serve children being raised in Poverty in a K-6 charter school environment. I believe with all my heart that the way to break the cycle of generational poverty is by obtaining a quality education and developing relationships with those who can help students develop a vision for a middle class existence. I support vouchers in that they offer parents and students a choice. I DO NOT support vouchers without equal accountability. Obviously the size of enrollment does not matter since small charter school are held to the same accountability system as local ISD's. If parents are seeking another learning environment to escape the STAAR test then we should seek to understand why and make adjustments to the test or the accountability system not just hold some schools to the accountability system and not others. As a tax payer and voter for 50 years I expect fairness and equality. To hold some schools, who receive tax dollars as funding, accountable and not others will create anything but equality and fairness.

Norma Metevier, Mrs.
Leander Area Republican Women
Leander, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

Jessica Johnson, Supt.
Dayton ISD
Dayton, TX

Funding needs to stay in public schools as we educate, love and grow ALL students.

1. Raise basic allotment- Dayton ISD has passed a 4.4M deficit budget due to the rising cost of resources and utilities, retention of teachers, and providing opportunities for academic improvement. We are worried about the ESSER cliff at the end of this year. Even using TEA resources comes with a huge price tag (not all components of programs/curriculum is free). The educational inequalities between neighboring districts are significant. The highest paying district in the state is 12 miles from my district. We train inexperienced teachers, give local permits, offer VISAs, etc. yet we train teachers for 1-3 years and they jump ship for significant raises. Our teachers and support staff deserve more money but we cannot compete with property-rich neighboring districts.
2. Fully fund special education- In my district, we have seen a significant jump in our SpEd numbers for several reasons such as COVID and the mandated screening of dyslexia at kinder and 1st grades. However, we now have an all boys, CPS placed, foster dormitory (a double-wide trailer house) that houses very violent, emotionally disturbed boys grades 5th-12th grade. These boys come from all over the state from Juvenile and behavior facilities. Liberty County does not have a JJAEP nor does my district have the funds to accommodate these highly expensive in-district programs. These boys are ARDed into these high cost programs. Therefore, we transport many of them to Harris County and it is on our district's dime to purchase the slots and pay for transportation daily.
3. Safety mandates that have passed without adequate funding. We want our children safe but need more money to be in compliance.
4. Due to the teacher shortage, we need the ability to hire retired teachers without penalty.

Giving our children equal and appropriate education with proper funding does not include vouchers (no matter what term is used). Private and charter schools are not held to the same standards as public schools. They can pick and choose their students. We love and educate ALL students. Public dollars should remain in public schools.

Heather Gray
Self
Dallas, TX

We need this in order to improve the quality of our public education IMO! The creation of a small bit of competition I hope will spur excellence in schools. As of now it seems public education is not really accountable to the quality of education.

Cathy Sweeney, Rev
self
Richardson, TX

I am against school vouchers that use public dollars for private schools. As a parent of students who graduated from schools in the Richardson Independent School District, I am aware of public education issues, and have spoken at school board meetings. Funding vouchers will drain public schools of the very funding that is required to make public schools succeed. Reallocating those funds would be unconstitutional and immoral, leaving some of the most vulnerable students at risk of even more inequities.

Laura Snavelly
parent/educator
The Hills, TX

Funding of public schools is important for access to all . Please do not divert public school funds to ESA or private schools. My children have attended public schools all of their lives and have worked in the public schools in Chicago, Little Rock, Austin, Lake Travis , and Marble Falls. All have provided excellent education and access to all students. Providing vouchers to ESAs & Private schools is not advisable and is discriminatory in some instances where there is not local access to these options or transportation to and from school. If we want a rich, diverse thinking, and educated society funding public schools is of upmost importance.

Karen Morrison, Mrs.
Self
Grapevine, TX

The legislator must fund schools adequately. We have a giant surplus in Texas and our schools are struggling. We are cutting reading teachers, ESL teachers etc because of the way the districts are funded. We especially need to help the districts that pay into recapture (Robinhood).

Angie Yarbrough
self
Dallas, TX

Texas just dropped out of the top 5 in the CNBC competitiveness rankings as a Top State for Business for the first time ever. One of the major contributors to that drop? Texas ranks 35th for Education. Not only is our per-pupil spending among the nation's lowest, but K-12 test scores are lagging. Instead of trying to strip money away from the Texas public school system so that the rich can use vouchers to help them pay for private school, the state should be looking to add money to the budget to improve public education.

Charter schools already exist within Texas for those looking for another public school option. If you choose to send your child to private education instead, that is a personal choice for which you should have to shoulder the cost. It's not the job of the rest of the populace to shoulder the cost for an individual to send their children to private school.

The areas that will be impacted the greatest by vouchers are the rural areas where there are extremely limited choices outside of the local public schools. Stripping money away from those schools would not be fair. I've seen firsthand the difference in what my niece and nephew experience in terms of the resources available at their local rural ISD versus those available at my own children's urban ISD in a wealthy neighborhood. There is a huge disparity. While my children were able to effectively continue their education at home during the pandemic due to having either an iPad or laptop for every single child, my niece and nephew's schools did not have devices for every student and couldn't do the same.

Spend the time to fix the system and the disparities before you strip it further of funding. Education is the foundation of our society, and if we don't prepare our children adequately for the future, Texas will fall even further behind. The drop in the business friendliness ranking is just the beginning.

Christopher Wilkins
self - teacher
Coppell, TX

As a citizen, voter, public educator, and parent I am very concerned about public education in our wonderful state. Discussions about public education have become over politicized and there are some who are trying to undermine public education by trying move the standards for each districts "report card," demanding more from teachers and administrators without properly funding programs and pay to go along with these expectations, and using culture wars to try and scare parents and cause them to think that teachers are somehow trying to indoctrinate their children. Support for local public schools is vital for the success of our society and democracy and the continued support of public schools and school choice within the public school system, not through vouchers and private education, must be supported from the state level.

Amy Wilkins, Rev.
self
Coppell, TX

As a citizen, voter, and parent I am very concerned about public education in our wonderful state. Discussions about public education have become over politicized and there are some who are trying to undermine public education by trying move the standards for each districts "report card," demanding more from teachers and administrators without properly funding programs and pay to go along with these expectations, and using culture wars to try and scare parents and cause them to think that teachers are somehow trying to indoctrinate their children. Support for local public schools is vital for the success of our society and democracy and the continued support of public schools and school choice within the public school system, not through vouchers and private education, must be supported from the state level.

Bryan Stein
Self - Teacher
Arlington, TX

I do not approve vouchers. I do not like the money being taken away from PUBLIC education.

Eve Myers
self
Tomball, TX

As a taxpayer and parent of two sons who graduated from Texas public schools, I am grateful for the educational opportunities my sons had in Tomball I.S.D that have led them to become productive citizens. Districts offer even more opportunities now than ever before. My sons had the opportunity to earn college credits through dual credit courses; now, high school students can even earn an associates degree. My sons participated in band programs that taught them cooperation, discipline, and teamwork. Research shows that students engaged in extracurricular activities perform better academically as well. We need to invest more in growing extracurricular activities and athletics programs to keep students motivated and engaged throughout high school. CTE programs have flourished across the state, and students are acquiring workforce skills that enable them to be self-supporting and contribute to our state's economic growth as soon as they graduate. As a taxpayer, all of this tells me the money I pay in school taxes is a sound investment that is bringing a return on the investment. I cannot say the same for vouchers, or ESA's, or ANY plan that results in public taxpayer dollars being used to support private and home schools. If regulation is good for public schools, then let private and home schools follow the same regulations. Do not divert public funds to private and home schools that have zero financial transparency, zero accountability or public reporting on academic outcomes, and zero public representation such as an elected school board or board of managers. Those who wish to choose private or home schooling, can do so but are not entitled to public funds. "Educational freedom" should not mean free money from taxpayers for private and home schools with no strings attached.

Billy Stone
Self
Cleburne, TX

I, my children and grandchildren are products of public education. We must support a strong public education system. We must not grant public funds to the affluent; doing so will lead the country further into a caste system and further from democracy. Thomas Jefferson was well aware of this requirement.

If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.

Thomas Jefferson

The most sacred of the duties of a government [is] to do equal and impartial justice to all its citizens.

Thomas Jefferson

James Pierce
Self
Copperas Cove, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

Kathleen Hammond
Self
ROWLETT, TX

Public money should NOT go to private schools.

Sara Hassler
Self
Mckinney, TX

Vouchers will only deplete what is already not enough money for public school resources and teacher pay at a time w schools are forced to meet the increasing demands the legislature keeps putting on them w no funding to implement

Sarah Crenshaw
self, PTA member and leader in Georgetown ISD
Georgetown, TX

I support an increase in the basic allotment. I oppose diverting public funds for vouchers or ESAs for private schools. I support diversifying the accountability system, and ask you to consider each issue separately on it's own merits.

Dee Carney
Texas School Alliance
Austin, TX

The Texas School Alliance sincerely appreciates Chairman Buckley and members of the Educational Opportunity and Select Enrichment Committee for their commitment, dedication, and willingness to support Texas public education and is grateful for the opportunity to submit our recommendations on topic #1.

1. Make investments that reflect the true cost of educating students by fully funding public schools to cover the costs of inflation, special education, full day Pre-K, and school safety.

Prioritize students by investing meaningful new dollars in public education and giving districts flexibility to address local needs. The \$33 billion surplus presents an unprecedented opportunity to invest in TX public schools educating more than 5 million students.

Recommendations:

- Increase the Basic Allotment (BA) by \$1,100 per student to adjust for 14.2% inflation since 2019 (HB3). Cost to state ~ \$14 billion
- Fully fund Special Education programs and services (as required by federal law). Cost to the state ~ \$2 billion
- Fund Full Day Pre-K. Cost to the state ~ \$1.6 billion
- Fully Fund HB 3 (88R) to meet the Legislature and TEA's school safety costs either by increasing the per student school safety allotment or adding more rounds of school safety grants.

2. Expand the Public Education Grant Transfer (PEG) program and provide additional funding.

In 1995, the Texas Legislature created the Public Education Grant (PEG) program. It permits parents of children assigned to attend a low-rated school to request that their child transfer to other schools or districts. Recommendations:

- Expand the PEG criteria to include specific groups of students. For example, 3rd gr. students who fail STAAR reading. TEA's publicly available data shows there were 81,000 (or 23%) third graders who failed STAAR reading in Spring 2022
- Increase the weight that districts receive when accepting a PEG transfer student to 0.5 or higher
- Include a transportation allotment when districts accept PEG transfer students

3. Ensure public dollars only fund accountable, transparent public schools.

- TSA recommends that the legislature address "public school funding" and "school choice" separately.

4. Chairman Buckley asked panel #3, "What are your greatest concerns about a 'School Choice' Program?" TSA's concerns are as follows:

- Public schools, through an array of specialized campuses and program, plus transfer policies -- offer more school choice than Texas has ever seen
- Private and home schools are not publicly accountable for student performance or finance
- Voucher plans, ESAs, etc. remove public dollars from public schools
- Vouchers, ESAs, etc. would pay for students already attending private and home schools
- Private schools are not required to give the STAAR test, publicly report their spending, comply with laws regarding open meetings and records, provide accommodations for students with disabilities, and/or accept all students

Jackie Dillon
Self
Richardson, TX

For the future of our state and quality of life for all Texans, we need a strong and effective public school system. Please do the right thing and Vote for policies enhancing our public school system. Our future generation is counting on you to represent them. Thank you.

Marcie Salamone
Self
Richardson, TX

The TX legislature should provide additional funding for public schools not promoting vouchers. Vouchers will contribute to further inequities for people of color and already struggling school districts.
Please increase funding for public schools. Please do not support vouchers.

Flora Gill, Ms.
Flora Gill
houston, TX

I got a public school education. I benefitted tremendously from going to school with kids that were not like me. My parents were college professors, but some of my friends parents were farmers, or gas station attendants, or nurses, or factory workers. I definitely invited friends who lived in trailers to my birthday parties. We all had access to a good education. Some kids decided to learn a trade, some kids took AP classes with hopes of using those credits to save money on college one day. These choices were NOT made on economic lines, it was up to the kid to choose their course. We all got to try a bit of everything and open our eyes to what we could do individually and together as a team. My husband went to Choate, maybe you've heard of it. Ivanka Trump went there too. He got an excellent education too, but everyone that he went to school with was very wealthy. Private schools are not forced to take everyone like public schools. If we create a system where only families of more than X\$\$\$ have access to a good education, we will be lacking the talent needed at all levels of our work force. We need smart people who know math and can read complicated documents to build our homes, fix our plumbing and electrical. We need smart people on rigs and refineries in the military and the grocery store. 40% of Texans do not make a living wage. a Majority of families will not be able afford to pay for a private school using your vouchers. Those vouchers only will help the wealthier few. I see that Texas is trying to create an economic Catch 22 for schools. You defund the schools on the state level and you cap the amount of money the schools can collect from local property taxes too. The schools need about \$1000 more per student to keep up with inflation. Mind you, Texas's education per student spending is lower than some 3rd world countries, even with this \$1000. then the vouchers will decrease enrollment and cut state funding more, then schools will have to cut resources and teachers.. The state will be effectively sponsoring a new slate of private for profit schools for the wealthy while making public school untenable for the majority. Lots of wealthy people will get wealthier and a lot of students will fail to thrive. stop knee capping our schools.

Rachel Piotrkowski
Council for a Strong America Texas
Austin, TX

Dear Chair Buckley, Vice-Chair Gervin-Hawkins and all distinguished members of the House Select Committee on Education Opportunity & Enrichment,

As you may know, Council for a Strong America TX (CSA TX) unites 3 organizations of business, law enforcement and military leaders to advocate for infants and toddlers to strengthen Texas families. Our members understand that early childhood education contributes to improved school readiness and better outcomes for children and families.

We respectfully ask that the House Select Committee on Education Opportunity & Enrichment includes Pre-K and early childhood education when studying the committee's charge of "ensuring all Texas youths enjoy the equal educational opportunity and the freedom to obtain a quality education, regardless of circumstance...and to improving outcomes for Texas public school students and meaningfully supporting educators and educational institutions".

Providing more children with access to a safe and effective learning environment, both in child care and pre-K, gives children a strong start in life and helps ensure more children enter school ready to learn and on a path to educational success.

Moving forward, CSA TX is available as a resource for the select committee and its members for expert testimony, and/or research regarding the importance of Pre-K and early childhood education when trying to speak to student outcomes.

Additionally, we will be circulating a sign-on letter with our member support to committee member inboxes directly following this submission.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We will circulate our contact information and are happy to talk further on this matter at any time. Please know that we appreciate your hard work and attention to this matter.

Marianne Inman, Dr.
Self; retired college president
Georgetown, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as they provide parents the opportunity to exert control over their children's education. Taxpaying Texans should have the right to direct their school tax payments to the educational entity of their choice. Educational opportunities of all types should be improved when parents have valid choices of schools for their children.

George Rohm
Self, Residential Rehabber
Richardson, TX

I am completely against vouchers period.

BUT if the Governor forces them on us, then they should have ALL the same TEA requirements and be NOT MORE THAN the NEW INCREASED Basic Allotment dollars for Public Ed.

Plano ISD is sending \$252,900,000 recapture fund dollars to Austin.

Richardson ISD is sending \$5,700,000 recapture fund dollars to Austin which is certainly less than PISD but it equates to about 82 teachers who could be used to help kids who struggle.

Thanks George Rohm

Robert Stevens
Self
Cypress, TX

Please do not pass vouchers. It's a terrible idea for those of us who support public education of all children.

Margaret Davis
Citizen and member of Arapaho United Methodist Church
Dallas, TX

I believe the passage of this will cause inequity in educational opportunities and that is contrary to the equal opportunity we as US and Texas citizens stand for. We need to look after the education of all citizens and ensure opportunities are the same for all. Thank you.

Gregg Vunderink
retired
Austin, TX

We desperately need more money for public schools to improve outcomes for all students regardless of district. No public money should be used to support private education.

Chelsea Larson
self
Garland, TX

I do not support vouchers or education savings accounts, our public schools aren't fully funded, we shouldn't take away from the limited resources allocated to public schools! Send more dollars to our public schools that serve over 90% of Texas children!

Annette Johnson
Self - Retired Social Worker
Tomball, TX

I want to see our state fund improvements to public schools to ensure a quality education for all Texas children. I do not approve of vouchers or other funding for private schools.

Marlo Saucedo
self-mom
Spring, TX

Staunchly anti-voucher!!!

Although my own experiences at St. Francis Day, Kinkaid, and EHS in Houston were positive, I feel my own children's public school education (The Woodlands High School) is of a higher quality all across the board. Being from a private school background, I know what it costs, and vouchers would only make a dent for people like my family, who can afford to send their kids to private schools anyway. They won't help anyone with a full "choice." But they would HARM public schools.

Public schools-available to all- are an important part of our democracy!

My family is Christian, but common sense dictates that due to the separation of church and state if Christian schools receive vouchers, that situation is distinctly un-American. As a taxpayer I do NOT wish to pay for any kind of religious indoctrination. I would rather this voucher money be given to public schools to pay their teachers and increase their arts programs, SPEs, and so many other expenses. Public schools are in need and we need to fund them, not misdirect funds toward smaller non-public schools that parents can choose to support with their tuition.

Non-academically, my children are better prepared at public school. The world is not a bubble. At public school they grow compassion and understanding by being in school with special needs students and students from all backgrounds - not just with others from the same background who are able to test in.

Academically, my children are better prepared at public school. Public school offers Honors and AP classes and the excellence level among their 1,200 student peers is higher than any group of 120 student peers could surround them with - whether that's in academic classes, choir, art, theater, or sports. My oldest is studying aerospace engineering in a top 5 program at one of the best universities in the world - UMich Ann Arbor- and finding it more than manageable. He is better prepared to ace his UMich classes than are most of his private-school-educated classmates there.

My youngest has had the privilege of singing in the TWHS choir program and acting in the TWHS theater program with a much more talented group of singers, and actors, than any private school with their small numbers could boast- and a rising tide lifts all boats.

This is why it is a travesty to even think about vouchers when public schools can work- not only well, but much better than private schools, when properly funded. Remember that all educators are accredited at public schools. NOT SO at private. Do not take money away from the potentially great in order to give it to the mediocre!

Thank you for listening to parents.

Marlo Saucedo

Deborah Talley
PART and Brenham SSLC
Deer Park, TX

Having our child enter an SSLC was not our first choice, but it ended up being our ONLY choice. We were not told of this option at our ARD. It was through trial and error and nearly losing our precious son that we came to the conclusion that the SSLC was best for us. We tried a community residential placement. Left him on Friday for a "trial visit". By Monday he was taken by ambulance to the ER. He went to the hospital 3 times the one week he was there. We were told by numerous other providers that he was too severe to handle. Parents need to have all the options laid out if necessary. Not everyone's special person can thrive in a community placement. I wish my child could. I would not have to make the 3 hour round trip every weekend to see him as there is a provider just 10 blocks from me, but he couldn't make it there. At least give parents/guardians of these most fragile Texans an opportunity to be armed with as much information as they can get.

Gay Lack
Self - retired
Copperas Cove, TX

I am a registered voter and I SUPPORT Education Savings Accounts. Our students deserve a high-quality education, regardless of the circumstances. Education Savings Accounts will give parents and children a choice in selecting the school the that will provide them the best educational opportunity. Many of our public schools across the state are failing our students and throwing more money at failing public schools will not fix the problem. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts so that Texas truly can improve its public school system.

Barbara Williams
self, retired educator
Sulphur Springs, TX

It is very upsetting to me when I see politicians misleading the public with false statements. Parents already have freedom of choice when deciding about the best education for their child. Parents may home-school their children or send them to private schools at any time they choose. Please do NOT pass any legislation that would fund "educational savings accounts" or vouchers by any other name. I do NOT want taxpayer funds to be used for home-schooled students NOR students in private schools.

Linda Crownover
Self
Weatherford, TX

Please vote no to private school vouchers in any form and by any name. Public funds must not be used for private education in Texas. Public schools already offer choices with students often transferring to another nearby public school when space is available. Public high schools offer varied schedules for students who want or need to work, and they also offer vocational training before graduation. Public schools partner with colleges to offer dual credit and associate degrees upon graduation. Charter schools provide other options for study and graduation while still being held accountable to public school standards for student achievement and fiscal responsibility.

Public schools continue to be a bargain compared to tuition for private schools. Transportation is provided so that every child has access to instruction and free or reduced priced meals during school sessions. Public schools often employ registered nurses to help students receive care during the school day and to monitor the specific needs of students who need special medical interventions such as insulin, assistive devices, and feeding tubes. These services would likely not be provided by private schools thus limiting options for all students. Public schools required certification for all teachers.

Vouchers will once again segregate the school age population of communities not only along racial or religious lines, but more importantly along family income lines. Even when a child from an impoverished neighborhood is provided a scholarship to a private school, not all costs are covered by the scholarship. Extra curricular fees, meals, uniforms, and transportation may still be barriers to equal access in private institutions of learning. Segregation along family income lines will be a result, even though unintended and unstated.

Most proposals for vouchers indicate that private schools will not be held to the same standards as public and charter schools and that they would not be required to provide special services under 504 for disabled students. Services for students who are cognitively impaired, on the autism spectrum, or even identified as gifted are not guaranteed in most private schools, creating the opportunity for segregation from the general population.

Finally, public funds were never intended to be used for religious education. Will vouchers be available for any private school—Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Morman, Wiccan? How and by whom will those decisions for funding be made?

Over time, public schools have provided a means for American communities to work together and to find commonalities for mutual success. We have looked for commonalities rather than differences.

Please vote no to education vouchers in any form and vote yes to fully support public and charter schools in Texas.

Bonnie Hubert
Self
Conroe, TX

Use funds to give raises and say no to vouchers that divert funds from public education!

Karen Beeson
Self
Dallas, TX

Enough time has been wasted on "school choice"! NO VOUCHERS - ever. Using my tax dollars for private school tuition is unacceptable. Put money into our public schools. PAY our very dedicated teachers and let them do their jobs without all the unnecessary interference.

Danielle Krawiec
Self
Justin, TX

I am against school choice and vouchers. When we give y'all (the government) and inch you take a dang mile. Realistically we already have school choice. I can choose to send my kids to public school. I can choose to send them to private school. I can and do choose to homeschool. I don't need y'all giving me a choice I already have and then taking more control of my home classroom.

Tiffany Waisanen
Self
Flower Mound, TX

Say NO to Vouchers. Parents already have school choice. We need to focus on funding the public schools to build a stronger community. Take the money you want to apply to vouchers and apply it to our public schools. I am a product of Texas public schools and my son is a rising high school senior who has gone through our public school system. I was happy to be able to volunteer and serve the schools and the teachers. Private schools will not benefit those that are not able to take a bus or get a reduced breakfast/lunch, much less be able to afford the school uniforms. Plus special services may not be available either such as dyslexia help or other special needs. Enrich our public schools and enrich our communities!

Timothy Ruttan
Self, Physician
Austin, TX

Please do not create a voucher system (ESA). This will fundamentally undermine public education and damage the long term future for all Texans. Moreover, it will be a giveaway to wealthy Texans who can already pay for private schools. Should a ESA or voucher system be implemented, at a minimum it must have income restrictions so it does not disproportionately benefit those who can already afford whatever type of education they want. Specifically, any program should be limited to children who are attending a Title 1 school or otherwise meet income qualifications for free and reduced lunch. Thank you for your consideration.

Therese Tetzl
Self. Not for profit
Dallas, TX

I am against school vouchers. I am against public funding for school vouchers. No politician in Texas should be voting for any type of a school voucher bill. I will no longer vote for any Texas politician that votes for any such bill nor will I give money to any campaign. Stop this nonsense and listen to the people of Texas who overwhelmingly disapprove of this effort. Education is not a political tool.

Kevin Slater
Self/Teacher
San Antonio, TX

Use surplus to fund our public schools

David Stephenson
None
Dallas, TX

I would offer my comments in opposition to Greg Abbott's efforts to establish his voucher system in Texas. This is a solution looking for no problem. And it underpins the Governor's typical punitive approach to governing the State of Texas. This bill is designed to help ONLY his rich supporters at the cost of overall education outcomes for the majority of students. He needs to get in touch with his constituents!!

Tracy Johnson
Democrats for Education Reform
Austin, TX

Expand Public School Choices

DFER TX urges members to consider expanding choice options within the public school system and fiercely opposes any effort to divert taxpayer dollars to schools not required to maintain state accountability standards or follow federal civil rights laws. A recent poll conducted by the national polling firm Impact Research and released by DFER TX shows that 78% of Texas voters support expanding public school choice options (i.e., magnet schools, career academies, and non-profit public charter schools). Overwhelmingly, the poll found preference for additional choices within the public system as opposed to private choice options, especially among parents (+41%) and voters of color (+45%) .

Specifically, DFER TX believes in a robust system of high-quality public charter options. Recent studies suggest some students may perform better in public charter schools, resulting in additional days of learning in both reading and math. As public charters provide new and innovative opportunities to families, their support at the voter level continues to grow. Recent polling released by DFER confirms support of public charter schools in Texas, especially among Texans of color.

As you consider recommendations that will inform future legislation, we hope you consider the needs of Texas families to choose from a diverse set of high-quality public education options and avoid any attempt to steer funds away from the public education system.

Achieve Fair Facilities Funding

To that end, Texas public charter schools receive, on average, \$966 less than school districts in combined per-pupil funding. This inequity is driven primarily by unequal facilities funding. In the 88th Regular Legislative Session, lawmakers considered key legislation, such as HB 1572, to address this issue by removing an arbitrary cap on charter school facilities funding. In future sessions, it's crucial that the Legislature reconsider and pass legislation to ensure fairer funding for all Texas public school students.

Strengthen Public School Open Enrollment

As Texas families demand additional public school options, DFER TX supports continued conversations regarding the transfer of students between public school districts. In the 88th Regular Legislative Session, SB 418 would have started the creation a statewide system of public school open enrollment and, importantly, banned public school districts from the egregious practice of charging tuition to attend a public school. DFER TX supports renewed debate on similar legislation in any future legislative sessions.

Tracy Johnson
Democrats for Education Reform
Austin, TX

Provide Robust and Effective Online Options

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for reform to Texas' system of public virtual education options. The vast majority of Texas students will continue to perform best in a traditional classroom setting; however, high-quality virtual and hybrid education options are an essential lifeline for those that need it. Legislation to implement the recommendations of the Texas Commission on Virtual Education failed to pass during the 88th Regular Legislative Session. DFER TX supports the revival of legislation to implement these bipartisan recommendations that enjoy broad support from public education advocates.

Increase Funding for All

Finally, to achieve any of these goals and ensure every Texas student receives the high-quality education they deserve, DFER TX urges the committee to consider recommendations to increase funding for all Texas public schools. Numerous proposals in the 88th Regular Session to increase the basic allotment and infuse additional school funding failed to pass. DFER TX envisions a future where every Texas public school receives the necessary resources to succeed.

Debra Decker, CTE teacher

Self

San Angelo, TX

Pleas support public education and teacher pay raises. No vouches. If people want private schools, let them earn scholarships.

Vera Robinson

Self

San Antonio, TX

I am a mother of 3 kids currently in the NISD public ED system. I am against using public funds for private school vouchers. Instead, we need to strengthen funding for public schools. This will ensure all children have equal access to a well funded education!

Kelly Simmons

Company Name

AUSTIN, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

Nana Vaughn

self

Buda, TX

My name is Nana Vaughn. I am a Texas educator. I worked in the Public School system for about 15 years and have 11 years of classroom experience. I am a certified special education provider. I currently work with a company called TeleTeachers providing online services to fill the gap in the special education system across the country. This spring I acted as a special education case manager for a district in the state of Vermont, which is a "school choice" state. What I saw was troubling considering where Texas seems to be headed on the topic of school choice. Students often go without services because the school they transfer to doesn't have the resources to provide what is prescribed in their IEP. Private schools are also having trouble finding teachers and support staff. Because the teachers in these schools are also overworked, students often go without their goals being addressed. The idea that, if we let families spend "their" money on the school of their choice, everything will work better might work in a perfect world, but we don't live in one of those. What's happening is that we are routing tax money away from public schools and making them weaker and that money is not providing a better education or better schools for students. I hope that you will consider tabling the idea that this is the answer to students not getting what they need in public schools and start including ground-floor educators in the decision-making process of what is best for students.

Robert Barrese

Self

Dallas, TX

I oppose any bill that provides vouchers for utilization in private schools. These bills have, in other states weakened public education especially for the poor and middle class. These also become subsidies for preferred religious institutions

Norman Mitchell
self business owner
COPPERAS COVE, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

Gary Ford
AccuBid
plano, TX

Every Texan is currently able to obtain a quality education in a public school. I oppose any voucher system that will send my taxpayer dollars to a private school until such schools are held to the same testing and quality standards that are required of public schools.

Christina da Silva
Self, Teacher
Lavon, TX

I am a teacher in the state of Texas. I have taught for more than 20 years, and my experiences have shown me that when parents have a choice of schools, children have a better chance at learning. Charter schools in Texas offer all parents the chance to give their children a quality education, and charter schools offer a way forward for the failing public schools. Successful charter schools provide correctives for failing, chaotic public schools because charters prosper or perish based on whether or not they succeed in educating students; consequently, charter schools adopt pedagogy and practices that actually educate children effectively, while public schools have no willingness to abandon failing practices. When confronted with difficulties, ailing public schools double down on pet theories and politics, with no concern that their downward spiral will not go on year to year, endlessly. If forced to compete with other schools, such failing institutions would address their problems and correct their mistakes. Successful charter schools such as Great Hearts Irving Upper School (grades 6-12) in Irving, Texas offer the abysmal public school system a chance to learn how to educate. As a teacher at Great Hearts in 2021-2022, I was amazed at the advanced levels of reading, mathematics, and science students achieved by means of the school's classical model. Competition breeds excellence, and vouchers would create a system where public schools would improve because a failure to do so would mean a loss of revenue. Therefore, the only way to save the public school system is to offer parents choice, and vouchers accomplish this. Please support charter schools and vouchers.

Alisha Brooks
self
Houston, TX

I believe if a parent wants their children to attend the best school possible regardless of where they live as long as your able to make it to school. My oldest children couldn't attend the school of my choice for high school they had k level classes from 9-12 grade and didn't receive any kind of scholarships due to being at the wrong school. So now I have one going into middle school and I need him to attend the best school we can make it to every morning.

Lisa Weil
Self
Rogers, TX

It is extremely important as parents that we have a say in where our children are educated. We have a family member who had to move their children to new schools in middle school because a special needs sibling was denied the right to attend the district their siblings attended. It is wrong to be denied the education best suited for any student.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sarah Morse
self, at-home parent
Austin, TX

Please increase the allotment for each student as much as possible. Please fully fund and support public education, rather than private schools and charter schools which are not fully accountable to provide equal services to all students.

Della Richhart
Self
Spring, TX

I am writing to share that I am proud of the public schools that my children attend and I want you, as my representative to remember that my views matter. I do not support vouchers and/or public funds being used to support the few. This attack on the public system is wrong. Thank you.

William Clifton
Self--retired
Waco, TX

Please do not allow vouchers for non-public institutions to be funded or subsidized by public funds unless you also require those non-public institutions to adhere to the same standards, rules and accountability that is required for public schools.

Jacquelyn Martin
Hopkins-Raines Chapter TRTA
Sulphur Springs, TX

Obtaining a quality education must be accessible to all Texas children. Their success as they become adults in the competitive and constantly changing environment relies on it.

Tom Sawyer, mr
Self-Employed
Plano, TX

What makes the American System work properly is Competition! In Business and in Sports, it brings out the Best in all Competitors! You must Innovate and Educate in order to Excel and Win the Contest or marketplace! The System becomes Corrupted when Transparency becomes elusive. If Athletes cheat, begin doing drugs, the Sport Suffers. If Business conspires to award contracts due to prejudice, being bought off or to maintain power over other competitors, the products become weaker in substance and not worth the paper they're written on. Competitors go out-of-business, and monopolies are created, and the corruption begins. That's where we're at! Follow the \$\$\$\$\$ and the Power the lack of TRANSPARENCY, and you get the end product A failed Educational System due to no Competition and a Lack of Transparency!

Elizabeth Paulette
Retired
New Braunfels, TX

Hi, I am a retired teacher that taught in the Texas public schools for 20 yrs. I also have two children that graduated from a public school and a charter school. Being able to enroll one of my children into a charter school was critical to her success. She did very well at the charter school and it was the best placement for my child. Having these choices for parents in Texas is great, but parents still need access to school vouchers. As a parent, I wish that I would've had the choice of school vouchers because I would have sent one of my children to a Catholic school. My husband and I are a middle class family, so we couldn't afford a private Catholic school, so passing a school voucher bill is extremely important for parents of all income levels. Allowing families to have many choices for their children's education will make for better student outcomes. Our Texas public schools are great, but having school vouchers will give parents the ability to enroll their children into a school of their choice that they wouldn't be able to afford otherwise. Texas teacher unions are partaking in false narratives stating that having school vouchers will drain their budgets. For some reason, they fear charter school and school vouchers. Today, Texas families have the choice of charter schools, home schooling and online schools. We need school vouchers to be yet another opportunity for parents to make sure their children have multiple choices to an excellent education in Texas.

Dyanna Lawson, ms
self
Aledo, TX

Our country has declared that ALL citizens receive a free public education. While free to the participants, it is not free to taxpayers. All citizens should know and understand that the future of Texas lies in the education of the children of the state. Therefore, they should support the education of their children and even adults. Financial contributions from all citizens is required to have a functioning and complete system of education. The leaders serving in Austin know this. They should support it wholeheartedly without political upsmanship and wrangling. The standing of Texas of all the states is a shameful excuse of a good system.

Johh Crews, Mr.
Self. retired
Kerrville, TX

I'm not addressing a bill but want to say that the best choices of schools will be those that encourage parents to be active in their PTA and other activities including attending school board meetings.

Sherri Kottwitz, Mrs.
Self
Cleburne, TX

Figure out how to equitably fund public schools. Vouchers will gut public schools. The people that will benefit will be the wealthy.

Natascha Webb
Self-School Administrator
Conroe, TX

Public school were made to offer everyone educational opportunity. Giving funds to private schools gives those schools an unfair advantage if they do not have to abide by the same laws public school must follow such as TEKS (same curriculum), STAAR (accountability for the TEKS and measure of teacher /school effectiveness), required to provide FAPE and LRE as public school must do (can not deny a child based on race, gender, disability, economic status, behavior-etc in other words no denial for any reason). Any one receiving tax payer fund must follow the same rules, laws and accountability. Giving these funds without the same accountability will break public school and in essence create segregation. Use the money to strength public school and make teaching desirable through pay, PD, and respect! Educators should help with laws and accountability. You wouldn't as a welder to perform surgery... right???

Edward Rivas, Assistant Vice President
Self - Insurance professional
Richardson, TX

NO school vouchers and 30% increase per student allocation for public schools. I went to a private schools K-12 in San Antonio and both my children have gone through public schools in Richardson. Texas Public schools are better. The accountability to all religions ensures fair treatment of all. Public schools better allocate resources especially for special needs of which both by boys used. Private schools by nature orient to certain demographics. Technically, they are open to all but the parents and kids at private schools hate those of differing backgrounds to attend. In our local scout troop it was the parents didn't appreciate those of "other" backgrounds infecting their base school.

Tammie Marberry, Dr.
Public Education
Hardin, TX

I have worked in public education for thirty years and NEVER have I been asked to teach anything inappropriate to children. Do some people make a bad decision from time to time, of course. Just like there are bad legislators, doctors lawyers, etc., there are bad educators but you don't punish and not support the entire field over the acts of few! Vouchers, Charter Schools, etc. take away from your public schools. Fund public schools the way they should be, increase teacher pay, focus on increasing support for training and ensure teachers are better trained, treat us like professionals and you will see improvements. This history of charter and private school success is limited at best and there is even less accountability. Teacher quality and class sizes are the two most critical values in success in education! Focus your time and attention there and you will see immediate improvements. STOP making me write grants and providing money with attached restrictions that do not help me take care of students. Untie the strings and put the money into the systems with a focus on these two items! NO to vouchers spending bills, etc.!!!!!

Ritchie Bowling, Mr.
Myself
Maypearl, TX

Texas underfunds Special Education by billions, and public schools have picked up the weight of decades of underfunded or unfunded mandates. Please work to retain State resources for Public Education.

Voucher Entitlement programs that use taxpayer money have proven over and over to not work and create tremendous waste. Please be good stewards of this money and protect our kids from pop up private school vendors out to make quick money for a system of no accountability financially or academically.

Ann David, Dr.
self - Professor
San Antonio, TX

State funding for private education of any kind is not in the best interest of all Texas children and families. Evidence from other states like Florida and Arizona do not support the use of state funds for private education. In fact, this use of state funds will be a drain on taxpayer money across time. If families want to send their children to private school, they can pay for private school. Private schools are not about parental rights, but about funneling state money into private organizations without oversight. Recent investigations by Hearst Newspapers show that the lack of oversight of charter schools has led to problematic spending on real estate and airplanes, and who knows what else. Private schools are able to reject children for any reason, or push out children who don't fit their narrow definition of acceptable, so most children will not be served by funding private schools with state money. It is so clear from all of the rhetoric this past year that too many elected officials only care about enriching themselves and their friends by using the rhetoric of "parental rights," "education savings accounts," and "school choice." I'm disappointed in how unscrupulous so many elected officials have become, how willing to ignore their constituents, and how willing they are to sell out Texas children to the highest bidder. I expect better from the people elected to serve the children of the State of Texas.

Cheryl Taliaferro
self, educator
Denton, TX

As an educator with more than 25 years of experience in both private and public education, I do not support the use of vouchers or ESAs. Our public education system is vital to the well-being of our society and needs to be fully supported with all of the resources available. The long-term negative consequences of defunding our public educational system will be devastating for the students and families who remain in public education and for Texas as a whole.

Clelia Peña
self
Richardson, TX

I believe that school vouchers are an equity issue that will contribute to even further inequities for people of color and students of low SES. It will also further prevent already struggling school districts to recuperate and close the pandemic learning gap. I am a mother and a teacher and I oppose school vouchers.

Melissa Marsh
Carrollton Farmers Branch association for gifted
Carrollton, TX

Vote No to vouchers Vote Yes to Public education

Julie Hinaman
CFISD Board of Trustees
Cypress, TX

Article 7 of the Texas State Constitution: Support and Maintenance of System of Public Free Schools. Please do your constitutional duty by supporting local, public schools. NO to VOUCHERS. Diverting \$500M away from local, public schools to fund private organizations is unconstitutional. Vouchers/ESAs do NOT have the same academic or financial accountability or transparency to taxpayers. Any use of state funds for private organizations MUST have the same accountability and transparency standards as public schools - same testing, same academic/TEA reporting, same safety standards, same financial audits, same financial reporting on-line, same teacher requirements, same reading academies, same TEA rules, same EVERY state requirement of public schools.

Otherwise, vouchers/ESAs is a scheme to defraud Texas taxpayers and to defund Texas public schools.

Tara Bilow
Texas Agency for gifted and talented
Spring, TX

We suggest an increase in the basic allotment, opposition to diverting public funds for vouchers or ESAs for private schools, support for diversifying the accountability system, and imploring them to consider each issue separately on its own merits would all be helpful.

Andrew Lu
Fort Bend Equity Coalition
Sugarland, TX

My name is Andrew Lu and I have just graduated from Clements High School.

As a student and advocate, I am deeply invested in the future of our education. I would like to see an opposition to censorship and book bans be a priority to this legislature.

Ensuring access to books is critical for the freedom to obtain a quality education because having access to representational literature and media allows students to learn from more perspectives. Book banning is of great importance to me because I and other students have organized a banned book club to maximize access to literature. I urge the legislation to prioritize overturning or rewording HB 900 to address this issue effectively.

As a student, the decisions you make will directly impact me and my peers. I urge you to remember that students are the primary stakeholders of education in this state, and beg you to listen to us.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to the students of Texas

Adam Guenther
Self
Austin, TX

No vouchers!!!!!!!!!! Fund public schools, that is your obligation. Do not siphon off money for a small group. You know in other states that have tried this scheme 80% of voucher users were already enrolled in their private schools. This is just reverse Robin Hood. Taking from the poor and giving to the rich. It's Anti moral and anti Christian.

Theresa Trevino
Self and Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment
Austin, TX

Texas parents have many options when it comes to public school choices. Even though Texas has done more with less in funding in the past, the state is at a point where it must honor the Texas constitution and appropriately fund public schools. The Comptroller Glenn Hagar clearly stated that to catch up with inflation, Texas needs to add around \$900 per student to raise the basic allotment. As the majority of students in Texas are educated in our public schools, we encourage raising the basic allotment. This would improve the quality of education. Until Texas appropriately funds its public schools, no public money should be used to fund a private education. Other states show that many students who partake in ESA/voucher programs return to the public school system. Additionally, the public schools have a robust accountability system, which private schools do not have in place.

Carol Stewart
self, retired teacher
Fort Worth, TX

I strongly oppose the issuance of vouchers. Our funds should be used for ALL students. Our excellence as a country depends upon every citizen being well educated. High quality PUBLIC education is the best way to reach everyone.

Joseph Kaner
self, actuary
Dallas, TX

It is the responsibility of the state legislature to maintain an efficient and free system of public schools. Feel free to visit Washington-on-the-Brazos to learn about our forefather's belief in a free public school system's importance and why it is in the state constitution. This means it is your responsibility for every child to have a quality and free education. Unless the legislature is proud to have a public school system near the bottom in multiple categories relative to other states, we should NOT spend any funds for vouchers or education savings accounts until after public education is fully funded and efficient for all Texas children.

I support increased funding for education so that our public schools can produce an effective workforce, and I do not support public tax dollars paying for private education without accountability measures like those used for public schools.

lisa ham
self
North Richland Hills, TX

I do not support vouchers. I was educated in public education and believe in a free public education for ALL children. I would appreciate legislatures supporting quality education through increased funding for materials, teacher salaries, and instructional enrichment opportunities. The pandemic stressed our educational system and, more importantly, the teachers and students. Students need experienced teachers who feel valued and supported by our government. I do not want my tax dollars supporting a student attending a private school, especially a religious institution. Parents should be able to send their children to private schools but not on my dime.

Mary Regenbrecht
self
Hallettsville, TX

Support our Texas public schools so that all Texas children have their constitutional right to a quality, equal education. So NO to vouchers by ANY name or scheme. Keep our state's public funding in the public schools. I fully support any parent's right to homeschool or send their children to public school - on their OWN dime, not us taxpayers'. I did it and those who have the means and opportunity to can do the same. But those families who do not have the means or opportunity for private or home schooling should not suffer in order that others of means can get a tax subsidy. Do your part as a public server and fully support and protect our PUBLIC schools.

Stefan Tower
ESA
Rosharon, Texas, TX

It has been proven, over and over again, that competition is beneficial for our society. Why do we want to exclude education of our children from the benefits of competition that can bring new idea, without ridiculous social mandates who are not age suitable for our small children and creates division between us contrary to the ideal of those who fought for Equality and Justice.

Debra Vaughan
Self
El Paso, TX

Please vote NO to vouchers!!! Support public education in Texas!

Billy Stone
Self
Cleburne, TX

We must not allow the us of public funds in any form to be used to supplement private educational institutions. If a parent chooses to home school or enroll their children into a private school that is their choice. However it should not be at the expense of the taxpayers of the state.

Richard Anter, Mr.
Self, business
Irving, TX

Dear Board Members,

We currently live at 2313 Huntersridge Dr. in Irving.

We 100% support the push for Education Savings Accounts.

We moved here in 2019 from Cleveland, Ohio, to escape the tyranny imposed by the cartel controlling the school system and thus our exorbitant taxes which we begrudgingly paid without any direct benefit. We knew Texas was on to something then, and we're very happy to hear it is coming to fruition now.

We will never send our children to public schools, because we want them to receive Catholic spiritual education interwoven into their curriculum. It's amazing to think that education wouldn't exist without Catholic Priests dating back as far as the 1st century, because they were among the only members of society who could read and write.

Also, regardless of where our children physically go to school, they will return to their home and directly impact and benefit the community in which they live. So the taxes we pay are still going to benefit the community, but in an indirect way.

In short, Governor Abbott said, the ultimate decision-maker in our child's education is us, and it is about our freedom to take them wherever we want. With this program in place, we won't have to leave the country in order to take advantage of my wife's home country's low-cost Catholic schooling and no taxes.

We have been and continue to contact all of our elected officials in the same way with the same message so that everyone knows we support this important legislation.

Thank you for your support of this legislation, and please keep driving hard to pass it.

On behalf of our children, respectfully,

Richard and Elma Anter

Allister Burney
Self/ Teacher
The Woodlands, TX

I support public education, those who attend it and those that work in it. I am against vouchers and funding for private education. Our public schools and students rely on state funding to provide the best possible education and environment for our students which in turn are our future. By using funds for private education, you are devaluing our field and the mission we have to teach our future to the best of our abilities.

Gabrielle and Paul Comeaux
Self
Dallas, TX

School choice allows parents the freedom to choose the best school for their child and her unique needs.

Daphne Hoffacker
self
Austin, TX

Our Texas governments makes among the lowest investments in our education system and our children of any state in the nation. According our own state comptroller, our schools are operating at about \$1,000 less per pupil than they were 4 years ago, which was already barely above funding levels from a decade ago. And, according to experts like Just Fund It Texas, we're at least \$4,000 per pupil below the national average. I struggle to make sense of any plan that doesn't start with fully funding our existing system before even entertaining the thought of using our tax payer money to pay for a small minority of parents to send their kids to private schools. It took until June of 2023 for the Texas Education Agency to fully comply with Federal Special Education standards and it's not a surprise that our sped community is searching for other options. What is a surprise is that in order the solve this problem you're choosing to send our public tax money to a small number of families (to begin with) rather than invest that money into the existing systems that are used by the vast majority of Texas students that so desperately need your support. This doesn't solve the problem for most Texans. The intention to implement a scheme that would not solve our existing education problems, that would enrich private entities while starving public ones, and would subsidize families who may or may not even be considering public school for their children in the first place, makes no sense. What's worse is the fact that there are so few benefits and yet it's being pushed so hard by hard-right conservatives. It reeks of the stench of the segregationist roots the voucher idea that was founded after Brown vs. Board of Education. Responsibly fund public education and stop carrying water for segregationist extremists. Our children deserve better.

Emily Myers
Self - Business Coordinator
Corpus Christi, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts to provide options for parents and children. Especially because of the dismal state of the TX public school system, I strongly support more choice for individual families! Having Education Savings Accounts would allow freedom for those who deserve a quality education but lack the funds to pursue it themselves (such as at a private school). Thank you for considering this important topic.

Kim Kerby Dickman
Teacher support
Watauga, TX

ALL students should receive quality education regardless of their circumstances!!!

Cindy Jumper
Self
Fort Worth, TX

No School Vouchers!!! Fund education and give teachers pay raises.

Crystal Hansen
Self
Houston, TX

This actually strips public education and disenfranchised children. I have worked in specialty private schools. The outcomes are poorer for children in private schools, especially children with disabilities.

Marilee Hayden
Self
Frisco, TX

I believe that vouchers will result in fewer opportunities for children of color. Public schools are already struggling. Taking money from public schools to give to private schools in the form of vouchers or ESAs, will further harm public schools and the children they serve. The state has an obligation to provide a reasonable quality education. Texas ranks pretty low when compared to other states. Poor public education has already had a negative impact on Texas as being a great place to attract businesses moving here.

YVETTE BRENHAM, Teacher
Birdie Alexander
Dallas, TX

Section 305.021

Claire Conboy
Self/Teacher/Professor
Lake Jackson, TX

A quick bit of background, I have a PhD in chemistry. I worked in research for 20 years and have been teaching for 15 years at the high school and community college level. I currently teach at a Catholic Highschool, but I have taught in the public-school system in Texas. My comments are regarding the declining level of education in public schools. This decline is for numerous reasons, but I believe it to be painfully evident. One of the primary factors is the unwillingness of teachers to challenge students and the declining expectations of student performance. Public schools are afraid of parents and students.

The declining standards are driven by poor student outcomes. The teachers in charge respond or remedy the situation by easing student expectations so that exam scores are seemingly improved. This cycle repeats itself. So, districts have added pre-testing to prepare for standardized assessments. The short version of this story is that there is NO incentive for students to perform well on these exams and NO incentive for teachers to purposefully teach.

Teachers are not allowed to fail students; students are aware of the system. Homework is considered a crime. This translates to disaster when these students enter college ill-prepared for the challenges of a fast paced, rigorous academic setting. The statistics speak for themselves. As an example, the retention of first year students and A&M San Antonio is 68%. (keep in mind this is the top 10% of students).

Private schools are free from the burden of state testing. Private schools can choose the curriculum that is taught. So here is a nice summary: In fact, private school students outscored public school students by at least 20% in all four areas of the ACT; English, Reading, Math and Science. This is not by chance. Perhaps an intangible factor to this statistic is the family support and involvement of the parents/family in the students' educational success.

I will conclude with an example from the AP class I teach. While at public school, students could not fail an exam (even with a failing grade). In the private school setting, assessments accurately reflect student ability and mastery. The difference, again, resulting is a much higher success rate on AP exams.

We should not be governed by FEAR. We should not be afraid to challenge teacher organization that cry foul when they are challenged to do their jobs. Parents have the right to choose the BEST educational option for their children. It is a travesty that the great state of Texas has yet to establish a system in which the intellectual talents of our children are allowed to develop to their fullest extent. We are creating our end, by limiting the present.

Carla Lane
self /Teacher
Pearland, TX

I am an educator and would like to address "educational opportunity". As a property owner, I am paying more property tax than ever before and yet the funding per student is still below the national average. Where is all of that extra money going if not to our kids? Most private school tuition is much more than \$8000 therefore the educational opportunity gained from a voucher system will only be by the economically advantaged who could afford the remainder of the tuition. The economically disadvantaged children would still not be able to attend a private school with a voucher. These children are our most vulnerable and they would be harmed by a voucher system. I don't want my hard-earned tax dollars to be used to give advantaged children a discount while isolating disadvantaged children into underfunded public schools. It also makes priorities obvious when this system, as proposed, will provide kids who can afford a private school education \$8000 but only \$6000 for kids who cannot. Do not pass a voucher system that only ensures certain students get a quality education. Instead, fund our public schools and make sure that all students get a quality education.

Deanna Lowenstein
Self
Cypress, TX

No vouchers waste and misuse of tax payers money. Not good for title 1 schools.

Toni Jones
Teacher
San Antonio, TX

We don't need vouchers; we need fully funded public education and our teachers treated as professionals and held on high regard.

Marta White
N/A
AUSTIN, TX

Support our public schools and say no to vouchers. Do not let them hold pay raises for our teachers hostage for vouchers.

Heather Olsen
Self/ Teacher
Fort Worth, TX

I believe all children should have a quality education. Education is the path out of poverty and necessary for an educated society. The continued underfunding of public schools and teachers has put the kids most at risk at a disadvantage. The answer is NOT vouchers or an ESA. Taking public school funds to pay for private and for profit charter schools will only cripple public schools and effect the education of kids who need it most. An \$8,000 voucher will not cover a year of tuition at any of the private and for profit charter schools near me. Most of these schools are \$10,000 or more per year. Low income students will not be able to pay the extra tuition. What about uniforms, fees, and food expenses at these schools? How is it okay to give tax payer dollars to private schools that don't pay taxes?? How is it okay to give taxpayer dollars to schools that can kick out students for behavior or special needs and keep the money? How is it fair for public schools to take all students without prper funding? Stop trying to give wealthy families and for profit education vultures our tax dollars! We can fix the education system by fully funding public schools. The per pupil spending needs to be increased and schools that serve economically disadvantaged students need more teachers and paras. The Texas constitution requires the "Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools." Please do the right by all Texas kids and support public schools.

Meredith Watmough, Mrs
Self - Public school employee
Spring, TX

It's time to put the same amount of effort you are putting into implementing voucher systems into our public school system. Stop the ineffective STAAR testing and accountability rating. It harms both our students and our teachers. Fully fund our public schools by increasing the per student allotment and giving teacher's raises. There are many things about Texas that I used to love, but our public education system needs the support of our representatives. I don't understand why we wouldn't want Texas to be the example other states point to as supporting and uplifting public education.

Mary Peticolas, Teacher
Episd
El Paso, TX

No vouchers. Yes to fully funding schools, teachers, and education in Texas.

Lanet Greenhaw, Former Richardson ISD Board of Trustees member
Self, former Richardson ISD Board of Trustees
Richardson, TX

Fund Texas public schools, a teacher pay raise, with NO VOUCHERS!

Kelly Ricks
Parent
Katy, TX

Please support our Texas students who are the future of our great state. Enough with politics. They deserve it. I will be watching and will be taking notes for future election dates.

Anne-Marie Faul, Ms.
Self
Katy, TX

Fund public school fairly so that teachers can do the job they are tasked with.

Jennifer Cregar
self - small business owner
Austin, TX

As a native Texan, small business owner, and public education supporter, I am sick of state government's multi-decadal attempts to push through school choice vouchers. They clearly are not popular among your citizenry, aka, we don't want them. We love our public schools and want you to focus on enhancing free public education for all in our current public education system. Please stop wasting time needlessly debating a dead-on-arrival issue.

Additional detail on my perspectives on fully resourcing our existing public education system is below.

1. Texas public schools have a wide array of options available to Texas families. The quality of all of these options would be significantly enriched if the Texas Legislature complied with the Texas Constitution and adequately funded our public schools. We are among the lowest states in the country in per-student funding, and even to keep up with that low level of funding it would take a 1K increase in the basic allotment just to keep up with 2019 levels. We have the money. Stop adding additional systems of education until you properly fund the one you are constitutionally obligated to fund.
2. The best way to improve student outcomes and support educators and institutions would be to fund them! We are more than 4K per student under the national average, teachers are paid more than 7K less than the national average, and we have a large and growing population and our coffers are overflowing. It is a simple solution. Increase the basic allotment.
3. Lastly, it would improve the quality of education, improve student outcomes and support educators if you were to finally diversify the state accountability system. STAAR is not intended for all the uses and is merely used to sort children, schools, and districts to create winners and losers. If you truly want to understand the quality of our schools, teachers, and enrich our students, please diversify the accountability system to include measures that are of value to students, parents, teachers, and communities.
4. Please do not link school funding, assessment and accountability, or any other such issues to vouchers/ESAs. Each issue deserves its own discussion and its own legislation. If vouchers/ESAs are popular, they should be able to pass on their own. I venture to guess they are not, but let's see with a vote on each issue separately!

Thank you for your work on this committee and for considering my recommendations.

Respectfully,
Jen Cregar

Tania Tasneem
Self
Austin, TX

In a few short weeks, I will start my 17th year as a public school educator and I am concerned. I appreciate that the hearings last week ended on a positive note with the need to increase the basic allotment, update the accountability system, and find ways to incorporate parent voice.

Texas public schools have a wide array of options available to Texas families. The quality of all of these options would be significantly enriched if the Texas Legislature complied with the Texas Constitution and adequately funded our public schools. The state should be focused on moving Texas out of the bottom ten in per pupil spending. The last thing our 5.5 million children need is for money intended for public schools to be diverted to private ones. We are among the lowest states in the country in per-student funding, and even to keep up with that low level of funding it would take a 1K increase in the basic allotment just to keep up with 2019 levels. We have the money. Please stop adding additional systems of education until you properly fund the one you are constitutionally obligated to fund.

The best way to improve student outcomes and support educators and institutions would be to fund us. We are more than 4K per student under the national average, teachers are paid more than 7K less than the national average, and we have a large and growing population and our coffers are overflowing. It is a simple solution. Increase the basic allotment. Public Education in Texas has been underfunded and under-supported for years.

Lastly, it would improve the quality of education, improve student outcomes and support educators if you were to finally diversify the state accountability system. STAAR is not intended for all the uses and is merely used to sort children, schools, and districts to create winners and losers. If you truly want to understand the quality of our schools, teachers, and enrich our students, please diversify the accountability system to include measures that are of value to students, parents, teachers, and communities.

Please do not link school funding, assessment and accountability, or any other such issues to vouchers/ESAs. Each issue deserves its own discussion and its own legislation. If vouchers/ESAs are popular, they should be able to pass on their own. I venture to guess they are not, but let's see with a vote on each issue separately!

Thank you for your work on this committee and for considering my perspective as a Texas public school teacher.

Kelli Moulton
Self
Corsicana, TX

True opportunity for individuals cannot be measured independent of equity for school systems. Public schools must be fully funded (yes, even more than returning to 2019 levels). Students with special needs require updated funding formula to support Texas public schools that accept all students.

Karyn Holly
Self
Dallas 75240, TX

Your killing public education. The lack of support for teachers is beyond belief. I'm hoping the Senate will strike your bill and go back to square one.

Jay Davis, Mr.
self, Radio News
Elgin, TX

Fund Texas public schools. Raise teacher pay. End vouchers, and end the current accountability system. Those pushing vouchers claim to support the Constitution. However, providing for public education is part of the *Texas* Constitution. Public schools serve as the anchor for many rural small towns that Legislators claim to value, but pulling funding from those schools would eventually result in their closure, and the closure of public schools would be DEVASTATING to rural/small town Texas. These games are an outrage. We claim to take pride in Texas High School football, but part of that is small town Texas that unites over their community high school and their football team. It is hypocritical to claim pride in such things and then seek to destroy them. That's not the Texas I know. That's not the Texas I love. Great Agricultural education comes from these small rural schools. Any negative effects on public schools would damage that agricultural education, which would prove devastating to the rural Texas economy. Listen to rural Texas Residents. This is what we want. FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS!!!!

Eileen Parvin
Self
Garland, TX

Public school teachers are the backbone of our education system. I am a retired public school teacher. I taught for 30 years. I can't believe the stress this government has placed upon the school systems in Texas. They put their hearts into everything they do for their students. They would risk their lives to protect their students. They pay their own money to help make their students learn the best ways possible. And yet they are not given any appreciation from our Republican leaders who have been in power for what seems like forever.

Please support them and give them the raises they deserve. We hope that you do what is right for public education. Say no to the vouchers too which only helps rich private people. We see you!

Brandee Carrera
Myself - teacher
Richmond, TX

As an educator of 23 years, I ask that you consider the students, teachers and staff of public schools. Stop pushing school vouchers- send the funding to public schools. Better yet, come spend a week teaching in a public school in Texas. It's sad that as a teacher, I struggle to pay my mortgage, bills and still have to find extra jobs to supplement my income. Support the teachers of Texas before there's an even larger exodus and the children of Texas are left alone.

Mark Moore, Mr. Moore
Self
McKinney, TX

School Choice does not give everyone an equal education. For once listen to the teachers who are experts in the field.

Dave Mason
self/retired
Lexington, TX

Raise basic allotment for public schools. Raise teacher salaries. NO VOUCHERS! NO VOUCHERS! NO VOUCHERS! NO VOUCHERS! NO VOUCHERS! NO VOUCHERS! NO VOUCHERS! NO VOUCHERS!

Ernie Moran
Self/Public school teacher
Fort Worth, TX

I am a taxpayer and I am opposed to vouchers. Public dollars should go to public schools.

Yvonne Grant, paraprofessional
America Federation of Teachers
Houston, TX

Regards to Paraprofessional Salary.

I Yvonne Gant, a union member. I have shared my concerns with my Houston Union President, Karina Anderson, and was told to share my concern. I am a Paraprofessional in the District for 3 years and do know I love the job; it was my calling by the good man above. when he calls me for this opportunity i took it and love every moment of it. However, in going with the district for the last 3 years has been very difficult when it comes to being paid for my services. this is something that is very dear to my heart and because of my struggles i have encountered being a black female in the workplace. I'm sure what i have to say isn't going to make a change, but we can be a part of baby step changes. John Connally says be. "Good Trouble".

Looking at my deposit into my account of 766.00...who thinks that. 766.00 every two weeks can pay mortgage, light, water, gas, insurance, car payment, clothing, copay, food, clothing, medicine, and not say if I have childcare expensive. and returning for school year 2023-24 insurance going up. how can we survive. this is more than a slap in the face. this salary seems 50 years ago when i started out. i know teachers juggle but we as Paraprofessional are really juggling trying not to drown. Yes, go back to school to get that degree, but how 766 is not going to do it. I am a 65-year-old black female with 50 years of experience and 2 years of college. I have gained tons of Professional Development training as well as hand on experience along the way. My experience to me has been more valuable to me than a degree, and in the field of teaching the hands-on experience is very critical. I have done lesson plans, curriculum work, teacher conference, assessment, collaboration, goal setting, computer training as a regular teacher with a degree. with all of this that i have gained and I get 20 thousand. i do understand a person can better themselves. What are we given to better ourselves from the district. No cost-of-living raise, only 5 sick days, salary stays pretty much the same. the max is not close to what it should be.

I'm not asking for pity; I'm asking for wat is right. i don't feel we are being heard or listen to, or we don't matter. show us you valuable us that we are just as important as a degree teacher. teachers and paraprofessional make each other. i have worked at Fort bend ISD school for 3 years as a Para and to say not one year have i been recognize to parents or any publication. there are times when we have to talk to parents. I have found in my years of education is people don't LISTENING, they listen, they are not HEARING, they hear you and this is how i am feeling right now, i have LISTENING to other Para express the same concern to you all and still you are not HEARING US. I will be glad to sit down with anyone to discuss this more and to see what changes can become of this.

Yvonne Grant
8326429991
ylgrant21 @gmail.com

Mark Terry
Self
Grapevine, TX

As an educator for the last 43 years, I have dedicated my life to improving the education children receive in the public schools in which I have served; public schools that educate most of the children in Texas. Even with sporadic funding, ever-changing testing expectations, and with, I believe, an increasing desire of a few to destroy this special asset we enjoy, I continue to work towards a public school system that educates all children in an exemplary manner.

I fundamentally disagree with proposals to use public money to fund private schools. These schools will not be required to accept every child, including children with special education needs. Private schools will be able to deny entry to students who do not meet their academic and/or behavioral expectations and will not be assessed in the same manner as public schools.

Private schools will, however, have the right to only accept those students who are already academically successful and whose parents will be required to support the expectations of those schools. And they will be able to exit students who are not meeting the school's expectations.

Because of the disparity in the assessment process and the right of private schools to deny students entry, the result will be a disparity when schools are compared.

If this legislature genuinely wants the best education for every child, commit to fully funding our public schools, give those schools stable expectations for assessment, and support our educators with respect.

Are there schools and neighborhoods that struggle? Of course, there are. Let us concentrate on those communities in need of assistance with targeted measures for improvement rather than an unfair, injurious voucher system that will destroy our public schools and the communities in which they serve.

As a citizen, I ask you to recommend denying any type of voucher program in Texas.

William Gumbert
Self
Argyle, TX

First, Texas public schools, serving the ninth highest percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students and the highest percentage of English Language Learners (ELL) in the nation (tied with California), are not failing. Despite the 42nd lowest funding per student, the 2022 NAEP scores for Texas public schools compare favorably to other states:

- ? ELL students in Texas rank No. 2 in Math and No. 1 in Reading-Grade 8,
- ? Economically Disadvantaged students in Texas rank No. 5 in Math-Grade 4 and No. 9 in Math-Grade 8, and
- ? Black students rank No. 1 in Math-Grade 4 & 8 and No. 6 in Reading.

Further, using STAAR results as the measuring stick, school districts outperform the state's existing school choice system of charters in every subject and every student population, according to TEA's 2021 Snapshot.

Second, private school ESAs for students in low-performing schools are theoretically appealing. However, average annual tuition/fees at private schools exceed \$14,000 and an ESA of \$8,000 does not make private schools accessible for most families. Further, few students in low-performing schools currently pursue public school choice options due to various barriers. According to TEA:

- ? Less than 100 students participate in the state's Public Education Grant program,
- ? Only 3% of students transfer to school choice options from school district campuses with F-Ratings, and
- ? The reality is more than two-thirds of students choosing school choice options transfer from high-performing school district campuses with A and B Ratings.

Third, private school ESAs are not like Pell Grants and Tuition-Equalization Grants. Unlike ESAs, these programs are only for students with exceptional financial need. Additionally, these programs do not reduce the student resources at public colleges/universities.

Lastly, like current school choice options, ESA funding is at the expense of school districts serving 89% of all students. In absence of a formal state study, school choice expansion through ESAs could reduce school district enrollment by over 500,000 students and most transfers will be from campuses with A and B Ratings. With students transferring from multiple grades at 9,000 campuses and with the state limiting the ability to increase revenues, school districts will not be able to reduce operating costs to offset the loss of revenue from enrollment declines. As a result, the net fiscal impact to school districts could annually exceed \$4.5 billion. In other words, expanding school choice through ESAs could reduce the resources afforded every student choosing their local school district by over \$900 per year.

If the goal is to improve outcomes for all students, the facts do not support expanding school choice through ESAs. Rather, the facts support the need to help students overcome the obstacles contributing to low performance, such as poverty, mobility, attrition, and chronic absenteeism. Thank you for your consideration and for your service.

Marty Sutton-Garner
RWGNT / Self / Sales
McKinney, TX

I believe in school choice. To me it is the best way to force schools to compete with each other to produce the best graduates of their program that can become productive citizens of the Great State of Texas when the students have a choice of which school to attend.

Karen thurman

Self

Emory, TX

No vouchers!!! We understand that in rural areas with smaller districts that our children will not have access to the educational resources that are available to large urban districts. It is a trade off to be able to live in rural communities where the school is often heart of the community.

Our two sons went to college, TAMU, Commerce, where they received degrees in Professional Business Accountancy and Business Information Systems. One is a Captain for Mesquite Fire Service and the other a Senior Draftsman for Seimen's Corp. Our two grandchildren graduated as Valedictorian and Salutatorian from Rains ISD without the voucher system and both are BSRN.

I retired from Rains ISD after 35 years so I do have knowledge of public education and it's downward slide. Vouchers are not the answer!!! Fund legislation for teacher pay increases, stop unfunded mandates, stop throwing money at state testing and allow teachers to teach curriculum not state testing.

Our teachers are capable of teaching a diverse population. Even with vouchers only a few elite parents will have the dedication and financial means to transport their children to larger towns/schools. Please consider making the legislative jargon in plain language that is readily understandable and give details that are often hidden or tacked on and buried in the myriad of pages in a bill! Please be transparent! Please consider carefully your vote on the voucher system and as a slogan from many years back encouraged, "Just Say NO to vouchers".

Respectfully,

Karen S Thurman

Kelsey Halfen

Self teacher

Richmond, TX

we want funding for our schools, a teacher pay raise, a lower testing and accountability burden, and NO VOUCHERS

Mark Terry, Deputy Executive Director
Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA)
Austin, TX

As the Deputy Executive Director of the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) I am writing in opposition to JHR 140.

The members of TEPSA have as one of our priorities the opposition to diverting public funds for the use of private education. We believe that funds collected from citizens for the support of public education and of students across the State of Texas should be used for its stated purpose, public education.

In our opinion, several areas should be taken into consideration as you discuss Education Savings Accounts (ESA), or any other type of voucher program are:

- Will all students who apply to a private school who accepts state funds be accepted for enrollment by the receiving private school?
- Will private schools have as a requirement to state the reason a student may not be accepted?
- Will the acceptance of students with a history of misbehavior be required in private schools?
- Can students who are failing academically and/or with recurring misconduct be expelled from private schools receiving funds?
- Will private schools, be they religious in nature, have as a requirement to accept children of any faith?
- Will private schools have as a requirement to offer special education services of every type? If they are not able to do so, must the school obtain the necessary teachers, training, and equipment to allow them to provide these services?
- Will private schools who receive public funding have as a requirement taking the STAAR, state assessment? And will the schools be rated under the same system as our public schools?
- Will private schools be required to follow the same state education laws as every public school in Texas?

TEPSA cannot support any proposal that will not answer these questions in a manner that gives each system equal footing.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Terry, Deputy Executive Director

Frances Jones
Self
Austin, TX

In a few short weeks, I will start my 14th year as a public school educator and I am concerned. I appreciate that the hearings last week ended on a positive note with the need to increase the basic allotment, update the accountability system, and find ways to incorporate parent voice.

Texas public schools have a wide array of options available to Texas families. The quality of all of these options would be significantly enriched if the Texas Legislature complied with the Texas Constitution and adequately funded our public schools. The state should be focused on moving Texas out of the bottom ten in per pupil spending. The last thing our 5.5 million children need is for money intended for public schools to be diverted to private ones. We are among the lowest states in the country in per-student funding, and even to keep up with that low level of funding it would take a 1K increase in the basic allotment just to keep up with 2019 levels. We have the money. Please stop adding additional systems of education until you properly fund the one you are constitutionally obligated to fund.

The best way to improve student outcomes and support educators and institutions would be to fund us. We are more than 4K per student under the national average, teachers are paid more than 7K less than the national average, and we have a large and growing population and our coffers are overflowing. It is a simple solution. Increase the basic allotment. Public Education in Texas has been underfunded and under-supported for years.

Lastly, it would improve the quality of education, improve student outcomes and support educators if you were to finally diversify the state accountability system. STAAR is not intended for all the uses and is merely used to sort children, schools, and districts to create winners and losers. If you truly want to understand the quality of our schools, teachers, and enrich our students, please diversify the accountability system to include measures that are of value to students, parents, teachers, and communities.

Please do not link school funding, assessment and accountability, or any other such issues to vouchers/ESAs. Each issue deserves its own discussion and its own legislation. If vouchers/ESAs are popular, they should be able to pass on their own. I venture to guess they are not, but let's see with a vote on each issue separately!

Thank you for your work on this committee and for considering my perspective as a Texas public school teacher.

Allyson Jordan, Principal
Self
Spring, TX

Please begin supporting TX teachers and schools!

Florence Miller
Self
Dallas, TX

Improving Texa quality education and the opportunity to receive it would best be served by supporting public schools and providing teachers with improved salaries. Vouchers are NOT the answer. That would only reinforce more wealthy students and benefit private schools that do not provide an education to all students. Private schools could accept the voucher money and remove the students for not being a good fit for their private school. The better option is to improve public schools to better serve all students. Pay teachers more, fund public schools with more money to improve their resources, buildings, campuses and support parents in getting a good education for all children/students! Texas as a state will be impacted and improved by having citizens with good/great educations that will make Texas a great state for all. Remember NO vouchers. Improve public schools for all.

JoAnn McKenzie
self
Austin, TX

The House Select Committee can create a better future for Texas through fully funding public education throughout Texas. Please support an increase in the basic allotment by \$1,000 per student, increase teacher pay. Our families, our communities, and, particularly, our students are counting on you!

Betty Daugherty
retired
The Woodlands, TX

I am a resident of Montgomery county I am against the educational freedom act. The Our school system is now rated 35th in the country. this bill will kill public education . We need good education system. The failure to properly educate our youth leads to crime and chaos. It is our obligation in a democracy to educate our children.

William Brummett
Self, Teacher and School Leader
Pflugerville, TX

I am a teacher, educational leader, and entrepreneur who cares deeply about the well-being of individual people and the well-being of American and global society. The pandemic has provided significant new opportunities to expand educational access and freedom by highlighting the acute need for reform. Having led a school near Philadelphia that provided excellent and low-cost education to urban, low-income families, mostly immigrants, I believe that all families should have the same choices wealthy families enjoy—the ability to choose from among a variety of excellent options, including religious ones for their children’s education. To deny low-income families this educational freedom is an economic injustice. Because poverty disproportionately affects Black Americans, this is also a racial or ethnic injustice. Having served in this effort to obtain educational freedom in a wide variety of roles and places, I am committed to expanding educational freedom over the long-term, and I hope and pray you will commit to expanding educational freedom through an Educational Savings Accounts program that empowers parents to choose the educational setting most effective for their children.

I want to address a few objections. I read a mailer opposing school choice that asserted parents would be able to choose a school "where our children could be indoctrinated by leftist, woke teaching." While I think this is probably just a word game and a disingenuous argument, I think it does raise a concern I heard voiced in the 2015 legislative session that students might end up in "schools teaching jihad" (as if there aren't laws against promoting terrorism in schools). These scare tactics suggest that liberty is not accountable enough, so we need more government control. Liberty means a free market, which is one of the most powerful forms of accountability in the world. But nevertheless, something else is going on in this argument. We live in a pluralistic society. Liberty means the right to determine within certain basic limits how we want to worship, raise a family, and pursue a living. Liberty should include the right to choose an educational setting that allows children to learn academic knowledge within an environment conducive to the vision of the good life shared by the parents. Every school, like every human community, pursues some vision of the good life and inculcates some set of habits because of that commitment. Our society is more polarized than ever partly because educational freedom is not allowed. Allowing parents to leave the public system if they find that it doesn't promote their vision of the good life for their child will promote peace--they won't feel obligated to protest at school board meetings and things like that. This freedom will also help our society learn to be pluralistic in healthy ways by creating a pluralism of healthy communities, strong because of healthy schools, that promote the formation of healthy individuals.

Sue (and Don) Silver

Self--I'm also a precinct chair in Collin County

McKinney, TX

We support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. We support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education. By the way, I (Sue Silver) am a lifelong educator with a Masters Degree in Education and taught public school students for decades.

Jerry Pritchard

Self

Austin, TX

Oppose bill to provide vouchers for funding any education.

Lori Rapp, Dr.

Lewisville ISD

Lewisville, TX

We appreciate the House Committee dedicating further study into education for PK-12 students in Texas. With a strong economy and workforce in Texas, supported by a public school system educating over five million students, now is the time to continue investing in this system. Before creating a third tax-payer funded education system (traditional public schools, charter schools, education savings accounts), it is incumbent upon this legislature to fund the system that educates the majority of students in Texas.

The Texas public school system has been built and regulated by the laws and rules passed over 88 legislative sessions. It is not educational freedom to provide taxpayer funding to opt out of this state regulated educational system. In fact, a voucher/educational savings account system takes more power away from parents when schools are not required to educate the students that are wanting to attend. If the goal is for parents to have freedom from the regulations that public schools are required to follow as a result of receiving state and federal funding, then shouldn't the first priority be to find out what regulations can be changed that would allow public schools to meet the needs of their local communities, parents and guardians? The weight of federal and state regulations that public schools are under are both bankrupting the system and eroding local control of public education. At a minimum, any individual that receives taxpayer money for obtaining an education should be required to follow the same regulations and requirements that public schools are held to and any dollar figure determined for an educational savings account that is above what public schools are currently funded at should be provided to public schools also.

We look forward to this committee bringing forth recommendations that utilize a historic surplus to invest in ALL of the students of Texas that are educated through the public school system. Property tax compression and an increase in the basic allotment can be accomplished with this surplus. We appreciate the property tax compression for residents within LISD and the use of surplus funds to hold the district harmless from loss of funding due to the compression, but this does not address the unfunded nature of schools with a basic allotment that does not account for inflationary costs.

Paul Colbert
Self, consultant
Houston, TX

Voucher Plans Will Strangle Public Schools Even If Not a Single Student Leaves for a Private School

Every one of the major voucher bills supposedly protected the state cost by limiting vouchers primarily to students current or previous public-school students. However, these bills also all contained a provision that would also allow students entering school for the first time, either in kindergarten or first grade, to receive vouchers. This provision would apply to new students who were already planning on enrolling in private schools or in home schooling.

According to the website of the Texas Private School Association, their member schools enroll 250,000 students. The website for the Texas Home School Coalition claims that 750,000 students are currently being home-schooled. Adding those two together means that about 1 million students are currently in private primary and secondary education in Texas. Gov. Abbott, and most voucher advocates have said these students should receive vouchers because “the money should follow the student.”

Assume that these students are evenly distributed between kindergarten through 12th grade, that means about 77,000 students (1 million divided by 13 grades) are entering students who would qualify for a voucher and who did not intend to enroll in a public school. The cost of vouchers ranged from \$8,000 to \$12,236. Multiplying those amounts by the 77,000 students who could qualify produces a cost ranging from \$600 million to about \$950 million in just the first year.

Every bill contained a provision extending vouchers to students who previously received them. Therefore, if 77,000 students received vouchers in the first year, those 77,000 would receive them the next year as they moved up a grade, and 77,000 more would also qualify. The cumulative number of students would continue until all private-school and home-school students would qualify by the 13th year. The following table shows the potential cost for the \$8,000 voucher and the most expensive voucher:

Year	Cumulative Students	Cost at \$8,000/student	Cost at "Average" Cost
1	76,923	\$615,384,615	\$949,692,308
2	153,846	\$1,230,769,231	\$1,899,384,615
3	230,769	\$1,846,153,846	\$2,849,076,923
4	307,692	\$2,461,538,462	\$3,798,769,231
5	384,615	\$3,076,923,077	\$4,748,461,538
6	461,538	\$3,692,307,692	\$5,698,153,846
7	538,462	\$4,307,692,308	\$6,647,846,154
8	615,385	\$4,923,076,923	\$7,597,538,462
9	692,308	\$5,538,461,538	\$8,547,230,769
10	769,231	\$6,153,846,154	\$9,496,923,077
11	846,154	\$6,769,230,769	\$10,446,615,385
12	923,077	\$7,384,615,385	\$11,396,307,692
13	1,000,000	\$8,000,000,000	\$12,346,000,000

There were also provisions in several of the bills that would have extended vouchers to all non-public school students more quickly. For example, some would have provided them for siblings of eligible students.

Katrina Gray
Self - Compliance Officer for senior living
Richardson, TX

In order for Texas to ensure educational opportunity and freedom to obtain a quality education for all students in Texas, we must have adequate funding for public education. Please provide more funding for our schools. Get our Texas schools out of the bottom ranks for funding and performance. I do not support having any funds pulled from public school funding for private school vouchers, or from any source. Our tax dollars should not be spent on private schools. Please listen to our educators on what they have asked for. The Teacher Vacancy Task Force offered you multiple ideas for improving our public education system. Our teachers need to be supported and paid well. Let local school boards make their own decisions about books and curriculum policies. There are enough laws and requirements by TEA that keep safeguards in place and give parents and schools the grounds to question anything that they are concerned about in their local schools. Thank you for your service.

Mindi Penrod
self
Houston, TX

Vouchers will not fix the system you have had 30 plus years to mold already. You will not take my tax dollars and give them to private schools with religious indoctrination type education. This is not an equitable education for all! That will not create a well rounded globally minded student, this is not the education we need to have in this state. Your plans, so I have heard, are meant to go into an ESA at that, which gives my tax dollars without strings or accountability back to parents. We require accountability for all other tax dollars going to the state, but why not this?

You would also rather give MORE tax payer money to individuals than you would if they were in a brick and mortar school building. This is not adequate funding at all. Fund our schools fully and increase the basic allotment to catch up with inflation. Paying your teachers well will insure that they stay.

Meaningfully supporting educators requires an inflationary index in the State's funding formula to allow public school districts to keep up with costs and to provide teachers with better pay raises. You also need to have a better support system for teachers, we need more support staff that are paid well to ease workloads. It takes more than money to improve morale.

Improving outcomes should not include a test that we are forced to teach to all year long. We need a better academic performance system to show the growth of teachers and students throughout the year verses one single test with purposeful gotcha type questions. This entire system needs a revamp and stop tethering it to teachers pay!

Susan Nayak
Self, Website and Management Consulting
Austin, TX

Parents should have the right to choose the educational setting for their child (public school, private school, home school). However, taxpayers should not be funding private school or home school environments. Taxpayer money should be limited to public schools ONLY. Education Savings Accounts are yet another attempt to provide vouchers at taxpayer expense, and will decimate our public schools.

Vouchers are not enough to fully cover the cost of private school, so the education savings account (and any other voucher programs) basically helps well-off parents defray the costs of private education, while making it impossible for economically disadvantaged parents to take advantage of the program because they will not be able to come up with the balance of the fees.

Public education is a public good. Fully fund public education that respects teachers and other school staff and helps kids thrive, building the next generation to be strong leaders and citizens. Raise teacher pay. Increase the basic allotment per pupil (Texas currently ranks 48th in the nation with our allotments, which is a travesty given the wealth of our state).

Kim Klepcyk
Splendora ISD
Splendora, TX

Please find funding for our public schools and say no to vouchers!

Mani Subramanian
Self
Austin, TX

JHR 140. I oppose this bill.

Cameron Samuels

self - student

Katy, TX

I'm a student organizer with Students Engaged in Advancing Texas. We deserve a SEAT at the table in decisions directly affecting us. Your policies impact our everyday lives. We deserve better, and we are always here for you to reach out to us and see what matters most in our education. SEAT adamantly opposes any policy that deprives students of the agency to make decisions in our education. In a state where parental rights are upheld, we deserve students' rights to own our education.

===

Where the sun of summer shimmers

Yes, Summer, you deserved more.
The youth, your students, our nation.

You sought to shine light on a generation
wanting to be heroes of their own life story.

But no longer can they enjoy a life of literature
like you had once begun with liberty.

Are they lost?
Lives of literature,
are they lost?

Where the sun of summer shimmers
and shines with enlightenment,
we have not lost.

We may worry of what will be next,
or rather, who,
but we ought not to let down our guards.

No one can possibly fathom how
many books will be left shuttered.

How stories will be left untold
and voices left unheard.

===

Heroes, pt. 1

Maybe a hero will come,
to slay the jabberwocky,
or even more desperately,
to defend our library

===

In our world of words

Who decides has power,
and who follows is a decision.

Life is a dynamic, a balance:
who does and who is done.

Who speaks harnesses power,
thus silence is subjection.

===

Delusional reality

How does one dream
where possibility
is not free?

They said protect the children,
but we were out here seeing
trans youth of our state fleeing.

Drag did not kill the 'fag'
but transphobia sure as hell
closed their book's cover.

Our libraries were decimated,
one book after another,
with no mercy.

History,
it's all their story,
not ours.

It's about time,
for us to reclaim
the story of ours.

===

Heroes, pt. 2

If one can be silent,

impact we can otherwise be.

Voice is power is prayer
in pursuit of truth and triumph.

Words work wonder,
for everyone
has a voice.

If words birthed light,
the heavens, and the earth,
our world's core is of words.

Who will you be in our
world of words?

===

An ode to the Texas Legislature

The clock will inevitably hit midnight.
Please don't close my book.

===

I'm a student organizer with Students Engaged in Advancing Texas. We deserve a SEAT at the table in decisions directly affecting us. Your policies impact our everyday lives. We deserve better, and we are always here for you to reach out to us and see what matters most in our education. SEAT adamantly opposes any policy that deprives students of the agency to make decisions in our education. In a state where parental rights are upheld, we deserve students' rights to own our education.

Denis Thompson
self / Programmer
Austin, TX

Schools need sufficient funding to do the best job of educating kids. It is about the money. Please increase funding to Texas public schools.

Glynis Chester
Self retired
Frisco, TX

I strongly support Education Savings Accounts. Giving parents a choice in how and where their children are educated is vital to the success of Texas students. Our kids deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools, even those in "Good Districts" are failing our children. My granddaughter attends one of those "good schools" in Frisco ISD. Last year, she was in the 3rd grade. She can't read, or even recognize every letter in the alphabet, but she's on the A/B Honor Roll. And we're expected to be proud?!

Parents should have the ability to send their child to the school that best suits their needs... Or at least spends more time educating and less time playing with her hair. Just as the free market lowers prices and increases innovation, we know that parental choice helps public education. It's happening all over the country. Texas may not be 1st in this endeavor, but we can get it done right. No excuses.

Sara Stevenson
Self
Austin, TX

No vouchers! Invest in our public schools!

Stacy Smith
Self
The Woodlands, TX

NO to vouchers. Fund public schools better. Hire more teachers. Pay teachers a better wage w benefits. Make public ed more accessible to all texans.

Marcia Grissom
Self - retired from RISD 2021 after 32 yrs and retire/rehire part time
Richardson, TX

Our support of quality public schools is the way all students through education have the opportunity to move out of poverty. A student who is economically disadvantaged will not be able to take advantage of a voucher program, because the amount provided is thousands less than the average cost of a private school education in the state of Texas. **YET ANY PUBLIC FUNDS ALLOCATED FOR VOUCHERS WILL TAKE AWAY FROM FUNDS SUPPORTING PUBLIC EDUCATION.** By investing money in our public schools the state gives local districts the resources to improve the education and therefore opportunities for **ALL STUDENTS.**

With increased funding, school districts can -

- 1) reduce class sizes which is critical with the growing number of non English speakers
- 2) meet the needs of students with learning differences which many private schools are not prepared to address
- 3) support extracurricular academic, fine arts, and athletic programs to enrich the educational experience for all
- 4) retain quality educators in the teaching field instead of seeing them move to other professions to support their families.

Public schools can provide many learning opportunities for children beyond the core curriculum because of their diversity. I am asking you to support public schools where all students can grow and succeed, not private schools who have the opportunity to select their student population.

Keri Launius, Dr.

Self

La Porte, TX

No vouchers!!!

Gail Wilson, Engagement Officer

America First Works

Irving, TX

The core of the school choice movement is the aspiration that every family obtain the freedom to pursue educational excellence for their children, regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic background. Every American family and student deserve this opportunity, but unfortunately, some Texas public-school today are failing far too many students. I'm writing to you to express my support for parental empowerment in the form of Education Savings Accounts. Every student deserves a high-quality education, and to accomplish this, every parent needs the ability to send their children to the school of their choice. As a mother raising my one-year-old son, I am deeply committed to advocating for a fair and inclusive education system that grants every child the freedom to obtain a quality education, regardless of their circumstances. Only through empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts can Texas truly improve its public school system—as we see across the nation, parental choice also helps public schools.

National test results for 2022 show that school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic had a devastating effect on American schoolchildren. For the first time in the history of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), scores in reading and math fell by the largest margin in more than 30 years and Texas students were no exception.

- o According to the National Assessment of Education Progress in 2022:
 - ? only 30 percent of Texas 4th-grade students scored at or above proficient in reading.
 - ? Texas Black 4th-grade students had an average reading score 24 points lower than White students.
 - ? Texas Hispanic students had an average reading score of 24 points lower than White students.
 - ? Low-income students in Texas had an average score that was 30 points lower than that for students from middle- and high-income households.
- o In 2021 only 22 percent of Texas high school students took the ACT and scored an average of 20.0.
 - ? Texas African American students who took ACT had an average composite score of 16.7.
 - ? Texas White students who took the ACT had an average composite score of 22.6.
 - ? Texas Hispanic students who took the ACT had an average composite score of 17.6.

These test scores can have powerful consequences for a generation of children. Reversing these achievement losses will need aggressive action over the next several years. Combining this learning loss and the fact that many schools exposing them to inappropriate content, we have truly failed the next generation of Texans.

Preparing children to be productive members of society begins with education. The only way to do this is to give parents access to Education Savings Accounts, which would ensure that every parent can send their children to the school of their choice – public or private schools. Please stand with me, and with parents across Texas, and please empower parents with ESAs!

Ken Kuhl, Mr.

PTA

Benbrook, TX

Vouchers are NOT the answer to educational opportunity and freedom. We MUST work to improve outcomes for kids in the one place they ALL have the opportunity to attend: our traditional public schools as laid out in Article 7, Section 1 of our Texas Constitution. MANY of our students don't have the option to attend anything else, and taking money from them, our most vulnerable, is wrong!

We need to fully fund our schools. We have a record surplus and we must spend it on OUR FUTURE: our kids! We are losing teachers daily because of the lack of competitive pay and support they receive.

Patricia Garris
self -- retired
Spring, TX

Vouchers are about economics not politics. They are designed to coddle those with money and ignore those who are without means. Texas is already 43 out of 50 states in education spending (although the second largest in terms of population,) and our schools struggle because they are not adequately funded. Rural areas are even worse off with even more to lose. Our rural areas are losing doctors, closing hospitals, don't have enough broadband access as well as teachers are beginning to lose their faith as well. We cannot afford to have our rural areas become intellectual deserts or worse graveyards. Most importantly, what problem is a voucher initiative designed to solve and for how many children, and where? I am absolutely convinced that the governor cannot answer the question because he has created a solution that doesn't match a problem. Let's not look back and see a future that strips rural children of their opportunity to grow and compete. Don't create a landscape where businesses never even consider building in rural Texas. It's. huge mistake that we don't have to make.

Holly Ham
Self
Humble, TX

I support Education Savings Accounts as a method to provide school choice to Texas public school students and parents. Texas students deserve a high-quality education, but many of our public schools across the state are failing our students. Throwing more money at failing public schools is not working. Parents need the ability to send their children, especially children currently in failing public schools, to the school of their choice. I support empowering parents with Education Savings Accounts, so Texas truly can improve its public school system. As we are seeing across the nation, parental choice helps public education.

Lois Dailey
Self
High Island, TX

Vote NO for vouchers.

Karen Buckman, Dr.
Self, Retired College Professor
The Woodlands, TX

As a former college professor for almost 30 years, I have taught many charter school students. They are not strong students with very weak foundations for college courses. Some students are good but very few. Please support public schools not charter schools or vouchers!

Phyllis Waddle
self
Austin, TX

I Oppose this bill as it takes funds away from Public Schools and Teachers pay increases or bonuses.

Lee Spiller
CCHR Texas
Austin, TX

We appreciate the well-informed discussion and questions asked during the Select Committee's hearings on July 11th and 12th. However, we were disappointed in the fact that the debate featured only the invited, not those who represent the actual end users of our educational system- the parents. Parents turned out in large numbers and with specific concerns during the 88th Regular Session.

in discussing equal opportunity, we often think of disadvantaged populations. What about those populations who will not access the obvious benefits of our public education system because they feel like the loss of family privacy and the non-recognition of fundamental parental rights make it something not to be trusted, not worth the risk?

We are deeply saddened to see parents losing that trust, and becoming unwilling to support districts.

A major issue of concern we heard from parents, and that you heard from parents during the session related to the use of intrusive surveys, social, emotional and mental screeners, and quasi-therapeutic activities like "circle-time" where students discuss emotions and more. Unfortunately, stories were related to these being used without consent, or with uninformed or underinformed consent.

Parents also expressed concerns about feeling powerless before their schoolboards.

We've experienced a situation where a parent and the school's own attorney agreed on some simple remedies and yet the school board refused to accept them. Why?

While there has been discussion about school choice, the key bills in the 88th did much more. They codified the fundamental rights of parents to direct the upbringing, education, health and mental health care of their children. They ensured that parental consent was necessary for psychological examination, testing and treatment, they made sure instructional materials were accessible to parents, and some had more definite enforcement measures.

Without vigorous enforcement, parental rights are just words on paper.

Improving Outcomes-

We disagree with the idea expressed by a few witnesses that Social and Emotional Learning or other similar activities could make students ready to learn.

Other than making sure children arrive to school well fed and that some parent education on children being well-rested occurs, we believe the way to improve student outcomes is not pop-psychology but academics.

We hope that in moving forward, with or without school choice, this committee will forward a plan that names and enhances parental rights, including the above referenced consent issues; and that there is a clear plan for enforcement. For those of us who grew up in rural districts, we fondly remember "Friday Night Lights" and communities that rallied around their schools. We believe that true partnership, parental rights, and ensuring that parent engagement includes discovering and delivering what is acceptable to parents are probably the most certain path to a system we can all support.

Riva Siegel
self/retired teacher
El Paso, TX

This sounds like vouchers instead of improving outcomes for Texas PUBLIC schools. Please stop harrasing the public schools, give teachers a well deserved pay raise and accept the fact that vouchers will not fix Texas schools

Mark Foust, Dr.
Northwest Independent School District
Justin, TX

Northwest ISD does not agree with or support the use of taxpayer dollars to fund school vouchers, education savings accounts, or any program for school choice other than the school choice (public charter system) that already exist. Just because it may be "constitutional" based on SCOTUS precedent doesn't mean it should be implemented. Private school choice exists now; parents can choose to take their children from public school to private school at their own expense. ESA's and vouchers should not exist in Texas unless private schools will be required to engage in STAAR/EOC testing and all other state mandated accountability.

Michelle Jehring
Self; business owner
Austin, TX

Educational opportunity is a matter of justice, and I hope that the Texas legislature corrects the profoundly unjust status quo of educational opportunity in our state. It is unjust that educational opportunity is restricted to children whose parents either have the means to pay private school tuition or relocate their family; to the lucky children who secure a seat in a charter school or who receive a privately funded scholarship. The status quo of education policy in Texas effectively restricts freedom and choice to the wealthy or lucky. I encourage the Texas legislature to expand educational freedom and choice to all Texans by the adoption of educational savings accounts to empower the less wealthy and expand the choices of the less lucky.

Teresa Martini
Self
Dallas, TX

I am a mother to two kids in Texas public schools. All Texas children deserve the right to a quality, free education in their neighborhood public school. In order to do this, schools must be fully funded. There should be no establishment of a secondary system of schools receiving public funds when the current one is still underfunded. Our public schools have not had a significant increase in funding in four years and the budget adopted came nowhere close to meeting inflation related cost increases while also requiring more through underfunded mandates. It is insulting what little was done to support our public schools while the Governor was out trying to sell his "school choice" plan. Voucher programs and ESAs do not help those most in need. They subsidize private school tuition for those that can already afford it. Private schools do not serve all students, can select which students they want to enroll, can remove students from school if they become a burden to them and send them back to public school. Not to mention the lack of accountability in all drafts of this type of legislation. Teachers in private schools don't have to be certified and there are no accountability measures for non-public schools receiving state money. If STAAR test scores are being used to deem public schools as "failing," why is it that private schools that would take state money do not have to be held accountable to the same standards? How much is the state going to spend just in the administration of this program? If there is additional money to fund these programs, shouldn't that money go to funding public schools, to ensure adequate education free of cost for ALL kids in Texas, as the Texas Constitution directs?

Nadia Khan

Self

Austin, TX

The legislature must put aside all partisan politics to focus on increasing funding for the public school system that should provide an excellent education for every child in the great wealthy State of Texas. Rather than be distracted by how to siphon more money from an already starved system to give money to only some families to only partially cover the cost of a private school, let's first ensure that a poor child with no advocate who arrives at a local public school to open arms gets everything she needs to succeed.

This great rich state has hoarded money that our public school system needs. The public system needs money in order to pay teachers, to buy supplies, to provide opportunities to children at the thousands of schools in Texas that do not have boutique PTAs to make up for the state's neglect. We can not point fingers at anyone else when our teachers can't afford to live anywhere near our schools, when our kids don't excel across the board in reading and math skills, when our class sizes are way too big to yield positive results for most kids, when we have surplus money in the bank to do better yet we keep choosing to look the other way. A state whose schools are so poor should not have surplus money sitting unassigned. A state with a surplus, by definition, should have public schools that are all thriving.

Open your eyes. Place one hand on your heart, and pass legislation that makes Texans proud to call this land home.

Everyone is free to go to the local public school, no litmus tests, no voucher needed, no hoops to jump through, no aptitude tests required, no guardian needed. Let's make them strong! Fund a free and appropriate education for all students by heavily funding the public school system today.

Reject vouchers. Vouchers will fund existing private schools, and will not increase the quality of education for anyone, and will not increase the number of kids receiving a quality education. If the state pays people to go to private school, private school tuition (now capped by what families can afford to pay) will go up by exactly the amount the state has offered, and no additional children will be served by that system, while private school budgets just got more roomy. When people choose to go private, they are choosing to spend private dollars on private services, IN ADDITION TO paying into the public coffers for the greater good of ALL children who are not as fortunate. That's fine. But we can not, as a state, spend the public's dollars on private school experiences that all people do not have access to, and that can and will set tuition costs to serve the demographic they've already chosen to serve. We have an enormous public system that Texas must support so that it rivals any education that one would consider leaving it for. Become the American state who knows how to do education!

We need public funds to be directed to build excellent public schools that are accountable to the public and accesible to all.

Zenobia C. Joseph, Educational Consultant/Policy Analyst
Self - A+ WRITERS Consulting
Austin, TX

Title VI Holistic Freedom Solution: Include Black Males!

1. Federal Law: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 “is a Federal statute and provides that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (FTA C 4702.1B, 2012). Education Savings Account (“ESA”) legislation during the 88th Texas Legislature excluded Black and Hispanic males, in particular, with a discretionary disciplinary history, creating a disparate impact.

2. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs/Social-Emotional Learning: “If we don’t meet those basic needs of those children ... that stay in our system as well as those that are moving from one system to the next, we can’t teach ’em in the classroom.” Video (2:05:12): Educational Opportunity & Enrichment, Select - Jul 12th, 2023 (granicus.com)

3. Solution: Compel all school districts to create a Maslow Holistic Needs Assessment. Engage parents at the beginning of the school year. Use open-ended questionnaire to assess the student’s “living conditions” to provide students a list of local resources that may help to improve academic outcomes and basic needs (e.g., food, shelter). During the Interim, direct Texas Education Agency to use 2023-2024 district data to create a standard Maslow Assessment. Disaggregate data to include, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, income, and school status (e.g., Title I, Blue Ribbon, A-F campus grade).

4. Research: "Breaking Schools' Rules" (Fabelo et al., 2011).

- "Of the nearly 1 million students studied, about *15% were assigned at least once to disciplinary alternative education programs (27 days, on average) between seventh and twelfth grade...
- Only 3% of the disciplinary actions were for conduct for which state law mandates suspensions and expulsions; the remainder ... was made at the discretion of school officials, primarily [local school code violations]....
- [Black] students and those with particular educational disabilities were disproportionately likely to be removed from the classroom for disciplinary reasons. African-American male students had at least one discretionary violation (83%), compared to 74% for Hispanic male students, and 59% for white male students. The same pattern was found, though at lower levels of involvement, for females" (p. 12). “Students were followed for one to three years beyond [projected graduation] ... when they were in seventh grade” (p. xi).

5. Federal Funding vs. Segregation: Create equitable choice legislation! Despite longitudinal study findings, ESA bills (e.g., SB 8, Creighton) stated, “A school district may deny approval of a transfer ... only if: ... (2) the student is suspended or expelled by the district in which the student is enrolled” [SB 8 Enrolled (88), p. 3/56]. ESA discrimination may, ultimately, jeopardize Texas Federal funds. Thanks! ~zcyj *percent

Lindsie Almquist, Chief Culture Officer
Coppera Commercial Plumbing
Taylor, TX

As a business, we expect funding for schools with P-Tech and CTE which is essential for the future work force. We cannot stress enough that funding the trades in schools with CTE and P-Tech is critical.

Sam Dowdy, Owner
S&D Plumbing
Taylo, TX

As a business, we expect funding for schools with P-Tech and CTE which is essential for the future work force. We cannot stress enough that funding the trades in schools with CTE and P-Tech is critical.

Debra Erck
Self - Educator
Austin, TX

It is critical at this time that we increase funding to public schools, increasing the per student allotment to keep up with the inflation we have seen since the last increase in 2019. As a 30 + year public school educator in Texas, and parent of two children that attended public schools in Texas, I am strongly opposed to funding vouchers or ESAs for private schools. The best way we can serve all children in our state is to put our best support - time, talent and finances, behind public education and the teachers who are on the front line doing the hard work every day to prepare our young for the future.

Mark Pollack
Self/Project Manager
Richardson, TX

As the state increases their share of education funding in the currently proposed tax legislation through compression and hold harmless through homestead exemptions, the overall funding for Texas public schools will not increase for our public school students because the basic allotment (BA) remains stagnant. Right now, Texas is more than \$4,000 behind the national average in per-pupil funding and almost \$7,500 behind the national average in teacher pay. With multiple school districts feeling the crunch of rising costs to maintain current school programs, many school leaders are dipping into fund balances meant for emergencies in order to keep paying teacher contracts and maintain extracurricular and cocurricular activities. Inaction from the state leaves our schools no choice but to cut programs, increase class sizes, and artificially decrease the quality of our schools. With over \$10 billion left in our state budget from a historic \$33 billion in excess revenue, the legislature still has an opportunity to go above and beyond what has already been set aside in the regular session budget through supplemental funding in a special session on educational opportunities. Also Educational Savings Accounts are vouchers. I am a proud support of public schools that made me the person I am today. I do not my tax dollars supporting schools that are not public nor that benefit those who are already wealthy. Public schools are there for the future of our children and our state. I know that continued weakening of public schools is a goal for the party the rules our one-party state, but I am an advocate for anything that can be done to strengthen public schools.

John Sherrill, Dr.
Archer City ISD
Archer City, TX

Esteemed members of Congress,

It is my sincerest joy to reflect with you the merits of the Educational Opportunity and Enrichment Bill (JHR 140). As we transition from one school year to welcoming students in the next 30 days, I can't help but wonder what 23-24 will bring. I am confident, based on the research from other states that have passed vouchers, that we will see a trend of students not receiving quality education when they are able to take their ESA voucher to schools with a wide degree of accreditation, accountability, and motivates. Although I understand that competition is good in all industries, this is not the right way and this is not the right time for the bill. Raise Your Hand Texas and my rural colleagues feel this could be the end of the "country" school. I echo their concerns. We have operated in a deficit budget - as I know many schools have. By introducing this variable in our funding, it will affect every one of our 5.5 million students across the state. I applaud your efforts for taking a stand in the general session. Take this moment to tell those stakeholders that Texas is PUBLICLY funded. Not here, not now, not ever will we take our eyes off of helping our Texas students.

Cheryl Vinson
self/educator
Euless, TX

Vouchers will not achieve educational opportunity & freedom. The Texas constitution clearly states that the state must fund a free public education system. Vouchers to private schools violate this constitutional right of our children.

While vouchers may be funded this biennium with surplus funds, this will not be the case in future sessions, which means that to fulfill a voucher program money will then be pulled from the school foundation fund.

Voucher proposals this session have failed to protect the rights of students in this state by not requiring sufficient minimum standards that voucher receivers must follow:

- Degreed & certified teachers
- Non-discrimination open enrollment
- TEKS standards as minimum standards for instruction
- Accountability measures applied to public schools

When we allow public tax dollars to follow the student without the accountability factors assigned to our public schools, we set up a false dichotomy for comparing success. If a charter school or a private school is achieving great results, we should be looking at what they are doing & scale it to our public schools. However, we first should critically examine the demographics of their student group. According to the 2022 TEA Pocket Edition, emergent bilingual/English learners represent 21.7%, SPED students 11.8%, & economically disadvantaged learners 60.6% of our public school enrollment. Each group represents unique challenges to provide a quality public education. These are the real challenges our public schools tackle every day. I know these challenges because they reflect the schools & students of my 31-year teaching career. Yet, I had the privilege to teach remarkable students & watch them learn and grow. When charter or private schools show better results with similar demographics they deserve our attention & emulation. Otherwise, they only show what is possible when we exclude those students who present more challenging circumstances for our schools & fail to live up to the constitutional requirement and moral duty to provide a quality education for ALL students.

How do we serve students and families who are in “failing” schools? Allow parents to transfer their students from failing schools in their district. Expand the previous session’s ESA funds for SPED students to access additional services. Create ESA fund use for transportation to choice schools. Create grant funds for open enrollment districts to offset additional staffing and facilities when accepting students outside their district in order to avoid burdens on the local district taxpayers. Create a process to allow parents to transfer their student from a school where the student is subject to a hostile environment (bullying, harassment, exclusion) that the school/district is unable or unwilling to address to protect the student as required by law. The transfer could be to another district school or another district. The school/district would then be subject to investigation or oversight.

Cindy Babcock
Self- Texas teacher
Athens, TX

Texas children deserve a free and appropriate PUBLIC education. As a Texas teacher with 36 years experience, I am horrified by the actions of those supposedly representing Texans this legislative session. The governor's own Teacher Vacancy Task force had many reasonable recommendations. Zero were enacted during the legislative session.

It is your constitutional responsibility to fund and maintain public education in Texas. Please do your jobs by:

- Increasing the basic allotment
- Providing meaningful raises for teachers and support personnel
- Increasing the state's contribution to TRS insurance
- Saying NO to any form of vouchers or ESA schemes

Addressing real concerns about the STAAR test- I've administered the state tests since TAAS, and I've never seen anything like what I saw our students endure this year. Please talk to real public school teachers about what has happened to testing this year.

Our teachers have given more than most of you will ever know because we care about "our kids. " please do your job and your constitutional duty and support Texas Public Education.

Rebecca Japko
PART
Brenham, TX

Regarding HB 3781 (88R) Sec. 29.0056. INFORMATION REGARDING STATE SUPPORTED LIVING CENTERS. Families should be provided with the information regarding the choice of a State Supported Living Center (SSLC) placement if their child satisfies the HSC 593.052(a). The structured care provided by a SSLC is vital to those children with complicated behavioral health needs that require residential treatment.

Autism is on the rise. About 1 in 36 children has been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) according to estimates from CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network.

Autism is not a super power. It is a neurological or brain disorder. 50% of those children diagnosed have severe autism. Severe autism is a combination of autism, intellectual disability, and severe challenging behavior. These children are self-injurious, aggressive towards others and/or destructive of property and have frequent elopements.

Those with severe Autism or extreme behaviors are often not publicly visible and many times cannot safely leave their homes. These individuals require a true continuum care by a multi-disciplinary treatment team to meet their profound and lifelong needs. Texas SSLCs are neurobehavioral treatment centers like other inpatient units that provide intensive care that often have waiting lists that are months or years long. Families should be able to choose from the continuum of care options the one that best meets the needs of their family member.

Families are reaching out to PART seeking guidance on how to obtain admission to a SSLC because their child is refused or evicted from a group home or other provider. Families cannot safely care for their child at home and the school district is not providing the information on the viable option of a SSLC placement that is often closer to the family, especially those who are offered out of state placement.

Not all special ed students are able to be mainstreamed or seeking higher education or competitive employment skills. Individuals with intense support needs who require 24/7 specialized educational, vocational, medical, psychiatric, and residential services must have these services to survive.

Let us keep Texas' children in Texas and give families a lifesaving choice.

Kenneth Estes, Dr.

Self

Alvarado, TX

Texas families have multiple educational options for their children. The State of Texas already funds two parallel public school systems (charters and traditional public schools). We have excellent public schools. We need to support them financially and acknowledge their incredible work to educate our State's school children. I oppose any form of vouchers or tax dollars being utilized to subsidize private schools.

Grace Garza

self / Special Education Teacher

San Antonio, TX

My name is Grace Garza and I am a Special Education Teacher for Northside Independent School District. Growing up my parents were financially well enough to enroll me in a private catholic school for all of my schooling. While attending school in the 80's and 90's I never saw students with disabilities. I now know that was because they were not equipped to offer services for students with special needs. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that has been in effect since 1975. Private and charter schools can pick and choose who they want to allow into their classrooms and do not have to follow IDEA.

As a public school special education teacher, I see firsthand the impact we have on our students. In public schools students have access to Speech services, physical therapist, Occupational therapist, Adapted Physical Education, Vision impairment services, assistive technology services, and behavior support to name a few. As teachers, we have many opportunities to be trained and reach out to support specialists so we are equipped to work with students with disabilities to meet their needs and help them be successful.

Over the last few years we have gotten students who came from charter schools. One student came with explosive behaviors and meltdowns that lasted over an hour. The first time he had a meltdown, he asked for me to call his mom so she could pick him up. When I talked to the parent about it she said that at the charter school, she was called 2 to 3 times a week to pick up her son. She also said it was affecting her job having to leave work often. The students' mom was never called and his behavior improved. By the following year, the student was able to control his behavior and meltdowns decreased to 1 minute.

I had another student who came to my class from a prestigious charter school who prided themselves on working with students with special needs. The parent told me that she was personally called by their own staff requesting her to remove her daughter from that school because she wasn't in a good setting and learning anything. Turns out she was supposed to be in a life skills or specialized setting but since the school didn't have that kind of classroom she was placed in a classroom for students with behavior issues. While the teacher dealt with students' behaviors she sat in a corner doing nothing all day. The student missed out on a proper education and she missed the opportunity to learn and be successful.

I am definitely for Texas legislators and the government to fully fund public education based on student enrollment and not daily attendance. When students with special needs attend private or charter schools, they are giving up their IDEA rights. I am against vouchers because private and charter schools do not have to adhere to the same standards and laws as public schools.

Patricia Cunningham, Ms

Self; retired teacher

El Paso, TX

I am against taxpayer funding for private or for-profit primary and secondary schools of any sort. I support our public schools and don't want their importance chipped away at.

Alexander Croft

Personal

Pantego, TX

Please properly fund public schools. The basic allotment has not changed per student since 2019 - we must keep up with inflation and support our students. Please give all educator staff some sort of raise. They deserve it.

Robert Thornell, Dr.
Learning Forward - Texas
Fort Worth, TX

There has been an obvious disregard for teachers professional learning opportunities to address areas of needs by students. The amount of time and money going into the Reading Academy with little to no impact is because there is little done to promote student differences and their needs. All students deserve the best possible teacher in their classroom, but to this point the state has seen quality teachers as interchangeable parts and refuses to acknowledge or at least take action on provided additional supports to teachers. Holding raises and funds from educators to push an agenda such as vouchers is a terrible message to send when seeking support for opportunity and enrichment. The surplus funds in the state should be used to address inequalities throughout the educational system, not the least of which is the "opportunity gap" This opportunity gap is the exact thing vouchers claim to eliminate by not a single plan has shown any sort of substantial promise to truly address the needs of the students that need the most help. The state should be doing all it can to provide students with the best teachers possibly and quit playing lip-service to our public schools. Schools should not have become the political pawns that they have, but our kids have been put up for sale and only those with the means to make other choices will be able to do so. Fund our schools and you will be amazed at how substantial the gains would become.

Maureen Voosen
self
Austin, TX

Vouchers take money that could be directed toward supporting a public education system in Texas that is clearly in crisis and use it to enrich private entities rather than support the public good. An underfunded public education system that is bleeding teachers and trained professionals in school buildings will inevitably struggle to meet the needs of all students in their communities. But the first step to solving that problem should be fully funding the existing system and giving it a chance to thrive before throwing our public money at a private school solution.

Joanne Richards
self
Austin, TX

Education saving accounts are just a long winded way of saying vouchers. Either pulls funds from public education. Public education is a hallmark of a democratic system that we hold so dear. Please vote against any bill that calls for the creation of education savings accounts, vouchers, or whatever word smithing comes up next that devalues public education.!

Bill King
Self
Austin, TX

I respectfully oppose JHR 140 and HB100. We need to fully fund and support public education first. The public schools produced the greatest economic boom in history after WWII. It is an insult to teachers that the Legislature will not give all teachers a significant raise when Texas has a \$32 billion surplus. We have many outstanding businesses in Texas who pay their workers well. Teachers should be in the same situation, instead of ranking almost last in pay. Please honor the majority of Texans, rural and urban, who want public education fully funded. Texas's future needs well educated citizens.

Ashley Prevost

Self, assistant director of instructional leadership

Austin, TX

The best thing this committee can do for public education is to fully fund all public schools in Texas, especially those serving the many children in Texas who live in poverty in both urban and rural settings. A fair and appropriate public education should be provided to every student in the state and should be a great equalizer during this time of unprecedented income inequality and soaring corporate profits. This committee should do everything in its power to make it easier for teachers, leaders, and all professionals working in Texas public schools to serve their students, and reject any plan to use public funding to provide vouchers that can be used for private education. The privatization of schools is immoral and only serves to emaciate what should be a public good until anyone with the power to choose an alternative does so and only those who don't have the resources to choose an alternative and must rely on public goods are left. Continuing to underfund Texas public schools is detrimental not only to the future lives of the individual students impacted by low quality education, but also to the future of our state - it's economy, and its access to the scores of students who aren't able to live up to their full potential.

Joanna Warren, Deputy Director, Public Education Policy

Educate Texas

Austin, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comment to the House Select Committee on Educational Opportunity and Enrichment. Educate Texas would like to express our strong support for the Committee's efforts in improving outcomes for Texas public school students and meaningfully supporting educators and educational institutions. We urge the Committee to continue considering the policies recommended by the Teacher Vacancy Task Force, which garnered significant support under HB 11 and SB 9 during the regular session. Specifically, we recommend a multi-faceted approach to support Texas teachers, by focusing on educator preparation and compensation, along with additional supports to build a thriving Texas teacher workforce.

Increasing compensation for all educators is foundational for both recruitment and retention. Expansions of the Mentor Program and Teacher Incentive Allotments would grant school systems the opportunity to strategically compensate our most effective teachers. Further, an increase to the Basic Allotment would put additional funds towards teacher pay increases.

High-quality preparation programs, such as teacher residencies, are equally important and complementary for recruitment and retention as competitive salaries. Many Texas teachers lack the preparation and support needed to succeed. Nearly 30% of newly hired teachers held no teaching certificate in the 2022-2023 school year. Teacher residencies provide teacher candidates with year-long paid classroom experience, intensive training, and mentor support. This type of preparation prepares candidates to enter by providing aspiring educators with intensive training and mentor support, teacher residencies prepare candidates to enter the classroom with the necessary skills and knowledge to make a positive impact from day one. Evidence shows that new teachers who had high quality residency experience are as effective as teachers with 3 years of experience.

A notable advantage of residency programs is their ability to offer stipends to candidates. This financial support would not only help attract individuals from unique backgrounds into the teaching profession, but also enable candidates to focus on their training without the burden of excessive financial stress, particularly for individuals who may otherwise be unable to pursue a career in teaching due to financial constraints.

By prioritizing support for teacher residency programs as a complementary strategy to compensation increases, Texas can create a sustainable pipeline of highly skilled and dedicated educators who are equipped to meet the needs of all Texas students. Investing in our teachers early in their preparation through residencies, mentorship and throughout the teaching profession, Texas can foster a thriving teacher workforce.

Sandra Landtroop, Retired teacher

Self, retired teacher

Kingwood, TX

It is without question extremely harmful to the opportunity for a quality education to fail to adequately compensate public school teachers. Furthermore, pushing vouchers to the detriment of public school funding has an equally harmful effect on our neighborhood schools!

ELIZABETH FARRIS

Self

Richardson, TX

Our Public School System has been the model for the world for education since its inception. We have the framework of an educational model that has produced generations of citizens who made this nation the greatest country on earth. We must protect this institution. We do need innovation, and there is a cost to that. Vouchers without accountability for private school is not the answer. Funding Public schools so that we can recruit and retain excellent teachers for the education of all students is a must do. Projections reported by organizations such as the Economic Policy Institute and the Learning Institute, who monitor trends in education, reflect deep and dire shortages of teachers in the classroom, but even more concerning the reduced number of people entering college or alternative programs to obtain education degrees. It is projected by 2030, we will have shortages of up to 50% across the country and specialty areas, for which we now have upwards of a 70% shortage in places across the country, projections hit 90-100% shortages, especially in Special Education. Texas is on the lists reported in Education Week of the state with the lowest number of potential teacher candidates and the highest rates of shortages now. What will happen if we do not fix this. Vouchers - tax dollars going to private schools, and charters, must have the same accountability measures of a public school: they must opt in for a minimum of 5 years; every single teacher on the campus must be state certified; they must have an equitable attendance zone to the local public schools and must accept any and all students in the attendance zone - if they do not have enough classrooms then they can do what public schools do - stick a portable building in the parking lot and deal with it; Students who qualify as low SES may not be charged tuition above the money sent by the State; no student may be expelled for any reason other than what meets State guidelines; they must take the STAAR test and meet State accountability ratings; they must provide programs for students with disabilities in alignment with the law - IDEA. Better yet, let's pour our money and support into our public schools.

Rebecca Fowler
Mental Health America of Greater Houston
Houston, TX

As your committee looks to find solutions to current barriers to educational opportunities and academic achievement, one important student population to consider is disciplined and justice-involved youth. During the recent hearings, the theme of parental rights, student behavioral issues and educators' frustration at the lack of support with classroom behavioral management was reoccurring. A clear policy solution that seeks to resolve some of the existing challenges for students, educators and parents is increased parental engagement and strengthened transition procedures for students returning to the regular educational environment from alternative education programs.

During the Regular Session of the 88th Texas Legislature, a bill was filed on this exact issue, House Bill 1626. The bill passed the House Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety, was voted out of the House, and made it to the Senate Education Committee. During the Regular Session of the 86th legislature, HB 2184 successfully outlined a process to ensure a smooth reentry for students leaving an alternative educational environment and attempting to re-enroll in school. Despite the passage of this legislation in 2019, families whose child is returning from alternative education programs continue to face challenges when attempting to re-enroll back into the local school district following the successful completion of their discipline program. HB 1626 (88R) codifies existing enrollment procedures by making clear the right of parents to not be turned away when seeking to enroll an eligible child in school. Just as important, HB 1626 (88R) outlines the rights and responsibilities of the district to enroll eligible students and place them in the most appropriate academic setting based on the individual needs of the student and campus safety. The bill streamlines how students enroll, not who is eligible to enroll. Additionally, HB 1626 (88R) safeguards the role of parents in the transition planning process to ensure that their feedback and participation are an integral part of the student's return to the general education environment.

Currently, campus staff are excluding parents from the transition planning process solely based on the lack of statutory language that requires parental engagement. Specifically, there has been pushback on the idea that a "meeting" is even required in the transition planning process and that parents should be included in meetings with the campus administrator as a basic parental right.

HB 1626 (88R) enhances the transition planning process by ensuring charter schools provide students with transition plans, increases academic support by encouraging the transfer of academic credits from alternative education facilities, and aligns review of the student's progress on the transition plan to a district semester calendar. The bill also broadens the coordination of services for students to include Court Liaisons and Special Education/504 Coordinators.

Michelle Boonzaier
Self
Keller, TX

Please stop pushing the school voucher agenda. Very few Texans want this. Pay our public school teachers properly and fund schools. I don't want my money to go to private for profit and religious schools. Parents who want their kids to get a religious education should pay for it themselves. We need a good secular system to create well-rounded Texans, not a system that indoctrinates kids into cults and takes away their ability to think critically. This country is trending to becoming a theocracy with dumbed down education to please religious leaders. We will lose our position as a leader in the world. It's so sad.

Karan Ratliff
Self
Austin, TX

We need to support public schools! Dumbing down public schools to enrich private schools is a recipe for disaster. And we know it's because only certain people can get rich by starting charter schools. I am against vouchers. We need to properly fund public education and staff.

Maria Dinapoli
Special Education Teacher EPISD
El Paso, TX

I am a special education teacher of 29 years. Our STAAR test needs to change in order to help students with disabilities. In addition we need better pay. We need to be treated as professionals with professional wages.

Kelly Brennan
Self
Plano, TX

I am told that there is a surplus in the budget and as a teacher for over 10 years, here are my thoughts for how to help the public education system: less state testing (STAAR isn't efficient for students that are 504 or SPED or ESL), higher pay for teachers, no private school vouchers, pay for school lunches as we did during COVID to help students with their learning, provide schools with supplies, and keep legislation out of the curriculum. If the board and curriculum writers are happy with the curriculum, then people at the state level shouldn't have a say.

Adrienne Abrahamson
self, former educator
Fort Worth, TX

I am a former educator - I have worked in several north TX ISDs. Despite what constantly happens from the state level to prevent school districts from doing their best for their community, I at least see them TRYING. But it is an overwhelming battle and seemingly unattainable to truly WIN. I have seen GCISD cut almost all of the programs that made it a "destination district" - foreign languages, dual-language, and many others. There are other issues going on in GCISD (and others, like Keller ISD where I live) where fear based censorship and extremist fear tactics are hurting the ability of the districts to do what's best for students & educators. No one is better served by learning only through a limited worldview. No one benefits from learning ONLY about history and stories that relate to people just like them. No one can develop critical thinking when there is largely unnecessary censorship of educational materials. Every single student in TX deserves a quality, free public education where they can grow and learn and become an empathetic, open-minded person who can think analytically and critically. They deserve amazing programs to choose from like AVID, fine arts, foreign language, STEM/STEAM, etc. They also deserve to learn in a public institution free from a religious or political agenda. So, if a family chooses religious private education, by all means they have the freedom to pursue it. But NOT at the cost to taxpayers. If a family chooses a charter school for their child (a charter school that, by the way, 1) doesn't answer to the community because it has no board 2) isn't even based in TX 3) has been exposed for mishandling finances & focusing more of profit than education) well, they STILL have the freedom to send their child there. But it SHOULD NOT BE at the expense of taxpayers. Surely you're familiar with "no taxation without representation" - how is this practicing fiscal responsibility in TX government? Why can't the TX government FULLY FUND public schools already? And now not only can we not do that, but proposing to put MORE money towards schools that don't even have to be held to the same standards as public schools? All I can assume is those who want this, WANT public schools to collapse. And it feels we aren't far from that. It is truly erroneous for anyone to propose this and it is disrespectful to educators, public school staff and taxpayers alike. Almost every ISD in TX is just trying to hold it together, struggling with teacher retention & pay, program cuts, enrollment (too much or not enough), attacks from extremists who want to force public schools to adopt their beliefs (which include forcing religious beliefs, censorship, and oppressing marginalized populations among other things) and so much more. You couldn't even raise allotment per student, and now you want to financially sponsor private institutions through vouchers (or ESAs or whatever you want to call it these days)?! Majority of Texans SAY NO. I SAY NO.
