

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Public Education
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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 SB 8 by Creighton | et al.

Tom Ausley
self
Austin, TX

I have two daughters and a granddaughter who are Texas public school teachers, and they are distraught that the Senate has passed this legislation that will establish an education savings account program. PLEASE SAVE PUBLIC SCHOOLS by refusing to allow this bill out of committee.

Amanda Chaney
self - teacher
Holland, TX

I do not support any bill that is a voucher. This will give public schools less money, and therefore less resources to be able to teach our Texas students. Our students deserve better than this. Students that do not come from a wealthy family are just as important as students who come from wealthy families. They all matter!

Julie Dishman
Self, Contract Specialist
Jersey Village, TX

I oppose SB 8. The proposed education savings account program diverts public tax dollars to private entities or homeschooled students/parents, with little or no accountability or transparency. Public education in Texas is currently ranked 42nd in state spending per student. Texas students would be better served by allocating more funds to support and improve the existing school system rather than diverting these needed funds to private schools and homeschools. School choice already exists: some districts offer transfers between campuses, transfers between adjacent districts, and charter schools. It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Lets work together to ensure we are providing every Texas child with the public education they deserve.

In addition to the proposed voucher system, the proposed bill incorporates onerous review policies regarding books and instructional materials, which would negatively impact Texas independent bookstores and organizations that donate books to schools. The proposed bill also incorporates the "Don't Say Gay" agenda, by banning all information to all K-12 students, including instruction, guidance, activities, and programming regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. This proposal is extremely harmful to our LGBTQ+ students, who already face discrimination and bullying on a daily basis. Please say No to SB 8.

Rene Hoffpauir
Self
Winnie, TX

Any form of ESA or voucher is a tool for dismantling public education. Parents in Texas already have multiple options for school choice. Please do the right thing by Texas Public Students, even those who have no parents to make choices, and do not pass any bill that supports state funding for education other than state public education.

LEIGHANN KAMM
Self
Lewisville, TX

I am against vouchers because it takes taxpayer money away from our already underfunded public schools & sends it to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers. We already have cuts to so many programs, and vouchers threaten to not only ensure those programs never come back, but other critical programs like transportation and nutritional programs will be cut. With the cost of everything skyrocketing, I don't want my family or anyone I know to lose even more programs and services and try to figure out how to private pay for them outside of schools. We will not be able to pay for private school even with the help of these vouchers so you will be taking funds from the schools the majority of Texas children attend and giving it to the schools where parents can already afford to pay privately. My child attends a school other than assigned by our zip code so we know parents already have school choice. Private schools can pick & choose their students so it will be a rude awakening for parents who think they will get to choose a prestigious private school for their child only to be denied entrance. Lastly, I've seen the studies of test scores of children who have gone public to private. The scores drop as much as they did during the pandemic and dropped more than the scores of kids in Louisiana during Hurricane Katrina. Vouchers are a disaster in the making for Texas children. Texans don't want to be last in education in the United States. Please don't push us further that way.

Karen Thurman, Ms
Self, retired public school employee
Emory, TX

Please vote against

Cindy Rubio
Self
San Antonio, TX

Public money should be used for public schools in Texas. Texas currently ranks 49th in the nation regarding public education. Public schools should be full funded and given the resources to succeed before any public money is given to private/charter schools. Vouchers have not been successful in other states. Many of these charter schools will be for profit schools, and I don't think citizens' money should be used to help others make a profit off of these schools. Gov. Abbott and the Texas Legislature need to be transparent when discussing this bill by allowing an open public discussion. As a retired public school teacher who has experienced the needs in our public schools, I am highly suspicious of Gov. Abbott's true reason for promoting these school vouchers. I'm asking you to VOTE NO ON SB 8.

Jessica Waller
The Fort Worth Weekly
Midlothian, TX

This bill would serve to further divide Texans in a culture already inundated with growing tribalism. This is not a healthy future for students. We cannot show them that the solution is giving up when the road gets rough, and avoiding people who don't agree with us. Our differences make us stronger.

Lea Palya
Self / Student Account Advisor
Mckinney, TX

No to vouchers! Keep our public schools public. Tax dollars should not be used to fund private schools at the expense of those who count on public education.

Jenny Schweers
Public school mom and TX PTA member
San Antonio, TX

As a mother of 3 amazing public school students, and PTA advocate, I urge you to fund our schools and teachers at an appropriate level that will better support the demands of educating ALL children in Texas. I urge you to use our state resources to increase the basic allotment per student at schools that have accountability to the public. Continuing to divert funds to charter schools that are not held to the same standards as public schools, or give vouchers to parents to partially fund their private school tuition, will significantly hurt our public schools who are already underfunded. I strongly oppose any ESA or voucher that gives state money to private organizations that do not have to answer for how these funds are used. If our public schools were well funded, that would be another matter, but the simple truth is that they are not.

I am a Christian, and believe my role as a parent is to be my child's primary teacher in life. What they learn is important to my husband and I, and we are thankful to have so many parental rights and choices at our schools, including what kind of books they check out and what health education they receive. We choose public schools because they include everyone from the community, no one is turned away. We believe it makes a stronger society to work for the good of everyone, not just a select few. We believe all children deserve a chance to learn, and be taught to become responsible, contributing members of society.

Yet, by allowing families to take money away from public schools that except all children, these schools will have to make further cuts in staffing and educational resources. This will only cause an increase in "failing" schools, teacher burn out and ultimately an under-educated society. We can and must do better than this for our children!

Please remove any form of ESA or voucher from this bill, and instead focus on adequately funding our public schools and retaining educators. This issue is very important, and deserves to be addressed in public hearings where witnesses can testify in person. Thank you for your time.

Felicity Maxwell
Self
Austin, TX

This bill is bad for Texas parents, bad for Texas students and terrible for Texas Budgets. ESA are not the solution for Texas school - full funding of our current school system is much better and more sustainable for the state over time. And trading testing oversight for voucher program is not a deal that Texas parents will support!

Lindsey Ferguson
Lewisville ISD
Flower Mound, TX

Public schools deserve funding, specifically title one campuses who serve the largest percentage of homeless students and students from poverty. Private schools do not encounter the same challenges. Please come speak to students at Lewisville Elementary School and personally meet the students who will be negatively impacted by this bill.

Andreanna Martinez, Assistant Principal
Calhoun County ISD
Victoria, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Kathy Beattie
Self, teacher
Dallas, TX

Strongly protest this bill which does not represent the best interests of children. Keep public schools strong and fully funded to better create well-educated adults.

Barbara Kaster, Mrs.
Self retired teacher
Corsicana, TX

Unless you have a degree in education you need to stay in your own lane. I am from a family of generation of teachers. You are trying to bankrupt the public schools and gain further control of public school education. We swore an oath to not discuss religion, politics and sex in our classroom with any student. My rep Cody Harris lied about not approving school vouchers to get elected. I would call lying like this as a lack of morals. I have also worked many years as a judge on the early voting ballot board. My father was a state representative for Wise county. His father was Wise county clerk. My mother father was Navarro county sheriff. His father was a lawyer and I believe DA. Her brother was Navarro County district clerk. My father and his mother were both teachers. His nieces two were teachers. Mothers side of family including my sister and myself were both teachers. Cousins 8 teachers no one taught the same subject. Together we could teach all subjects K-12. I hope I left know one out of my list. I have a neice and nephew that are award winning teachers. Two second cousins a choir teacher and band director. I would like to know your education level and how many teachers changed you life for the better. Can you teach and control behavior of 30 students? Changing grade levels so different lesson plans per day. Look into heart and memory you will see teachers that made you who you became and why. Please do not break the public school system. There are always problems that need to fixed on any school campus but it will brought to administration by other teachers.

Kendra Camarena
Self
Houston, TX

I oppose SB8. Why?

No to voucher- school choice already exist in Texas and the current law does not create an equal playing field for all school systems- example- private schools exempt from STAAR/standardized testing. It does not ensure students with disabilities get the services they need if accepted in private school nor does it provide a guarantee for students to be accepted.

No to more standardized testing- testing and prep monopolizes the school day/year already and does not provide adequate data in a timely matter to parents or teachers. Additionally, the test are not written to the appropriate reading levels for the grades assessed. My suggestion is for each of you to take a few passages from our current STAAR test and insert them in any readability analyzer on the web to see for your self. From a teacher's perspective- it is important to use formative assessments to identify where a student is. These formative tests provide immediate feedback that teachers can use to guide their instruction and teachers use these constantly to evaluate student learning.

Yes to eliminating STAAR.

Yes to eliminating STAAR as a graduation requirement.

Cost of TEA expansion and vouchers is ridiculous - this money needs to go to public schools to reduce the impact of inflation and provide a needed pay raise to teachers. School districts have been advocating loudly for the need to increase funding and we are and will continue to lose teachers if we don't begin to pay them what they are worth.

The school rating system is a farce and not reliable. The needle is continually moving by TEA to create failure. Tests changes, levels for approaches, meets, and masters changes, CTE certification tests allowed changes (especially if a high number of students are doing well on that test), data used for the assessment lags a year for certain domains, TEA creates it own rules such as defaulting schools to a failing grade if they do not meet 2 of the 3 domains, and it truly does not reflect at times the work a campus is doing based on the population they serve. I know because I was a teacher at one of those schools. If public schools and charters schools must be held accountable by this system so should private schools and homeschool programs funded by tax payer dollars.

Lastly, as a history teacher, I think it is important to remember why public education was established- to give every kid an opportunity to the America Dream. Public schools are the only schools required and take graciously every child. Public school educators do their very best to provide each student with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful regardless of their disability, income level, sex, color, country of origin, or religion. It is unfair to not fund public schools adequately and fund an entire "ESA" program. Fund public schools, increase teacher pay, hold charters accountable, and keep private schools private and separate from any government regulation.

Oppose SB8

Nikki Meador
Texans for public education
Marquez, TX

Under no circumstances should money be taken from public schools to fund vouchers! Public schools are already grossly underfunded and yet the state still wants to take money from them to fund charter schools. There is already school choice in Texas if people want to choose homeschool or private school. Rural Texas schools will really suffer and there are typically no charter or private schools in the areas. The state should stop spending 90 million on the STAAR test, they should invest this money into the public schools & determine some other way of measuring accountability without high stakes testing. The STAAR is not age appropriate since it is historically written 2 grade levels above where the kids actually are and is it unfair to students and teachers. There are some kids that are never going to pass the STAAR due to learning disabilities and handicaps, but they are still required to take the test and teachers and schools are penalized for those students failing. It is not making the children of Texas smarter, they spend the majority of the year learning material for a test, when they could be spending their time in school actually learning material that they need to know and that would benefit them. Every educator that I have ever spoken to about the STAAR believes it is unfair & inappropriate. Maybe the state board of education should actually meet with some educators who have spent time with students in a classroom setting, to get their input on how they think school accountability could be best assessed. I know that no actual classroom educator believes the STAAR is the best indicator for accountability, for the kids, or for their education.

Cheryle Simmans
Texans for Public Education
Victoria, TX

As a retired educator and counselor, I have always believed that the vast majority of Texas educators want the best for their students and every student in our state. That has been my experience in my 35 years in education. Our public education system is the foundation for our students' and ultimately our state's and society's success. That philosophy is evident in our state constitution in that the state is charged with providing for a public education. Therefore, I am opposed to vouchers. First, vouchers will take public taxpayer money from public schools for students to attend private or charter schools. Those schools do not have to account to the public taxpayer for how they spend the money, for their student outcomes, for the qualifications of their teachers to teach their content area, or for the content of their instruction. They do not have to administer the state tests and be evaluated and scored. Yet, these are requirements for which public schools are scrutinized and are held accountable. Secondly, I have an issue with the ability of private and charter schools to pick and choose which students they will accept. In other words, they are allowed to deny admission to students with learning, behavioral, or language problems that the public schools are required to accept and to educate because Texas provides a free public education to all of its students. To me, it creates legal discrimination at public expense. Finally, vouchers are touted as "parents' choice" to choose what school their child will attend, when, in reality, the schools will do all the choosing. Parents have always had a choice to send their children to private schools if they wanted to pay for it. Vouchers will not help the poorer students attend private schools as they will not cover the full cost of tuition or their transportation to and from school. The only ones who will be "helped" are those already attending private school. Vouchers are not good for Texas, for its schools, and most importantly for its students.

Jennifer Ray
Self
Alpine, TX

The Texas Constitution calls for free public schools for our children. Public tax dollars are meant for public schools. Tax payers can not pick and choose which services tax dollars support. Parents can not pick and choose which schools their tax dollars support. Vouchers and ESAs, or any other term, are taking my tax dollars and providing it to a private or religious school that is not required to provide details on how my tax dollars are spent. This is not acceptable. Giving money to private and charter schools with no oversight does not sound like responsible government spending. It sounds more like a plan to funnel money to private entities. I am also appalled that a public meeting can be closed to the public and only allow invited testimonies. This does not sound like a government by the people, for the people.

Tara Hrbacek
Self
Carrollton, TX

I am not in favor of any legislation creating a voucher or educational savings account that would permit the transfer of monies to a private school. Dollars collected from the public should remain only for the benefit of the public. The lack of transparency and accountability regarding how my tax dollars would be used at a private school is a fundamental problem of any type of voucher or educational savings account program. Keep the public dollars with the public.

Amy Lamb-Polka
Self/Teacher
The Woodlands, TX

Against vouchers!

Carin Adermann
Self
San Antonio, TX

I'm a Republican and do NOT support vouchers! Support our public schools and ALL children of Texas! No, no, no to education savings account programs!

Debra Rhoades
Self/public school educator for 31 years
Arlington, TX

Public tax dollars should go towards fully funding public education. Texas should be ashamed to be close to the bottom in school funding. Parents already have school choice. Testing is outdated; however, schools that receive funding should have to have the same requirements. They should have to service students who are in special educations, 504, and ESL programs, all minorities, and students with disciplinary issues. We don't get to pick and choose what students we educate, yet we do an excellent job without proper funding. I'm at a school that has a large transfer student population. Parents choose for their children to attend my school for the opportunities that we have but coming to my school doesn't take money away from public schools. There is no data for increased testing. We are tested out. In fact, Texas should eliminate one of the two English EOC tests in high school. It is redundant to have two tests over the same basic TEKS. Adding more tests is just a money pit and does not benefit the students or teachers. I have seen a lot of changes over the last thirty years; however, the attacks on public education over the last five have been the most alarming and draining. We need to find ways to decrease class sizes, properly fund programs, decrease the amount of work being added to educators, and give schools the right to hold students accountable for their actions. Please listen to teachers and administrators not the lobbyists and voucher advocates. Thank you,
Debra Rhoades

Susie duBois
Self
Killeen, TX

I absolutely reject support of any type of school voucher. I am a republican and am ashamed to see my party not taking care of ALL of our children. Vouchers have PROVEN to be a big fail over and over in other states. They will only further the divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots". Shame on my party for trying to underhandedly push this bill through. Stop it now!

Kathleen Houlihan

Self, parent at Maplewood Elementary

Austin, TX

I am against bill 8 or any legislation that further impoverishes our public education system. Texas should proudly find public education because it makes great Texans! I'm a sixth generation Texan and want our state to continue to innovate and thrive and grow, and we can't do that if we don't support public education with full funding. Creating vouchers will draw money away from public education increasing the educational disparity in our state and creating more drains on resources.

Cassandra WeaverCassandra Weaver

Self/Educator

Ennis, TX

Please protect public education and public education teachers. We need your support to keep public education alive in Texas.

Diane Evidente

Self

Carrollton, TX

I'm vehemently opposed to any voucher program or system that removes funds from public education. Per the TX constitution, it is required that the state fund a public school system. Over the last 20+ years, the legislature has systematically dismantled funding and has slowly but surely choked the life out of public Ed while yelling that public ed is "failing" students and parents. It is in the general good that we provide free public education for ALL students. Vouchers only help those who can already afford to send their kids to private schools. School choice is readily available to parents.

As a 23 yr veteran teacher, I've seen up close the lack of support both in funding and other areas from the state. Teachers are asked to be all - content experts, counselors, psychologists, parents, managers - yet with all we do, our state continues reduce funding of public Ed.

Come see what we do everyday. No one is indoctrinating students. TEA sets the TEKS we much teach. Parents readily have a voice in everything we do because there is a board that must listen and if not will be voted out. Parents can be and are in constant contact with the school and teachers - they already have the ability to ask and be given access to lessons and curriculum and novels.

But at private schools, parents do not have the same voice and cannot stand up for their students. There's no elected board that must answer to the parents and stakeholders. They teach their standards - not TEAs - which may be religious in nature. And you want to send public money to them. Private schools do not have to accept SPED/504 students. They can, at will, kick out students that they don't want. Public schools are required by federal & state law to take ALL STUDENTS regardless of behavior or learning ability. And ultimately, private schools will just raise tuition to continue to price out the very people you think vouchers will help. These are the facts of the situation.

Bottom line - our best defense in fixing our nation and the problems we are facing is a free, well-funded education system that is dedicated to serving ALL STUDENTS AND PARENTS.

Dean Adermann
Self / United Airlines
San Antonio, TX

Texas House of Representatives:

Please consider voting against SB 8 this next week. Public Texas Education is strong, but will continue to decay if SB 8 passes. Texans do not need false hope that is laid out in SB 8. Please make the positive choice of defeating this Bill that was attempted to be passed in the dark of night. Thank you for your time. Dean Adermann / San Antonio

Don Harridge
Concerned adult
Seminole, TX

A vote for school vouchers or ESA's is showing that you only care for a few select students. In Texas I do not want my tax money being spent on some rich private school that has no accountability. Fully fund public education. D. Harridge.

Donna Gregg
Self - teacher
McKinney, TX

I'm against school vouchers. Tax money stays with public schools. Start listening to educators

Shannon Goheen
LISD
McKinney, TX

NO to vouchers!

Janie Ramos
Self
Ropesville, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Annette Brown
Self - Retired Sr Director Supply Chain Frito-Lay
Frisco, TX

I do not support any bill that provides vouchers toward private education.

I'm public school educated for secondary, private and public college degree. I have been on a Christian College board of trustees for 12 years and an accredited private pre-school through elementary school board for 9 years. I value both offerings.

I also know private education vouchers will not cover enough of the tuition costs to enable access by all. It will be a desegregation tool that leaves behind those with less wealth or even access, to be given a public school education with less diversity of wealth, race and thought. We will further bifurcate our population when we need to be giving hands to pull up all together.

We are cratering our growth in the future, between not improving our education for all to provide a strong workforce, and not wanting to bring in immigrants to close the gaps, yet wanting businesses to return to US production. Basic logic says the equation will fail. We cannot do that with an eye to protect the already wealthier and supposed Christian. My Bible says we are to focus on ways to protect the widow, orphan, poor and homeless. Vouchers in truth support the already enrolled in private education, aka those with wealth.

Please reject SB 8.

Thank you,

Annette Brown
Frisco TX resident since 1991

Jody Brown
Self
Frisco, TX

I am opposed to public funds going to private schools in any form.

Melanie Riggs
Teachers
Kingwood, TX

Our public school system is under threat. I have taught for 34 years. And I have seen the devastating effects of No Child Left Behind, STAAR. And TTESS. More and more regulations intended to help students have run off fabulous teachers.

This bill will further divert funds from public schools.

The only way to fix what has been broken is to give schools the right to discipline children in an effective way. To hold parents accountable for the violent behavior of their children, to give is time to teach kindness and empathy as we have done for years. And to give is rich materials to teach with that include phonics. phonemic awareness, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, rich literature, science and social studies textbooks, grammar textbooks. These all have been taken away in order to "engage" students, leaving teachers to scramble for materials.

Truly, all we need is to be given the respect we used to have.

As for funding, paras, custodians, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers need to be paid a living wage.

Money needs to go to counselors and behavior interventionists.

We need our power back to discipline without our hands being tied. Consequences need to be fair and reasonable, and violent students do not need to be allowed to disrupt the learning of all.

Kathy Laney
Self
Wills Point, TX

Stand up for public education! NO VOUCHERS!

Sonja Phillips, Rev.
Self - Pastor
Seguin, TX

I am a supporter of public education as I believe it provides excellent skills and knowledge to be successful in a growing and diverse world. Too much money has already been stripped from Public Education for special interests and pet projects. Private education needs to be privately funded. I do not support SB 8 and I respectfully asked that this bill be voted against.

Bobby Ott, Dr.
Temple ISD
Temple, TX

Temple ISD board of trustees and administration completely opposes SB8 and ESAs. Setting up a system where one entity can pick and choose students, as well as withdraw students, without a grievance or due process will leave public schools with students that non public schools do not want. This divides children in society and inevitably divides our future.

Zenovia Kidd
PASTORS for Texas Children, Retired Teacher of 32 years
Weatherford, TX

Public \$\$ for Public Schools! Vouchers take away money from our schools. Please, as a PUBLIC servant, support public schools.

Paul Shirar, Dr.
Na
McKinney, TX

I wonder if you geriatric, self-aggrandizing, 'legislating out of you're personal self-interest' grifters are truly cognizant of the fact that WE THE PEOPLE exist and are watching your negligent governance with dismay and disbelief. If this were pre-revolutionary France, you'd be facing the guillotine! Best believe, you arrogant, condescending, self-important sons of bitches! Do you remember the slogan "Don't Mess With Texas?" Y'all are fucking with my State and with my family's ability to live and thrive here despite being a 6th generation Texan whose father served in the Air Force for 28 years and then another 18 as a federal official worth the DOD.

Bennett Ratliff, Hon.
Self - Small Business Owner
Plano, TX

Voucher bills provide NO transparency, accountability or oversight for the small business owners, empty nesters, senior citizens and others who pay the majority of taxes to support our public schools. The bill should require any school accepting a voucher, or any parent using a voucher, to be subject to the same rules as public schools today. I want to know what they are teaching (curriculum), how they are performing (STARR testing), how they are spending my money (budget oversight), and the qualifications of the instructors. I want to participate in the selection of their governing board (trustee elections), be able to attend and participate in their meetings (open meetings), vote on their performance and replace them if needed, and make open records requests. I DO NOT want my tax money spent on religious indoctrination of any kind, regardless of denomination, that is the responsibility of parents and their faith communities, not my tax dollars.

I am also stunned and disappointed that every voucher bill proposed excludes any student with learning differences. The vouchers do not require the accepting schools to accept or provide education services to any student with disabilities, that is DISCRIMINATION! EVERY child in Texas must have access to the same education as every other child and excluding our most vulnerable students from the classroom at any facility is not a Texas value.

Robert Stricklin
Self
Helotes, TX

This bill will only destroy our education system. If you truly wish to help our children then let's look at raising teacher salaries and lowering class sizes. Private schools score better on testing because they can pick and choose their students while keeping the student to teacher ratio low. Voucher system will only cause undo stress on good schools while poor scoring schools become empty. Let's fix our educational system by recruiting the best and brightest to the classroom.

Lea Drewery
Self
Justin, TX

No to vouchers!

Stacy Bryan
Self/Teacher
Abilene, TX

As a teacher of Texas, I strongly oppose vouchers. They are not good for public education,

Elizabeth Morrison
Self
Conroe, TX

I do not support this bill, I will not support anyone who votes for it.

Casey Kress
Myself
Spring, TX

I am against Vouchers.

Rolinda Schmidt
Kerrville ISD
Kerrville, TX

Chair Buckley and Committee Members,

Thank you for your hard work and long hours this legislative session. Your thoughtful deliberation on this bill and your committee substitute is much appreciated.

On behalf of Kerrville ISD and myself, I oppose SB 8 and the House committee substitute.

Private schools are not going to accept our most challenging students with disabilities, the amount of the voucher is not enough to serve the most educationally challenged or disadvantaged student, and the public schools ultimately are going to be left with fewer dollars to meet the needs of all students.

Thank you.

Rolinda Schmidt
Kerrville ISD, Board President

Alexis Neumann, Dr.
Self, taxpayer, educator
Lorena, TX

I'm not opposed to the creation of an education savings account. However, I am opposed to funds are being taken away from public schools that are constitutionally required to serve all students at any point they decide to attend that school. Schools need to be ready to serve any and all students. I also am greatly opposed to the use of taxpayer dollars to go towards any organization or business that does not honor the separation of church and state or have full accountability for services to kids with disabilities, academic integrity and outcomes, and fiscal responsibility. If the savings accounts would only go towards businesses or organizations that are not religious-based, provide all of the state and federal required services, and adhere to academic and fiscal accountability measures as the charter schools and traditional schools are required to do then that seems a bit more logical and constitutionally allowable. Of course these funds must be in addition to funding put in place to ensure that a local school stands ready to serve any child that walks through their doors at any time.

Kevin Richardson
Self
Amarillo, TX

No to vouchers. Fully fund public education.

Adrienne Kingston

Self, stay-at-home-mom, former teacher

Manvel, TX

As a mother of two children in public schools, I am ADAMANTLY opposed to vouchers in any former (including all the nonsense language used to try to spin vouchers in other terms). They are bad for our schools, bad for children, and bad for Texas. Fully fund and support public schools and give Texas children and the state of Texas itself the future they deserve.

Pauline Strong, Dr.

Self, professor

Austin, TX

SB8 is a dangerous bill that will weaken public education in Texas. My children and grandchildren have relied on the public school system, and I want to keep it strong. Our legislature should want this too. Public education supports democracy, the economy, and the advancement of the state. SB8 violates the separation of church and state, one of the founding principles of our nation. Instead of supporting private schools that do not have the obligation to serve all Texas children, the legislature should fully public schools. Please vote down this disastrous bill.

Dolores Martinez

Self

Garland, TX

We do not want vouchers for private schools that we can even get our kids into!!! Quit trying to pass this secretly!!! We have a right to oppose this but you all are trying to pass this as a favor to Greg Abbott and his friends with money!!! Why is it fair for us to pay for private schools for rich people???

Joe Kucera

Lorena ISD

Lorena, TX

Please vote "No" to SB 8 (Vouchers/ESA). Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers and private schools are not required to accept all students. In addition, private schools are not required to hire certified teachers. Vouchers/ESA give private schools the choice and not parents.

If you pass a voucher bill, please make private schools follow the same state mandated requirements as public schools. In order to have competition, we must all play by the same rules.

I appreciate all you do for the state of Texas. Thank you for your service.

Herbert O'Neil, Mr.

Hempstead ISD

Hempstead, TX

As superintendent of schools for Hempstead ISD I am asking that public funds stay with public schools. Our teachers desperately need a large raise and money for private schools lowers that need. Let's do the right thing and support our public schools. I am fully against this bill.

Adam Holland
Self - PR Practitioner
Seabrook, TX

Call them what you will, but they are vouchers by any name — and they cross the church/state line. The battle cry has been “choice.” Parents have always had a choice. Please consider how devastating this will be to public schools. Do you really want such a legacy?

Terry Swenson
Self
Temple, TX

Texas children spend too much of their class time being prepped for testing. Let teachers teach!

Ginger Evans
Self - stay at home mom
Spring, TX

I am against vouchers. I’m not sure who came along and thought this would be a good idea, but it’s ridiculous! It doesn’t help our kids, so stop trying to shove it down our throats as a positive move.

Christy Hood
self/teacher
Temple, TX

VOTE NO TO VOUCHERS!

Daniel Cernero
Self, Communications
Leander, TX

Please do not support this bill, which takes money that should be used to more deeply invest in public schools and instead diverts it toward un-regulated, no-accountability private schools. Do what’s best for all Texans by not giving a tax break to the richest citizens who can afford to send their kids to private school.

Without this bill, families still have *choice* on where or how their child receives schooling — except they should have to do this on their own dime if they are interested in a non-public school option. Public tax dollars should only go to entities required to accept all students and ones playing by the same set of accountability standards.

Vote this bill down and instead raise the public school basic allotment by \$1,000 per student to just cover inflation seen in the past 3 years.

Eddie Hill, Tech director
La Porte ISD
Houston, TX

If you are going to create a voucher system, then all educational systems need to abide by the same rules that public education systems have to abide by. It isn’t fair that charter schools can cherry pick students and not provide services to many of them more difficult students the public schools are always left with.

Kristi Branton
Self
Temple, TX

I am a public school teacher and I am AGAINST any sort of voucher program, education savings account, or school "choice" coupon program. This will defund our public schools and lower the education standard in Texas.

Terry Johnson
self
Holland, TX

I think the public should have voice in EVERYTHING that affects state laws and regulations.

Jacqueline Whitehead
self- public school educator
Troy, TX

Teachers are required to undergo professional training and earn advanced degrees in order to teach. Teachers and the school system should be able to be trusted to make the decisions on what is key in education for all students

Erin Bass
Belton ISD Trustee and self
Belton, TX

I respectfully submit this comment on behalf of myself and as a Trustee for Belton ISD. Throughout my career as a teacher and as a parent of four children, one with special needs, I know and understand the positive impact of public education on students.

We oppose the diversion of funds for K-12 public schools (including new revenue) for school voucher, educational savings account, or charter school programs until the State of Texas funds public schools above the national average. It is clear that we, in Texas, don't fund education fully and yet we hear constantly that an ESA is the solution. We realize public schools aren't perfect, but diverting funds to outside organizations to serve students would only exacerbate the issue.

Properly funding public schools to meet the needs of each and every student is the solution we should be exploring in Texas, not ESAs. Proper funding for public schools enables the State to maintain accountability and transparency for our tax dollars, my tax dollars, while serving the educational needs of our students. Without accountability, without transparency, and without quality control we can't expect ESAs, private schools, and outside providers to properly support the learning needs of each and every student.

There is still great work to be done in public schools!

Thank you,
Erin Bass

Denise Petter
Self
Pleasanton, TX

An education savings account program is another name for voucher. Vouchers hurt public education, the system our country put into place to provide all children with an education. Vote no on SB 8.

Samantha Edwards

Self - Temple High School teacher and coach

Nolanville, TX

I am (along with the majority if not all public educators) AGAINST this bill. Public schools and educators are already hurting financially and this bill is trying to take the little that we do receive away for private institutions?! They are not held to the same outrageous standards that public schools are. If they are receiving public school money, they should be expected to have the same guidelines we do. This is only going to segregate kids by their "financial class" when private schools decide to pick and choose who they allow while public schools continue to accept every student with open arms. I love what I do and I don't see how anyone could see this as acceptable. Money going towards private schools that are meant for public schools, but still being held to a lower/no standard.

Rhonda Ramirez

self

Temple, TX

I am against Senate Bill 8. I am a public school teacher and this bill directly by redirecting money from public schools to private schools. The entire reason there are two types of schools is so that we can afford a equal education for all. Public school try their best to create this. Private school is a choice. with that choice should come a buy in. that buy in is not public funds that buy in should come directly from the families that want to participate in those private schools. Please do not support this bill it will limit even more what we can do as public school teachers and will increase the teaching shortage even more that it is now.

JIMMY DISLER

self - public school employee

LEANDER, TX

This is aimed at harming public education and really only benefits the wealthy. If you have ESA, then you should have a stipulation that it can only be used at a facility that has all of the same requirements as public education. And I mean all. Charter Schools have a fraction of the requirements of public education systems, and you promote them as being superior to public ed. Put all of the same requirements then lets compare them to public ed. Make the playing field level.

jason gilpin

citizen of Texas (the greatest State)

Buckholts, TX

I am for sb8

Frances Carney

Self

Corpus Christi, TX

We taxpayers DO NOT want our tax dollars to go to private schools!! That is unAmerican. Do not destroy our public schools!! We will vote you out!

John Batson

self

Temple, TX

Please vote against this bill for school vouchers that will take funds away from our already short-funded public school system in Texas. We are among the bottom already in public school funding, and this is not the answer.

Vickie Pine
Self
Savannah, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

MASON PERES, Board Trustee
Myself as a LPISD Board Trustee
La Porte Tx, TX

We cannot do this to public schools, as a republic this hurts me to see so many conservatives behind this movement. With La Porte ISD we also have to face robinhood which should be abolished! \$60,000,000 we will send back this year

Karen Batson
Self/teacher and parenr
Temple, TX

The establishment of an educational savings account program will not improve the situation for Texas school children. This is not parental choice. This will allow private schools to pick their students and remove dollars from already underfunded public schools. Historically these programs in other states have not helped poor students attend private schools, but instead subsidize students that already attend private schools.

The legislature would be better off getting rid of the STAAR test and using those funds to raise our per student funding to comparable levels as other states. Supporting public education as the backbone of our democracy is part of this bodies responsibility.

I urge you to choose Texas kids over special interests and vote no to this voucher plan.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Devin Padavil, Superintendent of Taylor ISD
Taylor ISD
Taylor, TX

I appeal to our elected representatives to hold schools accountable for providing the experience and opportunities our children deserve. Appropriate funding and an understandable accountability system are the foundation of this.

School choice does not include every child. Transportation, retaining students with challenging behaviors, and providing services to all kids in special education are just some of the key differences between private and public schools. The state determines the curriculum and the accountability measures that private schools do not need to address. The implementation of SB8 will likely create a distinct separation between the haves and have nots.

Lacey Hall
self
Temple, TX

I am against charter and private school vouchers This type of option will create a further gap between students of lower socioeconomic levels as well as heavily impact public education funding which is already insufficient. Teachers are leaving the profession at a staggering rate and this will cause further burden on the public school system. Instead of providing vouchers, we should be providing funding for public education. We should be making the teaching profession one worth entering for young people and one worth staying in for veteran teachers.

Clare Stratmann
Self - PEIMS Specialist
Temple, TX

Please vote NO to education savings accounts and school vouchers. Education is NOT a business and it cannot be treated like one where money goes to the "company" that creates a product that the "customer" wants. EVERY child in Texas deserves a quality education. Let's support our public schools and find ways to better support teachers. School vouchers and education savings account programs do not help support our public schools.

Kyle Mosley
TISD
Temple, TX

Taxpayer garnered public funds should not be used to fund private schools. That money is needed in public schools by public schools. The wealthy is stealing from public schools and that money should be used to subsidize raises for our already underpaid public school teachers and to support our students and improve public school facilities and programs. Thank you.

Brian Thomas
Self, digital preservationist
Austin, TX

I implore the committee members and by extension the house if it gets that far to say no to SB8. This law, if passed, will create a gateway towards the ultimate privatization of public schooling as parents choose to send their kids not to schools providing education based on rigorous standards of science, math and history; but send their children to schools that agree with their world view. Regardless of whether it is fact based or accurate. In a world where the agency I work for was regularly asked to self inflict budget cuts and with education dollars flowing to parents who have kids in private schools paid for by the state, when times are lean where is the money going to be taken from? More important, when we have school teachers barely surviving and underfunded schools, if there's money to spend it should be sent on schools established to serve EVERYONE not just the few.

Finally, the recent US supreme court decision in Maine has made it so that voucher dollars MUST be made available to schools that indoctrinate students into the religion even when it means NOT teaching subjects accurately. For example, the results of the scientific method shows that climate change is real and caused by human action, that the world is roughly 4billion years old, that chemical bonds keep everything together and more. If the religion whose schools kids get sent to says otherwise, the school can call that sciency stuff bunk and the real reality is X. It's not an accident that this bill is being pushed after the supreme court decision. The separation of religion and government is essential to maintaining freedom of religion and other freedoms. Allowing MY TAX DOLLARS into a system known to be REQUIRED to be available to spend it on religion over reality , is a public endorsement of religion and a serious breach despite what people would have you believe. Invest in the school system if we have the money not in private pockets.

As an aside, my religious parents homeschooled my from 5-8th grade to protect me and my siblings from the world. It was really until college that I was fully exposed to actual facts of science and natural history. The charter school I went to after tried but wasn't able to get it all for my lack of background. Forgive the phrase but there but for the grace of god I'd be severely misinformed about reality and how things work. They did what they thought was right but that doesn't mean that it was right. I truly resent that I had to go to college to learn about real history and real science.

Sharla Ferguson
T.I.S.D.
Temple, TX

NO.

Mike Bickham, Mr.
Self - High School Teacher / Football Coach
Bartlett, TX

Absolutely NO - I totally disagree with the voucher program.

Catrina Lotspeich
Self - musician
Temple, TX

The state of Texas has consistently underfunded education and now you want to try and spread the precious few resources you do provide across too many entities. You are giving my tax dollars to private, often religious, schools that WILL “indoctrinate” students and not holding them to the same standards as public schools. The simple fact that you see no need to even try to make this fair and accessible to ALL students shows that you are not motivated by a true care and compassion for the children of Texas, but by your own political and religious agenda. Our students deserve better!

Stephenie Berg
self-Special Education Teacher
Belton, TX

I opposed to SB. As an educator in the public school system, I know that our funding is already limited. Teachers already go out of their way to provide supplies and opportunities for their students that the state and districts either do not have the funds for, or simply won't supply. Allowing families to receive public funds so that their students can attend private, and in most cases, religious schools, does nothing but deplete the limited public education funding we have. It also boldly crosses the line between church and state. I also find it odd that conservative pro-voucher parties want to claim that the public school system is "indoctrinating" students, but no one sees religious school that include religious studies in their curriculum as a form of indoctrination. The voucher program would be detrimental to those already in low income areas as well by taking tax dollars and funding away from already struggling areas. From what I have seen and researched, the only benefits of the voucher program are that those that can already afford private education, won't have to pay for it any longer, giving them even more of an advantage than those that currently have no advantages as it is.

Michael Cardona, Superintendent
San Marcos CISD
San Marcos, TX

I have always believed in the legislative process and as a former student whose parent made a choice many years ago, I am disheartened to see this unChristian method of promoting a policy that is hypocritical at its core and detrimental to the public school system. This method is beneath you and you should refrain from pushing this disastrous policy. To move money out of the public system to a system that creates larger government with no accountability flies in the face of conservative policy. Parent empowerment and choice are just another method for resegregating schools. Special education is currently underfunded and the state has neglected funding regular education to its fullest. I urge you to not take up SB8 until you fix the current system. The fact that you all are willing to give out \$7500 while underfunding public education speaks to this neoliberalist approach to privatizing public education. No one can answer the simple question of if a family pays \$4500 in property taxes and pulls 2 kids out of the system to get \$15,000, where is the money coming from. It isn't coming from that family so the notion that the money is the parents is a false narrative. You all are supposed to be better than this. You are to uphold the constitution. I have stated publicly that should you want to do this, then cancel STAAR, only test in areas we need to test, use that money to fund your pet project. Let everyone play by the same rules, public and private. Fully fund special education and raise the basic allotment to \$7,500, equivalent to the money you want to dole out. Make the rules fair for everyone because right now, you know in your heart of hearts, that the rules are not fair and this is bad policy. You should see public education as an investment. This idea of funding two systems is just not conservative and the roots of the policy are not Texan policy.

As a product of private education, I know my parents had choice then, just like they do now. This policy will divide Texas. I urge you to not vote for SB8 until you have fully fixed the funding in all areas for the public school system. Listen to your constituents, not donors, and certainly not those who are not Texan. Keep Texas the great state it is. I am not sure why we want to emulate other states since we lead the nation in so many areas. Thank you for your service. Thank you for reading this.

Jonathan Brooks
Self
Temple, TX

I oppose this bill.

Dr. Theodore Clevenger, Superintendent
Bartlett ISD
Bartlett, TX

As a collective body, Bell County Superintendents are AGAINST any form of vouchers or ESA's. Additionally, any superintendents I've ever talked to are 100% against any form of voucher. Thank you for reading this comment. God bless

Roxanna Luna
Temple ISD
Temple, TX

This is not a good idea for Texas children. There is a higher need for funds in public education than the PRIVIATE Schools!!!

Michael Scott
Self
Waxahachie, TX

This is a back door vote to get vouchers through. Vouchers are just a tax break for rich families, and will not help low/middle income families. This is not what is needed. What is needed is what is laid out in the State Constitution, fully fund and appropriate and free public education!

Chane Rascoe, Superintendent
Self
LAMPASAS, TX

The bill will drain up to \$100 million from already-underfunded Texas public schools. As a member of the Teacher Task Force, pay raises were the number one finding of need for our school systems to improve. By not providing for this need, we are ultimately failing our children. There is also no mechanism in the bill that will ensure that the students who use ESAs will receive an education that meets any standard of quality. The proposed bill prohibits any state agency or the State Board of Education from taking steps to regulate the educational program of an education service provider or vendor of educational products that receives funds distributed under this program. There are additional equity issues regarding restrictions private schools place on open enrollment. Please don't pass this bill.

Truman Thompson
Arlington Resicdents for Inclusion
Arlington, TX

You are giving vouchers for more money than you're allotting for students of public schools. Why not just raise the amount for public schools. We have 32 billion dollar surplus. Private school is a personal choice and should be a personal expense.

Andy Bass
Self, electrical contractor/business owner
Belton, TX

Please keep public funds in public school, or have private entities subject to the same accountability standards. The regulation on one side of the table makes no sense, especially if both parties receive taxpayer funds. If special education is a concern, which I have a child with special needs served in public school, then focus the attention on fixing/helping/supporting the teachers who are qualified to teach them and burdened by so many legislated mandates.

Respectfully,

AB

Denise Ayres
Self
Temple, TX

Public Education is in danger and SB8 will create grave danger for a free education for ALL children. There is no common accountability system in place across non-public education entities including private, charter and homeschool systems. There is no plan in place for transitioning voucher funds when students transfer schools. There is no mandatory acceptance requirement in place for private and many charter schools. All of this creating inequality! I urge you to stand AGAINST SB8 and focus needed funding on PUBLIC education in order to create equity and opportunity for all children to have access to learning and thus succeeding.

Gene Kasprzyk
Self - retired educator
Corpus Christi, TX

There is no data to support the suggestion that this will increase the quality of education in Texas. In states that have gone this route the opposite is true. This is nothing more than politics, playing the side that is needed to get votes. How about we do what is best for educating our young people by encouraging teaching as a profession and paying a professional wage?

Judy Malandrucolo, Retired Public School Teacher
Texas Alliance Retired Americans
Plano, TX

Vouchers have NO PLACE in Texas education. The fact that the Education Committee is trying to “backdoor” this through tells Texans all we need to know about the dirty politics going on to push this horrible concept through. Rural schools, Superintendents, and Texas citizens have already made it clear we DO NOT want to use Public School funds to finance rich private schools NOR for-profit Charter schools. My tax dollars MUST NOT be used for vouchers!!

Troy Mooney, Dr.
Self, Chief Academic Officer
Midlothian, TX

There is no win-win from any "compromise" that results in the creation of a special fund for pursuit of unregulated private education solutions in #txed (even if you throw in much needed STAAR reform. If pro-voucher folks are sincere, and they likely are, in only wanting more options for families, then correct offer is a fund to pursue fully regulated private education solutions, not what is offered in SB8 which is pursuit of fully autonomous private education solutions. There will be private education entities that will agree to meet regulated conditions. They will be the ones who want to provide options for families. The private entities who reject the regulations will be the ones that prefer their current service model. And that is ok. Any attempt to tie much needed STAAR reform to enable vouchers is an unnecessary negotiation. The failings of STAAR merit reform without any need to also pass a bad voucher bill.

Robert Case
Temple ISD
Temple, TX

I am against school vouchers. The system has not worked in other states. It will create a large divide in education which will ultimately result in the "haves and have nots" style of education. We could just decide to use the money to better fund our public schools and teachers.

Christa Duewall, Ms.
self, educator
Belton, TX

I do NOT think vouchers are a good idea for Texas. I believe that students should attend the school in which they are zoned for, because even if the assigned teacher is not serving the student well - the parent can always request a classroom change. The second teacher should be able to assist the student in receiving the best education in the world!! Not all teachers can serve all students, but there are teachers in the state of Texas that can reach the hard to teach!! Again, I do NOT believe vouchers are a good idea for TEXAS!

Clay McChristian
Graham HS
Graham, TX

Vote no on SB 8. This bill would only help upper families and hurt the middle and lower class ones. Funding aside, it will remove the upper class families from public schools. These families are very involved and vocal people who do a great job being involved in their child's education. This involvement makes schools better.

William Rachal
Temple ISD
Temple, TX

Honestly, as an educator, you should do what is best for the kids of Texas. If you think that vouchers are the way to go, then by all means, go for it. I think that some healthy competition is good for the Texas public schools. This is not a popular opinion for most Texas public school superintendents (and thusly teachers that are given false information within those districts), because they want to protect their overpaid jobs (and administrator friend's jobs).

Do what is right, regardless of whether or not it is politically popular.

Robert Ringo
Salado ISD
Salado, TX

I am completely against school vouchers. All you are doing is taking money away from the public school system with this. Who can really say that a private school educates better than a public school?

Danny Welch
Self Retired School Counselor
Temple, TX

Vouchers will be the ruin of both public and private education. Public schools will suffer from a loss of funding. Private schools will suffer the unintended consequence of allowing any government to get their foot in the door. A foot in the door will result in the same unfunded mandates for private schools that now exist in public schools. Government money always comes with strings attached. Instead of weakening public schools by throwing money at private schools, the state should address the school funding issue. Our school funding system is a hodgepodge mess of ridiculousness. Private schools do not need state funding. Private schools are called "private" for a reason.

Emily George
Self, teacher
Austin, TX

Please say not to vouchers of any kind and fully fund our public schools!

Melissa Davis, MTSS coordinator
Lewisville ISD
Flower mound, TX

This bill is unfair to public school funding. Public schools take all students, not a select few. Put the funding in the correct place! Districts already send millions of dollars back in recapture and to take away more is criminal. Schools are not what they used to be, and they are expected to do so much more with less and less funding. If this continues, the public school system will collapse.

Amy Lipka, Dr
self, education policy and advocacy
Cedar Hill, TX

Public dollars should remain in public school entities as governed by elected local school boards. Since 3000 characters won't allow a comprehensive comment on the matter, I think a single compelling question to ask yourself if leaning toward supporting a voucher program, whatever its name, is this: Why would Greg Abbott singularly go to private schools to promote this idea in recent months and not to public schools where the families in "failing schools" who would "benefit" from this ESA are alleged to be?

One argument in favor of an ESA program claims that this bill provides families the opportunity to choose a school that is best for their child. How is this choice going to play out in real time as it relates to being accepted by a private school?

This "choice" argument in favor of the establishment of ESAs claims that there are two primary reasons driving families to want to leave public schools right now: indoctrination and failing accountability ratings. First, if one critically thinks through the indoctrination messaging, it is clear that it is garbage being spewed and a fear tactic used to make families question the reality of their public school experience. 90% of us send our kids to public schools, and year after year, when families are asked their approval of THEIR personal public school, there is an overwhelming positive response. It is simply not true that people are experiencing indoctrination into "radical left wing" ideas, and perhaps the greatest proof of that is that the rhetoric and messaging around it stops short of real examples. The messaging is anchored in buzz words like "CRT" and "grooming" and "teaching kids to hate America," when you know in your heart as an elected Texas legislator this is simply not true. There are so few examples of this that emerge into the public narrative. You also know that your constituents by and large love their public schools.

A second similar argument anchoring the push for ESAs related to "choice" is that our public schools are failing from the accountability standpoint. As someone who dives deep into accountability ratings, my first response to this is: "Do you fully understand the public school accountability system in our great state yourself?" In my work, I am working on a task (too long to describe its purpose here) that requires me to analyze current ratings for specific schools in order to determine if the school will maintain or improve their grade rating. A school that earned a B rating last year with similar outcomes this year will likely receive an F rating this year. That is simply not an accurate measure of "the good of the school." A single, averaged letter grade of A-F oversimplifies the work of teachers, students and campus leaders. In its current iteration, the accountability system is confusing for all stakeholders with a changing measurement stick being used as what feels like a political tool to support this very bill that you are about to vote on.

Please VOTE NO!

Tenille Shade
Bridgeport ISD
Argyle, TX

In a state where we claim to cherish local control, using statewide public tax dollars to fund private schools for a select few, makes no sense. I am a public school educator, and I am respectfully requesting you vote NO to SB8. Vouchers have not home in Texas. They will irreparably harm rural public schools.

Liam Boyer
Self, Tech Industry Education Specialist
Austin, TX

Vouchers are dangerous for our public education system. Vouchers will lead to state money going to schools who do not have to play by the same rules (or be judged in the same manner) as public schools. ESA's will hurt many rural schools and does not take any action to address the real issues public education is facing in the state of Texas.

S. Neil Jeter, Mr.
Self; Educator
Troy, TX

Please oppose SB 8 and its substitute. A strong public education system is critical to the future of our state. SB 8 will divert funding away from our public schools where the majority of students are served. This bill and its substitute lacks accountability of state funds syphoned into private educations, especially when compared to the robust accountability system for public education. Even if private school students are required to take STAAR exams, this legislation does not contain the safeguards for the enforcement of proper testing procedures. This lends itself to fraudulent results. Even with limitations on participation such as special needs, leaving low performing schools, low socio-economic status, etc., the door will be opened for future legislation that expands participation. This bill and its substitute are bad for Texas.

TRISH Works
Self
DENTON, TX

Public schools care for ALL students. Public funds should NOT go to private OR charter schools that DENY students IDEA and 504 services that students need and deserve!!! Charters as well have gotten away with denying these rights to our children!!!

Linda Merriott, Ms.
Self, educator
Lubbock, TX

It is crucial that Texas protects children from gender altering surgeries, procedures and treatments. Children are not advanced enough in critical thinking skills to make life altering decisions like these. They are easily swayed by adults trying to influence children wit a hidden agenda. Please pass HB14 and protect our children!

Christine Mauer, Mrs.
Leander ISD/Self
Cedar Park, TX

I absolutely oppose SB8. This will hurt kids and hurt our districts. Public dollars need to stay in public schools. Private and charter schools are allowed to pick and choose their students and will not be held accountable by any entity. This bill is harmful to rural families as well. Please reconsider the thousands of pieces of testimony you've received from districts, educators, and parents that this will hurt education. This serves no one. This only deepens the pockets of privatized and charter education. Thank you for your time.

Teresa MARTINI
n/a
Dallas, TX

I am a mother to two kids in Texas public schools and am writing in opposition of SB8. There is far too much contained in this bill. The Parental Bill of Rights, STARR testing changes, and a voucher system for a majority of Texas public school kids are three very different topics and should be treated as such. 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 current budget proposals come nowhere close to meeting inflation related cost increases. 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 current 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?

I am also opposed to the increase in testing that SB8 proposes. Don't be fooled by the claims that this bill eliminates STAAR testing. It doesn't. It can actually increase the frequency of standardized testing to three times a year instead of one. Not to mention that this bill increases the power of the TEA Commissioner, an appointed position, and decreases the power of the SBOE, elected positions. Texans deserve to have a say in our public schools and the SBOE is an integral part of that. Removing representation is not okay.

This entire thing feels very rushed. First, the last minute 80 page addendum. Second, the committee vote set with no time to prepare. Third, the public hearing with only invited testimony. What are you trying to hide? The majority of Texans DO NOT WANT a voucher/ESA program. They want adequately funded public schools and teachers and staff to be paid a fair wage. They want the state to care for all of our children instead of funneling money to banks that will administer these programs, the companies that will start up new schools to accept all that voucher money with no strings attached, and to the testing companies that will develop the new standardized test that is supposed to replace the STAAR. All unconservative. Use that money to fund schools for all. Reject any form of voucher or ESA program.

Aaron Martini
Self
Dallas, TX

I am a father to two kids in Texas public schools and am writing in opposition of SB8. There is far too much contained in this bill. The Parental Bill of Rights, STARR testing changes, and a voucher system for a majority of Texas public school kids are three very different topics and should be treated as such. 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 current budget proposals come nowhere close to meeting inflation related cost increases. 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 current 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?

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Terri McDaniel
Self
San Antonio, TX

As a retired teacher of 36 years in San Antonio, I implore you to fully fund public education and vote NO to vouchers/esa's! They will hurt the children of Texas and not allow access to a free and public education!

Parents have ALWAYS had choice for their children. Both my children benefited from an outstanding public school education that included choice, so that reason is misleading! Please vote NO to Vouchers in Texas! The education of all children should not be a political pawn!!

Respectfully,
Terri McDaniel

Amy Branton
454-49-1166
TEMPLE, TX

Does the Public Education Committee seem to think these 80 pages of substitute language for SB8 are acceptable? How can rural representatives agree to this with it TAKING OUT the earlier "incentives" that would assist smaller districts as they lose students. Was this the initial plan all along... to pull a last minute bait and switch? Public education advocates are so VERY disappointed in the actions of the leadership of the Public Education Committee this week. Honestly, all Texans should expect honest and transparent actions in their legislators with plentiful opportunities to make their voice heard. Attempting to vote a bill through committee without a hearing, and then finally holding a public hearing with "invited testimony" only is the most distant option you can get from full transparency. From my understanding these new changes don't decrease testing, they increase testing. How is that what is best for students? We are over testing these students already and YOU KNOW IT! Also, transferring power to an appointed official where voters have no say is disgusting. Why not let the SBOE do some of this important work rather than the head of TEA, who clearly is the lapdog of Governor Abbott. Letting the SBOE make decisions would allow for some "checks and balances" that I used to hear so much about in our system of government. ESA's/Vouchers are BAD for students. Please consider jumping on the bandwagon of backing public schools. They aren't perfect, and you have already provided other avenues for students through transfers, charters and homeschools. Educators feel disregarded and disrespected, and the words and actions of our Governor have done nothing to improve that. There is no "woke" in the public schools that I have been around. Honestly, just trying to influence the kids to keep coming to class and listening and learning about the topics on the approved curriculum are impossible enough with the other influences that kids have in their lives in today's world. Get invested in propping up, backing, supporting, and improving public education. There are far too many students who struggle from homelives that are bad with parent's that aren't invested in their children. The public education system is where these kids get fed meals, clothed, offered services to meet other basic needs, and THEN they can try to learn. These kids aren't going to magically get enrolled in private schools, and private schools don't have the infrastructure in place to assist these kids if their parents bothered to enroll them or could afford the balance of the tuition that is left after the magic "coupon" that people are touting. These students are the future workforce, whether we like it or not. Teachers are fleeing from public education and joining other industries. That is obvious from the Teacher Task force report. Please listen and try to reverse that trend so that all students have an opportunity for better futures.

Summer Wilbourn
Self - Paraprofessional
Temple, TX

The proposed voucher system has been shown not to work in other states. There is not enough money in the education budget to cover the voucher costs as proposed. This bill will also decrease our public education funds and make it so the already struggling school will receive even less money than they do now. We should be putting more money into our public school not less. This will only make the gap even bigger between kids from low income areas and those from high income areas. Our public schools were built on a promise to educate all children equally no matter how much money their parents made. If you want to send your kids to private school, then you get to fork out the money for that not the tax payers!! It very much upsets me that we as a state are even considering this with how bad we rank in education as it is. That extra money that will need to be allocated for this voucher program would better be served put into our public schools to help educate all children. This bill should not pass! Please do not harm our already struggling schools by allowing this nonsense to pass! Thank you!

Kathy Mattox
Self Retired Public School Administrator
Cypress, TX

Why will the committee hear invited testimony only? This needs to be open testimony. I am opposed to any kind of voucher, whether it is presented as an ESA, a tax credit, or any other form which takes money away from our already underfunded public school to be used for private schools. Our Constitution explicitly states fund public free schools. Please vote NO on SB 8.

Alison Savage
Self - project manager
Lyford, TX

- [] I'm testifying against all voucher bills. I am from Lyford, a small rural community in Deep South Texas - I'm a tax payer, parent and i have served 10 years as a lyford CISD school board trustee. I am also a republican - I was born and raised a conservative Christian: I've lived my life based on those values

- [] But Today, I sit before you, incredibly concerned.

- [] All session I have heard you say that you stand for public schools, teachers and students ... but saying that and then supporting schools vouchers (aka ESA's) is completely offsetting. Vouchers are bad for public schools, bad for public school students and do not make financial sense.

- [] These come at a huge cost... \$8k for vouchers (which is a concern since the basic allotment for pubic schools is less than \$6,200 per student... and 40th in the nation!) ... and you are planning on continuing to fund small public schools when they lose a student, at \$10k for 2 years.
That's a lot of money.

So let's do some math ... I pay an average of \$2000 a year in school taxes.

And I raised 2 boys...products of public school.

If I had chosen to send them to private school from k-12th grade, (and I absolutely had the right to and could have made that choice)...and had an \$8000 per student voucher been available, that would have meant that a total of \$208,000 in voucher money would have been paid out for my kids-

As I said before, I pay about 2k a year in school taxes, so if my taxes are following my two kids, then it would take me 104 years to pay for my 2 sons to attend private school - obviously I'm not planning to pay taxes for 104 years-
So then where is this money coming from ?

Ultimately all of our tax dollars will fund this- and our tax dollars don't belong in schools with zero state accountability.

And if we have all that extra money to spend, then why aren't we increasing our investment in the amazing public schools that we already have - what could they do if they were funded at \$8000 per student?

I have heard the phrase, "my money, my choice" used for voucher support. But where does that stop ?
Part of the taxes I pay, is a hospital tax to our local county hospital - will it someday become my "choice" to move that tax money to another hospital? My husband is fighting cancer and we have chosen to do all his treatment at MD Anderson in Houston (4 hours from home!) ... but If I had the choice, I still would NOT want my hospital tax to leave my community - we may (and likely will) need that local hospital someday.

Public schools have worked hard to educate, coach, nurture, love and guide Texas students. They are the Pillar of their communities.

And PS My public schools says the pledge every morning. (As Texas education code states ... And many do... so if some don't, fix them!)

In addition Students pray before events and board members pray before board meetings.

Our district was built on patriotism, faith, community and love of our children.

Fran Smetana
self, educator
Salado, TX

I vehemently oppose the use of public funds to support private schools. I am opposed to school vouchers. First and foremost, the use of PUBLIC funds to support a PRIVATE use is not a precedent that should be established. Second, the lack of oversight in the parent use of vouchers does not guarantee that the funds would be used appropriately (They could be used to 'homeschool' and just take the funding without actually providing quality education, for example.) Third, with no accountability for private schools, there is no way to ensure quality educational practices are in place. Last, and most importantly, the use of public funds for private schools will be used (as is demonstrated in other states) by parents who already send their students to private schools. The impact will certainly be padding the pocket of that segment of our state. A more important impact is that parents who can then afford to send their students to private schools, even with vouchers, will certainly not be those that are already underserved...the economically disadvantaged, those with few resources, students with language barriers, families with no transportation...The result will certainly be a more segregated society.

In an already underfunded public education system, the drain of financial resources will impact the bulk of our children – negatively. Again, I fervently stand against school vouchers.

Maegan Schneider
self
Whitehouse, TX

I am completely opposed to any kind of voucher, program, savings account, etc that will take away funding for public schools. Public education is for everyone. Other programs can be selective on who can attend. I have not spoken to one single person involved in public education who thinks any of these potential programs are beneficial to our students. We don't need additional testing. We don't need oversight taken away. How many "in the classroom" educators are consulted on decisions that will affect them? My guess is very few! Keep tax dollars with public schools where they can do the most good for the larger population.

Katie Mullins, Principal Salado ISD
self
Salado, TX

I vote against this bill as it will be a detriment to our public schools and the funding we get for all students.

Cathy Nichols
Self
Centerville, TX

No vouchers. If parents want to send kids to private schools they should pay for it. Their choice! If I don't want my child to play at public park, will anyone give me money for a private club for her to play? I don't think so. Same thing. I do not want my tax dollars to go to private. Religious schools. They do not have to follow the same rules as public schools. So why finance them?
NO VOUCHERS!

Brian Megless
SeLf
Austin, TX

I oppose SB 8.

The current public school system is underfunded, and this is the biggest issue. SB 8 doesn't help solve this issue—it actually makes the public school problem worse!

Michelle Rutkowski

Self

Temple, TX

I am against school vouchers.

Public education is available to all students regardless of their circumstances and public education is grossly under funded. Public education is required to service all students regardless of their needs for zero cost to the parents/families; this includes special products or services that an individual student may need. Examples are FM systems for students with a hearing disability, stools or special restroom facilities for students that have dwarfism or other situations that require special care, just to name a couple of examples.

In addition, public education is not able to fully support all students and their learning due to under funded schools and/or districts with the limited funds available to resources like current technology, limited computers for students to utilize, high quality instructional materials, and furniture that makes them feel cared for.

The argument for school vouchers is to offer better educational opportunities for low-income families so they would not be required to attend under-performing schools; what if you took the money that would be spent on providing school vouchers and schools that are designated Low SES receive additional funds to supply the schools with high-quality instructional materials, technology resources, increase teacher pay across the state to attract quality teachers, and give all students access to quality education regardless of school vouchers and socio economic status.

In conclusion, I do not agree with school vouchers as it will not benefit the majority of Texas Students, Texas schools, or Texas Educators.

Georganne Warnock, Dr.

Terrell ISD & self (Superintendent)

Terrell, TX

I am writing to express my opposition to Senate Bill 8 and urge you to oppose this legislation. As a Texas resident, I believe this bill is harmful to Texas students, parents, and our communities.

Private schools aren't required to accept all students, including those with disabilities or special needs. In fact, private schools are more likely to reject these students. Tax dollars should not be going to private institutions that don't have to play by the same rules as public schools and are not accountable to taxpayers.

SB 8 also increases the number of state assessment administrations given to students from third to twelfth grade. It may eliminate STAAR, but it ramps up testing under a different name and gives more control to the commissioner of education to over-test our children.

Thank you for listening. I trust that you will carefully consider the concerns raised and make the right decision for the future of public education in our great state by voting no on SB 8.

Sandra Jackson

self - payroll specialis

Salado, TX

This bill only benefits those who can afford private schools. Funding for the public school system and obtaining & retaining teachers is already in crisis, school vouchers will only make matters worse.

Robert Baker
Self
Moody, TX

This would be devastating for public schools. I am opposed to vouchers.

Chrystal Thomas
self
Belton, TX

I am 100% against school vouchers. If private schools are not held to the same standards (accountability and admission) as public schools, this bill will take us back. Private schools are not required to accept all students or keep all students. This exclusivity is fine if you are a private entity. But if you are going to receive public funds, they should be held to the same standard as other public entities. As public schools, we accept all students regardless of behavior or impairment and are tasked with educating them. Additionally, if public schools receiving public funds are held to a high standard of accountability, then any private entity should as well. Private schools should be required to take STAAR assessments and be rated in the accountability system...which they are not. Finally, if public schools receiving public funds are required to employ highly-qualified teachers, then private schools should be required to do the same. For these reasons, I do not support the voucher system. Private schools are not held to the same standard as public schools and therefore should not receive public funds.

Leslie Feinglas, Dr.
Mesquite ISD
Mesquite, TX

- We oppose SB8
CSSB 8 won't help with teacher retention, doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address the individual needs of students.
 - CSSB 8 doesn't abolish the STAAR, it just replaces it with STAAR 2.0 with even more Commissioner authority.
 - CSSB 8 does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs.
 - CSSB 8 does not include a hold harmless for public schools that lose kids to a voucher.
-

Ginny Brown Daniel, Rev. Dr.
Self
Spring, TX

As an ordained minister, I am vehemently opposed to school vouchers because it will take necessary money from public schools to be used in unregulated charter and private schools. The separation of church is violated by this infringement in both religious private schools and our public schools. SB8 will also negatively impact rural and urban schools as well as strong suburban schools that will struggle to continue educational excellence with less money for teachers, curriculum, and resources. Vote NO on SB8!

Alexandra Jackson
Self- Realtor
Belton, TX

Please do NOT pass this bill. The voucher system is going to have an extremely negative effect on our public schools, and the property values in the areas that do not have alternate options that folks can afford. Our public schools are one of the things that make Texas a fantastic place to live and attract many our way. Please study what has happened in the state of Arizona since passing a similar bill. It's had a detrimental impact on their public schools. We love our public schools in Belton ISD and will be SO disappointed if this passes and our small district that has so many students that count on their local public school to provide them education, food, positive role models and resources to equip them for a successful future in a competitive job landscape loses significant resources due to additional funding constraints.

Michael Goos
None
Belton, TX

I strongly oppose the creation of any voucher program or savings account in Texas. The Texas legislature has a constitutional responsibility to make suitable provisions for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools. Our public schools are the foundation of our communities. I ask our legislators to focus their investment on the children, families, educators, and coaches who are building the future of Texas in our public schools.

Wes Graham, Mr.
Principal -- Lampasas Middle School
Lamapasas, TX

I am writing to express my opposition to Senate Bill 8 and urge you to oppose this legislation. As a Texas resident, I believe this bill is harmful to Texas students, parents, and our communities.

Private schools aren't required to accept all students, including those with disabilities or special needs. In fact, private schools are more likely to reject these students. Tax dollars should not be going to private institutions that don't have to play by the same rules as public schools and are not accountable to taxpayers.

SB 8 also increases the number of state assessment administrations given to students from third to twelfth grade. It may eliminate STAAR, but it ramps up testing under a different name and gives more control to the commissioner of education to over-test our children.

Thank you for listening. I trust that you will carefully consider the concerns raised and make the right decision for the future of public education in our great state by voting no on SB 8.

Nolan Patterson
Self
Magnolia, TX

This attempt to pass a bill in the dead of night was a sham. Now you will attempt to pass without public comment. Vouchers subsidize the rich and have not shown to work. Private schools are not held to any sort of accountability standard. This bill increases the amount of testing required of public school students. The exact opposite of what needs to happen. It is painfully obvious that Texas republicans in elected office do not support public education or public school educators. This a bad bill that should not receive a vote. I would encourage elected representatives to begin actually serving the public and support public schools and all the good we do. Most of us are church going conservatives who are tired of the lack of support. Please support public schools and vote no on this bill!

Paula Williams, Retired Business Manager-Leon ISD
All children of Texas and Taxpayers
Marquez, TX

I totally disagree with vouchers in any form. The money from taxpayers collected for the education of Texas students that come from Chapter 41 schools goes in to Texas general fund. According to news we have a surplus in there. If you would take all that money collected from taxpayers and sent by Chapter 41 schools you wouldn't be having the supposedly problems in public schools. You say public schools won't suffer-that taking money out of general fund to pay for! What a joke. Most of that surplus sent by Chapter 41 schools already and all of it should have been distributed to public schools. Just helping the rich parents who can afford to drive their kids to school use public money to pay for their kids education!!!

Susan Lampe
self--(retired teacher of 27 years)
Commerce, TX

A robust (which must be robustly funded) public education system is critical to our state and our democracy. So I see this bill as DANGEROUS. This bill not only will result in fewer dollars being channeled to public ed, it will allow money--MY money--to go to private schools which are not held to the same accountability standards that public schools have. So I see it as UNFAIR. This bill will also allow religiously based schools to receive taxpayer money--MY money. So I see it as UNCONSTITUTIONAL.

Our public schools need more support, not less. Texas has incredibly talented and passionate public school teachers who are making a difference every day in students' lives. Bills like this one are terribly demoralizing to classroom teachers, and serve to hamper teacher recruitment efforts.

Susan Lampe

Grant Ermis
self
Temple, TX

I respectfully request you do your elected duty, follow the will of your constituents, and vote this bill (aka HB5261) down. As a constituent in House District 55 and Senate District 24, and as a public education administrator for 17 years, I have first-hand experience that suggests vouchers will not be an effective measure of giving students access to quality education. Public schools in Texas are already significantly underfunded, and the fact that Governor Abbott is the link behind the support of these bills is a dereliction of duty. That notwithstanding, it doesn't take a statistician to know that allowing the flexibility of the use of public dollars to flow to private (non-chartered) schools in no way serves the best interest of parents and students. Consider for a moment, equal access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); public schools are held accountable to these standards AND we staff to ensure students who fall in this category are served. We are legally bound to do so because of statute and funding. There are absolutely no requirements, or accountability standards, of private schools to provide equitable services for students under this umbrella; however, you are still considering the ability to send public funds to a private entity. In only this one instance, should you allow this to be passed through Committee and on the floor of the House, you should be removed from office for neglecting to maintain public accountability of funding. I urge you to focus on SERVING students and parents via the system that has been built over generations and put in your charge, not a fanciful interest in political rhetoric and unaccountable dreams. Instead of this bill, consider HB1548 or HB100, which would be a means of advancing the ball on any improvements you want to make to education. Allowing the shift of funds to go to a private unaccountable entity is absolutely the wrong direction for Texans, so I urge you to let this bill die in Committee.

Scott Balmos
Salado ISD
Salado, TX

Do not be a fool and take away money from public schools! SAY NO TO VOUCHERS!

Peter Wood
Self
The Woodlands, TX

As someone who has served as a public educator for the past five years I am abhorrently against this bill. I strongly oppose vouchers/ESA programs that dilute funding for public schools and use public money for a private purpose. We need our public schools to remain strong in Texas! Vouchers are clearly not about parents choice, but rather subsidies for the wealthy. Shame on this committee for turning its back on the hardworking people of Texas. There are hundreds of thousands of kids who's lives will be negatively impacted by vouchers. Support the teachers that voted you into office and listen to the majority of constituents who oppose this bill!

Dawna Aleman, Mrs.
self
Temple, TX

I do not support Senate Bill 8, School Choice bill. Please be advised, I believe a school structure that is not a public education school district lacks the accountability measurements on making sure all students are educated equitably. This bill will create a tremendous impediment for our future generation's' academic success due to the lack of standardized accountability measurements that all public-school districts must achieve. This bill will hinder the No Child Left Behind responsibility that all Texas Representatives must support and enforce. Please know as a parent of two public school students and a voting citizen, I do not support Senate Bill 8. Thank you for your time. Respectfully, Mrs. Dawna Aleman

Keith Brooks, Dr.
Corrigan-Camden ISD
Corrigan, TX

Public education is one of the foundations of our nation. It is imperative we continue to appropriately fund and educate our students in public education. The private schools have looked to public education for the organizational structure from their inception. Private schools do not accept all students and that is what we have to give focus on, every student everyday.

Tanner Wilson, Mr.
Kennedy-Powell Elementary School
Jarrell, TX

As a new Parent, I have a deep desire to have a very clear line drawn in the sand over gender and sexuality. The limit at which this topic should infiltrate our school is at the HS and only to the extent of Sex education. This is limited to the function of sex, STD's, and State Laws about sex.

Nicole Peters
Self
Spring, TX

If you try to sneak in the bill, feel the need to rush a vote on it, try to keep public from hearing it, and keep the people from testifying then it's not really FOR the people is it???

Have you forgotten you are voted on by the people? You represent the people- your voters. You are supposed to be working for us!

We are watching. We are paying attention. We are all sharing. We are standing up. And in the elections to come we will be voting!

Thank you to those who stood up for what they know is right! We notice you and we have shared that too!

Hear our voices. We oppose everything about SB8 and all the underhandedness around the bill!

Represent us. Vote no on SB8 and any type of voucher/ESA system!

Hannah Davis Kettelman
Self, Digital Learning Coach
Temple, TX

Stop school vouchers- it is the development of a class system and is bad for our students!

Steve Prentiss
Self / Athletic Director
Temple, TX

I strongly oppose the creation of any voucher program or savings account in Texas. The Texas legislature has a constitutional responsibility to make suitable provisions for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools. Our public schools are the foundation of our communities. I ask our legislators to focus their investment on the children, families, educators, and coaches who are building the future of Texas in our public schools.

Vote NO on Committee Substitute SB 8

Strongly oppose vouchers/ESA programs that dilute funding for public schools and use public money for a private purpose. We need our public schools to remain strong in Texas.

Whitney Nelson

I am a 1st grade teacher at Hanna Springs Elementary in Lampasas, TX.
Lampasas, TX

I am 100% against this bill and school vouchers. This bill is bad for Texas students and parents! I am so tired of people not in education, making decisions about education!

It would cost Texas big time. This bill would create an education savings account program that would give between \$7,500 and \$10,500 in state tax money to subsidize private school tuition for individuals receiving special education services, who are educationally disadvantaged, or who are attending public schools and have 504s, are in D- or F-rated campuses, or have siblings in the ESA program. That could be more than 75% of students in Texas.

The bill requires more state tests. Proponents say that it eliminates STAAR, but in truth, it adds two tests every year for each grade in grades 3-8 and increases high school exams from five to six. State test are NOT THE ANSWER. You have no idea what this is doing to education as a whole. This year alone, at just my small town school... we had one student have a panic attack, one student have an asthma attack and an ambulance had to be called for a student who passed out. What is wrong with you? Teachers are quitting, the quality ones... because the pressure is so intense and we are constantly told we are not doing enough when our students do not perform on these ridiculous tests.

The bill gives the education commissioner more control and removes all State Board of Education involvement in the state assessment program. We are the state of Texas for a reason, while I do not believe in a lot the State Board of Education does, I surely would prefer it over mass control.

Please sit back and understand that you are trying to make decisions regarding a system that you do not understand. You are all about data and that is not the entire measure of a child. Do things need to change, yes... a lot does. This is not the way.

Virginia Tintera
Self/retired educator
Georgetown, TX

We already have school choice with charter schools. I do not want my tax money going to private schools. Church schools need to be paying taxes if they are going to try and take money from hard working taxpayers. NO ON SB8!!!!

I would like to see our legislators start to care about the TEACHERS who are underpaid and have crummy substandard health insurance. Not to mention retired educators. Students are not choosing education degrees in Texas colleges. They know it is an underpaid, unappreciated and micromanaged profession.

Do the right thing. Stop pandering to these far right hate groups who are dividing our beautiful state.

Rick Waterhouse, Col (Ret)
Skidmore-Tynan ISD
Premont, TX

Strongly opposed. Hurts public education.

Annette Rowland, MS, CCC-SLP
self - Speech-Language Pathologist
Marble Falls, TX

SB8 will siphon off MILLIONS of public education dollars from schools. It will leave the poorest students in severely underfunded schools and further reduce their access to higher education as a result. Private schools are NOT required to serve disabled students, so despite the supposed purpose of this bill they will not be admitted to most (if any) private schools in Texas.

One parent of a special needs student that I serve was told by a private school administrator, "Your child cannot come to my school. He is too low, and will hold the other students back."

The addition of MORE meaningless testing is just stupid. There's no other way to describe it. Your schools are required to administer a mountain of tests, and those tests simply do not evaluate students meaningfully. Your "solution" is to add more meaningless testing? It seems many in the legislature have failed critical thinking instruction.

SB8 is a money-grab for rich people who can already afford to send their kids to private school. Maybe if you gave EVERY public school \$7000 to \$10,500 per student, Texas wouldn't be ranked 27th in the nation in educational outcomes.

You think you have a teacher shortage now? Just wait until you destroy our schools.

Kathy Keyes
Self, Middle School Librarian
Salado, TX

I am not in favor of an education savings account program where parents can use state money to go to a private school or school of their choice. This type of account would allow unfair advantages to schools that draw parents for athletic or academic programs to bring their children to the same school regardless of where they live. At a time where we need to provide equity in schools, a voucher would keep that from becoming a reality.

Kathryn Reed-Butler
Self/Temple Independent School District
Temple, TX

As a private citizen and taxpayer, I do not want to subsidize wealthy people's children, who are going to/able to send their students to private schools either way, and who have far more loopholes to avoid paying their fair share than I have. I also don't want my tax dollars to go towards schools with little or no oversight or regulation such as public schools are subject to. This is just another hand out to the wealthy.

As a public school employee, I don't want to see our funding redistributed whilst we are still held to a higher standard and more public accountability. It is telling that those pushing this bill through are not allowing open testimony from the public. Perhaps you should tax private school tuition and redistribute that money instead?

Thank you for your time.

Michelle Collins

Self

COPPERAS COVE, TX

Please do not pass this misleading and education threatening bill. Removing the STAAR test results in more testing for students in middle and elementary schools, and up to six more tests for high school students. It gives all the power to the education commissioner and removes the state's board of education from being involved in the new state assessments. I understand the appeal of having more options for our children when it comes to their education, but the taxes on this are outrageous. This essentially destroys our current public school system and makes ALL schools public schools. This will lead to a crash in our education system as a whole within our state. Private and charter schools are only viewed as "better" because of their titles. Put the work into reforming our public school system, training educators, and taking care of them. Provide training for parents on how to help with homework and developing social and academic skills. Put this money into after or before school tutoring programs for these students instead of turning the whole system upside down. Our children deserve better. Our educators deserve better. Our state deserves better.

Matt Arend

Self

McKinney, TX

Fund public schools - parents have rights and choice. Support Texas teacher by fully funding public education.

Greg Decker, Superintendent

Rotan ISD

Rotan, TX

Vote no on SB 8. It is wrong for Texas and wrong for Texas students.

Jana Boatner

Lampasas ISD

Lampasas, TX

Please consider input from the professionals that are in the trenches of public education before making this decision. With the challenges presented by COVID shutdown and the overcrowded classes already in our district, allowing school vouchers would overcrowd the schools that are already stretched with the growing demands placed on the classroom teachers and staff. Why not increase support for those struggling schools that parents are wanting to abandon? Let's work together to solve the problems at hand rather than overcrowding schools and further increasing the likelihood for even more teachers abandoning their careers?

Rucker Preston, Belton ISD Trustee

Self

Belton, TX

I am AGAINST SB 8 and ask you to stand and vote AGAINST it because of the ESA, voucher component. As a parent with children in public schools, our Texas public schools need more funding, not less, from the state.

Thank you,

Rucker Preston

Justin Pierce
Self
Temple, TX

There are several reasons why I do not support the suggested voucher system. I believe that state leaders who support this bill are admitting failure in their ability to support the state-run public school system. I think that passing this bill is unfair to low-income households. What about a child with parents that can't get them to a school in the next town over due to only having one working vehicle both parents share? This child is forced to ride the bus and the only option will be the school that their house is zoned to. I believe this bill only accommodates the middle and upper classes. It is highly likely that this bill could result in a form of segregation, which is morally unjustifiable. I kindly urge you not to lend your support to this proposed legislation.

Brandon Enos, Dr.
Self and Cushing Independent School District
Nacogdoches, TX

This bill would further erode public education in Texas. As an institution, we continue to excel despite the many attacks on standards and funding. These attacks should not be directed at schools from our elected leaders. Introducing an Education Savings Account or any other form of vouchers for public K-12 education is failed policy at inception and cannot be allowed to be permitted without debate and careful consideration of the unintended consequences. According to a 2018 study by American Progress, students using vouchers performed significantly worse than their peers who remained at the public school, especially in mathematics. Schools are already severely underfunded; so, redirecting any of the funds to private schools or other non-public schools only undermines the entire educational system. If private schools followed the stringent Texas academic and accountability laws, then ESAs would be a debatable issue; however, these private institutions operate outside of the public mandates and thus should not receive the public funding. I desperately implore you, do not support this and stand firm with the 330,000 Texas K-12 public school teachers and our 5.5 million students.

Edwin Smith, Dr.
Self
Belton, TX

I am against vouchers, ESA's, and all forms of taking public funds and diverting them to private education. Parents have a choice of where their children go to school. My two daughters transfer to a neighboring district by my choice. Both school districts are full of great schools and people.

Sending public funds in the form of vouchers or ESA's diverts funding from schools that are already underfunded and tasked with educating all students. I believe all representatives should vote no to SB8 and any bill amendment that attaches vouchers or ESA's to a proposed bill. Please keep the 2011 legislative session in mind, this surplus has no guarantee and every dollar diverted is an opportunity for fraud, waste, and inefficiency.

Wilmalene Proffitt
Texas Retired Teachers
Goldthwaite, TX

I do not agree with any voucher or education savings program. Do not take money from Public Education! This is not the direction that the majority of Texans want!

Amanda Smith, Mrs.
self
Kempner, TX

I believe all students should have equal access to education. However, I also believe parents should be held accountable to getting their students to school. Currently, many truancy judges across the state are not doing so, leading to students bouncing around the state to different schools and ultimately hurting the children. If this voucher passes, how will it hold parents accountable? Much responsibility is being put on public schools and boards. Parents need to be included to increase the buy-in that is lacking.

Mallory Shaddix
Self, retired marketing EX
Houston, TX

I strongly oppose any tax dollars being used for vouchers or ESA's. Our state has yet to fully fund our public schools and that must be a priority. Our public schools are the oxygen that fuels our state's economy and our future prosperity!

Camey Benavidez
self
Belton, TX

I am against school vouchers. I am a special education teacher and work in a low income school. Vouchers will fail to accommodate and support special needs students. There is research that vouchers do not improve scores. I am also a parent of a child in private school. I chose to pay for her to go there and do not expect the government to help fund that option. I am also a parent to a public school student as well as work in a public school. I expect my tax money to fund the public school option.

Christopher Moran, Dr.
Whitehouse Independent School District
Whitehouse, TX

I vehemently oppose any measure that supports any form of tax payer dollars being allocated to fund private, home, or any other school other than the public schools. Accountability of public funds is critical and in a time of need for quality teachers and a public education system that needs support, we do not need to move needed funds to other areas.

David Hust, LTC (ret)
self Retired
San Antonio, TX

Using tax dollars to subsidize private schools is theft. It should never be allowed in any form. Public schools are essential and should be funded even more. They are the great equalizer, the pathway to individual achievement. That is why we have them.

Janeva wilson, UT Austin student
Self
Austin, TX

I strongly oppose SB 8. Vouchers divert funds from public schools and only serve privileged students. Texas schools deserve better.

Laurelyn Arterbury, Chief of Staff
Leander ISD
ROUND ROCK, TX

I am writing today on behalf of the amazing public school and public school educators across our great state of Texas. The latest iteration of Senate Bill 8 abandons protections for our most vulnerable students, defunds our rural schools, and contains no accountability provisions for the use of voucher dollars within private schools.

With tens of billions of dollars on the table this session, you have an unprecedented opportunity to focus on meaningful endeavors such as school safety and teacher pay raises. Instead, some leaders have chosen to spend their time on voucher schemes that would line the pockets of unaccountable vendors. And you have a moral imperative to support public education and ensure the longevity of success in our state.

There is still time within this legislative session to uphold the transparency that is so valued by me and your other constituents across the state.

Please don't let political agendas interfere with your role or cloud your judgement. Do what's best for public schools and vote against vouchers in Texas.

Jim Elmore
St. Thomas PCUSA Social Justice Committee
Houston, TX

Greetings committee members and thanks for serving public education's best interest.
Please oppose SB8 or any other bill that would divert school property tax from directly financing public education. Please do not support SB 8 or any house version of this bill that diverts funds from public education to support special interest groups.
Thank you for counting my request as relevant!

David Kaminski
Self
Hockley, TX

I'm asking you to oppose SB8. This bill is a further attack on public education and extends inequities between public and private education in Texas. Every education entity that receives tax dollars (vouchers, savings accounts, or whatever you want to call them) MUST operate under the same rules and laws. Otherwise, how will the public evaluate which school provides the most cost-effective use of their money? The current proposal will lead to evaluation without data. If you feel there are problems in public ed then address the problems. I urge you to remove party affiliation and make a decision based on facts and data.

Tami Richards, Teacher
Winters ISD
Winters, TX

Please Vote no

Chris Kovatch
Self
Orange, TX

I am opposed to this legislation. While I do believe and support parental choice, it is important to realize that sometimes choice comes with related costs. I attended private school through 8th grade along with my 3 other siblings. My parents made sacrifices to do this because of their choice. They had the option for public education but preferred something else at that time.

Removing funds from public education to allow for vouchers/educational savings accounts is not the answer. Equitably funding all schools to ensure the same opportunities for all students should be the focus. Fixing the issues with the current system should be what we focus on; overlooking/ignoring the need to locate the source of the issue by handing it off is not a fix. It is a dereliction of duties.

I fully recognize this is not an easy issue, but to allow vouchers is a direct affront to our educators that selflessly give of theirs live to grow our children. They could work in much more lucrative fields but instead are called to educate. We should be focused on giving them every tool to fulfill their role. Parents should also realize that education is a joint venture. Parents play an equally important role in their children's development as teachers do. I think at some point society has veered from a partnership model to education being a service industry. This ideological shift has not done any favors for our children.

I urge our legislators to not support this proposed legislation. I urge you to truly dig into the issue and speak with those who serve as educators throughout the State. Take the time to address the real issue, but seek input from those who are in the field daily. Let's remember that education is a team effort. It requires everyone working together.

Allow for public testimony and discussion. Rushing into any situation not fully informed is never a wise or judicious choice.

Dela Castillo
Dela Castillo, CFO Beeville ISD
Beeville, TX

CSSB 8 doesn't prioritize parental choice over the right of the private school to pick and choose their students.
CSSB 8 won't help with teacher retention, doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address the individual needs of students.
CSSB 8 doesn't abolish the STAAR, it just replaces it with STAAR 2.0 with even more Commissioner authority.
CSSB 8 does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs.
CSSB 8 does not include a hold harmless for public schools that lose kids to a voucher.

Michelle Collins
Self - Special Education Teacher
COPPERAS COVE, TX

Thank you for taking the time to read my comment. Whether we are in agreement on this topic or not, I truly appreciate your time.

My concern is that this bill essentially destroys our education system as we know it, instead of fixing it. It is blatantly obvious that this bill turns charter and private schools into public schools. Removing STARR does not remove state testing. Playing upon the ignorance of people, not within the education system or not aware of how it works, to meet this agenda is appalling. Replacing one state assessment with multiple is unfair to our Texas students. It puts undue and unnecessary stress on them. Furthermore, it is rather suspicious that this bill would remove the state's education board from being involved in these state assessments. I humbly ask you why? Why limit the collaboration on these assessments thus limiting the assessment growth and development of these tests? The money that would be given to these schools would be better spent in other areas of education. Provide better curriculum, supplies, and educators with it. Develop systems within schools that foster parent involvement, parent education, and parent/educator collaboration. Children learn better with strong support teams; gaps in the bridge between home and school must be closed. Provide after or before school tutoring programs for struggling students or help schools with them in place supplement and grow these programs.

The bottom line is that this bill is benefiting to students, but instead monetarily benefits private and charter schools.

I ask you to stand with me and vote against this bill. A vote against this bill is a vote to protect the education of our Texas children - no matter where they are registered.

Jakr Odom
Self/Teacher
Palestine, TX

This bill does nothing to address the real problems Texas Public Schools are dealing with. Vouchers are not the answer and the fact that this bill was first set to be voted on without any public comment shows that it is not something Texans want.

Timothy Horsley
Self
Roanoke, TX

Giving more money to private schools than to public schools is irresponsible. Adding standardized tests to students is ignorant and irresponsible. Vote no!!!

Jeff Norwood
BISD
Belton, TX

If taxpayer money is used in anyway the schools taking that money must follow all the same rules and regulations as PUB ED. Accept every student regardless of ability to fully pay, disability, discipline issues etc. Also must elect a board and provide full financial disclosures annually to the public.

Lyndon Clevenger
Self/Teacher
Troy, TX

Parents should have the right to choose where their kids go to school. With the amount of tax dollars that the working American pays, We should be able to send our kids to the school of choice. I am PRO school vouchers. Parents should also be able to choose whether their child is exposed to certain things like teaching about sexual orientation in public schools. This is ridiculous that we are even having this conversation. Sexual orientation should never be taught in schools. The focus should be on academics/vocational.

Rhonda Neal, Business Manager
Winters I.S.D.
Winters, TX

- CSSB 8 won't help with teacher retention, doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address the individual needs of students.
-

Austin Odom
Self
Corrigan, TX

Please do not support this bill.

CSSB 8 doesn't prioritize parental choice over the right of the private school to pick and choose their students.
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CSSB 8 does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs.
CSSB 8 does not include a hold harmless for public schools that lose kids to a voucher.

Leslie Sprecher
Self
Navasota, TX

I am opposed to vouchers. We need to invest in and support a robust Public School System. Draining money to private schools will not better educate Texas citizens or enhance the overall condition of our state.

Steven Cope
www.lindsayisd.org/https://www.lindsayisd.org/
Lindsay, TX

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CSSB 8 does not include a hold harmless for public schools that lose kids to a voucher.

Kathy Cook
Temple Independent School District
Temple, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers. Parents have always had a school choice option and they paid the tuition. That is school choice.

April Thrasher
Salado ISD teacher
Salado, TX

Public schools are so troubled at this point, I feel it is important that parents can choose to go to the school they want. Giving Vouchers gives choices and it helps schools

Melinda Cox
Self
San Antonio, TX

I support and advocate FOR public education.
Vouchers will destroy public education as we know it. I do not support vouchers in any form. Public education is our duty and it is the great equalizer. As a volunteer for over 14 years in NEISD, I have witnessed so many students find a spot and their voice thanks to the pub Ed experience.

Starla Kelley, Mrs.
Public School Teacher/Self
Amarillo, TX

The Founding Fathers of this country saw public education as a corner stone. "The education of every rank and class of people, down to the lowest and the poorest, has to be the care of the public and maintained at the public expense." Adams
The attempts by certain legislators to continue to defund public education is in direct opposition to the foundation of the American self-government dream and work set forth.
Voucher systems, Charters & even private schools are failing all over the country because it's about profit & exclusion. Dan Patrick has had a personal agenda, backed by dark money, to destroy public education in Texas. He is not even a Texan! He has been given way too much power & influence.
Stop this nonsense and fund public education like our forefathers intended!
I have taught thirty-two years in Amarillo ISD. I have given my best to ALL students. My children are successful products of public education. It's time to put a stop to this attack on our public schools. Please stop Senate Bill 8, and put Dan Patrick back in his place of helping Texans, not hurting them!
Sincerely,
Starla Kelley

Donna Lambeth, Ms.
Self
Rockwall, TX

I am opposed to
Vouchers. As a school counselor with 24 years in education, I have watched schools be asked to "do more with less" year after year. It is my personal motto, which is terribly sad and should be embarrassing for the great state of Texas. Vouchers will not help public education. I realize Governor Abbott is in a hurry to make Texas the absolute bottom of the barrel in education, but please stop this. Our children deserve more.

Chris Heskett, Superintendent
Covington ISD
Covington, TX

Please vote against Senate Bill 8

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

Chair Buckley and Members,

IDRA opposes SB 8. SB 8 takes the state farther away from the goals of fair school funding and parent and community accountability over education quality. Texas public schools serve all students as part of the state's constitutional obligation to provide an efficient public education system. SB 8 creates a separate, inefficient system of publicly funded educational assistance organizations.

The education savings account (ESA) program would funnel between \$7,500 to upwards of \$10,500 per qualifying participant, taking that money out of public schools that must serve all students and that are held accountable by state and federal education laws.

Private school voucher programs across the country rarely require financial transparency or academic accountability measures, and SB 8 is no different. The bill contains no financial or academic reporting requirements for participating EAOs. The aggregate STAAR report in the CSSB 8 does not align with state reporting or accountability standards for public schools that allow for transparency to parents. As such, CEAOs would not be held accountable for students' performance in reading and math, learning progress or accelerated learning by grade level, graduation rates, or postsecondary outcomes.

Studies have found that private school vouchers do not improve student achievement. For instance, researchers at the University of Arkansas published a four-year study analyzing assessment data from students who used the Louisiana Scholarship Program. The results concluded that students using the program did visibly worse on state assessments four years later than their counterparts in public schools (Mills & Wolf, 2019). Similar negative trends have held true across programs in Indiana, Washington, D.C., Alabama, and Ohio.

In contrast to the calls for greater transparency in public schools, parents enrolling a student with disabilities into the ESA program waive their rights to any state or federal disabilities or special education protections. A 2020 study by Education Week found that private school voucher programs across 29 states rarely require transparent reporting on student achievement or graduation rates or information as basic as teachers' education qualifications. Most of the programs allowed private schools to discriminate against students' religious and gender identities for admission. Only five states of the 29 required that students with disabilities be admitted to private schools benefitting from the voucher programs.

Overall, the programs obscured transparency on school and student performance, reduced accountability for meeting students' needs, and permitted discrimination from students' accessing the private education touted by the programs. This an inefficient and unaccountable use of public education funds. Please uphold the state's duty to support students in public schools and vote Nay on SB 8.

Citation resources available upon request.

Craig Sims
self
Midlothian, TX

I am a benefactor of the parent choice the state of Texas already gives parents without it costing taxpayers any money. My wife and I have used the freedom Texas gave us to choose home school, pod schools and coops to educate our children. At the end of 8th grade, we gave our children a choice. Some went on to local ISD high schools. Some chose coops. In the end, this is not about parent choice. I had the choice! We sacrificed in order to take advantage of the choices Texas already gave. What a voucher program does is create a government entitlement to parents. This is different than choice. Charters are choice. Open enrollment ISDs are choice. Laws that allow home school, private school, and pod schools are all choice. I can't believe that I am seeing my republican party recommend what is just a government funded subsidy ... actually another entitlement ... that will only cost taxpayers more over time, force more oversight, blur the lines between parent and government even more. Stay out of our private choices! When people sacrifice together to support a choice, there is community. When people come together in entitlement programs, there is self-seeking incentive. Voucher programs will erode the power and benefit of the choice that Texas gives my family. Please say no to general vouchers. Vouchers for failing schools (F schools for 3 years) maybe. Vouchers for SpEd students to get what they truly need... absolutely. General vouchers to give entitlements at taxpayer expense - sounds anti-republican to me.

Pete Pape, Mr.
Self
Leander, TX

I oppose any form of vouchers and/or education savings accounts. My taxes are paid to my local ISD and they should remain at the local ISD, not sent to a non-public, non-accountable entity or for parents to "homeschool" with public funds. Public education educates all students and promotes diversity. Private schools do not educate all students. TY

Chuck Bailey, Mr.
Self
Mt. Pleasant, TX

1. Texas Has School Choice - Parents are already free to choose the school that best fits their child's educational needs. Texas law allows for transfers, accommodations, homeschooling, and special education programs. Parents can also send their child to a private school.
 2. Taxpayer Money Demands Accountability - Accountability always accompanies any allocation of taxpayer money for any purpose. Education is no different. The idea of spending billions in tax dollars with no accountability is contrary to conservatism.
 3. The Texas Constitution Requires Public Education - No mention is made in our constitution of Texans funding private schools. Our founders would be repulsed by the notion of their taxes being used to pay private tuition.
 4. Parental Involvement is Paramount- Texas parents absolutely have the paramount right to total and complete information regarding all aspects of their child's education and all aspects of their child's educational experience.
 5. Underperforming Schools - Schools failing to meet educational requirements or failing to protect the moral innocence of their students should be dealt with immediately and continuously until permanent correction is achieved.
-

William Duran
Self - Public School Teacher
Temple, TX

I do not support vouchers. My tax dollars should not be used to support private school education. My tax dollars should be spent on the public school system where it can do the most good for ALL children in my district, city, county, and state.

Parents who CHOOSE to send their children to private schools should be responsible for covering the cost of that institution. I should not have to be responsible for paying for that education.

School choice will only cripple public schools and further demoralize and deconstruct the public school education system.

This is not the best solution for ALL TEXANS.

I support PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS. I support PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS.

Karma Chavez, Professor
Self
Austin, TX

I oppose vouchers. They're bad for public schools and they reduce access to the public good that is public education.

Chris Mason, Mr.
Public Education- Self
Quitman, TX

This bill is not good for Texas students and families. It only adds more rules to an already overloaded system. This bill will add money to the wealthiest Texans bank accounts while excluding the vast majority of the hard working class. Here are a few other point against CSSB 8:

- CSSB 8 doesn't prioritize parental choice over the right of the private school to pick and choose their students. This alone will exclude that vast majority of Texan families.
 - This bill won't help with teacher retention, doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address the individual needs of students.
 - CSSB 8 doesn't abolish the STAAR, it just replaces it with STAAR 2.0 with even more Commissioner authority.
 - CSSB 8 does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs.
 - CSSB 8 does not include a hold harmless for public schools that lose kids to a voucher.
 - It would cost Texas big time. This bill would create an education savings account program that would give between \$7,500 and \$10,500 in state tax money to subsidize private school tuition for individuals receiving special education services, who are educationally disadvantaged, or who are attending public schools and have 504s, are in D- or F-rated campuses, or have siblings in the ESA program. That could be more than 75% of students in Texas.
 - The bill requires more state tests. Proponents say that it eliminates STAAR, but in truth, it adds two tests every year for each grade in grades 3-8 and increases high school exams from five to six.
 - The bill gives the education commissioner more control and removes all State Board of Education involvement in the state assessment program.
-

BETH OLEJNIK

self, 3rd grade teacher

Moody, TX

By allowing state funds to pay for private schools, you are taking monies away from Texas students who NEED it. We have kiddos in 3rd grade who do not know letter names, sounds, or how to spell their own names. We are in desperate need of interventions at lower grade levels, more extensive help at Kinder and 1st grade to focus on social skills and adaptive behaviors. Money is needed in public school so that ALL children are helped and given a FAIR chance to excel....our little Texas are worth it!

Amber Guin

self

Temple, TX

As a public school educator, I ask that the STRONGLY consider the implications of this bill on students and public educators alike. This is NOT the direction we should head in Texas Education. Please consider voting NO to this bill.

Bryan Coward

Self

Irving, TX

We don't want vouchers, they are wildly unpopular, and will take money away from public schools. My family has two teachers in it that oppose this too. Why are you voting on this without public testimony on this specific bill? This isn't a democracy if you choose to listen to your donors over the people of Texas. If this passes, you will all be pushed out, it's just a matter of time.

Marcus Strohm

Self

Houston, TX

As a citizen of the State of Texas, I do not appreciate the underhanded and dastardly way that this bill was attempted to be rammed through the House without any public hearing in the middle of the night. It is deplorable that there is only invited testimony being allowed at this hearing so that you so called public servants can control what comments may be heard. With that being said the rest of my comments will be mostly confined to the education savings account program, more commonly referred to as school vouchers. We can all agree that more can and must be done to ensure the success of our youth in public schools, and that some of the public schools in this state are not up to the standard that they should be. The public education system in this state should be second to none and accessible to everyone no matter their race, gender, income level, creed, political affiliation etc. But here we are trying to strip away resources from our public schools to allow "school choice" for parents to send their kids to private schools. Why should I, a hard working tax paying Texan be forced to subsidize the personal wishes of parents to send their kids to private schools that have no accountability and do not answer to anybody? Shouldn't they be told to pull themselves by their boot straps and take a little personal responsibility if they wish to see their children attend private schools and pay for it out of their on pocket instead of out of the pockets of every Texan? Shouldn't the real "school choice" be perhaps these parents make some better choices so that if they wish of their kids to go to private school, they can do that themselves? This education savings account is nothing more than a government handout to the Texans that least need it, at the expense of Texans who can least afford it and I urge you to reconsider.

Jennifer Tippett
West Orange-Cove
Orange, TX

CSSB 8 doesn't prioritize parental choice over the right of the private school to pick and choose their students.
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CSSB 8 does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs.
CSSB 8 does not include a hold harmless for public schools that lose kids to a voucher.

Vote against vouchers.

Mary Johnson
Self. Pharmacist
Richardson, TX

This bill is a travesty. Texas has always been recognized as a state that grossly underfunds public schools. More money should be given to public schools instead of taking money away. I strongly oppose this bill.

Carlin Grammer, Mr
Self - Educator
La Porte, TX

Public education is crucial to our democracy and the economic success of our state and of our nation. Rather than funneling money away from public schools, the legislature should be working to provide adequate funding to make our public schools the best in the world. Every student deserves a quality education and public schools are the best way to accomplish this. Private educational programs are not held to the same standards as public schools and DO NOT guarantee a quality education. I am a Christian and I believe that private schools have a place...but it is only through public education that we will be able to maintain our democracy.

Mariella Martinez
self
Orange, TX

CSSB 8 won't help with teacher retention, doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address students' individual needs.

Matthew Jones, Mr.
Self
New Braunfels, TX

I am not in favor of school vouchers. I also am not in favor of the lack of accountability on the charter school side.

Lee Vi Moses, Dr.
self
LTL RVR ACAD, TX

I do not support this bill. The fact that some of the house members and the chair of the committee tried to amend the rules of government/democracy and meet at 9:00 pm makes me confident that the bill does not benefit the students of the state of Texas. It is a bill being pushed through, not supported by voters, but backed by money. Furthermore, the fact that invited testimony is the only testimony allowed solidifies that the bill is not beneficial. In his telephone conference on Thursday morning, Dr. Buckley stated, "The reason for invited testimony only is because we have already heard testimony from people who do not support the bill." Does that not speak volumes to the fact that most people in Texas do not support ESA's/Vouchers? Do your job, house committee. Listen to your constituents. Until you confidently explain that private/charter schools will be held to the same accountability that public schools are held to, my stance will not change.

Judith Vazquez
Self
Orange, TX

All students deserve the same opportunity, no matter if they attend public or private schools.

Rick Kirkpatrick
Florence ISD
Florence, TX

Vouchers do not guarantee School Choice. Private schools have selective admissions processes and do not have to accept any student, including those who receive special education services or 504 services. They also don't have to accept any students who have a lengthy discipline history or a history of poor attendance. Once a student is accepted, they can be dismissed at any time, at which time they would have to return to the public school they were already dissatisfied with in the first place. Once a student is accepted to a private school, they are no longer protected legally and the private school does not have to provide the same level of services that are required in a public school. In addition, parents of a special needs students will have no recourse, as they do in a public school.

If taxpayer dollars flow to public schools, the accountability for those students must follow. It is inherently wrong to hold one set of educational institutions to a standard set by the state and not the other. Private schools are not required to have certified teachers, not required to teach the same material, and are not required to provide the same levels of services as public schools. The only parents who will benefit from a voucher are those who are already wealthy enough to afford it for their children and who now would get a discount. \$7500-\$10,000 does not cover the cost of admission to most private schools, so the wealthy will get a discount, and those this bill purports to assist, will remain unable to attend.

I would ask for a no vote from every member on this bill.

Amy Flippin
Winters iSD
Coleman, TX

SB 8 will be a huge detriment to public education, especially small, rural schools. This is taking valuable funds for already struggling small schools and giving them to school that don't need them. Also adding more testing to each grade level is unfair. We are already suffering from the new, LONGER and more extensive test.....who in their right mind would think more testing would be fair or just for our students. Only people that have never been in public education and as teacher!

Michael Oldham
self, Technology Instructor with Madisonville CISD
Madisonville, TX

This bill seeks to create a program which would be in the comptroller's charge that is allowed to certify its own processors without requiring any outside input, solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations from any public or private source, and also take funding from the general fund(which could go to public schools) to subsidize a parent's choice to place their child in a non-public school, none of which are required to administer any state-mandated assessments. Not only will this incentivize parents to pull their children out of public schools thereby reducing attendance and therefore funding, but it will also set the precedent of reliance on the state government to help fund their children's non-public education. Funding for this program is problematic. Corporate entities, religious organizations, PACs, SIGs, wealthy private citizens who wield political leverage, literally anyone with an agenda, political, religious, or otherwise, can donate to this program and thereby potentially gain influence over the decisions of the program and/or the comptroller. Not only can anyone give money to the program, but the comptroller and/or any of their certified educational assistance organizations can actually solicit donations as well? Again, this is problematic because of the potential for exploitation. The current comptroller, who has no previous training or professional experience in finance or fiscal management, along with a "certified education assistance organization" will be susceptible to exploitation by any major donor be they private citizen, a vendor of educational products, or even the head of a private school. As private entities, these organizations are not beholden to any transparency requirements for their other business operations that aren't directly linked with the education savings account program. This bill will not only rob public schools of needed funding, but it will send the message that the state government has no faith in the public education system for which it is responsible. If parents choose to have their children educated at a for-profit institution outside the public education system, let it be at their expense because that's a choice they are making. Furthermore, small, rural communities that rely on their local public school for feeding their children two meals a day will no doubt suffer the effects of the almost certain funding cuts that would result from this bill. A parent's right to choose how and where their child is educated is not being limited, inhibited, or infringed upon in any way whatsoever, and to say otherwise is just patently false. The idea that this bill is about parental rights in any way is farcical. Furthermore, this bill violates the separation clause if religious schools profit from this program. In *Everson v. Board of Education*, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black said, "[t]he First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state," and "[t]hat wall must be kept high and impregnable."

Ashley Chohlis, Superintendent of Schools
Poth ISD
Poth, TX

This Bill hurts public education, the students, and tax payers of Texas. Please make a better choice and properly fund public schools and special education in public schools where programs exist and certified experts work to serve students with special needs. Most private schools do not even have special education programs. We do not need more state testing. Our students and teachers are under enough pressure as it is. The testing we have now is adequate. The SBOE should remain involved in the state assessment program. This Bill is BAD all around. NO public testimony? Where are our ethics?

Judi Thomas, Educator (Retired with 32 years service)
Self
Conroe, TX

The 80 page sub to SB 8 has voucher language tucked in about 50 pages into the document. ESAs (otherwise Known as VOUCHERS) are detrimental to our Public School System. I do not understand the all out "push" to make it more difficult for the system that MUST educate every student that walks through their doors AND comply with the mandated testing requirements levied by TEA. Private schools can "pick and chose" WHO gets to come to their school and they are NOT required to abide by the State testing guidelines. I taught in public schools for 32 years and even though much had changed, I feel I made a positive difference in my students' lives. This legislation makes me very sad for our Texas Public Schools.

Kymbra Bezner
Self, homemaker
Amarillo, TX

I would like all representatives to vote NO on this bill. We need to fully fund all public schools in our great state, and tax payer money should not go to private institutions. As a resident of rural Texas, I will be sending my children to our local elementary school very soon in Bushland ISD (west of Amarillo). It is the lifeblood of this community! The growth we have had in this area is a direct result of our schools. We have businesses that have opened, houses that have been built, and we are a thriving, close-knit community. ESAs will take money away from public schools, and rural Texas schools like ours would suffer the most.

Additionally, as a former educator in Amarillo ISD, I have seen firsthand the need for equitable education for all students, which cannot be accomplished with a voucher program, but can be accomplished through fully funding our public schools. We need to value all our students and make sure every Texas has the best education possible. Texas should have the #1 public schools in the country!

Thank you for your time.

Mandie England, Counselor
Winters ISD
Winters, TX

Education vouchers will not only be devastating to public schools and public education, it will be extremely harmful to our students. In our community, many families will opt to take the money for home schooling and never educate their children at all. This bill will significantly reduce the academic standing of students state-wide. This is anti-public education, but much worse, it is anti-Texas youth and their potential.

Jimmy Lee, Mr.
Self
Paris, TX

NO to vouchers!

Kandis Boeschling, Mrs
Self/Family, HR Business Partner
Austin, TX

Any instruction relating to any sexual education should never be across the board mandated by any government or school entity!
We founded this nation on being FREE, not OWNED, or Controlled by anyone!

Parents/Guardians are the ONLY ones who should have that authority with kids/teens! Never school, never Doctors, never the Government!

Yes there should be laws, guidelines, and assistance given to get children headed in the right direction.

But those tools and assistance need to be approved nature first!

But regardless of religion, race, etc..children are created by 2 parents and belong to them or those accepting that right! More should be done for those who are stuck doing it alone! And those that abandon their responsibilities!

Instead of trying to focus on overreaching inside the schools, and making them the Jr jailer, or the probation officer they need to be the Teacher, the proactive positive COACH!

That's where we have gone wrong is sharing and allowing toxic information, views, opinions, and negativity to sneak in and steal our kids growth and happiness. Parents thinking the school can handle the bully issues because they're busy!!!

Schools that have 504 but don't follow them. Or kids the get put into Special education when really they just needed a 504!! But parents are making money of it! My daughters school has violated her 504 several times over the last 3 years! Those should be the focus of these sessions!

Alicia Adams
Self
Richmond, TX

Senate Bill 8 will hurt children who attend our already underfunded public schools. As a former teacher and current parents I am opposed to this bill.

Erin Bingham
self
Spring, TX

The public doesn't want this. Teachers don't want this. If people wanted this, then you would have not have to pull stunts like this. Can someone please explain why this committee thinks private school kids are worth SO much more than a public school student? Raise the basic allotment to these numbers you are proposing for vouchers!

Kayla Yates
Self
Cypress, TX

Vouchers hurt public schools and students. MY SON LANDON, CAN ONLY GO TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS. I am concerned because private schools aren't required to accept all students, including those with disabilities or who are at risk of dropping out. THIS INCLUDES my son Landon who is an athlete with Type 1 diabetes. Private schools can not and are not required to meet his needs as a student or an athlete, including training staff in emergency care, providing a nurse, or giving him accommodation. Landon is FEDERALLY protected under Section 504, PRIVATE SCHOOLS do not have to abide by these laws and can legally discriminate.

Mary Ellen Bryant
Self public school librarian
The Woodlands, TX

I am against vouchers.

Sierra Jacox
Self
Montgomery, TX

I do not support vouchers for private school. If I don't like taking my kids to the neighborhood park should the state pay for me to go to a country club with a private park? NO. Please focus on improving public education and that will make it better for all.

Heidi Miceli
Self
Spring, TX

I am against vouchers. Please support public education and teachers.

EVE MARGOLIS
self
Austin, TX

Vote no on this wildly unpopular bill! It is clear that even the committee members know it's wrong per the attempts to sneak it through and now have invite only testimony. Absolutely oppose this bill!

Deborah Leiber, Ms
Self
The Woodlands, TX

I am strongly opposed to vouchers in any form. Public funds should not be shifted to private schools!! Please vote NO for SB8.
Sincerely,
Deborah Leiber

Morganne Reed
Self Home health care provider
Conroe, TX

- * Say no to SB 8 & no to vouchers.
- * Public schools are the heart of community. SB 8 will rip the heart out of our communities.
- * Public school tax dollars should remain in public schools with public oversight and accountability
- * Stop attacking public schools

(Texas has over \$32 billion in excess funds, one quarter of that, \$8 billion, was designated for public education. What are you doing with that? Could some of that go into a grant foundation to help fund private education?)

- * No to SB 8 and No to Vouchers
No more attacks on public schools
No more ripping the hearts out of communities
No to SB 8 & No Vouchers
-

Kimberly Fick
self
Spring, TX

No vouchers in Texas! Public schools need all our support to maintain and grow the level of education they provide to students in all areas.

Kelly Fail
Self and all public school employees
Kennedale, TX

This is a terrible idea. Texas is already one of the lowest in regards to public ed and vouchers will just make it worse. How about putting more money into public ed and taking care of your teachers?

Danelle Schwertner
Miles ISD School Board
Miles, TX

Chairman Buckley and members of the House Public Education Committee,

I am a business owner and an elected school board member at Miles ISD. Vouchers hurt public schools. It is the duty of the legislature to fully fund free public schools, and for some reason, the push has been to take public funds from public education and pay for private, religious or other ideological education systems that aren't held accountable to any financial standards. Why do our legislators continue to shirk their duty to our millions of public school students? You have tied our hands with unfunded mandates for decades, as well as impossible standards for most schools with high stakes testing, low teacher pay and fewer and fewer funds to do our jobs. Public education is the very basis of our society - all children must be educated in order to become productive adults. You owe it to our public school students to do your job and fully fund our schools. Education Savings Accounts are a theft mechanism that will allow the wealthy to continue to be able to afford expensive private school options, while removing much needed funds from the public schools that are the heart of this state. Instead of creating this system of paying for the affluent to keep some of their wealth, why not spend these funds where they belong and are under a system of strict accountability? Special education students deserve the very best - and private schools, with a possible very few exceptions, are not the place for that. Who is this helping? No one. This portion of the bill, as presented, is not helping anyone. Special education students will either not be accepted to private schools because these institutions don't want to, or cannot, make accommodation, nor must they follow IDEA protections, or they will stay in public schools whose funding has been ravaged by yet another legislative session that has let them down. This is the vicious cycle that YOU, as legislators, have put us in for decades. It is YOUR job to fix this, and the fix is not to take money away. We are weary of hearing the same tired excuses from the people who have been elected to take care of the issues facing our state. Fix the problems. Stop adding to them. ESAs, vouchers, bracketed vouchers or anything of the kind all have the same outcome: no transparency or accountability, and a less educated society. Public schools have better outcomes than private schools. Vouchers hurt public education. ESAs and vouchers are not the answer to the problems that the legislature has created over the last decades. Vote NO to SB 8 if there is any voucher or ESA stipulation.

Glenda Thompson
Self retired
Arlington, TX

Very against school vouchers. The public school was created to ensure all citizens have education. This is obviously an effort to defund that system, doing nothing to improve that system, but a step in privatization of schools, opening a whole new bag of worms. Look at the prison system. **STOP THIS AND SUPPORT OUR SCHOOLS!!!!!!!!!!**
I do not want my taxes to support private, especially Christian schools PERIOD

Robert Trahan
Self
Tomball, TX

I am firmly against vouchers. They take from the poor to benefit the rich. They will not achieve what their proponents promise, there's plenty of evidence of that in other states that have tried it. Please don't ruin public education in Texas! Vote against SB8.

Amber Fritschel
Self
The Woodlands, TX

I am strongly opposed to school vouchers.

David Fincher
Cotton Mill Learning Center, National Child Care Coalition
Mesquite, TX

For three decades we have made policy intended to improve outcomes for public school students. Unfortunately, in all that time we have actually seen deteriorated outcomes. It is past time to implement policy that has been proven to result in improved outcomes in every state and location where it has been implemented. I am FOR SB8 and urge all committee members to vote AYE for this bill. Think of the students, not the adults.

amber Meegan
Self
San Antonio, TX

As a public school parent, I want to encourage that this bill NOT pass. This will only hurt already underfunded schools and children who attend them.

Amy Butler
self
The Woodlands, TX

I am against vouchers. Stop trying to ruin our public schools.

Robert Murry, Mr
Self, retired
Austin, TX

This is a bad bill. I strongly oppose it as a former teacher and grandparent.

Elizabeth Foley
Self
The Woodlands, TX

This Texan-born resident will never support vouchers of any kind including, education savings accounts and tax credits. Fully fund public schools with your surplus budget. Our children deserve the best public school education and our teachers and administrators deserve your support.

Jennifer Rames
Self
San Antonio, TX

This bill is wasting resources that could and should go to public school teacher pay raises and hiring. This would be a huge source of administrative waste and would ultimately be a tool that would subsidize wealthy families who already pay for the private and religious education they seek. Getting a child a diagnosis of a disability in order to profit off this program will, sadly, be a tool used by those who can manipulate the system. Additionally, students with true disabilities will ultimately be rejected by private schools or be terribly under resourced compared to what public school districts offer. This bill should not proceed. My children are thriving in public schools and funds must stay in the public school districts. There are plenty of choices available to parents - in district magnets, school choice, charters. This bill must be stopped for the sake of our children.

Elizabeth Lucey
self, school nurse
Plano, TX

I am asking you to vote “no” on any form of education savings accounts, tax credit, or voucher program.

Vouchers hurt public schools and students. I am concerned because private schools aren’t required to accept all students, including those with disabilities or who are at risk of dropping out.

Even worse, parents lose rights and the protections of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) if they move their special needs child to a private school.

Finally, private and religious schools do not have the same level of accountability to the state as public schools do. Vouchers would allow private schools to receive taxpayer money without having to comply with the same curriculum or fiscal requirements as public schools.

In light of these concerns, I urge you to vote against any ESA this session to help protect our most vulnerable students.

Rachel Reyes
Self
Conroe, TX

No vouchers! Help public schools instead by providing better pay to teachers! You get what you pay for. Want quality teachers? Pay for quality teachers! Want schools to improve? Put your money where your mouth is.

Catrina Robinson
Self
Spring, TX

I am against vouchers.

Joan McCleery
Self
San Angelo, TX

For decades, the state legislature has tied the hands of our public schools, and now continues to show us that public schools are not a priority with the endorsement of high stakes testing, lower teacher pay and a ridiculous number of unfunded mandates.

SB 8 as it stands creates vouchers. Vouchers are ANOTHER bad idea for public schools! This bill includes "bracketed" vouchers for special education, but private schools are not equipped for special education students, and they don't have to be. They have zero financial transparency or accountability, because they are private businesses, and aren't required to do so. They don't have to follow the IDEA protections for special education students, either.

The legislature is required by the constitution of the state of Texas to fund a free, PUBLIC education. THE LEGISLATORS are the ones that have failed our public education students dismally, and continue to do so. The problems with school funding have been decades in the making, and have hindered our public schools in so many ways! Do not move forward with SB 8!!!!

Lacey Estrada, Mrs.
Self
The woodlands, TX

I am against vouchers.

John Walker
Self
The Woodlands, TX

NO to vouchers. Almost no accountability to the taxpayer and doesn't do anything to help our dismal funding of public schools.

I do not want this state to become like Louisiana where attending public school is a life sentence to mediocrity.

Please, no to vouchers, focus energy elsewhere.

D Karen Wilkerson
Taxpayer (Retired)
Tyler, TX

I urge you to vote down this bill, as it confiscates tax dollars committed for public education. If enacted, it operates to the detriment of Texas schoolchildren and goes against the desires of the majority of Texas parents and taxpayers.

Susan Martin
Self
Houston, TX

Please vote No to this and any Voucher bill.

Applying public funding to unregulated private schools through this back-door loop hole guise of “parental choice” is despicable and an irresponsible use of public funding. Texas already is behind in upholding high academic standards due to lack of funding and misrepresentation and barring of highly researched and proven educational practices which would support our students learning. (I reference differentiated educational models and necessary supports for students with learning differences.)

In short, I remind you of the following:

- Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers; they are not required to report student achievement data to the state.
- Private schools do not have to accept all students; they can (and do) discriminate. This often creates inconsistency for children who are removed after one semester or year due to certain “standards” or needs which a private school cannot accommodate.
- No credible research exists to suggest vouchers improve academic performance.
- Vouchers drain resources from public schools; other states have shown that voucher costs often grow well above projections.
- Texas already ranks 40th in per-student spending and the rate of inflation since 2019 is 14.5%, per the Comptroller.
- Choice already exists within the public school system: Districts have transfer policies, magnet schools, career/tech academies, etc. Those who choose a private educational model and have the means, should not be further rewarded.
- Vouchers subsidize tuition for existing private school and homeschooled students, putting a huge new financial burden on the state.

Alternatively, I urge review of TEA burdens on teaching, and I call for adequate public funding which might help Texas families regain confidence in our public school systems.

Carolyn Rigney
Self/ Nuclear Medicine Technologist
Trophy Club, TX

I am strongly opposed to SB8. Please focus on fixing the broken financial system and funding for public education first. Every child has the right to an appropriate public education. It is our duty to provide that opportunity. As both of my children approach the end of their public education journeys, I can tell you first hand, private schools do it have to follow the same rules for education when it come specifically to those that require SPED or 504 accommodations. As far as testing goes and how it is addressed in this bill I am also opposed. Let’s have more transparency on how much of our taxpayer dollars goes in advance to testing companies. Fix the root of the problem then consider what’s in this bill.

Karla Duran
Self
San Antonio, TX

No to vouchers that will affect public schools that are already underfunded.

Theresa Garcia, Retired teacher
Myself
San Antonio, TX

Please do not vote for this bill. My tax dollars should not go to vouchers!!! As a retired teacher I know the importance of quality public education. Our money should go to public schools.

Heather Alexander
self-stay at home parent
Spring, TX

I am against vouchers.

Jayne McRae
Self
The Woodlands, TX

I'm aware an 80-page to SB 8 was presented. I request a NO vote on this bill. I don't not support vouchers in any form, whether ESA, tax credits, and the like. Where Mt tax dollars goes matters and our students matter. NO ON SB 8

Jenny Murray, Mrs
self/Author
Roanoke, TX

I write in regards to the Education Committee's substitute of SB8 and implore you to vote NO.

As a mother of five children in the Texas Public School system, three of which have disabilities, and a product of Texas Education myself, I ask that you take the following points into consideration.

Tuition of charter and private schools goes up significantly when vouchers are passed. This is not a win for the middle class, as charter and private schools have zero oversight, nor are they regulated, and will only line the coffers of these privatized institutions.

Furthermore, due to the lack of oversight and being private institutions, they are not required to follow state and federal laws for curriculum and will allow discrimination towards children. The negative impacts would be felt most among children with disabilities and minorities. This would allow discarding of those not deemed 'worthy' into a severely defunded public education system and would act as tool for segregation and oppression of children that have been 'othered' by charter and private schools.

This is a blatant attempt to continue the attack on public education via defunding districts because private and charter schools would receive \$4,340 more per student while public education is currently still funded by 2019 costs. It should be noted that, if the state followed today's costs, my specific school district would receive about 6 million dollars in funding.

Our school district is the fast-growing in North Texas and the third fastest growing in the state of Texas. HB3 was devastating for our district as it removed 4 Golden Yield Pennies, before HB3's passage we had 8 Golden Pennies, and forced us to continue being a Robinhood district even though we requested to be removed due to the rapid growth we've seen. This, coupled with the state giving less funding when property values rise to our district and the passage of SB8, would adversely affect our children, teachers, and districts.

Please vote FOR public education, ALL children, our teachers, and continued academic excellence by voting NO on SB8.

Stewart Beall
Self
Spring, TX

Stop trying to push school vouchers. This only hurts our public schools. Trying to sneak it through on a seperate bill is underhanded and despicable. You are going against the will of the people.

Pamela Clark
Self/retired educator
Arlington, TX

Public education is endangered and our students and educators will not receive the adequate funding necessary to give them the education they deserve. Privatized education, whether in a Christian-based setting, charter or non-Christian based schools shouldn't benefit from public funding, sadly, monies spent per student are already very low. Public education is essential for students to grow and thrive and be contributing members of society and remain competitive in job markets; additionally, college preparedness is necessary if that's the direction a student chooses. I hope you recognize the importance of serving those in a public school setting. Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Pamela Clark

Janeen Behnken
Self property management
Commerce, TX

Do not destroy public schools in Texas. Everyone knows y'all are puppets for West Texas oil money who want to do away with public education. You will destroy small town Texas by ruining the public schools. Not every Texan wants a so called "Christian" education.

Laurie Mawyer
Self
Spring, TX

The non-stop undercutting of public education and state constitutionally mandated funding of public education is abhorrent. If the Texas Legislature truly valued its citizens, students, and position as a business-friendly state then it would worry more about providing FREE and appropriate public education to ALL students. Businesses are not going to continue to flock to Texas if Texas cannot provide an educated workforce.

Vouchers (school choice) is a thinly veiled attempt to reinstitute segregation in public schools - but now it's focused on splitting the affluent from the socioeconomically disadvantaged. Any respectable elected officials who truly claims to represent and value their constituents should be voting down this 80 page sneaky amendment to SB 8 and any and all future school voucher legislation.

If so many parents are worried about what their children are being exposed to in schools, how about they spend more time volunteering in those schools. Most of our teachers are parents, neighbors, friends, and constituents - there is no sinister plot to subvert the youth of Texas. However, it truly feels like there is a sinister plot by certain members in the Texas Legislature to dismantle public education in this great state.

Shelley Lincoln
Self
Cedar Park, TX

As a current teacher I am so disappointed that this is the state of public education in Texas. Taking money away from our students is a shame but trying to push this through in secrecy is terrible. You claim that you want transparency in the work that you are doing and yet you hiding from the public, not allowing the public to speak and controlling the narrative. Texas children and educators deserve so much more. The playing field should be level for ALL Texas students whether they attend public, private or charter schools. By approving vouchers you are putting public school children at a disadvantage and that is not acceptable.

Eric Walker
Self
The Woodlands, TX

A hard NO on vouchers. No real accountability to the taxpayer as there is no direct way to challenge how a private school spends taxpayer money like there is with a school district where I can vote for a school board and give public comments directly to the board. Furthermore, we shouldn't even be considering giving money for private schools when we haven't even properly funded public schools which is how most students in Texas get their education.

Shanda Jones
Self /Educator
Cedar Hill, TX

vote NO on the SB 8, the voucher program embedded in this bill isn't good for public education. Public funds should not be used for private education. school districts receive funding based on student attendance so if they don't attend you take away funding and valuable resources. This is an attack on public education and misuse of funds. Fund public education in Texas appropriately, your constituents are watching it.

Jacqueline Collins
Retired Teachers
Wortham, TX

Vote NO to SB 8. The process in which it is being done is not acceptable. Pushing this bill through without due process is shady and undermining!!! Our children, parents and teachers deserve much better than this. You stand on supporting public education yet turn your backs by pushing for vouchers!!! Again, unacceptable!!! VOTE NO to CSSB 8 !!!

John Buchanan
Self/self-employed
SANGER, TX

Vouchers / ESAs are the antitheses of a conservative small government. The bill will be at least a billion dollars, and the money will go to groups for which no accountability will be required. This sounds an awful lot like money going to special interest slush funds that conservatives and Republicans have openly decried for decades. This is a billion-dollar boondoggle in search of a problem.

The rhetoric doesn't match reality. Our public schools are not being fully funded, nor are they the "woke" indoctrination factories being claimed by the interests behind this legislation. The reality though is by gutting public schools in this state, you will lead to fewer companies wanting to come here which, long-term, will destroy the business climate in this state.

RL McConnell
Self. Retired.
Greenville, TX

Hello, I am respectfully requesting a vote NO on S.B. 8.

SB8 would take public tax dollars away from already-underfunded public schools.

This bill would exacerbate education inequality in Texas and make it more difficult for Texas' most vulnerable students to succeed.

Again, I would respectfully ask that you vote NO on S.B. 8, a bill that would leave too many of our state's public education students behind.

Texas needs an educated population for our success in the future.

Thank you for your time.

Daniel Perkins
Self - Attorney
Greenville, TX

I oppose this bill. Vouchers hurt the vast majority of students. Vouchers drain money for public schools and divert those funds to private schools and for profit vendors. Private schools are not obligated to accept or serve all students. Students with disabilities may not have access to the services they need in private schools. The loss of funding for public education would have meant much needed salary and retirement increases for teachers and staff. Vouchers subsidize wealthy families. Please vote against this bill.

Alma Burkhart
Montgomery county taxpayer
Conroe, TX

I strongly oppose this bill because it takes away from public schools. Creighton, you are messing with Montgomery county public schools (CISD) which are excellent schools and this bill will hurt your constituents!!

Whitney Threatt
Self - school social worker
Greenville, TX

As a social worker in a low socioeconomic elementary school, I can tell you first hand how badly school vouchers would ruin learning for these students. Please please consider voting against the vouchers to preserve the public school system for so many that rely on it, as I did and as many of you may have too.

Patti King
Self/Retired
Beaumont, TX

Vouchers / ESAs are the opposite of a conservative small government. The bill will be at least a billion dollars and go to groups for which no accountability will be required. That is from Senator Creighton himself. This sounds an awful lot like money going to special interest slush funds that conservatives and Republicans have openly decried for decades. This is a billion-dollar boondoggle in search of a problem.

2) The rhetoric doesn't match reality. Our public schools are not being fully funded, nor are they the woke indoctrination factories being claimed by the interests behind this legislation. The reality though is by gutting public schools in this state, you will lead to fewer companies wanting to come here which will destroy the business climate in this state long term.

Connie Carrington
NEISD, Public School Mom, Volunteer, PTA Board for 15 years, Substitute, RootEd Rep
San Antonio, TX

No to Vouchers! More money in the basic Student Allotment. If you can find the money for Vouchers you can fund the Basic Student Allotment. How wonderful would our public schools be if they got \$9,000 or 10,000 per child as the bill seems to want to give in ESA? We would have amazing schools! Protect our kids - Fund them and No to ESA.

Phillip Sanders
Self / Public Education
Katy, TX

This bill is a voucher/ESA. It will not improve standardized testing in public education. In fact, standardized testing will increase with a new assessment program to be put in place by 2027-2028. More power will be granted to the TEA commissioner.

There is no accountability for voucher recipients. Private schools and vendors will not be required to comply with federal and state protections for students with disabilities. These protections are required for public schools.

The absence of any sort of "hold harmless" ensures public schools will lose funding.

The new version, CSSB 8, will be more expensive than SB 8 which would cost over \$1 billion per year.

In closing this is a bad bill because it will defund public education. Public education takes all students. Whereas, private schools are allowed to choose their students. This is why school choice is actually the private school's choice. Public money should fund public schools and not subsidize affluent parents.

Tanya Lloyd
self/educator
Lockhart, TX

I would urge this committee to take a long hard look at the damage that this bill will do to public schools. After reading the entirety of this bill I am dismayed at how the governing body of the state of Texas views public schools and public school teachers. Many of the items in this bill are redundant, parents already have the right to their child's grades, discipline records, health records etc. As an employee in the state of Texas, no one should have the right to see my work evaluation except for my employer, they then have the right to discipline or fire based on those evaluations, parents should not have access to those records, as the general public does not have access to any other type of employees evaluations. I believe that this would be a violation of ones rights. The voucher program will only weaken public schools by taking away much needed funds. Our schools are already underfunded and are barely able to purchase supplies needed for school employees to do their jobs. If the Texas legislature truly wanted public schools to succeed they would fully fund them so that the number of teachers, counselors, aids, nurses, special education teachers, gifted and talented teachers could be hired and utilized to teach the TEKS that are outlined by you. As for asking districts and teachers to have ALL resources used to be available to parents before the start of the year, how can you ask that teachers work outside of their contract hours to complete this? Because that is what it will take. All a parent has to do is ask and any teacher will be happy to supply the resources being used, but it is impossible to have that in a digital format for parents to access by date. Good teachers know that learning is fluid and evaluations must be made each day as to what the students mastered and what has to be retaught, that would skew the timeline that was presented to parents. Many teachers already send home weekly or monthly newsletters about subjects to be taught. Our young adults in Texas are at a disadvantage because we are not teaching sex ed. Parents can certainly opt out, they already can opt out of the course required by the state that are to be taught concerning dating violence, STD's and even puberty. I would rather students learn facts from adults than myths and untruths from other students or social media. Seeing as how, LGBTQIA+ people are a natural subset of our human population, teaching our children to treat them with respect and dignity is a no brainer. As a society we have nothing to fear from people that are different that we are and we should not try to belittle and/or dehumanize them. These children are a part of our school system and they should not feel unwelcome or unsafe. Thank you for your time and consideration to these remarks. Tanya Lloyd

Erica Janczak
Self
Northlake, TX

- Please vote NO on the committee substitute for Senate Bill 8.
- It's bad for kids and schools.
- It's wrong to make these changes without public input.

Texas has a long history of not supporting our public schools with the dollars needed, nor addressing the school finance issues. Instead of suddenly having \$10,500 per student in vouchers, how about supporting our schools with that money. DO something (leadership) instead of just trying to dismantle public schools. Vouchers will not make it better.

And the increase in testing days is laughable. Stop thinking that is the answer. We have some amazing leadership at our school district. The school districts are not the issue. Our "leaders" in Austin are the issue.

Greg Mooty
Self
Austin, TX

My wife and I (consistent Texas voters) are vehemently opposed to SB 8. It's another sly attempt to eliminate public education, a foundation of our freedoms. Note that this bill is opposed by a vast majority of Texas residents,

Caleb Baker

Self, Licensed Professional Counselor

Amarillo, TX

This bill would be especially harmful to public education, public educators, and Texas's most vulnerable families who don't have the financial resources to 'save' with school choice. Please vote NO on this bill.

Rick Reeves

Self

Spring, TX

Stop trying to push vouchers. Focus on fully funding public schools!

Melinda Buchanan

Self-Teacher

SANGER, TX

One of the most significant issues with vouchers, ESAs, and tax credits is that they divert public funds away from public schools. These policies essentially take taxpayer dollars and redirect them towards private and religious schools, leaving public schools with fewer resources to educate the majority of students in Texas. This undermines the public education system, which is intended to be a pillar of our democracy and can exacerbate existing inequities in the education system.

Another concern is that voucher programs lack the accountability measures that are in place in public schools. Public schools are held accountable for their performance through state assessments and other measures. In contrast, private schools receiving voucher funds are not subject to the same level of scrutiny, and as a result, may not be held to the same standards of academic rigor, financial transparency, or student safety. This creates a situation where taxpayer dollars are being used to fund schools not be held accountable for their outcomes.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to serve all students, and many private schools have admission criteria that can exclude students with special needs, students from low-income families, and students with diverse backgrounds. By redirecting public funds to private schools, these policies can exacerbate existing inequalities and create a two-tiered education system that favors students with greater financial resources.

Another issue is that voucher programs can harm students' academic performance. Multiple studies have shown that students who receive vouchers to attend private schools do not perform any better than students who remain in public schools. In some cases, voucher programs have been associated with decreased academic achievement, as private schools may not have the same level of resources and expertise as public schools in supporting student learning.

Finally, vouchers, ESAs, and tax credits can harm the local communities that public schools serve. Public schools are an important part of local communities, and their success is tied to the health and vitality of the community as a whole. When public schools lose funding to voucher programs, the local community may suffer as a result. This can lead to a decline in property values, increased crime rates, and a decreased sense of community cohesion.

In conclusion, voucher programs, ESAs, and tax credits for education may seem like a good idea on the surface, but they pose significant risks to the quality of education in public schools in Texas. These policies divert public funds away from public schools, lack accountability measures, and can harm academic performance, and local communities. Rather than pursuing these policies, Texas should focus on investing in its public schools, improving teacher training and addressing the root causes of educational inequity.

Cassie Jordan
Self
DENTON, TX

Absolutely NOT! This is against Public Education and will hurt schools and children. Stop this political game with Public Schools. Educators and their students don't deserve to be pawns in politics. You want to support students? Let teachers teach. Let students learn. Do not Pay parents to send their students to private schools. If they want their child to go to a private college that is their choice, not yours. You should be standing up and supporting Public Education, not trying to destroy it. Also, Give teachers a REAL raise, not breadcrumbs. How much of a raise do you think you deserve yearly? 2%??? Hardly.

Wanda Longoria
self: retired teacher
San Antonio, TX

I stand in opposition to SB 8 and urge members to vote against this bill, which will prove to siphon essential funding for public schools, which are currently in a crisis, due to years of underfunding. This bill will cost our state over \$1 billion per year to support its version of a voucher program that most Texans don't even support. This would give private school parents, who can afford to send their children to private school already, further financial assistance, while our disenfranchised students continue to get neglected. This is completely unacceptable. Research about vouchers across our nation already shows that the money given in vouchers goes to parents who ALREADY have their children enrolled in private schools. The \$8000 proposed would NOT COVER FULL TUITION to parents enrolling their children in most private schools whose tuition ranges between \$15,000-32,000 nationally. Not even scholarships would cover the full cost of tuition. This clearly indicates that those who have get more and those who struggle financially are left without once that money runs out. Meanwhile our public schools that serve ALL students, get further defunded. This bill further doesn't provide a "hold harmless" provision which guarantees that local public schools will continue to lose funding. This is unacceptable at a time districts need to offer better compensation to teachers, as our schools are in crisis! Teachers continue to leave the profession for higher paying private sector careers. This endangers the students of Texas who are losing greatly qualified teachers as they move out of the profession. This also puts a further burden on the local districts and hurts rural districts tremendously, because they are limited in how to budget for raises. Meanwhile, this bill does NOTHING to hold VOUCHER RECIPIENTS accountable. SB 8 clearly acknowledges that private schools and vendors WILL NOT be required to comply with federal and state protections for students with disabilities, protections public schools are required to offer. SB 8 removes end of course exams and requires TEA to REPLACE them by DEVELOPING English Language Arts and Math assessments to be administered to students enrolled in 11th grade. This is a problem because it would be testing material that students learned YEARS EARLIER and that is not currently part of their instruction. This is unfair to all those students and future students. The bill also gives MORE POWER TO the TEA COMMISSIONER to create these new assessments and would also have the power to change elementary and middle school testing to a through-year-test. This would mean more testing (three times in a year) throughout the year. We already know parents are opposed to over-testing and have consistently asked that STAAR and state accountability tests be abolished. While we are hearing that this bill would kill STAAR, which is true, the public is NOT HEARING that it will continue to push standardized testing more frequently.

Anjali Mehta

Self, Content Designer and AISD alum

Austin, TX

I urge you to vote no on SB8. I am a product of Austin, Texas public ed institutions, both traditional schools and magnet schools. I look back on that time fondly, appreciating the inclusive nature of those schools and the incredible educators/staffs that created equitable environments.

I believe vouchers redirect money that can help our chronically underfunded public schools thrive and survive. When public schools miss out on funding because it's been diverted to private schools, and when voucher students miss out on private school experiences that exceed their \$8,000 government-provided limit, both public and private students feel the pain.

As the San Antonio Express editorial board said, the push for vouchers would defund public schools, shift tax dollars to private schools and, research suggests, assist wealthy families. To quote them, "Parents already have rights in the state's education code, and they have plenty of choices for their children's schooling. They can choose to send their children to traditional public schools, sometimes even outside of their district. They can also opt for public specialized magnet schools or independently run public charter schools, or they can home-school."

And according to the same San Antonio Express editorial board article, there is no proof, meaning no studies, showing that vouchers are successful — in being able to demonstrate higher grades/test scores, or students' well-being, or in ability to offer support to those special needs students. And without any oversight on private schools' curriculum, accountability, teacher requirements or spending, we may never actually be able to tell if these voucher students are advancing as much as the program promises they will.

Additionally, it is generally understood that private schools who are able handpick their students, are also often out of reach for students who are low-income, qualify for special education, or at-risk. Perhaps a voucher will cover the cost of tuition, though that won't always be the case, but there could be additional financial barriers that prevent lower-income students from actually taking advantage of this bill — transportation costs if the school is not in their neighborhood, costs for extra-curricular activities and uniforms, and so on. Even if a student is accepted, there doesn't seem to be a guarantee that they'll be able to have the full private school experience. As the Austin-American Statesman's editorial board said in their op-ed, "voucher programs essentially gives the wealthy a discount at a private school."

I also urge you to consider impact the public ed institutions have on our rural communities. They are often times the biggest employer in the area, and they can serve as community hubs for non-school events. Even if they receive a couple initial payments for a few years, what will happen afterward? I believe trading some money now for less down the line doesn't seem fair to rural schools who already struggle.

Ty Stevens
Miles ISD/self
Miles, TX

I would like to first thank you for serving on the Public Ed Committee and taking the time to discuss important issues in our Public Schools. I am a firm believer in the value of Public Education. Texas Public Schools are committed to making a difference in every child that walks through our doors. I am writing to you today concerned about the Committee Substitute for SB8. I want to express my opposition to any type of voucher program or ESA's presented to this committee. This is my 22 year in education where I have served as an administrator for 16 of those years and I am currently the superintendent at Miles ISD (1st year). Listed below are a few points for reasons to vote no on any School Voucher/ESA Bill, particularly SB 8:

1. School choice has always been available to all students.
 - o Students can choose to transfer into a school district, which we have 88 transfers students this current year out of 515 students, and we will approve more throughout the summer.
 - o Students also have the choice to attend charter schools, private schools, or homeschooling. Charter schools are provided state funding and have to follow similar, not exact, Public School laws. Private and Home School students are not held to any type of accountability, therefore public tax dollars should not go to them. The mere word private school means it is a private industry that does not rely on state funds. It needs to remain that way.
2. Private schools and home schools do not have an accountability system for academics or finance, but Public Schools do.
 - o The comparison between Public and Private schools is not a fair comparison. If you want to make it a fair comparison, make all schools receiving public funds accountable in all matters and in all ways.
3. Special Education: Public Schools are required to follow Individuals with Disabilities ACT (IDEA). This protects students with disabilities in public education, and although public schools are not perfect, public schools do a great job of meeting the needs of every child. Private schools do not have to accept special education students nor any student that does not meet their criteria. Private schools have no laws governing them, which means they are private.
4. Accountability- although this bill does address accountability, it does not address private school accountability. Public funds that go to private schools through the use of ESA, better known as a voucher, should be accounted for. This bill also adds an additional ELA test in the 11th grade, why add more testing to public schools if you are not going to hold everyone accountable.

Tax payers dollars should go to entities that are directly accountable to the public. Please vote no to SB 8 and any other bill that contains the word voucher.

Ty Stevens

Jennifer Pendergrass
Myself
Northlake, TX

I support SB8

Lisa Pendergrass
Myself
Richland Hills, TX

I support this bill SB 8

Patti King
Self/self-employed
Beaumont, TX

Vouchers, Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), and Tax Credits for Education divert public funds away from public schools and towards private and religious schools. While these policies may seem appealing to some, they pose significant risks to the quality of education in public schools in Texas.

First and foremost, voucher programs, ESAs, and tax credits for education take taxpayer dollars away from public schools, leaving them with fewer resources to educate the majority of students in Texas. Public schools are already facing significant funding challenges, with many schools lacking the resources they need to provide high-quality education. Diverting public funds to private and religious schools only exacerbates these funding challenges and undermines the public education system, which is intended to be a cornerstone of our democracy.

Furthermore, voucher programs lack accountability measures in place in public schools. Public schools must meet certain academic standards and are held accountable for their performance through state assessments and other measures. In contrast, private schools receiving voucher funds may not be subject to the same level of scrutiny, and as a result, may not be held to the same standards of academic rigor, financial transparency, or student safety. This creates a situation where taxpayer dollars are being used to fund schools that may not be held accountable for their outcomes.

Moreover, voucher programs can actually harm the academic performance of students. Multiple studies have shown that students who receive vouchers to attend private schools do not perform any better than students who remain in public schools. In some cases, voucher programs have been associated with decreased academic achievement, as private schools may not have the same level of resources and expertise as public schools in supporting student learning.

Finally, voucher programs, ESAs, and tax credits can harm the local communities that public schools serve. Public schools are an important part of local communities, and their success is tied to the health and vitality of the community as a whole. When public schools lose funding to voucher programs, the local community may suffer as a result. This can lead to a decline in property values, increased crime rates, and a decreased sense of community cohesion.

In conclusion, voucher programs, ESAs, and tax credits for education are not a solution to the challenges facing public schools in Texas. These policies divert public funds away from public schools, lack accountability measures, harm academic performance, and harm local communities. Instead of pursuing these policies, Texas should focus on investing in its public schools, improving teacher training and support, and addressing the root causes of educational inequity. By doing so, Texas can ensure that all students receive a high-quality education and that the public education system continues to serve as a cornerstone of our democracy.

Bev Strickland
Self-Permanent Managing Conservator-Parent of HS Student
San Antonio, TX

I am a Grandparent raising a 15 year old Special Needs Foster Care Child. I have had her with me since she was 2. She's a student of the NEISD public district. We must have fully funded public schools that are able to offer a wide variety of programs to all students. Our school already struggles because my child is smart, emotionally disturbed and socially delayed. She's most likely going to have all Bs and As this past year and she's been in an Agricultural magnet program and on the swim team. There won't be any voucher school that could do the same but our school might no longer either.

This week my Students final class of the day had been spent locked in the classroom with her classmates and no teacher. Apparently the teacher has other commitments but there's no sub so they are left alone for the hour. Don't pass this measure. The school can't afford to lose funding when a select group of kids take their vouchers to their local church. Our Junior Swim team only swam for 3 months because there's no bus driver to transport them. Again the school struggles and fewer students will likely mean the end to the tiny swim team.

I am counting on you to do the right thing for the most vulnerable of kids-the Wards of the State-the Foster Kids. My child is your child. You are doubly responsible. Vouchers won't serve this group equally and you know that. Say no to vouchers please.

Katherine Mochel, Mrs
Self, RootEd, PTA Member, Domestic Engineer
San Antonio Texas, TX

Hello, I am against SB 8. As a mother of 3 boys in NISD, I support funding our public schools; not vouchers, coupons, or ESAs. Please invest Texas dollars in our Texas public school children. We are asking for an additional \$1000 in the student allotment. I love my neighborhood school. Our amazing schools build the whole child with exposure to art, music, theater, STEAM programs, sports, and so many other clubs and organizations sponsored by our NISD teachers. By not increasing the allotment and passing vouchers, our neighborhood schools will not be able to remain robust, inventive, and rigorous. This issue is important to me, because my boys love their schools. I don't want to see their opportunities lost due to school closures and cancelled programs. My fourth grader has discovered a way to channel his creativity through art and STEM. In him, I see a future designer, developer, or artist. My freshman takes auto mechanics at Clark HS. In him, I see a future in mechanical engineering, and at the very least, he will have the skills to fix his own car when he graduates! My senior will be a second generation Texas Aggie. Through a commitment to his studies and exposure to GT and STEM programs all through public school, he has been accepted into Texas A&M engineering. He wants to pursue a degree in Aerospace engineering. We are so proud of each of these boys and the exceptional men they will grow to be thanks to a foundation built on a public school education and the community that shapes them. Please support an equitable and fully funded public school system.

Edward Rivera
Myself
Northlake, TX

I support this bill SB8

Michelle James-DeHaan
Self
Greenville, TX

S.B. 8 would be one of the greatest transfers of wealth in Texas history from the state's poor and middle class to the richest Texans.

The bill would take public tax dollars away from already-underfunded public schools and funnel them toward private, often-religious, wealthy schools.

By further gutting Texas public schools of the resources they desperately need, we would only be further exacerbating education inequality in Texas and making it even more difficult for Texas' most vulnerable children to succeed.

Again, I would respectfully ask that you vote NO on S.B. 8, a bill that would only help the richest schools, and would leave our state's public education students behind.

Thank you for your time.

Elizabeth Fowler
self
Houston, TX

VOTE NO TO VOUCHERS!!

Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers; they are not required to report student achievement data to the state.

Private schools do not have to accept all students; they can discriminate.

No credible research exists to suggest vouchers (aka Education Savings Accounts) improve academic performance.

Vouchers drain resources from public schools; other states have shown that voucher costs often grow well above projections.

Texas already ranks 40th in per-student spending and the rate of inflation since 2019 is 14.5%, per the Comptroller.

Choice already exists within the public school system: Districts have transfer policies, magnet schools, career/tech academies, etc.

Vouchers subsidize tuition for existing private school and homeschooled students, putting a huge new financial burden on the state.

Jon Pendergrass
Self
Northlake, TX

I am in FULL SUPPORT of SB8. Give us a choice.

Jessica Stuart Buono
Self, not employed
Spring, TX

I am against vouchers. We need more support for public schools, not this shady division that will undermine the already underserved.

Catherine Reed
NEISD/public education
San Antonio, TX

Thank you to my Representative, Steve Allison, for voting against this Bill. As a parent of children who have gone through our public education system, I implore you to vote against this. Our education system is already broken, making vouchers (or whatever you choose to name them) available, will only further destroy what we have. At the very least, the playing field between public and private education should be level. Give the \$8000 per student to the public schools; make private schools accountable with the same restrictions and testing requirements; require that their teachers and educators all be certified and require that private schools not be allowed to cherry pick which students they allow through their doors. Special Ed students, students with autism, disabilities, etc are not welcome in private schools - thus why they look so good from the outside looking in. I'm sure a majority of you matriculated through a public school system. If it was good enough for your parents to send you, why isn't it good enough to put faith and support in and stand behind for our kids?

Georgia Polley
self
Houston, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Kelly Wolf
Self
Houston, TX

I have one student in private and one student in public therefore I'm uniquely qualified to see both sides of this issue. vouchers will absolutely decimate public education. Our schools are already woefully underfunded, moving more money out of them will exacerbate an already tenuous situation,

We need an increase in the basic allotment. I don't understand why legislators cannot make this very easy decision to use the \$30B surplus to fund education. Instead our district will write the state a check for \$100MM when 20,000 kids live below the poverty line, i honestly don't understand how recapture is legal.

Minda Caesar, Honorable

self -- I am a trustee of the Spring Branch Independent School District, but I am testifying for myself
Houston, TX

Public dollars should remain in public schools. Students, parents, communities, and businesses rely on public schools to provide high-quality education and to ensure and sustain the economic viability of the state. Vouchers divert public education funds to private schools, neglect our most vulnerable students, and lack transparency when it comes to spending and outcomes. Although this committee substitute attempts to address some of those glaring flaws, it still falls far short of doing so. Further, almost 60% of students in Texas schools are economically disadvantaged. With public money being diverted to private entities, the traditional school districts will face economic hardship, and those students will not be able to afford to go to a private school -- nor will there be space for them in any sort of quality program. Just take a look at Florida, where fly by night schools opened and took state money -- then closed without educating the students and leaving them and the local school districts in the lurch when funds were already gone. More importantly is the issue of accountability for public funds and ensuring results. Taxpayer dollars should be invested in evidence-based solutions with proven results for our students. Research shows that the overall effects of vouchers are limited and inconsistent. A recent study of Milwaukee's voucher program, the oldest in the country, found no improvements in math or reading scores for students who used vouchers. These findings echoed studies from 2021 that measured the effects of voucher programs in Louisiana and Indiana. Moreover, the ineffectiveness of vouchers is salient among our most disadvantaged students. In a recent study, researchers found vouchers had virtually no positive impact on college enrollment and completion rates for low-income or first-generation students of color. Voucher programs are a classic example of initiatives growing well beyond their intended scope. In most cases, what starts as a small, targeted program ends up expanding over time. Consequently, states with vouchers find themselves sending significantly more taxpayer dollars towards private school tuition. Ohio's largest voucher program -- the Educational Choice Scholarship Program -- has more than doubled in costs to the state, ballooning from \$175 million to \$444 million in the last seven years. I would urge you also to look to the state of Arizona, where the budget is increasingly being taken up with vouchers -- leaving very little left for the majority of the students. Arizona recently passed the first universal voucher program in the U.S., making every student in the state, regardless of socioeconomic background or history of public school enrollment, eligible for a \$7,000 Empowerment Scholarship Account. Arizona has already seen its voucher program skyrocket from a \$2.5 million cap in 2011 to costing the state more than \$150 million in 2021. We cannot afford this in Texas. Our children are our bottom line.

Jerry Pendergrass

Myself

Richland Hills, TX

I support SB8

Jennifer Easley
Self
Austin, TX

- School vouchers hurt Texas public schools because they direct funding away from an already critically underfunded system.
- (1) They do not ensure accountability. Vouchers send public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to the public for producing results.
 - (2) Vouchers are a step backward in serving students with disabilities. Over the past 30 years, federal and state laws have evolved to ensure students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education. Private schools are not required to provide special education services mandated by federal and state laws.
 - (3) Vouchers violate the separation of church and state. The U.S. Constitution prohibits any government “establishment of religion.” Tax dollars directed toward private schools of religious origin violates this principle. The U.S. Constitution ensures the “free exercise of religion”; no government has proper authority to dictate a religious community’s expression of faith. Regulation and oversight always accompany the allocation of public tax dollars, thus violating freedom of religion.
 - (4) Vouchers provide choice for some, not 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. Vouchers do not address 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.
 - (5) Vouchers drain critical funding. Vouchers drain additional resources from the public school system. Public funds should remain in the public school system that serves the vast majority of Texas students.
-

Angelique Donnelly
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Please vote NO on the committee substitute for SB 8. This is not supportive of students or schools and it’s wrong to make these decisions without public input. Private schools aren’t held to state and federal laws and aren’t regulated. Also they could discriminate against children with disabilities, minorities, and those with different religious beliefs. Tuition at private schools increases when vouchers pass.

Cathleen Barnstable
self (accountant, business leader)
Houston, TX

I oppose this bill and urge the committee to vote against it. It does not provide necessary investment into public education and in fact diminishes it.

Ricki Barnstable
self (business leader)
Houston, TX

I oppose this bill and urge the committee to vote against it.

Ann Schwartz, Ms.
Self
Round Rock, TX

I ask the House Public Education committee to oppose this bill. I oppose it because vouchers are bad for Texas children. The TX Lege needs to put more money into public education, rather than divert it into private institutions where it will benefit private businesses. As a taxpayer, I want public monies to go to public schools. I don't want them to be given to private institutions that don't have public accountability regarding what sort of education they provide and how they treat children. This bill is also touted as expanding parental choice, but it does the opposite. It gives more choice to middle and upper income parents perhaps, but it doesn't open up choices for those with limited resources. They will continue to rely on public schools, now with fewer resources. Like many other bills this session, the term « parental choice » is misleading. Which parents? Vote against SB 8 if you care about all Texas children and all Texas parents, not just some of them.

Penny Simmons
Self
Lorenzo, TX

Texas parents need real choices for our children. We are becoming more & more aware of leftist propaganda and the sexualization of our children in public school. Please pass legislation that will free us from schools who force this agenda on us.

Respectfully,

Veda Kull
self, retired educator, social worker, & business owner
Rowlett, TX

I have not been privy to the entire 80 page document but instead the general statement for SB8 from Texas Legislature Online. I have seen a few comments as to what it contains and it is my understanding that the new version does grant more money per person(over \$9000) to parents or private schools than public schools, and incudes a somewhat broader range of students. Also, I have heard that there are NOT measurables for learning NOR accountability about acceptance of students. The committee should know that I have four grandchildren, two of whom have always gone to private schools and two of whom have always gone to public schools. Those two in private school have always had their tuition funded by relatives. For me it is a matter of conscience/religion that we support PUBLIC schools and engage with students of all walks of life because that comes from the democratic foundation of our country. If parents choose to have students attend private schools, they should be allowed to do that, just not on tax money. I am a strong believer of separation of church and state & my church system has always strongly supported that premise. What the legislature should be doing is fully funding PUBLIC SCHOOLS. If they are in a crisis, then the state should support local efforts to improve them. There has never been sufficient funds to adequately meet the staff and supply needs for public schools. Until such time as the State of Texas does adequately fund public schools, then there should be NO discussion about gifting some students with a significant amount in per pupil expenditures over public school students or pupils. This should not be a matter of partisan politics seeking to improve its standing with any particular group. Sound public education with an attitude of acceptance to all who enter will increase the quality of life and the economy for this state for now and for the future.

Cathy Jayroe
self, retired
Commerce, TX

Sec. 1.009 - The parental rights in this bill are designed to promote the political agenda of the religious right at the detriment of the remainder of parents. Section 1.0009(1) and (2) should be removed entirely.

Section 25.036 - Transfer of Student - This will destroy local school districts if the bill does not give students within the neighborhood first access before any lottery.

Too much emphasis is placed on parental rights and not enough on parental responsibilities and teachers rights and responsibilities. Curriculum should be decided by educators (not by parents or bureaucrats) with opt out options for individual students for specific subjects. Parents should not get to decide that a subject is not taught at all because of their personal objections as that steps on the rights of other parents.

Sec. 26.0083 - Students 17 and older should be exempt from their information being disclosed to parents if the student objects.

Sec. 28.0043. - This should not include grades 9-12. Also it is not clear what happen would happen to the GSA clubs in Texas high schools with this section.

Many of the rules in this bill are onerous on high school teachers who have multiple classes. What works for a teacher with 30 students does not work for 170 students.

SUBCHAPTER J. EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNT PROGRAM - I strongly oppose any and all diversion of tax money for public education funds away from any public school district for private school vouchers. That is a sure fire way to destroy the public education system and install a tuition based system. Private schools cater to a very small portion of the states students and are always an option for families who choose them.

Public funds are for public schools that have to accept everyone, have certified instructors, and an accredited education program. I do not want my tax money diverted to a private school. This has already proven a disaster in other states that have adopted the voucher program. I respectfully request that this bill not be enacted.

Cathy Jayroe

Jan Fletcher
Self, Retired
Sherman, TX

Please vote against SB 8. S.B. 8 would be one of the greatest transfers of wealth in Texas history from the state's poor and middle class to the richest Texans.

The bill would take public tax dollars away from already-underfunded public schools and funnel them toward private, often-religious, wealthy schools.

By further gutting Texas public schools of the resources they desperately need, we would only be further exacerbating education inequality in Texas and making it even more difficult for Texas' most vulnerable children to succeed.

Again, I would respectfully ask that you vote NO on S.B. 8, a bill that would only help the richest schools, and would leave our state's public education students behind.

Robert Seward, Honorable
Mesquite ISD Board of Trustees
Mesquite, TX

Committee Members: I am asking you to cast a "NO" vote on any proposal that involves education savings accounts, tax credits, or voucher programs.

The protections for our most vulnerable students are eliminated by Senate Bill 8, our rural schools are denied funding, and the bill does not include any accountability mechanisms for using voucher payments in private schools.

I believe that vouchers are bad for Texas and vouchers are harmful to public schools and the pupils who attend them. Private schools are not required to accept all students, even those who have impairments or who are in danger of dropping out of school. This causes me concern because they do not have to do so. Also, they take much-needed money from local neighborhood schools.

Even more unfortunate, if parents enroll their child with special needs in a private school, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) rights and safeguards will no longer apply to their situation.

Because there are tens of billions of dollars up for grabs in this session of the Texas legislature, the legislature has the opportunity of a lifetime to put their attention on worthwhile projects such as increasing teacher salaries and improving school safety. Instead, certain leaders have decided to focus their time and energy on developing voucher programs that would line the wallets of unaccountable suppliers.

In conclusion, in contrast to public schools, private and religious institutions are not required to maintain the same level of accountability and transparency to the state. Using vouchers, private schools could obtain government funding without being required to adhere to the same educational or monetary standards as public schools.

In light of these concerns, I strongly ask you to VOTE AGAINST any ESA, tax credits, or similar voucher schemes that are being considered during this session in order to assist in protecting our students who are the most susceptible to harm.

Amy Hoffmann
Self/ PTA
San Antonio, TX

Please do not vote for any type of voucher bill. Our public schools are hurting so much already trying to pay their staff, facilities and programs. Vouchers will only defund public education more. We need more focus on school safety funding then on vouchers right now. Our children (and their parents) shouldn't have to worry about them being killed while at school. I am a registered Republican and oppose vouchers. Please do the same for our kids. Thank you!

James Slater, Dr.
Self
Dallas, TX

Under the Teacher Incentive Allotment, National Board Certified Teachers currently earn a “recognized” designation. SB9 proposes moving National Board Certified Teachers down to a new, lower level of designation.

National Board Certification is considered the “gold standard” for teaching. More than a decade of research shows that National Board Certified Teachers produce 1-2 months of additional learning for their students compared to their peers. In order to earn National Board Certification, teachers demonstrate their content knowledge through an assessment, submit samples of student work and videos of their teaching, and analyze their own instruction.

The House Committee on Public Education’s 2022 Interim Report recommended that National Board certified teachers be designated as “exemplary.” While this would be ideal, even awarding National Board Certified Teachers the "Recognized" designation, which is what they earn under current law, would strengthen SB9. Currently, there are only 1,203 NBCTs in Texas and unfortunately, our state is ranked in 49th place, therefore, we agree that this legislation will encourage the future growth of NBCTs in Texas.

As a member of the Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching a 501(c) (3), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards state network, I urge you to amend SB9 so that NBCTs earn a “Recognized” designation under the Teacher Incentive Allotment.

Erica Christy
Self
Houston, TX

Be proud of Texas and support our very own public school system. Do not defer public monies to private schools. Texas public money should stay in Texas public schools. Instead, the State should offer more monetary support and be proud of the Texas education system.

Stephanie Luper
Self and School Board Trustee
Bullard, TX

Education savings accounts have no place in Texas! In other states it’s been shown that vouchers don’t work and have increased learning loss, which is the opposite of the intended benefit. If public schools keep getting told the state can’t raise the basic allotment to keep up with inflation because it’s not sustainable, why are vouchers being pushed?

Anne Miller
Self
Austin, TX

Please do not approve the use of public taxpayer funds for private school tuition vouchers.

It's difficult to understand how it could possibly be legal to use public funds for religious schools, and it would be a waste of taxpayer dollars to try to defend this issue in court.

Texas has historically had a reputable public education system, but we will be headed in the direction of Louisiana if you choose to support private education over public education.

If improvements are needed to either special education or gifted and talented programs, please invest more funds in our public education system.

Thank you for considering this input.

Clemencia Cole, Mrs.
Self
Mckinney, TX

Good afternoon,

I am not in support of vouchers or any educational savings account that takes away funding for our public school. We should focus on improving our current public system that serves most of our Texas kids instead of defunding it. I believe that if this bill passes it will provide a motivation for parents to flee our public schools.

Thank you

Jennelle Berger
RootEd & Self - Parent of children in our public schools
SAN ANTONIO, TX

I am parent with a 3rd grader and 7th grader who attend public schools in North East ISD and have done so since Kindergarten. I'm commenting in opposition to vouchers, taxpayer savings grants, education savings accounts, tax credit scholarships, tuition reimbursement grants, and all other names given these programs that would provide public tax dollars for parents to use on private institutions such as religious schools.

I will make this important note. I don't have anything against private schools. I know and love people who have attended, currently attend, as well as teach at private schools.

What I DO take issue with are public tax dollars going to private institutions especially when there is no equity when it comes to accountability, serving students with special needs, reporting on spending, and testing requirements.

The amount of the voucher in Senate Bill 8 will be \$8,000 annually. However it begs the question: how will this help since very few private schools in Bexar County have tuition less than \$10,000? Students who are economically disadvantaged (who the private school association is claiming they want to assist) will likely be left behind in a voucher program due to the gap in voucher funding and education expenses, including transportation and meal services. On top of funding for vouchers being an issue, accountability is also on the table. Texas has a robust accountability system for the traditional and charter education systems using results from the STAAR test. The proposed voucher bills are showing very little accountability.

If Texas passes legislation on vouchers, the state will be siphoning public tax dollars meant for the public education system to private institutions with little government oversight or public accountability. Texas does not have the funds to provide for three education systems –traditional, charter, private-- as we are already struggling to fund the constitutionally mandated traditional education system. For as much as we Texans claim to be great and yes, on many of those reasons I agree, it's embarrassing that Texas is currently ranked 47th in per-capita student funding, \$4000 less than the national average.

Instead of taking funds out of an already vulnerable system to benefit just a few, we are asking for an increase to the basic allotment per student by \$1000 as well as saying NO to vouchers.

I'll end this with the best analogy I've heard about this issue and sums up it well: allowing families to use vouchers would be like calling the city and saying "I don't really use the public libraries so I want those tax dollars back so I can purchase books from Amazon". It does not work that way and never has. Vouchers are unconstitutional and have a history/foundation in segregation. Please vote no on vouchers.

Rebecca Barbier
self
Houston, TX

I have been fighting vouchers for years. I have a student with ADHD who would never be accepted in to a private school. These schools are selective and elite. Vouchers do not cover the price of tuition and we ALL know that there is no way the middle and lower class can make up the difference. This is just a ploy by the wealthy GOP politicians to make good a promise to their wealthy donors. This is NOT good for Texas. As our State loves to demolish beauracracry, why would we add another entity to manage tax dollars to be paid out to private schools. How does that money get returned if the student leaves the school? I am in a school district that is already financially struggling thanks to the lack of State funding now. The State continues to put more on public schools with less money and then uses it against them when pushing vouchers. It is part of the billionaire funded agenda to destroy public education so that profits can be made off of children. If the State really wants to help kids, stop with all the State testing, allow teachers to teach the curriculum versus the test, start trusting teachers with books and TEKS like you want to do with guns, and make our schools safe with avenues other than more guns. Vouchers and ESAs do NOT belong in Texas classrooms.

Nissa Lind
self
Austin, TX

Say no to vouchers and any form of ESAs, which siphon money out of a public budget that should be fully devoted to public, not private, education. This bill will only hurt public education and make Texas a laughing stock.

Morgan Braun, Mrs.
Self
Flower Mound, TX

Vouchers remove funds from public education and reallocate to private. I do not support using tax resources for a private option.

Michelle Hernandez
Self
Flower Mound, TX

I have been advocating all session - no vouchers. Public Education is Fantastic. Public teachers was wonderful. Public education needs money. They need my money from the taxes I already pay. My money does not need to fund any other education besides public education. 3 Children. All different, all with different needs and specialties. All serviced by public education. None would have been serviced outside of public education. No not pass legislation that tax paying Texan's do not want.

Kaci Lahpor, Mrs.
Texas PTA
Plano, TX

School vouchers hurt Texas public schools because they direct funding away from an already critically underfunded system.

Vouchers:

Do not ensure accountability.

Vouchers send public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to the public for producing results.

Are a step backward in serving students with disabilities

Over the past 30 years, federal and state laws have evolved to ensure students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education. Private schools are not required to provide special education services mandated by federal and state laws.

Violate separation of church and state.

The U.S. Constitution prohibits any government “establishment of religion.” Tax dollars directed toward private schools of religious origin violates this principle.

The U.S. Constitution ensures the “free exercise of religion”; no government has proper authority to dictate a religious community’s expression of faith. Regulation and oversight always accompany the allocation of public tax dollars, thus violating freedom of religion.

Provide choice for some, not 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.

Vouchers do not address 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.

Drain critical funding.

Vouchers drain additional resources from the public school system.

Vouchers do not serve Texas students; funds taken from public school districts means fewer options for advanced coursework; the inability to ensure rigorous courses are offered such as Honors and AP which help students compete against their peers and prepare them for entrance to college.

Public funds should remain in the public school system that serves the vast majority of Texas students.

Corliss Bunkley
Self - Clinical Coaxh
Arlington, TX

This bill is ultimately going to hurt public schools and students. Taking out the stipulation for teaching about gender and sexual orientation is just a sneaky way to get this passed. You can always come back and amend it. Private schools DO NOT have to service students with disabilities and even with this money, you know our low income families still won't be able to afford tuition at private schools. You also know many parents who want to send their kids to private school will lie to get the voucher. This is dishonest and needs to stop.

Susan Trentham
Self
Flower Mound, TX

These vouchers are still a threat to the 5.4 million children in public schools. I am requesting you support our students in the Lewisville Independent School District.

Ana Gann
Mansfield ISD PTAs
Grand Prairie, TX

Vote NO to senate bill 8!!!! I am so tired of this and it's time for you to do the right thing for our public school systems. Enough is enough. We want accountability for the dollars that are sent. We want you to make it right for students with disabilities. My daughter has irlen syndrome and my son is severely dyslexic and our school district doesn't have enough funds to get teachers certified or even keep them! My children need help and I want YOU to make this right and vote NO to vouchers! I also want choice schools to be allowed at ALL of our schools in mansfield ISD and I am advocating for that this year and have been needing your help so please please just do the right thing and vote NO help my children be successful. The children in our state need your help! They all need your help! Help them!!!!

Michaelle Carney
self - retired teacher
Royse City, TX

The state of Texas entitles citizen to a "free public education". Any use of monies outside the state public education system should not be allowed. You will be taking money out of the public school system that is already needed. Want to know why there is a teacher shortage? You don't trust public school educators to make the right decision for students. Instead an educator can get a complaint from a parent no matter what they choose is best for their classroom. They are then not supported by administration or state officials. This shortage falls back on you local officials and the choices you have made. If you allow money taken out of public schools, you are allowing the system to fail. As a 28 year public school teacher, I believe in public education with law makers not making the decisions for educators that have been trained through a college teaching program, have an education degree and a certification. Private schools do not necessarily hire teachers with degrees or that are even certified. That is what you want to teach your children? Choose public education. Choose the best for all students in this state not for a select group.

Owen Oppenheimer
Self
Flower Mound, TX

This will defund my public schools. Please don't take away the educational opportunities I had from my sister by destroying Texas public education.

Leeanne Hargrove
Texas PTA/PTSA
Flower Mound, TX

Please do not vote for private school vouchers. Taking money from Public Schools to support private schools is a huge disservice to all Texans. They are not held to the same high standards as students in public schools. Public Education and an increase in teacher and school support staff salaries should be the top priority of all lawmakers. You get what you pay for; the students that come from our schools are our future.

Alicia De Leon
Former staff member Teacher's Aide
McAllen, TX

I believe all monies vouchers should go to our Public schools for the less unfortunate. Private schools are a choice and for the wealthy that can afford to sent their children to their private schools of their choice. So keep vouchers to Public Schools.

Ashley Reed
self, field organizer
Austin, TX

I urge you to fully protect public education. Please do not pass this bill. Texans do not want our tax dollars going to private organizations. This bill will disenfranchise already vulnerable children.

Susan Dollar, Dr.
Retired
Boerne, TX

Vote NO on SB8. Refuse vouchers. Instead, save our public schools!

Jackie Smith
Self (taxpayer)
Boyd, TX

As a tax payer, I do not want to subsidize private education along with public education. That is a choice for parents to make and pay for themselves. Texas lawmakers have increased the burden on our property taxes for the last twenty years. We should be able to vote on this issue at the ballot box along with the lawmakers who support the idea of vouchers.

Laura Saldana-Flores
Texas AFT
Mission, TX

Public Education has been one of the most equalizing initiatives our country has ever implemented and as such our duty is to support it in all aspects. This bill does the complete opposite and in turn debilitates our system while promoting elitism. Vote No on SB 8 so that ALL students have the same opportunity afforded to them and their individual needs be met accordingly!

Douglas Catoe
self
Cleburne, TX

The ongoing effort to provide "freedom" in education is not welcome to the majority of Texans. This means, our representatives, this committee, are not working in favor of what Texans truly want.

I implore you to stop your fight against public education. Instead, fully fund Texas schools, kill STAAR, and give districts and parents TRUE "freedom." The freedom to determine what is best for students rather than leaning on the state and TEA to dictate what "they" believe is right.

It is foolish to assume that state dollars poured into alternative education options will not ultimately lead to more state control of those alternatives. The challenges faced by Public Education today is based in large part, if not solely, on the state and TEA meddling, particularly the STAAR that all parents, teachers, administrators, and reasonable politicians loathe. The continued existence of STAAR is indicative of the power of money in politics.

In short: Stop trying to force voucher-type programs down Texas' throat and when given the chance, kill the STAAR.

Stephanie Fruge
SELF
Houston, TX

I support SB8 and live in Spring Branch ISD. I believe parents should have the right to choose their school if their zoned school is not working for them. As a child with dyslexia, we are moving him to a school for smaller classrooms and more one on one help as he is failing at his current school. To be able to utilize some of the funds that we pay into the school district to pay for his private school for my son with a learning disability would be a game changer.

Barbara Baruch
Representing my family and myself.
San Antonio Tx, TX

For myself and my family, we are totally against this "education savings account program" which is really a mechanism to take money that would otherwise be available to public schools in order to fund private education and to fund the administration of this program. Everyone already has the choice to send their kids to private schools --they just have to use their own funds to do so. Another name for this program is subsidizing people's private school tuition.

Hilary Toma
Self
The Woodlands, TX

Vouchers are bad for Texas education. Vote no for this bill.

Diana Long
Self
AUSTIN, TX

Public schools are a cornerstone of democracy, providing citizens with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in their communities and in the larger society. They promote critical thinking, tolerance, and respect for diversity, creating informed and engaged citizens. Vouchers are an attack on public education and must be stopped. Please oppose SB 8 for the sake of the 5.5 million students that attend public schools every day. Vouchers are not the answer for a "failing" public school system. If schools are failing, it is because the legislature is not investing in our kids. The legislature is constitutionally responsible for promoting and supporting an efficient public education system. Any effort to divert the already scarce funding in our schools is a step in the wrong direction.

Liza Holmes
Self- financial analyst
Boerne, TX

Please keep public schools and public education strong and well funded by not allowing vouchers. As someone who put two children through 12 years of catholic school it seems inconsistent for me to not support vouchers but a STONG public school system is essential and nothing should jeopardize that. My family made sacrifices to pay for private school but that was our choice and believe public schools need more funds, not less.

Al Brien
Active and Retired Texas Educators 7000
Houston, TX

Texans expect our Texas Public Education Committee to support public education, not open the door to privatization. Please vote down any and all voucher bills and devote our Public Education Committee time to evolving Texas public schools to Better serve our 6 million school students.

Thank you
Al Brien

Mary Hinton
self
Boerne, TX

No, no, a thousand times NO on SB8!!! Stop trying to destroy public education in the State of Texas. Texas could have the absolute finest public school system in the entire nation, the ability and funds are there. WHY don't you work towards that end instead of siphoning public funds to private religious schools. And stop with the damn book banning. Ugh.

Karen Coulter
self - public school speech-language pathologist
Fair Oaks Ranch, TX

After working in public education for over 30 years, I can attest to the harm SB 8 will add to the already-stretched ability of Texas ISDs to continue funding public education. The caseloads for special education specialists are so overwhelming, we are losing them in record numbers, and adding vouchers to a bill to help fund special education will not provide the help needed. This is a BAD bill. Please, vote NO on SB 8.

Tana Lam
Self
Cypress, TX

Vote NO to vouchers/ESA's/no coupons for people to use for private schools! Please fund our public schools!

Kelly Grey Carlisle, Dr
Self; college professor
San Antonio, TX

Please do not pass any legislation that creates vouchers or in any way channels public funds to private elementary or secondary schools. I am a parent of two children who attend our amazing public schools and I am an educator at the post secondary level. Our public education system is the heart of our Republic, and it produces well-prepared students, in spite of everything done to diminish its funding and reputation. Private schools do not need state support. Support public education. Do not pass this voucher bill or any other.

Lance Schultz
Self
Port Lavaca, TX

To be both abundantly clear and distinctly concise, I wish to reiterate the fact that this bill is a flagrant violation of Article 7 of the Texas Constitution, the State's requirement to provide a free and appropriate education to all students through the public school system. In turn, the bills diversion of public funds to private entities borders on violating Article 1, Section 6 relating to the separation of church and state by way of diverting money for the public's total interest toward the interest of a sub-group of the population. Unless the Constitution of this State is amended by approval of this State's voters, the Bill, and any including vouchers or the like, should be thrown out entirely.

Kevin Taylor
Lorena ISD School Board
Lorena, TX

To whom it may concern:

I am trying to understand how unregulated private/charter schools are a better investment for State funding to the individual child. The State of Texas has placed a ton of investment in standardized testing and now will subsidize private/charter schools whom do not have to conform to these standards. It is unconscionable to me that we are even considering this bill.

Provisions to the bill would need to be made requiring private/charter schools to do the following to receive the voucher funding:

- Accept all students whom apply without preconditions to be equitable with public school requirements.
- Provide transportation to and from school equal to public education.
- Provide Special Education programs equal to public education.
- Provide extra-curricular programs to form well rounded students equal to public education.
- Require pension programs for teachers equitable to public education.

These are just a few of the major topics that are huge financial liabilities to public schools. Allowing the private institutions to not have the same requirements are a massive advantage to non state institutions. This financial advantage will allow private/charter schools to recruit talent away from our cherished Lorena ISD.

TRS is a huge labor burden to the school payroll and staff member. A massive amount of teachers are exiting the classroom for non-pension based teaching jobs. They are also moving to careers with higher wages and less long term benefits due to high inflation.

This decision needs the full vision of the negative consequences in the long term. Our law makers can make the appropriate changes to our State schools to make our current system work better.

..... More local control, less regulation.....

Sincerely,

Kevin Taylor
Lorena ISD School Board

Erica McCready
Self
Houston, TX

It is an outrageous proposal to allow my tax dollars to be used to fund private schools with no accountability. The SBOE ensures that Texas students are learning at the highest standard. No money should be given to private schools that have no accountability financially or academically.

Dedrick Davison
DNDAVISONFAMILY
Mansfield, TX

Public \$\$\$ should not be given to Private organizations. We already have school choice and as a parent of 3 school age children attending public schools I can already see the curriculum simply by logging into Canvas. STAR testing should be required for schooling regardless if they're Public or Private! Use that surplus to fully fund our public schools and pay our teachers what they deserve! Stop listening to folks who don't even have a kid in a school.

Kelly Cash
Self
Denton, TX

Stop trying to ram this through in the dark of night without appropriate testimony and debate. Adding the vouchers to this should make it a dead issue. Stop promoting Abbotts agenda and support agenda of the majority of your constituents. You are a proxy for the voters not a minion of Greg

Viviana Tutson
Temple high
Temple, TX

Please stop this bill from passing

Laurie Clark
Self retired teacher
Leon valley, TX

NO to the voucher system

Aaron Reynolds
Concerned Citizens
McKinney, TX

Under absolutely no circumstances do I support school vouchers to pass our legislation. We have a wonderful school system that is under attack and it needs to halt immediately. Our current leadership has already taken our property taxes to the 7th highest in the Nation and this will either increase that once again or worse simply under fund our great teachers and schools that work tirelessly to better our children's lives.

Julie Garza
self
Temple, TX

I am against school vouchers. I am a parent who has my children in public schools. I am a social studies teacher at a public high school. I am also a devout Catholic, many of my family members have chosen Catholic school for many years. However, we have separation of church and state in our Constitution. Tax payer money is not for private schools, period. The state for years has continued to mandate and raise the stakes for public education without proper funding. Private school, charter schools, and public schools are not equal in any way as far as what is expected of them and what they are allowed to do. I have been a voting Republican in Texas my entire life. I am AGAINST vouchers, please do not do this to Texas public education; it is WRONG and anyone who actually knows anything about education without a personal agenda, knows this is fact.

Emily Smith
Self
Austin, TX

Vote no please

Elizabeth Domas

self I am a proud public school teacher.

Orange, TX

Please do not take funds from public schools for vouchers. Please support our public school system in Texas. My grandparents were teachers many years ago in Texas public schools. My mother was a public school teacher in Texas. Both of my sisters and I are public school teachers. My nieces, nephew, and daughter are all teachers in Texas public schools. My children all received excellent educations in public schools. Do not destroy our legacy by voting for vouchers. The nation is watching Texas. Don't mess with Texas public education!

Thomas Hughes, Mr.

Self

Kempner, TX

I am in support of SB 8. Until public schools can govern themselves with integrity and regain public trust I feel parents should have a choice as to where they student attends.

Drew Domas

self retired from DuPont SRW in Orange, Texas

Orange, TX

I am NOT in favor of vouchers! My wife and daughter are both teachers in Texas public schools. They work hard and deserve funding for their students. Do not take money needed for public school in order to pay for vouchers. It's wrong!!!!

Kim Odom

Self - teacher

Lampasas, TX

Teachers often deal with "Home School" students that are brought back to the public education setting after Home School failed. These students are often very far behind their peers. I have a student that returned this year after 3 years of "Home School". She should be in 3rd Grade. She tested at a pre-kindergarten level in Reading. She left our school at the end of Kindergarten on grade level. There must be regulations over Home schooling. Some recommendations: parents must apply and pass a State test, or parents must show proof of the State-approved curriculum they are using, or parents must have their children take state-prepared benchmark tests at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. There's a reason teachers are required to have a college degree and pass certification tests; teaching takes training and skill.

Melinda Samberson

Texas PTA

Frisco, TX

There are many flaws when you are taking public tax money for public schools and giving it to private organizations. This further diminishes the public education system in Texas which is already in dire straits. School vouchers hurt Texas public schools because they direct funding away from an already critically underfunded system. Vouchers do not ensure accountability, they take a step backwards for students with disabilities. Over the past 30 years, federal and state laws have evolved to ensure students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education. Private schools are not required to provide special education services mandated by federal and state laws. They violate separation of church and state and they do not enable kids (unless they already are in a position to pay the whole amount) to attend a private school.

PLEASE vote against allowing vouchers in any form. They will undermine the already struggling public school system in Texas!
Thank you!

Lauren Gutterman, Dr.
Self, professor
Austin, TX

Please vote no on SB8. Do not take taxpayer money out of our already underfunded public schools to subsidize private schools. Parents who choose to put their children in private school do not need our public funding. The newest version of SB8 also expands state testing. Our kids are already subjected to too much stressful unnecessary tests that do not reflect their learning. Vote no on SB8 and protect public schools in Texas!

Ashley R Gunn Chohlis
Self, Superintendent of Schools
FLORESVILLE, TX

I strongly OPPOSE this Bill.

Sapna Singh, Dr
Self
Sugar Land, TX

I am opposed to SB 8. This bill will gut the public education system, allow for private schools to access taxpayer funding with no regulation on who they accept or what they teach. As a pediatrician I see discrimination possible for my special needs kids as private schools may reject them with no consequences. Do not allow our most vulnerable children to be denied a quality education for the sake of some people boosting up private schools and taking money from our already stretched system. Fund the schools and teachers, remove the STAAR test. Let's make Tx education great again!!

Anna Griffin
Self
Chandler, TX

Please stop attacking public school systems and their funding!!! And how is it legal for these bills to be introduced the way it's happening now? First with no public allowed to attend, now with only invite-only? Who got the invitation to come speak about this issue? Why is it being rushed?? As a parent to 3 kids who go to a public school, I am mad! And I can promise that I will be spending all the time needed to educate myself and my fellow parents about this issue and ensuring we vote accordingly when the time comes...holding public officials accountable for this mess.

Doreen Rogers
Self- Public School Speech Therapist
Temple, TX

Vote NO

Elizabeth Wally
self
Dallas, TX

OPPOSE I oppose SB8 and its clear intent to harm Texas public schools in various way small and large. It is huge and the way it was brought for a vote is clearly meant to bypass us, the Texans whose children and grandchildren will be affected by the changes. Even the members of the committee didn't know what was in its 80 pages and were asked to vote on it ASAP. Now only invited testimony. Makes it clear you are hiding something, doesn't it? We are losing teachers and you are also trying to get rid of counselors in this time of "active shooter" drills and bring in a theocratic school system by taking away the guardrails. I don't have the space or the current text to comment in detail on the rewritten bill written to please our Governor not the professional educators, parents and children. Outside organizations like ALEC and others give you language which I doubt many of you even have read closely. NO NO NO on the badly written and presented SB*

Michael Swenson, Mr.
Self
Temple, TX

I'm against SB 8.

Angela Breidenstein
self
San Antonio, TX

This bill should be rejected. Furthermore, the process of public hearing is being subverted. I'm opposed to allowing public funds for private school education - the Texas constitution calls upon elected and selected educational and legislative leaders to support public education.

Portia Bosse
self
Austin, TX

As a taxpayer, I want to keep public funds in public schools! I oppose SB 8!

David Wright
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Passing SB8 through committee without public comment is a disservice to our state. Please continue to working on fulling funding public schools. Vouchers do nothing to help improve education in Texas.

Matthew Greenfield
TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Temple, TX

Dear Texas Representatives,

I am writing to you today to express my concern about Senate Bill 8 (SB 8), which would provide state funding for private schools through school vouchers. I believe that this bill is illegal and would have a negative impact on public education in Texas.

First, SB 8 is illegal because it violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The Establishment Clause prohibits the government from establishing a state religion or favoring one religion over another. SB 8 would provide state funding for private schools, many of which are religious schools. This would give these schools an unfair advantage over public schools and would amount to the government favoring religion over non-religion.

Second, SB 8 is illegal because it violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Equal Protection Clause guarantees that all people are entitled to equal protection under the law. SB 8 would allow parents to use state funding to send their children to private schools, but it would not allow public school students to receive the same benefits. This would create an unfair system that would discriminate against public school students.

Third, SB 8 is illegal because it would undermine public education in Texas. Public schools are already underfunded, and SB 8 would make the problem worse. By diverting state funding to private schools, SB 8 would force public schools to make cuts to their programs and services. This would hurt students and teachers and would make it harder for public schools to provide a quality education.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote against SB 8. This bill is illegal, unfair, and would harm public education in Texas.

Sarah Dolcini
Teacher
Orange, TX

Vouchers do not make a better educational staff. Educating under privileged students takes grit, commitment, and a huge heart. Giving away the funds to a private school, where those children can already afford the education, is simply making economically under privileged students, have even less. This is an assault on public education and will do nothing but further break down an already broken system.

Blanca Nicole Zuniga, Mrs.
Self
Rosenberg, TX

As a mother with children in LCISD school, I am against any funding by taxpayers that does not benefit our public schools. Texas already ranks 41st in per student funding. Also, this bill does not allow for any transparency for the funding or hold private institutions to the same expectations or testing as our public schools. Please vote no to SB8.

Kerri Morris
Self
Dripping Springs, TX

I strongly oppose SB 8 because I believe it will not serve our most needy students & their families. We are lucky enough to have resources for our child, however many families who lack resources will not have the transportation or additional funds to take advantage of the school vouchers that would supposedly benefit their children. As a social worker of almost 2 decades, I often saw in the medical system similar problems. I worked for a hospital that served all patients including those with publicly funded coverage, however they often did not have the transportation to come to their doctors appointments and even critical medical procedures. Funds then needed to be found from a different source so that people could actually access the care. Let's use our funds to provide the resources needed in the public schools in our own communities. Coming from a district where we just struggled to pass a bond for our over populated and outdated schools, I am not in favor of any more funds being lost by the district as they are much needed. Thank you.

Angie Diaz, Mrs
myself teacher
Belton, TX

I am 100% AGAINST vouchers...I believe it will created segregation and divison among our children and will not be beneficial to our state or nation

Paige Hoes, Mrs.
Self - Managing Director of Student Services
Melissa, TX

These last few weeks of session are vitally important for the future of our public schools. The House Public Education Committee is hearing the committee substitute for Senate Bill 8, which includes the largest voucher program in the nation.

I am a constituent, and I'm writing to ask you to please keep CSSB 8 from leaving the committee and/or if it DOES leave committee for it to be voted DOWN for the following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Max Thompson
Self, retired educator
College Station, TX

I urge you to vote against SB 8 for the sole purpose of voting against vouchers in Texas. Parents have rights to choice currently in Texas as to where their child, children, can attend school. If they wish for their child, children, to go to a private school, they can do so and pay for their choice. The Christian schools that Governor Abbott chose to proclaim his rhetoric about ESA's had children attending those schools. Obviously parents had choice.

I believe most of the rhetoric conveyed about the need for choice is from outside our State of Texas. School choice is not a Texas concern, funding our current system of public schools is a concern of most Texans and a Texas Constitutional matter. Be a Constitutional Texan and vote no to Senate Bill 8. Thank you for your service to our Great State of Texas.

Eileen KUHN

SELF - but also as CFO of a Texas public charter school with both academic and financial excellence ratings (Meridian World School, Round Rock, TX)

Georgetown, TX

PLEASE - make these private education opportunities ACCOUNTABLE to the citizens of Texas. As the CFO of a public charter school, I know full well the value of mandating that our school be accountable to the state both academically and financially - it's the only fair and assured way for the citizens of this state to know that their tax dollars are truly being spent to make sure our children are educated well - not just adequately, not just according to their individual parent wishes. If Texas is to meet the needs of kids AND provide for a thriving future, we must do better at educating them through best practices and proven instructional strategies! Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Eileen Kuhn

Tessa Heine, Ms.

Self

Dallas, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. Diverting tax payer money out of the public school system is the opposite of what needs to be done, specifically fully funding the public school system. In addition, voucher systems like the one proposed only benefit the wealthy at the cost of those that need public education the most. Taking from the most vulnerable in our society to put money in wealthy pockets is immoral and offensive.

James Hammonds

Self - Teacher

Belton, TX

The use of taxpayer dollars to fund school choice will only widen the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots". Please vote NO for this bill.

Lee Lewis

Teacher/public school students

Cisco, TX

We have a constitutional mandate to FULLY fund public education in our state. Nowhere does the constitution even hint at using state tax dollars to fund ANY schooling other than public schools. Parent choice already exists in the same form it always has. Using public funds for private schooling is a violation of our constitution and using public funds for private institutions, especially religious institutions, is in direct violation of both state and federal law.

Darrell Gest

Self (legal asst.)

Austin, TX

I am against SB 8

Tracy Hearn
Self
Colleyville, TX

Texans have told you repeatedly we do not want vouchers. We want our PUBLIC schools fully funded and our teachers paid. We do not want ESAs or diversion of tax dollars for private schools by any method, means, or clever renaming. Our teachers are not groomers or indoctrinators and we are tired of them being slandered. We are tired of nasty GOP tricks to reject the Will of the People. We are tired of you supporting unconstitutional laws such as putting religious figures in public schools. We are tired of our kids getting killed and yet you add more guns in schools and public places. We are angry that you killed HB 2477 without a vote. We are angry that you tried to use sneaky back door procedures to bring this to the floor and now you are trying to do so by silencing us. The majority of Texans are educated in our public schools. You are trying to defy us and you will be held accountable at the ballot box. Don't mess with Texas Public Education. Fulfill the mandate of the Texas Constitution and fully fund our public schools as you are required to do.

Wayne Roark
Temple ISD
Temple, TX

None

James Norman, Mr.
Self - Public School Educator
Temple, TX

While I applaud the approach and propaganda provided in terms of school vouchers hidden under the aspect of school choice, the aspect is inherently dangerous. To begin, the money will have to come from public school funding which is already underfunded as the federal government will not support a voucher system that goes to private Christian schools that will directly violate the separation of church and state. With little to no oversight, this will also lead to a situation where the system will be abused and cost the taxpayers even more. You will see once data returns that the schools are performing, they are meeting goals and are serving all children.

Lisa Chambers, Mrs.
Local ATPE chat Vice President & TEACHER
Dublin, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools, of which there is only 1 in my county, are NOT required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially. The majority of schools in my county are TITLE I!!!!

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of ALL students in Texas.

I BEG YOU TO JUST SAY NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Joanna Graham
Tax payer and parent
Houston, TX

While they won't let you testify on Monday, you can submit electronic testimony on Senate Bill 8:
<https://comments.house.texas.gov/home?c=c400>

Here is what I wrote:

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

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It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Marilyn Beaird
self
Bedford, TX

School vouchers have no accountability for performance which is problematic for determining their effectiveness. Giving taxpayer money to private schools provides no protections for the taxpayers of Texas. From research we learn, vouchers do not improve education for all. NO to SB 8 and vouchers.

Jen Hughes
Self
San Antonio, TX

As an educated mom of 2, and community service leader, I beg you to vote NO to this bill. It will cripple our public schools which we as a community of NEISD absolutely LOVE!!! Texas parents at large do NOT want vouchers.

Jim Rosebrock
Self - Rancher
Belton, TX

Governor Abbott and Dan Patrick better wake up and understand the sleeping giant of rural citizens are getting angry and questioning their bully tactics and lack of leadership skills. Forcing school vouchers down our throats does not taste good. It's a time for a change at the top!

Michelle Rind
Self, Teacher
Woodway, TX

I am against school vouchers. I feel freedom of choosing education is a right but that right comes with responsibility of the parents. If I should choose to homeschool my own children, or put my children in private school, I know that decision comes with financial responsibility. Taking money away from an already hurting public education because of a choice, is irresponsible.

Dayna Berry
self / public school teacher
Lampasas, TX

I am AGAINST school vouchers! I am opposed to funding private school choice. Leave the funds in public education. If parents want to send their children to private school, they have that choice and THEY can pay for it themselves.

Lyndsey Yates
self and teacher
Moody, TX

I do not think this bill should pass. I think public education is the best for our kids, especially in this community. I feel as though if a parent would like their child to go to an alternative school/charter/private that they should incur the cost of such decision. This is not a matter in which the state should allow options. What message would you be sending to public educators... That would be like telling us, we are not good enough for all children and you are willing to help parents seek alternatives.

Amanda Piepenburg
Self
Allen, TX

You must allow public testimony. Ramming this thru without proper hearings or debate is representative of a dictatorship. If you can't get it your way the right way then maybe it isn't ready. If you weren't so afraid of public testimony you would allow it.

Brian Pitts
School Teachers
Waco, TX

Firmly oppose
School Vouchers are not the answer to education.
Properly fund schooling
Pay teachers a wage that makes the profession attractive where there is competition to get into the profession and not a mass exodus to get out of the profession.
Hold private schools to the same standards as public schools or lower the public school standards to the private school requirements. You should be comparing apples to apples if you are going to make one the standard of education.
Thank you for your time.

Mandie England, Counselor
Winters ISD
Winters, TX

Any action by our state or TEA to increase testing is ludicrous. This massive, high-stakes testing is not only meaningless, it is harmful to our students. The tests that have been developed are poorly written and unfair representations of student knowledge. The questions are intentionally confusing and misleading which is completely against every tenet of education! Furthermore, the EOC exams do not prepare our students for anything later in life. The testing skills required for EOC will not be used in any other testing realm our students will confront.

Every single Texas legislator and employee of TEA should be required to take every EOC our high school students are required to take. It would be eye-opening, for them and the public who elected them.

Joseph M Guerra
Self/ Member of Edgewood School Board
San Antonio, TX

This bill does not in anyway provide for the betterment of education for all students who reside in the public schools systems of Texas, by passing this bill you will decrease the available funding of all students and especially hurt smaller county wide school districts by subsidizing private for profit schools. It also increases the amount of Testing to be given and in doing so decreases the amount of time for true education to occur in effect continuing to dumb down all Texas children, further guaranteeing that you as legislators can give more incentive to privatization in turn filling the pocketbooks' of big business'. Lastly the Texas State Board of Education should continue be involved with the assessment process not just one entity in total control

Jennifer Troell
Self, Human Resources Representative
New Braunfels, TX

I am a parent with a child in public school. I am against SB 8. I consider it harmful to our children and our public school system. Parts of it are overly burdensome to our school districts, parts are overly burdensome to our teachers, and parts only serve to impede our children's education. I urge you to vote against furthering this legislation.

Stephanie Ashworth
Self/retired
Austin, TX

I am opposed to vouchers.

Margaret Parsons
Self
Duma, TX

This is a bad bill. It is wrong to fund private education with public money. Fully fund public schools and remove all the ridiculous burdens you have placed on public schools!

Shirla Mullins, Mrs.
Winters ISD
Abilene, TX

I work in a rural school. We service a lower socioeconomic area. We are working to create opportunities for our students in the workforce through CTE classes. We already struggle finding teachers and meeting our budget needs. Vouchers and ESA will only make our jobs harder. If you want to do what is right for education give our teachers raises, increase FUNDING for public education, stop the craziness of so many tests and NO vouchers or ESA.

Marilyn Tolbert, Dr
Educator
Fort Worth, TX

Please vote against these bills. Detrimental to Publix education

Sherry Mercer
Self
Dallas, TX

I'm opposed to this bill. I'm opposed to any bill that diverts funds from public schools.

Mike Read
Littlefield ISD
Littlefield, TX

Absolutely a terrible bill for Texas Public Education!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
PLEASE VOTE NO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Savannah Hennig, Mrs.
School Board Member/ Salado ISD
Salado, TX

I am against this bill due to it establishing an ESA account with no information on how private schools would be accountable to the state when they begin receiving state funding. Any educational institution that receives state funding should be held to the same standards as public schools.

Kelly MOore, Superintendent
UGISD
white oak, TX

Please vote against SB8!

Christyn Baer
Self - parent and event planner
San Antonio, TX

Vouchers (and whatever other name they go by) kill public schools. They only benefit the people that can afford to send their kids to private schools, which are also often faith based. UNCONSTITUTIONAL!!! They do nothing for kids that can't afford that or rural areas where they don't exist. All they do is take more money from our already under-funded public education system. Vote NO!!!

Tristan McGonigal
Self, Teacher
Temple, TX

To my representatives,

As a young new teacher in the great Texas public education system, I believe it is my duty to voice my issues with this bill. I am Texas voter, but I feel betrayed by my representatives for pushing such an anti public education and anti free market bill. It is not the duty of the tax payer to fund private intuitions where we, the tax payers, have no input in how that money is utilized nor the curriculum that it backs. This will inevitably incubate a growing segregation in our society. This is truly a "rich get richer" ploy that is funded on the backs of the common tax payer. This bill announces a "vote of no confidence" in your public education servants, further delegitimizing a profession that has become a scapegoat for our societal ills.

This bill claims to be about "parents rights" meaning parents should be able to send their children where ever they see fit, and I agree with that sentiment. Parents should able to homeschool their children or send their students to private school if that is their prerogative, but not on the tax payers dime nor at the expense of our public schools. Let's have a discussion as a community on how we can improve our public school system, not how can we abandon it along with the Texan students and families who depend on it.

Be pro-Texas students, be pro-Texas families, and be pro-Texas public school teachers.

david raffield
self
Cypress, TX

1. Say NO to ALL Vouchers.
 2. Increase state funding for students by at least \$1,000
 3. Increase teacher pay and benefits. #43 in US is embarrassing to the state of Texas.
 4. Do AWAY with STAAR
-

Darrel Hughes
Self
San Antonio, TX

There are several reasons why I do NOT support SB 8.

Firstly, school vouchers would divert much-needed funding away from public schools. Public schools are responsible for educating the vast majority of American children, and they are already facing significant funding challenges. By diverting funds to private schools through vouchers, public schools would have even fewer resources to provide high-quality education to the students who need it most. This would result in larger class sizes, fewer resources for teachers, and a decrease in educational opportunities for students.

Secondly, school vouchers would lead to greater inequality in education. Private schools are often more expensive than public schools, and they are typically attended by students from wealthier families. This means that if school vouchers were implemented, low-income students would be left behind, as they would not have the resources to attend private schools even with the voucher. Additionally, private schools are not subject to the same accountability measures as public schools, which means that students attending private schools could be receiving an inferior education without any recourse.

Thirdly, school vouchers would undermine the principle of separation of church and state. Many private schools are religious, and vouchers would effectively be subsidizing religious education with taxpayer dollars. This is a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits the government from endorsing or promoting any particular religion.

Fourthly, school vouchers would not necessarily lead to better educational outcomes. Research has shown that students who attend private schools do not perform significantly better than those who attend public schools. In fact, some studies have shown that private schools actually perform worse than public schools once socioeconomic factors are taken into account. Therefore, it is not clear that vouchers would actually improve the quality of education in America.

Finally, school vouchers would be difficult to implement in practice. In order to ensure that students are attending high-quality private schools, the government would need to establish a complex system of regulations and oversight. This would require a significant investment of time and resources, and there is no guarantee that such a system could be successfully implemented.

In conclusion, school vouchers are a misguided and harmful policy proposal that would undermine public education, increase inequality, violate the separation of church and state, and may not even lead to better educational outcomes. Instead of pursuing this policy, we should be investing in public schools to ensure that all children have access to a high-quality education that will prepare them for success in life.

Sara Baker, Dr.
Self - Professor
Temple, TX

As a native Texan who once lived in Louisiana, I saw the effect of the voucher system on their Public Schools. Texas has pride in their exceptional public schools and a voucher system would decimate those schools. The inequities between the wealthy and the struggling would be magnified. Texas should be a place where all students can be guaranteed a free and appropriate education.

Amber Lemons
Self
Stephenville, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Scott Floyd
self
Gladewater, TX

We have no place in Texas public education for vouchers, education savings accounts, or whatever mysterious name they want to call putting public dollars into private schools. I strongly oppose any bill that would provide for that. As a Christian, if I wanted my children in private school, I would send them there and pay for it. As a matter of fact, I did that with my oldest for two years. He was falling behind and not being challenged in the least bit in that private school (considered the best in our area), and there was no recourse other than to move him to a much better public school district that also had accountability to the parents. You are opening the door to create tons of unintended consequences that you are not even thinking about. What will the legislature do when "religious" schools of less than desirable "religions" start popping up and public dollars are keeping their doors open through vouchers? What will the legislature do when people realize they can turn this into a new form of a welfare program by "homeschooling" their kids and keeping the money? In the end, former Lt. Gov. Bill Ratliff said it best. Public dollars are for public schools. I sure do miss true statesmen like him.

Lorri Wright
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I do not want tax payer money to be used for ESAs (vouchers). It will hurt our public schools. And it is fundamentally WRONG. I do not want my taxes to fund private schools. I expect our representatives to support our public schools and make education a priority.

Karla Jacks
Como-Pickton CISD
Sulphur Springs, TX

Please do not vote for this bill.

Kim Jenschke
self-teacher
Stephenville, TX

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Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

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It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!!!!

Shelley Doyle
self/teacher/parent of former private school children
Temple, TX

I feel that public funds need to be kept out of the private school. As soon as funds from the state are introduced into the private schools, it will open the door for the legislature to start taking over and/or making regulations for the private school sector. Private school should be separate. As a public school teacher and my husband a bench tech for ACER, we do not make a lot of money and made many sacrifices to send our children to private school. If we can do it on our salaries, pretty much anyone can by making the same sacrifices. In addition, I do not want my taxes to pay for someone else to have a private school education. Let their parents make sacrifices to send them to private school.

Thank you.

Kimberly Chumley-Curda, Ms.
Self
Richmond, TX

I oppose SB 8. I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and returning public education to full funding. We should invest in public schools rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers. Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation as reported by Education Weekly. We can and must do better for ALL the children of Texas.

Honer Cox
ISCISD Board of Trustees
Iraan, TX

Please do NOT move forward with this bill. It seems to be aimed at pushing money towards the voucher program, while being disguised as a parental rights bill. If either of these issues is warranted, then they should not be attached to any other bills.

Also, as I understand it, this would take even MORE control away from locally elected school boards, and we are already overly burdened with state control as it is. How does that equate to more parental control, whenever the very people that the parents elected would have less of a day when more power is shifted away from the boards?

Joshua Smith
Self - software manager
Wylie, TX

Vouchers are an attempt to rob already underfunded school systems and divert STATE money to PRIVATE institutions that have NO state oversight or mandate to serve. Public education is a foundational public good and bedrock Christian value.

GOLDIE SCOTT
self/teacher
STEPHENVILLE, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers. Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students. Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud. Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement. Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially. It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas. NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Julie Germann
Self Employed
Austin, TX

Reject this bill. Vouchers hurt public education which is the backbone of our society. My tax dollars should not be funding private schools that can discriminate against children with special needs.

Jerry Hooper
Self
Corpus Christi, TX

Please vote against this bill. It is a bad bill and I'm undermine the current public school systems.

Shelley Keating
Self
Katy, TX

Say NO to Vouchers

Cindy Clayton
Self - Technical writer
Houston, TX

I am writing to request that you vote NO on any version of SB 8 that contains ANY form of education vouchers or savings accounts that would reduce the amount of state funds provided to public schools by a single dollar. There is no excuse to siphon off taxpayer funds to private and/or religious educational entities, which would be less accountable to the state and more likely to cherry-pick their students.

Public schools are the foundation of a free society and our democratic republic--undermining them, instead of improving and supporting them, is an attack on society as a whole.

Texas families, teachers, and taxpayers are watching this week to see whether you will do the right thing, for our schoolchildren and for our state's future.

Melissa Ferguson
Self, NISD PARENT, volunteer and Accountant
Roanoke, TX

Thank you to our LONE Texas House Representative that voted against allowing the Texas House Public Education Committee to vote on a school voucher bill that didn't receive a hearing.

Thank you Representative Kronda Thimesch!!!

We want to let our other Representatives know that we see how you voted to allow a harmful bill to get a committee vote without a public hearing. Thank goodness your peers thought better on transparency of the legislative action.

State Representative Ben Bumgarner

Giovanni Capriglione

Richard Hayes for Texas House

Nate Schatzline For Texas

State Representative Lynn Stucky

(Charlie Geren did not vote)

Until you address how recapture is harming fast-growth school districts like Northwest ISD, we do not support your efforts to allow vouchers because they siphon money from our students and our academic programs.

We oppose any effort to divert local property tax revenue for any non-public education purpose.

We oppose legislation that authorizes state funds to be used to pay for vouchers or private school tuition and related costs. You must ensure charter schools and other education-related systems receiving public funds have financial and academic accountability to the public in line with accountability measures for public school districts.

We need you to support student learning and success.

What are y'all doing to reducing the burden of recapture? Our fast-growth district has increasing recapture payments that are constraining our school district budget, and that limits the number of teachers and support staff the district can hire. The continual understaffing of our fast-growth district has forced an increase in requests for a waiver from TEA to increase the student-to-teacher ratio at elementary grade levels. Increasing the number of students in an elementary classroom harms students' early childhood development and educational opportunities.

Northwest ISD is a great steward of public tax dollars and leads all school districts in Fort Worth with the most graduates acquiring an industry-level certification. Why would you vote to send tax-dollars for purposes that show zero return on investment in growing the economy, especially when our destination school district is vital to the economic engine of the AllianceTexas?

Read more about how NISD CTE provides fantastic opportunities for students' Career and Technical Education Pathways & Opportunities in the economic engine of North Ft. Worth <https://fortworthreport.org/2023/04/20/fort-worth-school-districts-have-a-new-goal-boost-career-readiness-by-10-in-next-year/>

~Seven Academies~
Sixteen Additional Programs of Study*

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources

Animal Science*

Applied Agricultural Engineering*

Plant Science*

Architecture and Construction

Architectural Design*

Arts, Audio/Video Technology and Communications
~Creative Media Production Academy~
Design and Multimedia Arts*
Digital Communications*

Business, Marketing, and Finance
Accounting and

Anne Mills
Retired Texas Educator
Commerce, TX

Respect Texas children and educators by fully funding our public education system. The majority of Texans oppose an education savings account program or vouchers. Vote a resounding "NO" on SB 8. Retired educators VOTE.

Frances Mott, Dr.
self
Malone, TX

My name is Frances Mott. I live in my home at 420 S Walnut, Malone, Texas, Hill County. I pay school taxes every year. I do NOT feel that taxes collected by the state for public schools should be used to provide vouchers to parents who wish to send their children to private, often religious, schools. Private schools do not have the same testing requirements as public schools and are not held accountable by state regulators. Therefore, I am against the education savings account program. I believe this money would be better spent on improving the public school system by decreasing class size, paying teachers better wages, updating classroom equipment, providing adequate supplies, and paying for school building improvements. I also do NOT believe that the state should collect taxes meant for public schools and then create programs which channel portions of this money to private, OFTEN RELIGIOUS, entities. I strongly feel that this is a violation of the separation of church and state. Please vote NO on SB 8. Thank you.

Ann Muir
self- retired anesthesiologist
BOERNE, TX

I strongly urge you to vote against SB 8. This will be a disaster for public education in Texas. We need to fully fund public education. The voucher program also violates the separation of church, as this will divert tax dollars to religious schools. Thank you

James Patton
Self
Commerce, TX

I vigorously oppose school vouchers. The effects of such a scheme will be to further undermine funding to public schools. Our public schools, once among the best in the country, is now well below average at 31st. Our funding of public schools is even worse at 38th, just half of the funding level of the top rated state. Texas likes to boast about being number one in many areas, but unless we support and improve our publicly supported education system we will move ever closer to being number one in illiteracy and failure.

Bryan Shipman
Blackwell CISD
Blackwell, TX

The Honorable Representatives

I am writing in Regards to Senate Bill 8. We strongly prefer public comment on the bill and not only invited testimony. This bill represents the beginning of a paradigm shift in how the education of children is funded. Sixteen hours is just the beginning of a discussion that pertains to the future education of the children of this state. Tax dollars should come with accountability, oversight, and transparency just the same as public schools. Schools accepting tax dollars should not be able to reject any student or this is not about school choice.

The Honorable Representatives that came before us created systems and laws to protect children. The children in private schools should be treated no differently.

Please VOTE NO on SB 8

Lisa Fenstermacher
Self, public education
Garland, TX

Please keep school funding in public education and do not let tax payer dollars fund school vouchers.

Vouchers will:

- Take money away from public schools.
- Cause a decrease in services available to public school children.
- Treat learning like a commodity, and a free market doesn't always work in a interest of the consumer.
- Allow private schools, which have little or no accountability, to take tax dollars from underserved communities, which could lead to corruption.
- Allow undesirable groups to start their own school and receive public funding.
- Divert attention from much needed reforms, such as smaller class sizes and better conditions and pay for teachers.

Say no to SB8 and school vouchers.

Jimmie Walker
Self/ educator
San Antonio, TX

I am Very strongly against SB 8. Unless private school have same expectations as public schools, public \$ should not be allotted to them. This bill does not reduce assessment in any meaningful way.

Not holding comment is undemocratic.

Suanne Pyle
self / retired public school teacher
Boerne, TX

I am a retired public school teacher from a family of public school teachers. My family and I have given over 100 years of service to the schoolchildren of Texas. This bill will tear down public education. It will remove funds from public schools that are already struggling because they are under funded. We need to improve our public schools, not fund private schools who are largely unregulated and often have unqualified teachers.

Vouchers will divert billions of dollars to pay private school teachers who do not pay into the Teacher Retirement System (TRS). There will never again be a cost-of-living increase or a 13th check for retired teachers if this voucher bill passes. We are already having a crisis with not having enough teachers. If you can't fund their pensions we will lose even more. Also all those teachers who have retired who depend on those pensions will have to drastically lower their standard of living.

This is a manufactured crisis to decimate public education and boost private Christian schools and others with their own agendas. Passing a voucher bill that would decrease funding to public schools would be devastating for the children of Texas – and it is incumbent on us to make sure they understand that reality.

Melanie Cuellar
Self
Round Rock, TX

We vote in our communities, from local to state, to federal. The people vote for the ones deciding the curriculum. You want to tell teachers what their job is when you have no education in that field. It's just like you want to tell doctors how to not save lives, the lives of mothers. This bill is going to squash our communities. It's going to divide us even more. This is not what the people want. We care about our communities.

Helen Anguiano, Ms.
Self
Houston, TX

The bill leaves out equitable educational opportunities to students who receive special education services and students who struggle with behavioral difficulties.

The educational savings account program will not ensure that all students be accepted into the charter and private schools the program will fund.

These schools do not have the same enrollment requirements and laws that current Texas public schools have. These schools have the option to not accept children based on services they require or support they need.

Jessica Wilson
Self
Sherman, TX

No to vouchers. No to "education savings accounts." Stop trying to defund public schools. Again.

Tamara Leiber
self
Navasota, TX

All children have a constitutional right to a free and appropriate public education. The Federal, state, and local governments are responsible for funding our educational system fully. You must carefully vote for proposed laws that do so and not waiver from the commitment you have to our children and the future prosperity of Texas.

We can and must do better for ALL of the children. Vote against "Vouchers" in the form of ESAs. Vote to fully fund our public education system; don't move public money to private educational institutions.

The public education system is not our enemy. We must collaborate with and support them. That is the only way they can be successful. Pull resources from public education, then you assure its failure. I can't imagine that is what you are wanting.

I have and will continue to vote for Education Friendly leaders. My neighbors (your constituents) will also be encouraged to do so. As a retired educator, I see day in and day out the reality of how public education can improve lives. We deserve representatives that truly represent the best interest of ALL citizens, not the few that opt to leave the public education system. Hopefully you can be that representative, but if not we still have our vote.

Gene Krejci, Mr.
Self
Houston, TX

This bill is a sham. Vote no. This is garbage.

Jennifer Coke
Self-retired Texas public educator
Waco, TX

I am completely against any type of school voucher program, ESA, tuition credits, etc. The Texas constitution mandates funding for public free schools. It doesn't say to use the funding for private or for profit schools. It doesn't say to fund home schools or religious schools. It clearly says public schools. Using our tax money for other than public schools will gut those schools which are already underfunded, leading to an eventual collapse of our public schools. This will in turn lead to fewer companies coming to Texas and destroy the long term business climate here. Beware of unintended consequences.

Kim Clogston
self
San Marcos, TX

I refuse to accept one penny of cuts to our public education system. STop this voucher SB 8!

Brittany Thomas
Self- educator
Lewisville, TX

Please do not divert public tax payer funds to a voucher program. Fully fund public schools so that we can fully educate all students, not those we choose to let in. We have been cut digital resources because the house didn't provide enough funds to schools 2 years ago- this would damage what we would have available even more.

susan holick
Self
The Woodlands, TX

Against school vouchers

Jayne McRae
Myself
The Woodlands, TX

Vouchers are bad for the communities in Texas. Parents have ALWAYS had a right to choose where and how to educate their children. My tax dollars should ONLY go to the public system established in my community. My dollars should not be used for other parents to do as they please. They can freely do that on their own dollar. No matter how you dress this up, it will funnel money away from an already VERY UNDERFUNDED system instead of finding ways to use my money to, at the very least, get us on par with the rest of the country. We are 42nd in the nation for per pupil spending! Teachers buy their own supplies, especially those in Special Education. This is a disgrace of a bill and this has been a disgraceful process. Parents and community members have spoken on this issue several times. Don't Florida our Texas. Do not pass bills that directly affect us without first having the decency to hear directly from us. ALL OF US. I am against SB 8 and any and all corresponding HB and any and all future SB and HB. No to SB 8. No to vouchers! Figure out a way to fund our schools, students and teachers! Do your jobs!

Judy LeUnes, Teacher
Self
College Station, TX

Public dollars should stay in public schools. We are starving our public schools already.

Do not support vouchers!! Thanks for reading

Terri Pease, Mrs
Self, church Business administrator
San Antonio, TX

There is a good reason the chair of this committee attempted to pass this bill in such an underhanded way- he knew once people had time to actually read it there would be an uproar about it.

Texas parents, students, teachers, and administrators hate standardized testing and the punitive ways lawmakers use it. The author of this substitute knew the only thing that *might* tempt staunch anti-voucher constituents and representatives accept vouchers was to trade them for the STAAR test. At first glance, it appears this bill does, but when you really take the time to read it, you can clearly see that it:

- Increases the number of standardized tests a student must take from grades 3-11.
- makes A-F more punitive for public schools, but NOT for the private schools that will receive vouchers
- it adds a test to 11th grade that we do not currently have

Do not be fooled by this bill. Not only will it decimate public schools financially, but it will demoralize them even further with the additional testing.

My kids deserve fully funded schools that aren't bogged down by incessant testing. Please vote NO!

Celina Bautovich
Self
Spring, TX

Vouchers are not good for public education. Please focus your voucher efforts on funding Texas public education better. Make our education system better. Our children deserve it.

Please vote no for vouchers always!!!

Kelley Thomas, Mrs.
self; consultant
Richardson, TX

Chairman Buckley and members of the committee - I am writing today to provide my comments in OPPOSITION to SB 8 and CSSB 8. Neither version of the bill is favorable to public education, with the obvious attempts at appeasing many with the committee substitute. While the committee sub attempts to show accountability of the private institutions through the necessary state standardized testing, many students will still be underserved since the school itself will not be held to the same standards as the public schools. In addition, so much of the language of the original and committee sub is intended to show concern for the most vulnerable in the public education system, our SPED population and those who are in underperforming schools according to state standards. If the true intent was to ensure that these students were reaching their full potential, the better choice, the choice that aligns with the Texas Constitution and what the families of the 5.4 million students currently in public schools want and deserve, is to take the \$800 million or more dollars and invest them in SPED programming and into rehabilitating the underperforming schools. Removing additional funds from struggling programs and schools doesn't make sense! When a student leaves a school with a voucher in hand, they aren't moving out of their home. Instead, they are living in their home, going to another school with funding intended to be used by our public schools, and not offering an opportunity for that hole in the school funding pipeline to be filled. One child out of one classroom doesn't make the classroom utilities cost any less, the teacher any less, the insurance on the building any less, the transportation to the school any less, or the SRO any less. One child out of one classroom does cut funds from a school district's budget already stretched tight.

Leane Krause
Self
Tomball, TX

Vote no for SB8. Vouchers and voucher like programs take away funding from public schools. Every single child has an opportunity to attend public school. Public funds belong in public schools.

Tony Raymond
Texas Public Schools
Gladewater, TX

SB 8

- Requires TEA to adopt or develop a new test to transition from STAAR to the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) by the 2027-28 school year.
- Requires TEA to administer three tests each year to students in grades 3 through 8 as part of through-year assessments and allows TEA to force districts to participate in the Through-Year Assessment Pilot program.
- Provides that ESAs would be worth \$9,000 for a child who is educationally disadvantaged when applying for the program or \$7,500 for a child not defined as educationally disadvantaged. Special Ed students/parents would lose their protections provided by laws that only apply to public schools
- Allows individuals to spend ESA funds on any so-called education-related expenses, such as private school tuition, higher education costs, virtual education, instructional materials, assessments, tutors, transportation, educational therapies, technology, meals during the school day, and before- or after-school care. With such a broad description, opens it up for abuse.

ultimately this will create a whole new level of government spending to monitor & administer. Money that would have otherwise gone into a classroom.

Chris Holmes

My family, my home value and my community

Houston, TX

While the idea of school choice is a good one, Texas Legislators have gone about it the wrong way. It is a lie to say that it will create competition while you defund public education. Until you fully fund public education you can not in good faith vote for this bill. please prioritize increasing the per student allowance before you go down this route.

Jennifer Fountain

Self

Pasadena, TX

Vote no. Vouchers, ESAs, tax credits, etc that take students and funding away from public schools are not putting the education of our children first. The STAAR “incentives” that are lumped in this bill are also not best for students, so don’t be swayed.

PLEASE vote no.

Deborah Randolph

Self/public school librarian

San Antonio, TX

I am proudly finishing my 27th year as an elementary educator. Three years as a special education teacher, and the rest as a librarian. I implore you to please vote against HB 8.

Vouchers will destroy our neighborhood schools. Public dollars should be sent to public schools. In fact, more dollars should be sent to public schools. Our schools serve all students. We serve those with learning differences, behavior struggles, physical disabilities, students who are homebound, students who are gifted, students who need extra support, the list goes on and on. Schools are not receiving adequate funding as it is, as evidenced by the hundreds of dollars classroom teachers spend out of their own pockets to buy needed materials for their students. To take funds out of public schools and funnel those to private institutions that are allowed to pick and choose who they serve is completely abhorrent.

It should also be noted that public schools provide so many opportunities for students to excel outside of the classroom; whether it be in fine arts, athletics, technology, various clubs, and so on. A voucher system will make opportunities like this harder for schools to provide due to a lack of funding.

In addition to vouchers being an unacceptable option, it is also underhanded to try to slip in changes to an already questionable Bill that meets the needs of a loud minority, as opposed to addressing the best interest of the students in Texas. Fully funding public education should be a priority for the legislature. It should not ever be a political issue. Education is for all students and shouldn’t be impacted by party ideology. The best interest of Texas students should be a non-partisan focus.

Rather than saying yes to vouchers and more state testing, our representatives should be saying yes to funding our existing schools to the full extent possible. Teachers give so much of their heart and soul to their craft. If you ask a teacher why they chose this profession, no one is going to say “it was because of the great money I’ll be getting paid!” Instead, you will learn that teachers chose this field so that they could be difference makers. They chose this field to light the spark of learning in their students. To teach those who others considered untouchable. Perhaps they chose to carry on the torch to honor a teacher who made a difference in their lives. Whatever the reason, I can tell you it’s not because of money. However, fully funding, public education also means honoring teachers as professionals. other professionals receive raises regularly in line with inflation. Not so with teachers, and that’s a shame.

I encourage you each to take the time and visit the neighborhood schools near you. Take the time to see the great things that happen daily and your local school districts.

Please, vote NO on HB 8 and show us that you care about the public school system in Texas.

Cathleen Garner
Self
PEARLAND, TX

NO MORE TESTING. You want to help kids with mental health like you claim? Start there.

Kathleen Major, Place 4 Liberty Hill ISD Board Trustee, retired educator
Liberty Hill ISD retired
Liberty Hill, TX

Respectfully, I ask the committee to refocus on what is right for all Texas children. The substitution document seems to offer an incredible amount of money to a limited population of students yet I have been told several times by several legislators, there is not enough money to support an increase in basic allotment for public school

School choice doesn't expand choice for parents. It expands power of private schools to select students. They do not have to accept all children with a voucher. They do not serve children based on their best interests

As a tax payer and consistent voter, I have seen this session consistently block voucher/ESA Proposals. I do not want public funds going to private companies.

As a trustee, my constituents ask overwhelming why the legislature is not listening to the majority of voters and support public schools.

As a former teacher and principal, I am incredulous at the the lack of purpose toward suitable public school support. I am disheartened at the attacks on public school educators who Are the heart of the systems and programs for children. I am appalled at the praise of public schools during election season and the stunning reversals by some during this session.

No vouchers or ESA OF ANY kind. Provide greater support in basic allotment.

Schools should have adequate support to provide free and appropriate learning opportunities to all students and the ability to make decisions right for their communities.

Refocus on your charge to support Public Education. Recommit to the children of Texas. Remember to just do it right and achieve success for our future.

Darell Hortman
Self, Retired public educator of 41 years
Palestine, TX

I believe that the net result of CSSB8 will be negative, especially for the children who need the most help. Tuition at most private schools exceeds what the bill offers, so parents must be financially well-off enough to subsidize the school. Most private schools do not provide transportation at no-cost to parents, so parents must have reliable transportation and flexible enough schedules to be available to transport their child on the school's schedule. Eliminating the STAAR and replacing it with something else offers no benefit. High stakes testing needs to be addressed comprehensively, not simply substituting one test for another. True accountability and oversight of the funds and ensuring their intended use seems woefully inadequate and reminds me of the reports from Arizona. My reading is that a private school could receive funds, and the child be in the care of staff who are unqualified and not certified, thus providing substandard services to the child. In some ways, the bill seems to be rewarding lower standards. It should not be assumed that just because a school is not a public school - that it is a better school. Lobbying and marketing can be deceptive.

School choice is only a choice for those parents who can afford it.

JoAnn McKenzie
Westminster Democratic Study Group
Austin, TX

One of our highest priorities is the education of our future generations - all of them. Public education deserves all of our tax dollars, we do not want money siphoned off to private educational entities, proven to have little accountability or oversight.

Bonnie Bogert
Self-Project Manager
Conroe, TX

I am vehemently opposed to any vouchers, education savings accounts or any state funding of non public education institutions. Vote no on SB 8!!

Donna Coppedge
Self
Pflugerville, TX

While they won't let you testify on Monday, you can submit electronic testimony on Senate

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers. The Texas constitution requires fully funding public schools.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Dana Dworaczyk
Self/Educator
Port Lavaca, TX

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NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Lucinda Thelen
Self retired educator
College Station, TX

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NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Chelcie Tomme
Self - LSSP
Tomball, TX

I vehemently OPPOSE SB 8. I urge you to vote NO to any bill including educational saving accounts or vouchers.

We should invest public dollars in quality public schools and innovative programs that benefit ALL students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers or our children.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom in the nation. Diverting public money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This puts our already disadvantaged students further behind, widening the already evident disparities. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to uphold the same standards as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses.

Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, our families, and most importantly, our children. We must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Adrienne Gall
self
Highland Village, TX

Due to invited testimony only, the public does not have an opportunity to speak about this newly drafted verbiage that is not transparent for your constituents. This bill should not be passed as it continues to fund private sectors without transparency and accountability, it gives the impression that STAAR will be decreased when in fact it will become a larger quantity of testing and the commissioner will receive too much control for a non-elected, non-educator. You will not be representing the people or the students of Texas if you pass this bill.

Judith Wyble, Ms.
Self retired teacher
Spring, TX

Vouchers aren't regulated and take money away from public education. Instead of throwing money at a problem that doesn't exist, how about we FULLY fund public education. Also private schools don't accept every child and there isn't any standardized testing. How do we know WHAT they will use the money for? Nooo to vouchers!! NOT NOW NOT EVER! Look at Michigan and how badly vouchers hurt their student population!! NO VOUCHERS!!

Jordan Alexander

Self

Amarillo, TX

I just want my representative to know that I am paying attention to how he votes. I have always voted as a conservative, and I am paying attention to the education bills. SB8 should not pass. It is not what is best for all students. I'm also very disappointed in HB900 and SB13. The first amendment is just as important as the second. I am not sure when this was forgotten. I hope you are actually talking/listening to educators before you vote. If I see these pass, I will make sure I vote differently in the future. Thank you!

Sharyn Reynolds, Rev (retired)

Self

Austin, TX

I oppose any program or legislation that provides public support for private education. Having lived in rural communities and being raised in small towns I understand that public schools are the center of the cultural and community life All across our state. Any voucher program that takes public money away from public education Diverting it to private schools,not only favors one religious community over another but sucks from the public education program what is needed for not only the children but the community life that they and their families share. At one point we did choose to send one of our children to private school because of some specific needs that he had but we made that decision knowing that was a cost at our family would sacrifice to make and not something the rest of the community should be expected to support.

Sarah Rivlin, Ms.

Self - teacher

Houston, TX

I oppose this bill because it would use my tax dollars to pay for private school. This is an inefficient and unjust use of public funds.

I am a teacher, and I see how deeply underfunded our public schools are. We are underfunded and understaffed all across the state. These complaints are coming from urban, suburban, and rural districts alike.

TEA Deputy Commissioner Lechelop admitted that vouchers would force public schools to lose teachers. We already don't have enough adults in the building, and we certainly can't afford to lose more.

Karen Porter, Ms

Self

Azle, TX, TX

Education is crucial for all and all should have equal access to that education. Vouchers are only good for a certain type of student. Public education educates everyone. If you want something different for your child, then you have a choice to make that happen. Draining tax dollars needed for public education creates a bigger divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots." I do not support any efforts to take away from all the children of Texas to benefit an elite few.

Jennifer Cross, Dr.
self
Frisco, TX

As a Texas taxpayer and parent of current public and private school children, I staunchly oppose SB8. After remaining in the bottom 10 states of per-pupil funding for decades, Texas public school children desperately need adequate funding of their PUBLIC SCHOOLS. These schools serve all children and have objective taxpayer accountability. No to trying to hastily ram this 80-page substitute bill through at night. No to having invited-only testimony at Monday's hearing. If our tax dollars will be required to fund this bill, then we taxpayers deserve a full hearing open to the public to speak about the bill.

Craig Wilson
Self
Malakoff, TX

Destroy Texas school kids. Destroy Friday night football at your own peril. I will never vote republican again if this passes. I have always voted republican but couldn't do it if you destroy Texas.

Debra Wilson
Self
Malakoff, TX

Please vote No to vouchers

Jonas Greene
Self
Burleson, TX

All public school children in Texas will not benefit from the language in this bill. Add language in this bill to raise the basic school allotment to the same dollar amount as the proposed education savings account.

Suzanne Danhof
Self
Denton, TX

I am AGAINST SB 8 and all voucher bills.

Betty Jeanne Taylor, Dr.
self
austin, TX

this is, at best, unethical. you're forcing a vote without thoughtful consideration — on a bill that members haven't even read and for which you have blocked testimony. this bill will reduce funding for already under-funded public schools, and cost the state more.

Neva Hammonds
Self / A Conroe isd staff member
Conroe, TX

I am against vouchers.

Dominique Harvey
self
Houston, TX

VOTE NO TO SB 8!! This bill will destroy Public Education, and vouchers do not make sense. What decent school costs \$8,000 a year? Place the money back into public education and raise the basic allotment!

Georgia Strickland
Texas PTA
Katy, TX

Please vote NO for this bill! We don't want vouchers!

Michael Nicholson
Self/Retired
Richmond, TX

Texas already has one unaccountable, taxpayer funded system: For Profit Charters. SB 8 is even more atrocious. Private schools do NOT have to accept any student, nor are they required to test their students with state instruments.

What you will create is a plethora of fly-by-night schools with flashy advertising and zero substance. Think Trump University for the K-12 set. And all the while weakening an already underfunded public education system.

Karen Goodman
Self / parent / PTA member / social worker
Austin, TX

Please vote NO on any & all bills involving vouchers or education savings accounts which do drain funding for public education and desperately underfunded public schools. Private schools do not have the same accountability, oversight or requirements to serve all students.

Kimberly Smith
self
North Zulch, TX

Dear Representatives, I have watched in horror over the last 20 years the lack of funding public education has received. Funding has a positive impact on students while defunding has the opposite effect - districts, already surviving on less money will be forced to cut academic programs such as dual language programs, STEM and vocational programs. By cutting these programs, lower-income students will be negatively impacted and more significantly, and rural counties will be hit the hardest.

I am opposed to SB8, and more specifically to vouchers, ESAs or tax credits. These terms are contradictory to conservative values in that there is no accountability for the recipient/s. What is to prevent a family receiving that funding and then deciding afterwards they want that child, or children, back in the public education system? The school lost that funding initially, and now they don't have the proper funding. We saw that parents did not homeschool their children properly during the pandemic, therefore, my question concerns the accountability of those homeschooling parents - how will they be held accountable for the use of public funds?

Public schools accept ALL students. Public schools cannot deny based on race, religion, gender, wealth or intellectual ability, however, private schools can deny any student they deem unfit for their school. Alarming, private schools are not required to provide services to students with disabilities.

Vouchers, or any disguised form - ESAs, tax credits, decrease public school funding even more than it is already. In fact, a TEA official stated as much in a leaked audio: <https://www.kxan.com/investigations/leaked-recording-high-ranking-tea-official-admits-vouchers-pose-public-school-funding-pitfalls/>

For the lower income parents, vouchers (ESAs, tax credits) will not cover the cost of transporting their student to and from the private school nor will it cover addition tuition costs. Vouchers, in my opinion, are just a way to subsidize the wealthy that already send their children to private schools.

There is evidence that points to the fact that vouchers don't impact students as positively as supporters of vouchers state: <https://news.stanford.edu/2017/02/28/vouchers-not-improve-student-achievement-stanford-researcher-finds/#SnippetTab>
<https://cepa.stanford.edu/content/school-vouchers-are-not-proven-strategy-improving-student-achievement>

Fully funding our public schools to an amount seen in the previous decades will benefit us all, however, the issuance of vouchers, ESAs or tax credits will hurt us as a state. As I have stated in earlier correspondence, I have the CHOICE to go to a public park or the County Club where I pay dues. Would it be fair for the state to use public funds to subsidize my choice of going to my Country Club?

Again, please vote against vouchers, ESAs or tax credits.

Respectfully,
Kim Smith

Mary Mann, Mrs.

Self retired educator / Grandchildren public school students

Mart, TX

To House Public Education Committee Members: I am Mary G. Mann, resident and homeowner of Hallsburg ISD, 76705, McLennan County, TX , business property owner of Mart ISD, McLennan County, TX 76664. As a parent, grandparent, and retired educator, I urge you to vote NO on SB 8. My tax payer dollars should never be used as part of ESAs or any other use in private or charter schools in TEXAS. Respectfully, our Texas public schools and certified professional educators, active or retired, deserve better from our Texas Legislature. Our schools are underfunded. Our teachers are underpaid. They are professionals who deserve to be recognized as such with salary commensurate to their degrees. This SB 8 bill does not measure up to that goal. Our schools should be provided the funds to successfully educate every Texas child. SB 8 does not do this. Our children should be evaluated with measurements that are pedagogically sound and taught by teachers with the freedom to make learning fun, as well as effective in producing a workforce to benefit our state. The STAAR test does not in any way meet those parameters. Please vote NO on SB 8. My four grandchildren, ages 6-13 in public schools, appreciate your NO vote on SB 8 and support of our Texas public schools, small and large. Thank you, Mary G. Mann, 518 Red Gate Road, Mart, Tx 76664

Georgan Reitmeier, Mrs

Klein ISD

Spring, TX

ESAs or any form of vouchers is an unfair and unaccountable system to address the needs of Texas students. Public funds need to be given to all enitites under the same guidelines, such as A-F grading schools and state assessments. All must accept EVERY student!

Mimi Lawrence

self, physicist

Austin, TX

In case you all missed the email I sent to you all earlier today: VOTE NO ON SB8! VOUCHERS HURT TEXAS CHILDREN! Your Public Education Committee has called a meeting for Monday, May 15 on SB 8. But you will hear invited testimony only. What are you afraid of? Teachers, school staff, and parents are STILL being left out of this process. Why? The money interests pushing vouchers know that's the only way to sneak this deeply unpopular bill through.

Do the right thing. Do your duty to the Texas Constitution and protect our public schools. Vote No on SB8.

Mimi Lawrence

Kathy Bolner, Ms

Swlf

McKinney, TX

The Texas constitution mandates free public education to Texans. This bill will defund public education, and send ourTexas taxpayers money into private schools. These schools will not have the accountability requirements of our public schools and will not be required to accept our kids with disabilities. Texans will have no say on how money is used or spent. Additionally, most Texans will then be subjected to an under-funded, academically challenged education. Our athletes, many of whom use their talents to provide for their higher education needs, will be forsaken as money used for athletics will have to be funneled into education programs, just to keep them at a sub-par level. This is wrong on all fronts and is beneath what Texas stands for. We have always championed the hard-working people of this state and to rob us of the opportunity to have a quality education goes against every thing we stand for as Texans. Stop this money grab and celebrate ALL Texas children for the champions that they are.

Ritchie Bowling, Mr.

Self

Maypearl, TX

The proposed multi-billion dollar taxpayer entitlement voucher/ESA will further take available funding from Special Education and Community public schools across the State. It is my understanding the State of Texas underfunds Special Education by 1.5 to 2 billion Statewide. Public Education needs that fixed before spending on an entitlement program that will send funds to private institutions that will pick and choose which students they serve.

I have a special needs son, and I know a voucher for Special Education students will be worthless to the students needing specialized services and instruction.

Please do not approve to send this bill or it's replacement to the House floor for a vote. There are 5.5 million students in public education and only 100,000 private school seats. Most of those are already filled with affluent students and many of these schools have already turned paying students that have applied away.

This is wrong for Texas at this time!

Thank you,

Ritchie Bowling

Ruth Torres
Parent
Dallas, TX

A basic principle of government & basic RESPECT for parents is to LISTEN to us on matters that concern our children. So please save the rhetoric in valuing parents and giving parental choice when you don't even give us the option to speak and be heard on last minute changes to a bill that will impact our kids education for decades.

If I give you 3 plates of food that look good, I've given you choice. If I don't tel you 2 of them have ingredients that will make you sick, Ive given you uninformed choice.

#Vouchers are a TRILLION \$ public land grab so taxpayers pay for private lands & billions annually in no bid contracts while robbing kids of quality public Ed with uncertified teachers, increasing crime & incarceration in 4 profit prisons, while politicians profit.

State statutes requiring competitive bids don't apply to private entities so charters & voucher recipients will be giving away billions annually for no bid contracts.

Please see BackpackFullofCash.com showing how vouchers and charters have already impacted other cities.

No matter how much rhetoric and manipulated spin there is for vouchers and charters, they don't give parents choice, they take choice away from us and give all the power and benefits of taxpayer dollars to private entities absent oversight.

As parents are temporarily manipulated with advertising to charters & vouchers existing schools will decline, close and be sold off to become anything in our neighborhoods. Taxpayers are and will be paying for land owned by private entities. Property taxes will go up even more as costs for all these new buildings will be transferred to taxpayers directly or through bonds.

By the time the public lands taxpayers have been paying for decades are sold and the damage has been realized, the cost will be too great to recreate our current infrastructure and the politicians that profited will be long retired enjoying their wealth at the expense of our kids.

Isaiah 10:1-4.
Woe to those who write unjust laws to oppress the people.

Truth In Service,
Ruth Torres
Mobile: 214-680-9119

"The true measure of a man (and woman) is not found during times of comfort and convenience but moments of controversy and challenge".
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

monica morris
Self
Montgomery, TX

I am against school vouchers.

Wade Wilson
Self
Bowie, TX

No vouchers for private schools paid for in taxes. If parents want school choice they can choose to pay for private school themselves

Patricia Curry
self
Mart, TX

SB 8 school vouchers....Please do not pass a bill such as this because it will hurt small rural schools like Mart Independent School District as well as faculty and retirees of the district. I spent 26 years teaching in the afore mentioned district and I always had and continue to have the best interest of our students and educators in my heart and mind. Thanks.

Whitney Jones
Self
Canadian, TX

Vouchers will kill public education. Which is exactly what Gov. Abbott wants to do. Instead of investing in struggling schools by FULLY FUNDING public education and paying teachers like the educated professionals they are, they're willing to strip rural districts of funding to support an idea that we have already seen fail in other states.

Pay teachers. Good, hard-working, student-centered teachers are leaving education in literal droves because they aren't supported by the state of Texas, the parents of Texas, and the politicians in Texas who claim to stand for what's right. Teachers cannot continue to work just because it's their passion. They have to make a living wage, too.

Megan Vosters
Self, Kindergarten Teacher
Lumberton, TX

Education Savings Accounts are bad for Texas. We need to fully fund public education, not send tax dollars to private schools that don't have a responsibility to educate every student that walks through their doors. I do not support this bill or any bill that contains any type of voucher system.

Jennifer Bradford, Mrs.
Myself, SAHM of 3
Richardson, TX

I oppose the school voucher system in any form, this bill or any other. The system sets up public schools at a disadvantage by underfunding and creates classist system of advantage for private schools that only the wealthy can afford.

Sharon Evans
Self. teacher
Early, TX

I urge you to vote no to any education savings account or voucher. Put the focus on strengthening our public schools

Private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools.

Vouchers will be of little value to many families as they would not meet the required tuition of many private schools

It is crucial that the needs of public schools be prioritized with public tax dollars funding our public education system

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Kala Schlaegel
All public school teachers in Texas
Mansfield, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Lisa Glenn
Self, Physician
Austin, TX

I'm registering against the bill. Having a hearing for a bill without public comment is suspect. Having a hearing on a bill that can't be found online without public comment borders on criminal. Please enable school districts to teach children, fund the programs, fix the weird funding mechanisms and clawbacks, stop throwing money at private schools that are unaccountable for the students.

Alicia Jeffrey
Self- teacher
San Antonio, TX

Vouchers or education savings accounts or whatever we're calling them today are harmful to our public schools, our students, and our future. Charter and private schools that would like to use public money should have the same standards as public schools include state mandated testing, special education accessibility, and certified teachers. If there's money to pay for vouchers, there's money to raise the daily allotment per student. Educators are already going above and beyond with minimal financial support. Please don't make us do even more with even less.

Kathleen Pennuell
Self
New Caney, TX

I would like to remind all those whom we vote into office, we vote for you to uphold and defend our state's constitution not to change it.

THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE 7. EDUCATION

Sec. 1. SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE OF SYSTEM OF PUBLIC FREE SCHOOLS. A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools. (Feb. 15, 1876.)

Nowhere does it say to take tax money and use it for private schools.

Amy Branton

Public citizen, taxpayer, parent and School District Payroll Supervisor

Temple, TX

I feel like we, the public, have made our feelings clear regarding ESA's. We don't support them. This makes me think that this committee is bowing to pressure from a couple of bullies in high state offices. Who do you really answer to? Shadow PAC's and people with bully pulpits, or your constituents and the every day citizen? I don't support sending tax dollars to private schools, and I don't think Jesus would support the defunding of public schools. Jesus loved everyone, not just the people in the tabernacles, etc. I ask you to think about the students whose parents could care less and don't get involved in their kid's education. Educator's see these cases daily. They feed these kids snacks, offer school supplies, and shoes, clothes and other necessities when needed out of their own pockets. Do these students deserve to have their schools have less resources and fewer well trained, certified teachers on staff? Because these students will still be in public schools after the eligible kids have moved out. These students will be even more disadvantaged in the future than they already are because YOU didn't vote with your heart. Fully fund public education, and not at the measly amounts you currently have. Get involved in improving our schools and supporting our teachers! Vouchers don't work. Are you aware that this substitute actually increases testing rather than cut it back? Also, your decision to not allow public testimony on this bill substitute is shady and not the way we are supposed to do things in Texas. This decision speaks volumes. Please understand that we, the public, are taking notes. We will remember these decisions and votes at the next primary or general election. We need leaders in Austin who understand what true leaders are supposed to look like. Signed, disgusted and disappointed in Central Texas!

Leslie Sanders

Self, PARENT

Arlington, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the BOTTOM 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Timothy Orcutt
Self/Teacher
Spring, TX

I could not be more against school vouchers. As a public educator and a former Lutheran school student, my parents made the decision to send me to a private school for my K-8 education for one reason. They did not want state government interference or want it tied to state money. If this bill passes, it would be devastating to the public education sector. As a public school teacher, I feel as a profession that we are criticized for trying to do our jobs to the best of our ability. With inflation being a real factor, Texas has not raised the amount of spending per student to counter inflation. One question that I have is how will private schools be held accountable if the state gives parents educational savings accounts? Money for public education is tied to many different factors that are taken into account each fiscal year. What will the guidelines be for those who choose private schools? How will this affect the teacher workforce in public schools? It seems to me that Texas, and the state senator I voted for, could care less about the outcome of public education. By privatizing it, and giving money to parents of private school students, you are creating another accountability system which will almost be impossible to manage. It's not fair or equal for all. If this vote passes, you will see many public school teachers, myself included, leave the profession, and our votes for you to remain in office will no longer be there when you come up for re-election. If you want to do something right, give all public school employees the same raise to counter inflation, a more fair and balanced accountability system to show multiple levels of growth over time (not just based on the STAAR test which is taken over two days once every year), and show support for the future adult citizens of our state and our country. We need your help now more than ever. Do the right thing. Help us. Work with us. Talk with us. Ask us as educators what we need and let us who are in the classroom tell you. Please, make the right choice. Say no to vouchers and education savings account programs.

James Windham, Mr.
Self - Retired banker
Houston, TX

SB 8 is important legislation to create an education savings account program to begin to provide parents with the empowerment to seek out the best options for their children's education and have the funding follow the child. This bill is particularly important because it emphasizes children with special needs and those currently attending poorly performing schools. And it is timely because it is an opportunity to address the serious decline in educational outcomes caused by the recent pandemic. I strongly recommend adoption of this legislation.

My involvement in public education policy includes serving a term on the State Board for Educator Certification, serving as a member of the Board of Regents of Stephen F. Austin State University, serving as a member of the Texas High School Completion and Success Initiatives Council, and founding and serving as Chairman of the Texas Institute for Education Reform.

Jan Yeeters
Self. Retired
Greenville, TX

I keep hearing the statement that this is for educational freedom. How can it be educational freedom if it's not accessible to everyone. The people that will suffer are the ones that can't afford to pay the rest of the tuition or able to provide transportation. Private schools do not accept special education students. How is this educational freedom? Vouchers will deplete public school funding. Texas is one of the states that spends less per student in the United States. There is no way that we can withstand money being taken away to go to private schools. No matter what governor Abbott says, it can't be done. Teacher's already spent enough of their own limited personal money to subsidize what little money they do receive to stock their classrooms. My father always taught me to follow the money. Who does this benefit? The people that can already afford private school. Does this help them save money? Give more funding to public education, not less! All the children of Texas deserve top rank education. Taking away money will not further that along. Just say NO to vouchers!!!!

Renee Marshall
Self
Bartlett, TX

As a Texas tax payer I oppose senate bill 8. I do not support any voucher scheme. My taxpayer money should not go to any entity that is not overseen by a publicly elected board that represents my community. Public schools are supported with public school taxes and not one cent of that money should be allotted to a private school. Parents have school choice. They may choose to homeschool their children or send them to a private school but my tax money should not pay for a penny of it.

Moira Lail
self
Houston, TX

I strongly oppose vouchers. PUBLIC tax dollars should fund PUBLIC schools, not private schools. Vouchers drain resources from public schools; other states have shown that voucher costs often grow well above projections. Vouchers cut into already inadequate public school budgets.

Karla Bevel, Teacher
Selg
Greenville, TX

I am totally against “school choice” aka vouchers. They will be the demise of public education if passed. In states that have passed the voucher system, the majority of students taking advantage of them were already enrolled in private school. They will not help the majority of our school children in Texas and I’m asking you to vote no on SB 8.

Katherine Velasquez, Dr.
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please do not support or approve the establishment of an education savings account program nor any voucher program. Use this money to improve the current school system.

Nancy Collins
Self; retired teacher
Austin, TX

As a former teacher in both public and private schools, I feel strongly that public education is the bedrock of our democracy. While private schools are important, as well, it is the public school system the provides the foundation of our communities in cities both large and small. I am strongly opposed to the establishment of an education savings account program.

Rachel McManis
Self, educator
McKinney, TX

Texans DO NOT want vouchers in ANY form! Parents and educators Stop trying to override the will of the people for the profit of a few.

Caitlin Dodd
Self
Grapevine, TX

Vouchers or educational savings accounts or tax credit take money from public schools and give it to private schools. Private schools are not accountable to the public even if they are receiving public funds.

Brian Danhof
Self
Denton, TX

I am AGAINST SB 8 and ALL voucher bills

Elinor Seeley
Self/Teacher/parent of both private and public school children
Dallas, TX

I most emphatically am
Opposed to any tax payer funds going to private schools: 1) we already have wonderful public schools in Texas 3) why take money away from public schools due to “parent choice” when parents can choose public or private now 4) if they choose private that is their choice . If they can’t pay for it, they find a less expensive one/apply for a scholarship or all the private school voucher big money backers can set up fundraising for scholarships 5) tax payer money should not be used for k-12 private schools which would include religious schools. Hard no. 6) a voucher system will create a network of for profit private schools that would end up being cash cows for the owners similar to section 8, where the owners have no very little incentive to cut corners 7) it is not right to compare public schools which are required by law to take every child to private schools that are selective 8) the west Texas billionaires backing this are trying to destroy public education 9) if this goes through it will hurt public schools 10) the backers are hoodwinking gullible parents into thinking they will be able to go to real private schools, but this will not be the case as we all know 11) voucher systems have not been proven to be any more effective than public school 12) if anyone has hurt public schools in Texas it is the Republicans who have been running Tx public schools for the past 30 years causing teaching to the test and not keeping our schools safe by refusing to enact common sense gun regulations that the majority of Texans want 13) public schools needs to be fully funded before you all ram this down everyone’s throats. VOTE NO! If this passes, I predict many of the GOP will be voted out. This is going to be too much with what you all have done with banning abortion and criminalizing doctors causing women to suffer severe health consequences. Not to mention the shootings every day. Read the room. The majority of Texans do not want what you GOP reps are serving up in your cauldron of Christian Nationalism.

Linda Morris
Retired Texas teacher
Plano, TX

Please vote no on SB 8. I am opposed to vouchers.
Linda Morris

Missy Douglas
Self
Merit, TX

No educator in their right mind would ever support this bill. You are trying to dissolve the basic right of a free public education. I don’t care what you call “vouchers”, they will ruin public ed. I will vote against ever member of Congress in my district that supports this bill. Justin Holland I am so sorry I ever supported you. Don’t worry, I won’t make that mistake again.

Kathryn Beauchene
Self
Conroe, TX

I am against school voucher system mainly because private schools are not required to operate under the same legal requirements as public schools. One big discrepancy is in enrollment. Private schools are very selective in the requirements that must be met that a child must meet to attend, and additionally can choose to “kick out” a child at any point for any reason. Whereas public schools serve ALL children. Public schools are not allowed to turn anyone away, must not turn away for any disabilities or learning challenges. Public schools must include and educate any child displaying any behavior (good or challenging) and support learning any language (English or otherwise), while abiding by all the other rules from TEA with the pressure of passing high stakes exams in grades 3-12. The voucher system would be taking even MORE resources away from the members of the population that need it the most; as I have never heard of a private school accepting a high needs child into their programming and providing the resources needed for learning to be successful for said child. Another reason this voucher system is not ok is the funding. How is a public school child worth 6800 and a private school child worth 8000?! That is NOT EQUITABLE. A child is a child. Texas- you do so many things so well, but this time you are missing the mark. If we want ALL members of our community to be educated and thriving; it’s time to start investing MORE into our Texas public school system. The ONLY way I would ever consider supporting a proposed voucher system would be that ALL schools- public or private- have the SAME requirements under the law for everything, and the money per child in public or private is the same. This current voucher system, if passed as is, will cause more division and create further educational divides.

Cristine Peerson
Self Educator
The Colony, TX

This does not support public education and is not in the best interest in educating all children. Vote NO.

Donna Lynn
Holland I.
Temple, TX

I do not support vouchers at all. It will only hurt public education and help rich people. Poor people will still not be able to afford private schools. It is a horrible idea!!!

Lisa Davison, Dr.
Self-public School Educator
Lakewood Village, TX

Texas legislators should be focusing on funding public schools! Vouchers are not the way to promote education for students in Special Education or minority or at-risk students who will not accepted by private schools.

Tiffany Miles
Self
Salado, TX

I do not support school vouchers. This will not benefit our students in any way, shape, or form.

Dovie Carrell
Self
Nacogdoches, TX

Vote no to SB8. Vote no to ESA's, vouchers, or any other legislation that defunds public schools. Our children deserve a fully funded educational system that has to accept ALL students. 37% of Texas school children reside in rural districts and will have no access to private schools. They do not need anymore standardized testing like that hidden in this bill. That testimony is only going to be allowed by invited individuals is proof positive that the committee's intentions are not truly in the best interest of the children of this state.

Lisa Addison, Ms.
Self public school teacher
Cuero, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Kelley Michalski
Self-educator
Flower Mound, TX

I am opposed to SB8. As a 32 year special education teacher, any voucher program discriminates against special needs. Private schools will not take ALL special needs students. They say they do, but they don't. Some might take mild learning disabilities but in Public Education, we take ALL students. You see, we don't discriminate as we see EVERY student as important and valuable. If you vote for vouchers, you are stating that you don't see each student as valuable. Imagine if it was your own child that wasn't allowed the same privilege as another child. How would that make you feel?

Public funds need to stay in public education. Recapture has caused districts to have higher caseloads. This money we send back is going into the surplus the state currently has. As a taxpayer, I pay my taxes to go towards MY school district, not to have you guys put my taxes in your rainy day budget or towards vouchers for private schools while leaving out many students. I urge you to stand up for ALL students and make the right decision and vote no on SB8!!!

Laura Yeager

parent; self; public education advocate

Austin, TX

I have been advocating for TX to reduce testing to no more than federally required and eliminate the graduation requirement for a dozen years.

1. CSSB8 increases testing at all levels. Elementary and Middle school students will take 42 exams instead of the current 20.
 2. The sole discretion of what the tests look like, how long they will be, how they will be scored, will be given to the unelected Commissioner of Education. There is no oversight, no 3rd party review, nothing.
 3. Through year assessments were pushed through in HB3906 w/o public hearing and this would make them final. Parents don't want more testing - they want less testing, and meaningful learning.
 4. ESA recipients would take the same tests but the schools would not be rated or held accountable. The bill does not diversify the public ed accountability system so schools will still be incentivized to focus on testing. This is not a level playing field and will favor private schools that are not held accountable.
 5. I DO like the section of the bill that eliminates the graduation requirement for students. High stakes (graduation requirements) on students has never been required by federal law. It still isn't and only a handful of states require this. Make this a standalone bill.
 6. Please eliminate the graduation requirement, reduce to no more tests than federal law requires, adopt diagnostic non-punitive exams with oversight and pass that as a separate bill.
 7. Fund the public schools. Don't hand away money to unaccountable private schools when you can't even fund the public schools at the national average. (TX is 48th in the state for per-pupil spending)
 8. Texans don't want vouchers. They want adequately funded public schools.
-

Corrinne Skelton

Lewisville ISD

Highland village, TX

Please no vouchers. We need better public school funding.

Amanda Turco

Self- school counselor

The woodlands, TX

Vouchers in any form would be devastating to our public education system. We are already under funded and need more resources not less. I will vote against anyone that wants to push through vouchers on this single issue.

Mary Regenbrecht

Self

Hallettsville, TX

I am writing once again to ask you to oppose SB 8.

All Texas school children deserve the right to the best education our state can provide, as the state and federal Constitutions prescribe. Our teachers are working as hard as they can to make this happen and state leaders need to stop getting in their way. Vouchers for those who choose to leave the public school system would only add more barriers for the teachers as well as their students. I chose to homeschool all three of my children, and yes it was financially costly but the state had no business overseeing how I taught my children; if the government funds something, someone will eventually demand oversight of how that funding is used. School vouchers are in no way a tool of conservatism.

Please oppose Senate Bill 8.

Becky Schuerman Choi
self; intern/SAHM
Plano, TX

I oppose legislation that authorizes state funds to be used to pay for private school tuition and related costs. Studies have proven over and over again that vouchers cause academic decline. Why would you want to destroy PUBLIC education in Texas to "benefit" very few - mostly families who can already afford private school? From my perspective, this looks like a Christian nationalist idea to push indoctrination. Supporting SB 8 would truly mess with Texas.

Deborah Kiester
Self
Flower Mound, TX

Please vote no for vouchers per SB 8. This will seriously hurt public education in Texas, which has been in trouble for years. Quit listening to the the voices of the few, to the detriment of the majority of our children in Texas.

Geri Stopper
LEWISVILLE ISD
Flower Mound, TX

No vouchers! Support public schools

Cynthia Polk-Francis
Parent,
Mckinney, TX

Texans do NOT want public money going to fund private education. Even with vouchers, low-income people can't afford to send their kids to private schools. Vouchers only help wealthy people. Don't gut our public schools!

Joseph Kaner
self, actuary
Dallas, TX

Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in the discussion. It is very meaningful for me to pass along my comments.

I am against using any public money to support school vouchers or any similar 'savings account' for the following reasons:

- 1 - Vouchers and ESAs eliminate transparency and public accountability.
- 2 - Vouchers and ESAs channel tax dollars into private schools that do not face state-approved academic standards, do not make budgets public, do not adhere to open meetings and open records laws, do not public report on student achievement, and do not face the public accountability requirements contained in state and federal laws, including special-education laws.
- 3 - Private schools are not accountable to the public via an elected board.
- 4 - Private schools do not serve all corners as public schools must do, and can choose to reject any students for any reason
- 5 - Private school vouchers drain taxpayer money from already underfunded schools
- 6 - Vouchers and ESAs only act as a subsidy for the wealthy who are already sending their students to private schools
- 7 - We already have 'school choice' in our Texas public schools, through magnet schools, fine arts academies, college-preparatory and early-college high schools, Montessori education, dual language campuses, community schools – as well as a full range of programs and services to support the needs of our increasing diverse students

Thank you,
Joey Kaner

Jennifer Platt
Public Educator - Administrator
San antonio, TX

Vouchers do a disservice to students across the state, especially those in rural areas. Vouchers also disenfranchise our most needy students: those with special needs, at-risk, and educational disadvantaged. This is a case of inequality and creating an inequitable system. Polls and statistics clearly show that majority of Texans are not in favor of this. Please do your civic duty and choose what's best for students, not your political future.

Alayna Siemonsma
Myself
Conroe, TX

Vouchers are not the right thing for ALL students or families. I do not support school vouchers.

Julie Richard
Texas pta
Richardson, TX

I'm writing to ask you to vote no for any vouchers. I believe public education is vital to our future and vouchers undermine public education. Vote no for all vouchers.

Elizabeth Kumbalek
Self
Blanco, TX

I am adamantly opposed to vouchers, payments, or any other use of public tax dollars to fund private education under the guise of "parent choice." Parents already have a choice: if private or religiously based education is best for your child then by all means send them to private school, but not on my dime. Public money must only support excellent public schools that are accessible to all Texans. Moving public tax dollars to parents for private schooling will gut our already cash strapped public schools.

Stephanie Ryan
Lewisville ISD
The Colony, TX

We cannot continue to operate public schools on a shoestring budget - please support public education. Please oppose vouchers!!! Our students can already choose to go to a private school but we need to fund public not their choice to go private!!!

Mary Bouchard, Ms.
Self
Austin, TX

Public education. has been a right in Texas since 1845. SB8 will undermine that right by sending public money to private schools, thereby undermining funds and support for truly free public education. Texas already pays its teachers \$7,000 less per annum than others states. It is shameful.

Katie Corson, Teacher
LISD
Oak point, TX

None

Irene Kerestes
Self Insurance Analyst
Helotes, TX

TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEED TO BE FUNDED! My daughters elementary school JUST GOT A SCHOOL COUNSELOR, and there has a 5th GRADE CLASS WITH 36 STUDENTS. FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND RESPECT TEACHERS BY SUPPORTING THEM! Your mockery of them as they risk their very lives (remember Uvalde?) to teach children is disgusting. And BTW, most teach all the basics, yet many Republicans lie about them indoctrinating children with nonsense. They are dedicated to the betterment of children's lives.

Nicole Peters
Self
Spring, TX

As a mother, former teacher, and detonated voter, I am urging you to say NO to vouchers, education savings accounts, and anything alike.

Please Vote NO on SB8 including CSSB8. It is bad for kids. Bad for schools. Bad for public education.

Public schools are the foundation of every community. A community is the product of its public school system. The purpose of public schools are to give every child a safe place to learn and grow into a contributing member of society.

8.2 billion of the 33 billion surplus was collected from property tax and should be used on public schools. Our kids are worth it! Todays students are tomorrows workers and leaders. They are the states best investment. There is not a more important investment than the students of the great state of Texas!

1) The bill will be at least a billion dollars and go to groups for which no accountability is really required. That is not being good stewards of the tax dollars we pay!

2) Our public schools are not being fully funded, nor are they the woke indoctrination factories being claimed by the interests behind this legislation. The reality though, is by gutting public schools in this state, you will lead to less companies wanting to come here which will destroy the business climate in this state long term.

I want my dollars paid to property tax to go where it's supposed to- PUBLIC EDUCATION! Private schools do not have the same accountability.

Simply, public dollars should stay in public schools and not given to private entities.

Again, please oppose all voucher systems of any kind!

Thank you for your time!

Laurie Clark
BAD
San Antonio, TX

No on SBB

Barbara Frandsen
RYHT
Austin, TX

Private schools have the power to reject or accept. Public education takes and cares for all students.

Robbie Ausley
self
Austin, TX

Texas has an abysmal reputation and history for the funding of public school education. School vouchers would only make those circumstances worse. NO VOUCHERS!

Barbara Frandsen
ATPE
Austin, TX

An educational savings account is just another voucher program. Vouchers mean tax payers help parents pay for private and parochial schools. If a parent wants to send a child to a private school, that is fine. Pay for it or be thankful for public education. Stop taking money from the public system, which serves ALL children of all races as well as those with disabilities.

Laura Russell
Self and my kids
Denton, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public schools and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Jennifer Holt
Self
Sulphur Springs, TX

I do not want tax money going to private for profit school with no accountability. Especially schools that are to pick and choose which students they accept and discriminate against students with difficulties. I do not want the additional testing. This bill increases the amount of testing. Texas ranks one of the lowest in the nation on per pupil spending. Fully fund public schools.

Maria Zuniga
Teachers
San Benito, TX

If you can't even fully fund public schools, why should we believe you can keep taking funding from public schools by setting aside more money for private schools. Stop n VOTE NO!!! TO VOUCHERS AND MORE TESTING And failing to set equal requirements for both public n private schools.

Ashley McMahan
Self / Teacher
Stephenville, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8.

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It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Cliff Lightfoot, Dr.
Lexington Independent School District
Lexington, TX

As superintendent, I strongly oppose this bill. It allows for vouchers/ESAs without accountability provisions for non-public schools who would receive state funding. The bill does not improve the testing system as I believe is its intent. Instead, the bill actually increases the number of standardized tests for students. It will test students in 11th grade on material learned in prior years and requires Texas colleges to use these 11th grade exams for placement into freshman courses. The bill will greatly impact district and campus accountability ratings for the implied purpose of making public schools look worse to garner greater support for the voucher (parents' rights) portion of the bill. The legislature should instead take some ownership in our public schools and everything they do right in spite of senseless hurdles placed in their path. I ask respectfully for this bill to be tabled or defeated, and for our esteemed elected officials to work with educators on how to make Texas public schools the gold-standard example for the rest of the country. Tearing down public schools in favor of private schools is most definitely NOT the answer.

Gilbert Trevino, Dr.

Self - School District Superintendent

Floydada, TX

I strongly oppose any type of voucher or education savings account program. Public funds should not be used to fund private institutions. State leaders should support public schools and ensure they are properly funded. In addition, the testing provisions within this bill seek to further complicate how schools are rated. I am not opposed to accountability; however, the current accountability system seeks to make it difficult for schools to succeed, especially with the Commissioner constantly moving the target.

Laura Butler

Self

North Richland Hills, TX

I say no to this bill. Texas does not need vouchers. Texas must continue to strengthen our States public education. Vouchers to not give all children and parents school choice. Students with disabilities would not be accommodated at private schools. Many poor working families depend on local schools. Taking money from public education and giving to private entities will water down public education for all students.

Vote NO

Janette Keen

Self

Grapevine, TX

I do not support vouchers in any form

Jamie Bickham

myself teacher

CARTHAGE, TX

Why are taxpayers money considered to go to vouchers NO!!! Public school is a great education for all kids. You are slapping teachers in the face allowing this to happen. We as educators work hard in teaching our kids.

Michelle Bush
self, teacher
Temple, TX

As a proud citizen of the state of Texas, I am writing you to inform you that I am firmly against the passage of SB 8 and wish to encourage you to vote against it. I do not want money to be given to an institution that does not have to account for how it is used and if they kick a student out, does not have to return it. I do not believe that private and charter schools are a better alternative for students as they can alter their curriculum at will with no accountability or transparency. How can we know if students are benefiting from their education when they do not have to be held accountable in the same ways as public schools? Also, I do not believe that the state should provide funding for institutions that do not have to meet the state's standards in terms of teacher certification. The state should not be financially supporting a campus where there is no way to ensure that the teachers are qualified to teach the content. Also, it is a contradiction that this bill is being advertised with the terms "school choice." Private schools do not have the obligation to accept every student that applies or "chooses" their school, therefore negating the choice component for the students and their parents. Private and charter schools can kick out students at any time and for any reason, causing the students to return to a public school that has now had to reduce its force because of a smaller enrollment, causing there to not be enough teachers and classrooms to be overcrowded. The data has shown time and time again that a smaller teacher to student ratio benefits students, and the consequences of this bill will cause public schools to be at a disadvantage. Texas ranks as one of the lowest nationally when it comes to school funding, but suddenly we have thousands of dollars to give to private and charter schools? Why isn't this money that is suddenly available being used to improve our public schools? If the state can afford to spend that much money per student to go to a private school, why can't the state give that money per student to the public schools? We should be strengthening the institution that we already have in place to help to ensure that EVERY child in the state of Texas is provided the best education, with the qualified educators. Once again, I encourage you to vote against the passage of SB 8 and continue to find ways to strengthen our education system for the future of Texas.

Marcy Huffman
Winters Elementary
Winters, TX

The future of our state is in our public schools. This bill will simply take money away from the public schools and put it into private schools, which will create more of a societal divide than we already see. It will result in less resources for the majority of Texas' students. EVERY child deserves a solid education and pulling funding from the public schools will create a system that is far from equitable. The ESAs will not be enough to cover all expenses for a private education, thus pulling money away from students from an impoverished background, creating more hurdles that must be overcome for those students to succeed, eventually creating more of a divide between the haves and have-nots in our state. Our future will be determined by the quality of education we provide the masses. In a state where public education is already grossly underfunded, the last thing our students need is less funding. Support ALL students by saying NO to HB8. You owe it to the children of our state and for the well-being of our state's future.

Christina Anderson
WOCCISD
Orange, TX

Educating economically disadvantaged students takes dollars and commitment. A voucher does not guarantee that the student will be served better in another district. If education truly matters, we must ensure that it is appropriately available to all students. We can't take funds away from those that need it most in order to give a choice to those that already can afford a choice.

Lorena Herrera
Self
San Antonio, TX

As a former elementary vice principal in Texas public schools, I must share how unethical SB8 is and violates current Supreme Court decision. It is unreasonable, unethical, and illegal to put tax payer money toward private education. As lawyers and politicians I am sure you are very familiar with LEMON vs KURZMAN 1971 which requires a separation of church and state. Clearly SB8 is not even legal in these regards. If you want school choice, invest money into public schools that are already developing phenomenal magnet programs, such as the magnet middle schools in Northside ISD (San Antonio).

Furthermore, kids do NOT need more state testing. I demand you go to an elementary school during state testing and see the children literally crying out of nervousness because of the pressure the state legislation has created on children around state testing. Children physically get sick the day before and day of testing because they are nervous or scared about how they will do on these tests. State mandated testing is unreasonable and we do NOT need more, as SB8 is adding. SB8 is unethical and should be voted against if you truly believe in Texas educators and children.

Troy Parton
Self, School Superintendent
Munday, TX

As a taxpayer, parent, and school administrator I am amazed that our Texas Legislators continue to bow down to National Politics rather than focus on what is best for Texas. We used to be the leader for the rest of the states. SB 8 is a copycat bill (not written by a Texan) being filed in states across these United States . The Texas Constitution forbids state funds being used for this purpose. Every one of these bills for Vouchers is proposed violation of our State Constitution. Article 7, Section 5(c) states: (c) The available school fund shall be applied annually to the support of the public free schools. Except as provided by this section, the legislature may not enact a law appropriating any part of the permanent school fund or available school fund to any other purpose.

CSSB 8 doesn't prioritize parental choice over the right of the private school to pick and choose their students.
CSSB 8 won't help with teacher retention, doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address the individual needs of students.
CSSB 8 doesn't abolish the STAAR, it just replaces it with STAAR 2.0 with even more Commissioner authority.
CSSB 8 does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs.
CSSB 8 does not include a hold harmless for public schools that lose kids to a voucher.

Furthermore, SB8 does nothing to address any of the identified needs from our own governor's task force on the teacher shortage. There is a teacher shortage, despite testimony contrary to the fact.

Please do not allow this bill out of committee.

Justin Hanke, Mr.
Rogers ISD
Rockdale, TX

I do not support this bill. Until you confidently explain how private/charter schools will be held to the same accountability public schools are held to, my stance will stay the same. Dr. Buckley, the Chair of the Committee, stated on Thursday, "The reason for the invited testimony only is because we have already heard from the people who do not support any type of ESA/Vouchers." Does that not speak volumes to the number of people who have already discussed this? Do your job, house committee. Listen to your constituents.

JESSICA WATTS

Self/Literacy Coach

Temple, Texas 76502, TX

I am against school vouchers. I have been an educator in Texas my whole career, 23 years. I understand how difficult it is to educate students and get them on grade level. However, it is not the school that is failing it is our state. We are not providing enough funding or pay to recruit and retain the very best educators. We do not provide enough dollars/student for the resources our classrooms so desperately need. We base funding on attendance when at the elementary level, how can a 5-10 year old student be responsible for getting themselves to school. It is an absolutely ridiculous measure. Funding is already being sent to charter schools and more funding taken away from public schools will only increase the barriers and resources that are lacking to educate our children. In other states with vouchers, the majority of voucher money used were for students who were already going to private school - subsidizing these student's private education. Many of these alternative schools don't have to serve all children. Children with special needs don't have any choice and must return to public school to receive the resources they need to be successful. Where will these students get those resources if we take them away to fund other students' private educations? Also, many of these other schools in school choice, even with the voucher, will still be too expensive for parents to afford. School choice is another way to systematically segregate children. It is touted that this a way for parents to choose a school for their children, but that is simply not true. This is a way for the well off and rich to subsidize their student's private education and to separate those students who have from those students who don't. We are creating dangerous divides in our society where children will grow up within society lines lacking empathy, compassion, and understanding for each other.

Mandy Nettleton

self

Temple, TX

I do not feel that the School Voucher bill will be beneficial to Texas Schools. This system is going to further the gap that exist between the wealthy and underprivileged. From what I understand, it will allow parents to use state funds to pay for private education. Many underprivileged students do not have the opportunity to choose where they go to school. They lack transportation and other resources people must have in order to go to a private school. If this becomes law it will take money from public schools that we desperately need. Many teachers are already using their own money to offset the cost of creating dynamic lessons and getting students what they need. I am completely against the voucher system, If parents want their children to go to a different school that is their right. I do not believe that we should use federal or state money for them to do this.

Heather Garrison, Teacher

LISD

Lexington, TX

Absolutely NO! Parents already have the rights you are trying to "say" they will gain by passing this bill.

Shelby Swancoat

Self

Houston, TX

This bill is harmful to public education. Do not support this bill

Jennifer Stewart

North East ISD

San Antonio, TX

This bill takes away funding from already underfunded public schools, its students, and hard working staff. It continues to put students that need the most support at a deficit. Our children and our future deserve better.

LARRY HAYNES

self school administrator

ORANGE, TX

It is unfathomable that you lawmakers, the ones we voted for and trusted to put our needs ahead of personal and political interests, failed to act on HB 2744. Somehow, however, you managed to make sure that CSSB8 (school vouchers) made the cut and will be discussed on Monday, May 15. It is incredibly clear that school privatization is more important to you than school safety! Your actions speak much louder than your words. So, rather than stand firm, unite, and face this national crisis head-on, you chose to cower in the corner of pathetic indifference! Shame on all of you! By your indifference and uncanny ability to sit on your hands and do nothing, you have made it abundantly clear that you understand and are 100% okay with the fact that a person 18 years of age in the state of Texas can't purchase a pack of cigarettes or a beer, but he can purchase a semi-automatic or automatic weapon! Have y'all completely lost your minds?

When will it start to matter in Texas that way too many children have lost their lives due to gun violence? Specifically, as an educator, I am appalled that after the massacre at Santa Fe High School in 2018, **NOTHING CHANGED!** I want to know how in the world you could possibly NOT do something following that tragedy! And then, May 24, 2022, rolled around and what was supposed to be an extremely happy day for students at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas turned into a bloodbath! The gunman used semi-automatic and automatic weapons on elementary-aged students and their teachers! Teachers who were not armed in any way willingly gave their lives to protect their students! At the same time, law enforcement personnel at the scene who were well-trained and heavily armed failed to enforce anything! The lack of leadership and their inaction highlighted yet another cataclysmic failure of the adults to protect the children! I honestly don't know how any of you can look at yourselves in the mirror! You have allowed these children to die in vain!

Brett Guillory, Mr
Self
Houston, TX

Morath has to go.

Edtech has to go.

Crony deals must go.

SEL and all your non-cognitive psychobabble must go.

Nonprofits grifters go away.

Defund the TASA/TASB lobby.

Kill the 20 regional ESCs.

Kiss The Commit Partnership goodbye.

Send Bill G@tes and Educate Texas packing.

Pay the teachers with the money you save on all the crap.

Fight for a classical education and starve the beast. #txed #txlege

Follow the same rules as public schools or no voucher

Reform accountability, the student and parent must be held accountable

3 diploma system

Cate funding should be a top priority

Restore discipline and stop punishing the schools ratings for disciplining a students and removing them

James Cashion, M.Ed.
self - Financial Services for Educators
Bluff Dale, TX

To Those in Public Service & Concerned with SB 8,

It is difficult, even as a parent who could benefit from the proceeds, to support a bill that proposes the use of other people's tax dollars to pay for my child's education in a non-public, non-regulated school system. Under the current bill, there is little to no accountability for institutions receiving these funds, while our public schools endure very strenuous accountability measures that I would say have all the symptoms of over-regulation.

I do, however, support making it easier for parents to place their kids in the educational environment that is right for them. I have personally moved all 3 of my children to different schools to serve their individual needs. Educating my children is my duty, nobody else's. Teachers and school districts are just partners in that process whom I have invited to help educate my kids in ways that I am unable to. It is my right to have control over where, & from whom, they learn.

I propose an alternative to the Education Savings Account idea. In the years that a parent has children in school, they can direct an "Educational Local Tax Refund" towards an institution of their choice. Whatever they paid to their local district in the previous tax year in property tax can be "refunded" directly to an alternative education entity. But, only UP TO the amount they paid in, and the money does not pass through their hands. It must be applied for by the entity and delivered directly to them.

Additionally, they do NOT receive more funds if they have multiple children. The most they can have "refunded" is whatever they paid into the local public school.

This solves two problems I have with SB 8. First, it eliminates the use of tax dollars from other citizens who may not support my private school or alternative choice. Second, it actually frees up (instead of taking away) more state funds for teacher pay & other public school programs. For example, If the local public school portion of my property tax bill is \$4000/year, and it costs \$11,000 to educate my child, the state is, in essence, covering \$7000/year for my child. If I take my child & my \$4000 elsewhere, \$7000 is now freed up for the aforementioned items.

Thank you all for your service to our great state and to our children. I trust & pray that you will vote wisely and be willing do the work & make fair adjustments to SB 8.

Sincerely,
JD Cashion, M.Ed.
Bluff Dale, TX

Danny DeGuire, Dr.
Self
San Antonio, TX

Vouchers or any language used synonymously for vouchers MUST NOT be approved by this or any future legislative bodies in Texas.

Kate Cowgill, SLPA
Lexington Independent School District
Lexington, TX

No thank you

Amber Nabors
Independent School District
Stephenville, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.
NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

ANGIE PEARSON
Self
GATESVILLE, TX

As a 20-year veteran educator I completely and whole-heartedly oppose the education savings account program. What is being touted as an opportunity for parents to have school choice is a complete ruse. The schools will still have the option to pick and choose who attends. The under-served populations will not be welcomed in with open arms but will remain in public schools, schools which will be even more greatly under-funded. Public schools have been and will always continue to be the backbone of our society and educators will continue to work miracles with the limited resources they have because they have accepted this calling and want to see ALL students succeed. I can assure you that I and my fellow educators will be watching to see the outcome of this insane proposal

Belinda Robertson, `
self-teacher in public education for 38 years
Lexington, TX

Please vote no, stop trying to tear apart public education. Public Education is being ripped off and you can help prevent that.

Ileana Garza-Rojas
Self
Farmers Branch, TX

This voucher will hurt public schools. Please think about public education in the state of Texas and the amount of students it will impact. This is not about us, this is about the kids and future generations.

Julie Allensworth
West Orange-Cove CISD Head Start
Orange, TX

I want to express my concern for this bill (CSSB8). Please know that it does not allow for the same level of funding for kids with special education concerns.

Please don't let this bill pass.

Thank you, Julie Allensworth

Wayne Guidry
Longview ISD
Longview, TX

I urge the House Public Education Committee to reject SB 8. No bill the Senate is holding hostage is worth SB 8 passing. SB 8 is nothing more than a tax break for the wealthy. I urge you to look at how vouchers has ruined football in Florida. Thank you for your time and service.

Tisha Gray
Self
Stephenville, TX

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NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Doyle Roy Jr, Mr.
Pottsboro ISD
Pottsboro, TX

DO NOT PASS THIS BILL! Public schools need all of the funding that they can get and vouchers will hurt our smaller school districts exponentially.

Angela Cardenas
Self, Educator
Lubbock, TX

We absolutely and completely oppose this bill and any bill that includes any type of voucher or education savings account. This is not good for the millions of Texas public school students!

Belinda Robertson
self-teacher in public education for 38 years
Lexington, TX

Vote no , help save our public schools

Erika MENDOZA
LISD teacher
LAREDO, TX

Keep the money is public schools to invest in technology and other things that teachers need. Also, pay public school teachers more, the cost of living increased and now we are one of the most underpaid jobs that required a college degree.

Robert Dolgener
Rogers HS
Temple, TX

I do not support this bill. Until you confidently explain how private/charter schools will be held to the same accountability public schools are held to, my stance will stay the same. Dr. Buckley, the Chair of the Committee, stated on Thursday, "The reason for the invited testimony only is because we have already heard from the people who do not support any type of ESA/Vouchers." Does that not speak volumes to the number of people who have already discussed this? Do your job, house committee. Listen to your constituents.

CLINT YORK
self / manager
BELTON, TX

I am absolutely AGAINST any of my tax money going to "education savings accounts" or "vouchers" or anything like that. YOU ALL that are trying to do this need to know that we all know this is "welfare for the rich" and it is absolutely NOT what any true fiscal conservative believes. STOP trying to do this and instead help our society and help our state by providing this money to our public schools. It is RIDICULOUS that you all think this is a good idea.

Kelli Widmer
teachers
TEMPLE, TX

School vouchers will wreck the public school system and will bring back segregation in public schools, not based on race, but on socioeconomic status. Vote no on anything that creates vouchers!

David Gustof
Self
MESQUITE, TX

I am against any bill that creates vouchers or gives public (tax) money to private schools. The state of Texas constitution states that PUBLIC schools shall be created and funded. NO private schools vouchers.

Kerri Pridemore
NA
Belton, TX

I do not support school vouchers. I am a conservative Texan. Tax payer funds should not be given to private corporations or entities. We need to fund public schools appropriately, so all Texas children have a world class educational experience. The basic allotment for public school needs to keep pace with inflation. This year, more than ever before, the state has the funds and ability to increase school funding in a meaningful and impactful way. Please do not vote for school vouchers.

Alicia Sigee
self
Beaumont, TX

I do not support SB 8. This bill is not suitable for public school education. Private schools are not held to the same standards as public schools. Special population students will be excluded from participating in private schools.

Terisa Clark
Self
Lubbock, TX

I'm in support of this bill. Although the amendments of the house have not been favorable. Let the empowerment of parents in selecting their children's education have a chance. Texas is in the last of 15 states to have a form of school choice. Come on Texas. Let's get started

Barbara Davis-Staley, Mrs.
Texas State Teachers Association-Retired
Tyler, TX

Please vote no on any voucher bill.

Nancy Yates
Self - mother
Hamilton, TX

Nothing this important should be pushed through without thorough vetting and public testimony. It didn't work this session because the people of Texas - especially rural Texans like me- don't want it. Do not try to end run around a legitimate democratic debate. Our students and teachers deserve better.

James Lee, DR
Hamilton ISD. President
Hamilton, TX

This bill is not in the best interest of Texas students nor Texas public schools. I am strongly against the voucher concept. This will harm rural districts disproportionately. The legislature needs to focus instead on additional inflationary adjustments per student. Please focus on what is best for all Texas students.

Lacey Stewart, Mrs.
self
Temple, TX

The state raised funds need to be applied to state funded schools only. My taxes should not help someone else pay to take their child out of public school and put them into a private school. You should have the freedom to do that if you want, but my taxes should not help you. Every time we take money away from our public schools, we are destroying our children's education more and more. We already struggle to pay our teachers a decent wage, we struggle to provide excellent education that includes the arts and focuses on the whole child. We bog down our public education system with ridiculous standardized tests and way too much paperwork so that our teachers cannot even teach in new and creative ways. And now we think we are going to help the problem by taking funds away? There are consequences to your decisions and if you want to go to a private school then part of those consequences are you have to pay for it. Instead of thinking we are creating competition by offering help to pay for private school, lets make our public schools rival anything that a private education could offer so that people don't want to leave!!! If you need concrete evidence why this is a bad idea, just look at the public school system in Oklahoma! It's a disaster and now we want to do the same thing!!! Learn from other people's mistakes and make a better choice!

Mark McCrory
Self
Temple, TX

Tax money should not be allowed to be transferred from student to student or school to school. The distributive power of taxes has always been for the greater good of society. If we pass a legislative for vouchers where will this end? Can I demand to have my street money applied only to my neighborhood? Or can I only request that certain intersections be paved? This bill is dangerous and insulting to the everyday citizen of Texas.

Paul Martin
Rogers ISD-Teacher
Temple, TX

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Adrian Spalding
Self/ Field Coordinator
Dallas, TX

I object to my taxpayer money being spent on private schools. This Voucher bill would decimate the public school system in Texas as similar legislation has in Louisiana and Mississippi. Private and charter schools have no accountability, and many employ a negligible percentage of licensed teachers. In Dallas, my hometown, the public school district is often the only option for students with special needs, and many private schools not only do not have SPED resources, but refuse to accept students with learning differences in the first place. This partisan bill strikes me as particularly despicable coming from a party that claims to fight for the "protection of the children," as SB8 would pull the rug out from under the Texas children that rely on our public schools for a quality education.

Pam Fischer
Self/TEACHER
Waco, TX

Vote no on this bill. I am a 30 year veteran teacher in Texas Public schools, in Waco ISD. I was a member if the Teacher Vacancy Task Force. Taking money from students in public schools and giving it to other things MAKES NO SENSE. You are creating an environment that is impossible. Dont change anything on the STARR test, that is a waste of taxpayer dollars. Give all teachers a \$10000 raise and we will stay in the profession.

Debra Pevey
Self
Garland, TX

Parents have a choice in what school they can send their children too. I am totally against giving my hard earned tax money to the rich or any religious school. Our children and our economy depends on our public schools. Fully fund them now!

Terri Woodfin
Self
Gladewater, TX

Please vote NO for SB 8 - This is not fair to Public Education to give funding to Private schools when they don't have the same requirements for STAAR as as public school does.

Danielle McKay
Self Teacher
Belton, TX

As an educator, I believe every child should have the opportunity to an excellent education regardless of race, socioeconomic status or ethnicity. Too often students are forced to attend public schools with less funding, staff shortages, overcrowding, etc. because they are redlined into that school zone, and do not have free choice. Private schools are not an option for the everyday family, as they cost too much. School Vouchers would afford students and families the opportunity to attend a private school, or smaller school, with smaller class sizes, bigger budgets, and more staffing. Now with that comes certain terms. There should be one voucher per child per family, and the student must adhere to all school rules and policies, and if they get so many referrals or suspended, they lose their voucher, and must attend the school they are zoned for.

Kara Woodley

My children; middle school special education teacher

College Station, TX

This bill is not Texas students and families. As a parent of two students in special education and a career educator, I know that this bill is bad for Texas children and for Texas public schools. Vouchers or ESAs will effectively defund public schools as students leave to go to private and charter schools that are not held to the same accountability as public schools. Vouchers are a disservice to public schoolteachers and their students. Furthermore, students in special education do not have the same rights and assurances in charter and private schools that they do in public schools. When charter and public schools can't serve them, they have to go back to public schools that have been defunded by vouchers. The voucher program is exclusionary for students, especially those in special education, and stands to defund Texas public schools by chipping away at their resources.

Anna Fitzsimmons

Self and teacher

Temple, TX

Parents already have rights and public schools are doing some amazing things which is not what being noticed. Because of the news and tweets, majority of the time when people question me about teaching they ask about only the things heard on the news. It is disheartening because there is so much good going on, the hardest thing we deal with is managing all the testing, behaviors, and house bills. We need to invest into our public schools because all students are the future of tomorrow, not just some. This will solve way more problems than trying to push a motion that majority of people (of all incomes and races) aren't for. We need to make teachers voices more heard. We would love for people with voting power to come visit, and talk with us.

Linda Webb

Self / CFO

Arlington, TX

Unless all schools receiving vouchered children have to accept all who apply, follow same standards and benchmarks, and provide IEP support for kids with learning disabilities, then it is not a program for school choice by parents, but school choice getting to choose their student body. I have raised my kids one in Arlington public schools and one in private school and still pay school taxes even though I no longer have students in the system. That is appropriate because an educated population is a public good supported by tax dollars. Using my tax dollars for religious schools who can turn away kids, leaving public schools even more underfunded and teachers underpaid while taking those who can afford transport and meet selection criteria will only widen the divide of education for socioeconomically disadvantaged. The fig leaf of trying to help those parents and those schools is just that - a fabrication to divert tax dollars to private and religious education. Please vote no. There are better ways to fix our ailing schools than stripping them of dollars. We certainly will have trouble attracting and retaining teachers in that system. Texas kids deserve public dollars for public ed, and so do Texas taxpayers.

David Alcantar
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am opposed to this potential legislation. The centerpiece of this bill, Student vouchers, is more appropriately acknowledged as a student coupon. The “aid” proposed by this bill would do little to ensure that all students obtain a quality education. It incentivizes already wealthy parents by infusing private schools, which require no oversight, with more money to provide already wealthy parents with more services and opportunities for their already privileged kids, punishing poor families for their circumstances and preventing bright children, who happen to be poor, from achieving their potential educational and financial success, by robbing their schools of precious funding needed to meet their educational needs. The sleight of hand that is this bill is a classist approach to segregate the State of Texas into a theocracy, by siphoning funds from public education to divert into religious institutions. It is blatant robbery of poorest among us to perpetuate, through the state, the “prosperity” gospel. The role of the state is to provide equal opportunity for life, liberty, and prosperity for all citizens, the most fundamental means by which to do so being education, and, instead, this bill endangers the entire educational system of the state to favor wealth, religion, political affiliation over personhood. Strengthen the public school system in Texas and all Texans will succeed. Divide the state into those with education and those without, and see it fail. Again, I am strongly opposed to this bill and student vouchers in particular. Parents already have a choice in where to send their children. This bill would cause poorer families to have to commute even further away so that their kids can attend the private school with more resources, because no parent wants their children to attend a school with fewer resources. But with this bill many parents will have no choice, because of their circumstances, and those children will suffer, through no fault of their own. Additionally, the added commute time is going to increase traffic delays, accidents, and fuel costs, etc., which will add billions in costs to the educational endeavor. This bill creates more problems than it solves. Let’s work, instead, to ensure that the school right up the street, or a few blocks away is the obvious choice of school for every Texan because it has just as much resource and opportunity as whichever one is across town.

S. P. Smelley
Self - retired Educator!
Weatherford, TX

Supports our parents and give them the control of their childs education!

Deanna Fencl, Mrs
Parent
Hollywood patk, TX

Please take action! Give power back to the parent!i am for this! Please push this through

Ronica Iselt
self/teacher
Lexington, TX

Please vote no on this proposed bill.

Amber Walker
Self
Killeen, TX

Instead of allowing school vouchers so that students can attend "better" schools, why don't we work to ensure that ALL public schools are the best that they can be so that students do not have to choose. As a public school teacher in a rural Texas district, I choose to serve in my district in an effort to improve the quality of education that students in this area receive. Why should these students, who live in this community, need to travel elsewhere to receive an education of a certain standard? This type of voucher program creates educational deserts in particular areas of the state. It will not improve public education throughout the state. As with many other decisions in education, it is clear that this proposal was drafted and presented by individuals who are not passionate about educating children, have not spent any amount of time working in the public education system at even the most basic level, and have no to what degree educators fund their school and classrooms to achieve consistent student growth and cultivate the interest in life-long learning. Such a bill is the beginning of the (already battered) end to public education.

Renee Goodwin
self / educator
Stephenville, TX

Awarding parents public funds to choose private schools goes against the intention behind public funds! Isn't that a gifting of public funds...which is not allowable? As a public school educator, I can also truly believe (based on my experience) that there is a strong possibility that some of the recipients of the funds will not utilize the funds in a way that will provide an appropriate education for their students. In other words, they may use the funds for "educational materials" but then not supervise that the students actually use the materials.

As for assessment, an increase of the number of assessments students are required to take, or increasing the number of times, is not beneficial to students or educators. My fear is that educators would then have three mini-STAAR tests that are difficult to organize and result in data that is not informative. Through the year testing will only be beneficial if it is designed in a way that can be administered easily by a classroom teacher and utilized only for instructional purposes.

Kim Kaiser
Self/Texas teacher
Stephenville, TX

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NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Kathleen Jones
Self/Texas Public School Teacher
Coppell, TX

Vote No! This is an attack on our public school systems and the teachers who unselfishly serve the students of Texas. Governor Abbott has his own selfish agenda and is not listening to the voices of or serving the majority of Texans.

Alieca Hux
Private citizen
Sulphur Springs, TX

No public money for private schools !

Patricia Bubb, Mrs.
Self
Cedar Park, TX

Please support parents' right to choose the education that best suits the needs of their children. Please support school choice!!

Loretta Stone
Self-teacher
Copperas Cove, TX

Private schools do not have to provide accommodations for 504 students or special ed. This is a disservice to our children.

Michael Cowan
Self/Teacher
Robinson, TX

This bill will create multiple false hopes for parents, even if we solely consider the private school vouchers. The initial disappointment will come from the fact that this voucher will not actually pay for the tuition of many private schools. Parents will still have to come substantially out of pocket in order to pay for the private education for their children. Furthermore, this will not stop private schools from raising tuition in the future, which will only increase the inability for families to pay for this schooling. Even ignoring the fact that many private schools will not be willing to bus students to their campuses who cannot afford their own transportation, the rules of supply and demand dictate that private school tuition will only increase as demand increases while supply either remains constant or shrinks. The next disappointment will come from extracurricular opportunities. Private schools are typically not bound to Title IX, meaning that these private schools can openly discriminate amongst their student populations when it comes to sports, the arts, and any other after school program. If we consider CTE programs in public schools, Private schools often do not offer these course pathways, and as such prevent students from fully developing their career options. Finally, the private schools do not have to provide SPED, 504, ELL, and other academic/emotional support structures for their students. Thus, parents of students who are accustomed to having these practices in place to help their children succeed will be in for a rude awakening when their children are now struggling and suffering in the school environment without them.

As for parental influence in the classroom, there is a cloud of misunderstanding when it comes to where and how school and the home interact and intersect. While parents should always be interested to know how their children are performing and what they are learning in the classroom, that does not entitle them to control curriculum. Not only have the vast majority of parents never trained to be teachers or learned the TEKs for their children's coursework, they are often aloof to the attitudes and beliefs of the other students and their families. The primary purpose of the teacher and the TEKs are to ensure that all students have a base level of essential knowledge in whatever class the student is taking. The teacher has to craft their lessons around the TEKs and the needs/abilities of all their students. While it is certainly no fault of the parent to be dedicated to their children's academic fates, that hyper-fixation will distort the learning of the entire class if allowed to hijack the overall class curriculum. Parents are certainly free to feel that they personally disagree with certain educational topics, as is their First Amendment right. However, that right does not give individual parents the ability to insert themselves and their beliefs into the classroom.

Jeremy Bales
Self - Law Enforcement
Salado, TX

Although the base of this bill seems reasonable, I am NOT in favor of a voucher system to provide a private school education to a student that the parent is not satisfied with the public school education. While this student and parent may not be happy or pleased with their educational experience in their provided district school, if they so choose to move to a private school, that burden of paying that tuition should be solely reliant on the parent/guardian of that student to cover the cost. My tax dollars should not be used for a private school education for another child.

Jeff Rutland
Lampasas ISD
Lampasas, TX

I'm against school Voucher. We already have trouble properly funding out local schools. The local schools work hard to educate the kids. Please vote NO. Jeff Rutland

Senice Franklin
TSTA
Katy, TX

It takes funding away for public that is not fully funded at the present time . WHy would take money for the student that need it most.

Karin Johnson, Dr
Self. School improvement specialist.
Austy, TX

I am opposed. This bill is too critical to not allow comment and discussion. This bill is not what is best for Texas. Please stop trying to ram this through. Most private and religious school teachers are not certified. Why is there no accountability plan for these schools that will be popping up all over? Why shouldn't they be required to take the state standardized test? Who will monitor these schools?

PHILLIP MITCHELL
Self
Marble Falls, TX, TX

SB 8 creates the largest voucher program in the nation! Keep public funds in public schools!
It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools
It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws
It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve
It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system
It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority
Texas public schools are under attack, and we need to stand up against out-of-state school vendors looking to defund our local public schools!

Senice Franklin, DMC Coordinator
TSTA
Katy, TX

No Vouchers it take money away from public schools .

Robert Armstrong, Mr.
Self-public school teacher
Killeen, TX

As a public school teacher with over 22 years experience in the classroom, I am aghast at the damage this bill will do to the public school districts here in Texas. School districts struggling to do the most for their students with the resources they have will have their funding gutted. These ravaged districts will not be able to close the gap between funding and services for their students. They will be forced to cut services to the bone, and the students will pay the price. School districts are already hustling to fill vacancies in staff due to Covid 19 and its aftermath. This is a gut punch to the efforts of the superintendents and human resources personnel who do their utmost to find qualified staff every spring and summer for the coming school year. Senator Bryan Hughes benefitted from earnest qualified staff as part of his educational process as did Representative Shelby Slawson, who filed HB 1515 purporting the same unfair actions be forced upon the public school districts in the lone star state. Shame on any elected representative in Texas who supports and votes for either of these bills. It is akin to spitting in the faces of every educator who helped them achieve the success they now enjoy.

Jacquelyn Ramba
self, public school employee
Belton, TX

I vote and I am against school vouchers.

Kelly Paxton
Lampasas isd
Copperas Cove, TX

To better my family

SANDI DUNN, DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
GRANGER ISD
GRANGER, TX

THIS BILL WON'T HELP WITH TEACHER RETENTION AND DOESN'T BETTER FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS. IT ALSO FAILS TO ADDRESS THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GAPS AND DOESN'T ADDRESS THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS. SB8 DOES NOT INCLUDE A HOLD HARMLESS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT LOSE KIDS TO A VOUCHER.

Ashley Newton
Self LEISD teacher
Denton, TX

No vouchers. Private schools shouldn't get to pick and choose who they get to take. Public schools teach ALL Children

Lacey Torn
Belton ISD Special Education Teacher
McGregor, TX

I have been a Special Education Teacher for Belton ISD for 5 years. I have seen a huge increase in negative student behavior and teacher hopelessness. We need MORE TEACHERS in each classroom to combat behavior and provide academic support. Our students are falling far behind and an increase in negative behaviors are a side effect of that. Please increase funding for ALL schools in Texas before WE ALL will suffer from the next generations lack of education and responsibility.

Parent ALREADY have access to their students instructional materials. Teachers are more than open about what curriculum is being taught to their students. This idea that teachers are immorally indoctrinating students is political fear mongering. Quite honestly, many of the parents I see in my economically disadvantaged district are not educated enough themselves to make informed decisions on what and how their students should learn to prepare them for the workforce.

I will be leaving the profession this year, along with many of my colleagues. I have been stabbed with pencils, yelled and cussed at, hit, and kicked by elementary students for nothing else but wanting them to attempt assignments they are given. We are not paid a college educated professional wage. I am not paid enough to endure this level of emotional and physical trauma.

Larry Markert
PLISD
Prairie Lea, TX

SB 8 (the "parental bill of rights"/voucher bill) is being heard in House Pub Ed on Monday, May 15th at 8am. The committee is only allowing invited testimony but you have the opportunity to voice your opinion by clicking here.

SB 1814 is an effort to prevent school districts from keeping their I&S (bond) rates at the same level (rather than lowering them due to lower debt service or higher property values) in order to build up a surplus in I&S funds to prepay debt.

As the Superintendent of Prairie Lea ISD, I am totally against SB 8 and SB 1814. Please pass on this on.

Stephen Junious
Self- Media & Education
Beaumont, TX

This bill will hurt thousands of children across the state, especially those in rural areas like the district I serve. Public education is not only important to the future of our children, but it also serves the community economically. I know from first hand experience that the private school system does not care about education; their main concern is indoctrination. I strongly urge you to reconsider this piece of legislature. Politicians like to say "we're doing this for the children." Well do something that will really help children and fund public schooling.

Robin Dillard
Self Programmer Analyst
Post, TX

I do not want tax dollars funding private education in any way. I also disagree with non-educator groups, PACs, legislators, and people dictating what educators teach in public schools. This is red-herring legislation meant to distract and further divide us.

Yvonne Snyder, Mrs.
Self
Belton, TX

I support school vouchers. I would like to have the choice to send my child to a private school.

Shelley Thomas
self
Stephenville, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers. Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students. Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud. Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement. Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially. It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas. **NO TO SENATE BILL 8!**

Sam Walker
Self and Lampasas ISD School Board Member
Lampasas, TX

I completely disagree with this bill. The State legislature has been taking tax dollars from public schools for years and eliminating the local control within ISDs while blaming school districts for raised property taxes. This bill will further this and hurt the public education system that has made this country the place it is today. My spouse went to private school and I am not against other types of schools however individuals that choose this route should also be on the hook to pay for this education. In the debate about higher education, I don't believe that a student loan should be forgiven if you chose to better yourself and the same is true about K-12 education. Private, home, and charter schools are not required to provide or meet the same standards/levels of service as public schools so why should the government help to fund them. Please vote against this bill and come up with one that helps to fund all of the requirements that the legislature has already mandated on the public education system and that will allow local boards the ability to afford to improve and maintain their districts.

Diane Honzell
Self Teacher
Katy, TX

I do not agree with the use of public funds to pay for private and charter schools. I feel the funds would take away from public school students, especially Special Education students. Just because the Governor is pushing this Bill does not mean it is in the best interest of the students.

Russell Holden
Self
Montalba, TX

This bill does not support public education by the inclusion of vouchers/ESA's in the bill. Not only does the committee substitute allow for vouchers/ESAs, it also fails to improve the high stakes testing system by actually increasing the number of standardized tests required. Under SB 8, it will require testing in 11th grade on material learned prior years and it requires Texas colleges to use these 11th grade exams for placement into freshman courses. This will also greatly impact district and campus ratings, which will lower the already convoluted accountability system rating, which looks designed to make public schools look worse. This bill and its committee substitute are bad for educators and students and should be left to die in committee.

Shannon Fritz
KIPP Texas Public Schools
Austin, TX

Under the Teacher Incentive Allotment, National Board Certified Teachers currently earn a "recognized" designation. SB9 proposes moving National Board Certified Teachers down to a new, lower level of designation. National Board Certification is considered the "gold standard" for teaching. More than a decade of research shows that National Board Certified Teachers produce 1-2 months of additional learning for their students compared to their peers. In order to earn National Board Certification, teachers demonstrate their content knowledge through an assessment, submit samples of student work and videos of their teaching, and analyze their own instruction. The House Committee on Public Education's 2022 Interim Report recommended that National Board certified teachers be designated as "exemplary." While this would be ideal, even awarding National Board Certified Teachers the "Recognized" designation, which is what they earn under current law, would strengthen SB9. Currently, there are only 1,203 NBCTs in Texas and unfortunately, our state is ranked in 49th place, therefore, we agree that this legislation will encourage the future growth of NBCTs in Texas. As a member of the Texas National Board Coalition for Teaching a 501(c) (3), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards state network, I urge you to amend SB9 so that NBCTs earn a "Recognized" designation under the Teacher Incentive Allotment.

Daniel Ayala
TSTA
lubbock, TX

Please vote AGAINST SB 8! Please help to keep all funding for public schools .

Vickie Ocegüera
WOCCISD
Orange, TX

CSSB 8 won't help with teacher retention, doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address the individual needs of students.

Alisha Brown
Self
Duncanville, TX

We do not want this!!! Testing is already too much!!!!

BJ Carpenter
Texans
Austin, TX

Please vote down the voucher bill. Our Texas public education system needs more money, not less and vouchers will undermine an already poorly funded and resourced system. We have some amazing teachers and they need your support! It seems like the Texas government is doing everything possible to cause our system to fail so vouchers can be pushed through! This is not right! Texas has enormous resources and they should reflect that in our public schools and be the best in the country but we're ranked #37 for prek-12 by US News. This isn't because of teachers performance it's because of the failure of standardized testing and underfunded schools.

Jason Bonnett
self
Salado, TX

The voucher program will demolish our public school system. Stop trying to create a new problem and fix the problem we have. Overhaul TEA and have professional educators make decisions instead of professional politicians. Stay in your lane as I do at the school I work.

Brad Wilde
Self
Rogers, TX

Private schools, just like public schools, should be subject to rigorous accountability measures to ensure the quality of education provided and the welfare of students.

Holding private schools to the same standards of accountability as public schools is crucial for ensuring equitable access to education and safeguarding against educational inequalities.

By enforcing comparable accountability measures for both private and public schools, we can promote transparency, maintain high educational standards, and guarantee equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their school choice.

Susana Palacios
Kleinisd Schultz Elementary
The Woodlands, TX

Please keep Public Schools strong by providing the funds necessary to maintain strong teachers in the classroom!

Bobby Fowler
Self
Belton, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers and the education savings account. Tax dollars should stay with the school district from which they are derived (exception: Robinhood). Public is not in the word PRIVATE and parents do have a choice where to educate their children; however, our Texas Constitution requires the Texas Legislature to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of PUBLIC FREE SCHOOLS (Feb. 15th, 1876). Our Texas Constitution does not cover maintenance/dollar support of PRIVATE schools so I ask that you oppose school vouchers for the State of Texas.

Sarah Yeppez
Self, school librarian
Spring, TX

TX voters do not want our taxes going towards charter or private schools. They do not have the same accountability that our public schools do. They are not required to serve students with disabilities as our public schools do. A vote for this bill is not a conservative choice. Instead we need to elevate our public schools by funding them.
VOTE NO on SB8!

Rick Hinsey
Self
Frisco, TX

I do not endorse any public school funding being directed to fund a 3rd party school voucher program. These voucher programs will only benefit those families that can already afford and choose to send their child to a non-public school. I am especially concerned if these voucher programs can be utilized for schools operated by religious organizations be they Christen or non-christen. The funds proposed for funding the voucher program need to be directed improving teacher retention through better salaries, benefits and professional training programs. Please vote no for any proposed voucher programs.

Paul Laskoski
self
The Woodlands, TX

I am against this bill primarily for its ESA Program, also known as education vouchers. The bill values private school children at \$8,000 when the Public Education Basic Allotment is only \$6,300. There is no justification to value private school children over public-school children. The recently added restrictions on eligibility will not prevent the problem of diverting funds away from public education institutions, inhibiting teacher retention and limiting education resources. Private schools are not required to accept children with disabilities or special needs, and private religious institutions can reject students on the basis of faith or other reasons, putting thousands of children at a disadvantage. Based on similar voucher programs in other states, such as Indiana, over 95% of funds will be pushed into religious private schools, overwhelmingly Christian, against the will of taxpayers. Also, whereas Indiana once had more restrictive eligibility at the onset of its voucher program, targeting low-income families, it has in the years hence raise the eligible income limit so that families that are 300% of the poverty guidelines, well above state average income, are eligible. Passing this bill will only pave the way for future legislative sessions to follow Indiana's example and raise eligibility limits to include middle-income families who can already afford private school without government assistance, which is ridiculous. And finally, the average Texas private school costs \$2,500 more than the \$8,000 voucher limit in the bill. Low-income families are unlikely to afford this gap, undermining Republican lawmakers' claims that the bill will assist low-income families at poorly rated public school districts. Vouchers will not solve problems in education, they will exacerbate them. **DO NOT PASS THIS BILL!**

Chenda Duong, Mrs.
self/educator
Elgin, TX

No Vouchers. No SB 8.

Britta Christenson
Self and Retired
Houston, TX

I oppose this bill and urge the committee to vote against it.

Jason Poer
Self Teacher
Kyle, TX

Vouchers are destroying our public schools, eroding confidence in our institutions and making our state look weak.

Eric Rodriguez, Dr
Hays CISD
Kyle, TX

I vehemently oppose vouchers as this will only hurt education in the long run. Please seriously consider listening to the professionals in education who fight in the best interests of students every day. Thank you.

Kevin Glawe
Self. Retired Military.
Belton, TX

As a father, grandfather, and tax payer; I firmly believe in school choice and support SB 8. Parents should have the freedom to choose which school is best for their student and what the school is teaching. My wife and I have faithfully paid our taxes, funding our local schools for over 45 years. We placed our children in a public school for one year and paid the consequences for that poor choice. As an enlisted military soldier, we sacrificed and placed our daughters in a private school. The cost was over \$1100 a month in tuition, but worth every cent. However, it put a financial strain on our family. We now have 9 grandchildren and our daughters are all being faced with the same choice. Five grandchildren attended public school for one year. It was clear that the environment was not conducive for a safe or profitable education. Two of our daughters have chosen to homeschool through ABeka Academy (\$650 a month for 4 students) and one has chosen private schooling (\$1600 a month for 3 students). Having an education savings account set aside for each student would afford all of my grandkids the opportunity to attend a private school. This money would bring equality to lower income families that dream for a better education or educational choice for their children. Taxpayers should have the freedom to choose which school our tax dollars support. If this bill does not pass, please consider a bill that allows individual taxpayers to choose the school they fund with their money. This may allow for private schools to offer scholarships for underserved families.

Hunter Houston
Self- Assistant Principal in Belton ISD.
Temple, TX

I am currently an administrator in Belton ISD. I am AGAINST SB 8, as school vouchers further marginalize our neediest and most vulnerable learners. The rhetoric surrounding school choice is centered around public schools "indoctrinating" students, which is a blatant lie. Governor Abbott has spread lies and misinformation about public schools to fit his narrative. Public schools are held accountable to state standards that are created by TEA, and private schools are not. Private schools can teach whatever they want with no oversight, so, if indoctrination is what the republicans are concerned about this bill and similar bills are contradictory. SB 8 and other similar bills are clearly trying to cripple the public school system that so many Texans rely on. Republican law makers are on the wrong side of this issue and have done nothing but spew false narratives and lied to the public about public education in order to support their agenda. Public schools are crucial to the longterm success of Texas. Again, I am AGAINST SB 8.

Gil Lara
Epta
El Paso, TX

Disapproved of sb8 and non education public school related legislation.

Mitchell Knauth
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please vote "no". Please do not use public educational funds for those that do not have to follow all of the laws that public schools have to follow.

Jenny Jones
New Diana FFA
Diana, TX

1. The education savings accounts will not have any accountability to the State of Texas in funding it like public schools do.
 2. This would divert public dollars that could be used to increase teacher salaries and properly fund schools with the surplus of money that is currently available.
 3. The bill attempts to divert lawmakers from seeing this diversion of public money as the bill would also abolish STAAR testing. It also leads to the commissioner of education getting more authority.
-

Lindsey Ramirez
Self
Austin, TX

This bill is harmful to public schools, taking away much needed funding and leaving behind those students who can't afford to make up the difference between private school tuition and the proposed voucher amount, nor the transportation it requires. Additionally, private schools are not beholden to the state requirements for special education therefore leaving many students who require accommodations and support behind in the public school system without funding to help them achieve the same outcomes. As a society, we succeed when we invest in our future, which includes all, not just the wealthy. Thank you.

Jennifer Jackson
Texas FFA Association
Austin, TX

My main concern revolves around the educational savings account and how that will take public funds and put them into private schools. The level of accountability in private schools is very different. I also have concerns related to the barriers and inequity that exists here-most students in private school have access/ability to pay for that type of education but we are willing to pull money away from public schools who already struggle to provide everything students need? Additionally, not all students have reasonable access to alternative private institutions.

Jessica Lamberg
Self
Round Rock, TX

I am opposed to this bill and any legislation for school vouchers. Public schools need our help and this is the opposite of helping.

Leonor West, Teacher
Self
Hockley, TX

No to SB8 this will hurt public school students in so many ways! I pray you see this!!!

Pamela Willey, Mrs.
Self
Lubbock, TX

I oppose this bill that will provide vouchers for private school tuition. It is unfair when they take the students they choose and do not have to accept all students that public schools have to accept. They do not provide services for students with special needs.

Frank Serna
Self/teacher
El Paso, TX

I do not support this bill and ask that all representatives vote NO. Education is a public institution for society's benefit and public funds should not be used for private, for-profit schools. Parental rights are being used as a smoke screen for Christian nationalists banning content they deem inappropriate. This bill has no merit and should be struck down.

Tanzanyika Williams, Concerned Educator/parent
TSTA
Hockley, TX

No to SB 8

Rebeka Ecker
Self
McKinney, TX

I oppose ALL vouchers.

Carole Compton, Mrs
Self
Sherman, TX

I think parents already have a choice in their children's education. I am very concerned about this woke indoctrination & I hope our state will pass bills to fight this & be known as a state resisting this fully.

Javier Ruiz, Teacher
self / TSTA
Odessa, TX

Vouchers will destroy public education. Giving funds to private schools from taxpayers is wrong on multiple levels. Additionally, allocating more funds per student is criminal. How is this legal? \$6500 per student in public vs \$8k in private. WRONG! WRONG! WRONG TEXAS! DO BETTER!

Allison Moore
self
Gilmer, TX

This would be detrimental to public education. The educational saving account would not be regulated like public school funds. It would take money away from students who do not have a choice to attend another school because of lack of transportation and financial means. An educational savings account will not improve education. This would divert public dollars that could be used to increase teacher salaries and properly fund schools with the surplus money that is currently available. This bill would also give the commissioner of education more authority. This is a mistake. This bill also discusses abolishing the STAAR test however this will never happen something else would replace it. I am convinced this bill to hurt more students than help them.

Chris Cleveland
self/ag science teacher
Plains, TX

1. The education savings accounts will not have any accountability to the State of Texas in funding it like public schools do.
 2. This would divert public dollars that could be used to increase teacher salaries and properly fund schools with the surplus of money that is currently available.
 3. The bill attempts to divert lawmakers from seeing this diversion of public money as the bill would also abolish STAAR testing. It also leads to the commissioner of education getting more authority.
-

Carl Atnip
SAISD
San Antonio, TX

No vouchers anywhere, or we will vote you out of office!

Terri Stubbs
Self/Educator
Lampasas, TX

If more funding is taken away from public schools, it will only hurt students who are not able to attend private schools either because of access or acceptance requirements. As seen during COVID even parents with the best intentions and support from certified teachers struggled to keep their students on grade level while home schooling. As a result, HB 4545 was implemented. If taxpayer money is being given to private schools and home schools, then testing accountability requirements should be the same for voucher recipients as they are for public school children. I do not believe this bill is even remotely in the best interest of Texas kids. Not all public schools are good, and I understand parents wanting another option, but it seems that this bill will punish all public schools because of a few. If parents want to send their kids to private schools or home school, then they need to pay for it, not the taxpayers.

Cansie Visi
Self, registered nurse, former school nurse
Austin, TX

NO!!! Detrimental to public schools!

Jose Silva
TSTA
El Paso, TX

Oppose SB 8

Johnny Stevens, Mr
Self
Somerset, TX

I believe this bill could be detrimental and its aspects of diverting public dollars that could be used to increase teacher salaries and properly fund schools with the surplus of money that is currently available. Furthermore I believe that the education savings account will not have any accountability to the state of Texas and funding it like public schools do. I believe this bill should be struck down for these addendums. However I think that lawmakers will be diverted from these issues due to the fact that it also mentions the abolishment of STAAR testing and gives the commissioner of education more authority. As much as I don't like the star standardized testing in public education I think the bill needs to be revised to address information stated at the beginning of my statement.

David Russell
Self
Amarillo, TX

Please vote no to protect our public schools.

Natalie Nielsen, Agriculture Science Teacher
Agriculture Teachers Association
hutto, TX

1. The education savings accounts will not have any accountability to the State of Texas in funding it like public schools do.
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 3. The bill attempts to divert lawmakers from seeing this diversion of public money as the bill would also abolish STAAR testing. It also leads to the commissioner of education getting more authority.
-

Aierelle Bundrant
My self KEA AND all teacher and support staff
Killeen, TX

I will never put my kids in private school. They are not accountable for anything as to where public schools are. I will never teach in a private school. You will lose good teacher for no reason because you're putting money into something that makes those who are rich richer and those who are poor even more poor. This SB BILL Number 8 is a complete and utter waste of time. Watch teachers leave the school system do you really think your teacher will stay after this stupid bull do you think people will truly stand for some that been nothing but lies in disguise ? Waste time on things like this and if you think there's a shortage of teacher and support staff just wait

Shannon Wehner
Self. Educational Diagnostician
San Angelo, TX

Opposed.

Jeffrey Mucha
Self. Teacher
BELTON, TX

I am against proposed school vouchers because they will detract from the already inadequately funded public schools. Article 7 of the Texas Constitution calls for "SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE OF SYSTEM OF PUBLIC FREE SCHOOLS" and school vouchers runs contrary to this ideal. Further, school vouchers will increase segregation within our communities and schools.

Noah Flores, Mr.
Self/teachers
Midland, TX

This bill promotes private schools no matter the language that is used. Public funds should go to public schools. It's being billed as parental choice. Historically what happens is people who are already in private school take the money from the public school and use it to keep going to private school. Private schools hold no accountability and are free to discriminate. Vote no to school vouchers.

Noel Castaneda, Teacher
Self
El Paso, TX

Please vote No.

Heather Andrews
self/public school teacher
Lampasas, TX

If more funding is taken away from public schools, it will only hurt students who are not able to attend private schools; either because of access or acceptance requirements. As seen during COVID, even parents with the best intentions and support from certified teachers struggled to keep their students on grade level while home schooling. As a result, HB 4545 was implemented. If taxpayer money is being given to private schools and home schools, then testing accountability requirements should be the same for voucher recipients as they are for public school children. I do not believe this bill is even remotely in the best interest of Texas kids. Not all public schools are good, and I understand parents wanting another option, but it seems that this bill will punish all public schools because of a few. If parents want to send their kids to private schools or home school, that's their choice, but the taxpayers should not have to pay their bill.

Eduardo Aleman
TSTA/NEA. retired teacher
Kilgore, TX

Please do not take away funding from public schools. The vast majority of our population attend public schools

Brian Gibson, Ath Director
Wink Loving ISD
Wink, TX

We've had too many broken promises and lack of support for public education; now we want to provide an alternative. I'm not opposed to change BUT I am oosoed to vouchers because we need to fix public education first. Pay and treat teachers in public education as TRUE professionals and give the support needed as it has been over promised and under delivered. Think about all the failed promises coming out of TEA / Austin and re-evaluate. Be a hero and find a solution plan for ALL students not just the ones that want private education subsidized. Please vote no to vouchers / ESA and please rid our kids of the needless STAAR test. I would love to see as I'm sure you do too any type of positive correlation in the real world success based on STAAR results. There are none obviously because performance on a STAAR test does not translate to real world applications. I'm not opposed to testing but in a growth world we evaluate where we are, work on our weaknesses, then re-evaluate and hit it again. Treat hit like a weight room workout: test see where we are, workout, test and see how we did and re-evaluate our process. But lack of success when we test doesn't mean the kid isn't a god athlete or can't be productive. We build on his / her strengths to help the team!! That's not what STAAR does. We start with some idea of where we think we are, test at end of year, and then wait until after a full summer to figure it out. Not the right formula. Vote NO to vouchers / ESA and please change our evaluation requirements.

Robin Phillips
Self
Houston, TX

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

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

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

? I demand transparency and accountability for taxpayers, and reject any program that would allow voucher schools to turn away a child based on their family income, disability, academic record, religious beliefs, etc. Private schools are not held to state accountability standards that public schools must meet, and therefore should not be given public funds without adhering to these standards.

? I 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.

Juan Cruz, Mr.
TSTA
San Marcos, TX

Should be open to all the public

Francisco Alamos
Self, digital organizer
Houston, TX

Public funds belong to public schools. Education standard will DROP as they have in other states and children with special needs will be hurt by this bill. We can barely get enough educators as is and yall want to spread our funds even thinner. Vote NO

Barbara Brewer
Yourself
Fort Worth, TX

My son was struck by lightning 3 years ago and is paralyzed. We spend \$25,000 a year on out of pocket medical expenses. His day consists of PT and medical treatment. Finally in the evenings he can finish his schoolwork. He can't attend regular public school and so we pay \$400 a month so he can do online school. This voucher program would help us tremendously!! Please vote yes for vouchers! PARENTS deserve the right to choose! I'm paying for a private education and paying astronomical taxes for public education we can't use!

Emily Lee
myself, educator
New Boston, TX

Please vote NO to CSSB 8. This large bill substitution has the following potential impacts:

- It diverts much-needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Thank you for your support and for accepting the responsibility of doing what is best for ALL Texas students.

Respectfully,

Emily Lee
Texas Public School Parent and Educator

Brenda Short
Self, Retired IT Manager
Cypress, TX

Please vote NO on SB 8. There's no reason for taxpayers' money to go towards private schools. Private schools aren't accountable to tax payers, they can discriminate enrollment, they drain resources and teachers from public schools (our district is already understaffed) and vouchers would put a new huge financial burden on the state. Taxpayer money should go to public schools. If Texas has extra money for school programs, it should go to providing raises to public school teachers so they're not having to live in poverty and to fund programs for their class rooms, so that teachers aren't having to pay out-of-pocket.

Ray Pieniazek
Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas
Austin, TX

SB8 will not help Texas public Schools. The State of Texas should not give money for education without accountability for that money. This money set aside should be given to Texas Public schools to make schools better and pay teachers for what they are worth. Texas is so far behind other states in education funding and teacher salaries. The saying that everything is bigger in Texas should state except for public education. It is unbelievable that statement by anyone that accountability will be by the parent. As a former public educator whose wife was a counselor, we constantly had kids coming back from private schools that were kicked out because the private school did not want to deal with them. Very few schools will work with students with special needs. Heck they dont have to accept them like public schools do. In rural areas school choice will not even be a factor. As a reminder - in Arizona 85% of those that took voucher money were already enrolled in private school. If they already could afford it why do they need the state to pay for it. A parent that says I want my tax money, I doubt any are paying 9,000 in taxes per kid in their current school district, so that is nonsense. I urge the committee to let this issue die and do not send SB8 back to the floor for further consideration. The title of your committee is public education - give money to public education and not private. Texas can be different and not follow all the other states who think this was a wise idea.

Sarah Bryant
Self, public educator
San Antonio, TX

I am against this both as a parent and a public educator with almost 20 years experience!

Sharon Story, Ms
self, public school teacher
Odessa, TX

As a voter, I urge you NOT to support SB8. Districts already have choice schools, and I teach at one of these. There is no need for charters, 'savings' accounts, or any other thing that diverts money from our public schools. We need strong public schools, not weakened public schools and lots of start-ups and organizations serving as schools but without the same accountability. It would be doing a huge disservice to Texas students to weaken their neighborhood and magnet schools for unproven alternatives. We serve all students who come to us, including students with disabilities.

Please vote AGAINST SB 8

Gary Briers
Briers Simmental Ranch--Owner/Operator and Professor, Texas A&M University
College Station, TX

I am opposed to education savings accounts for individuals/families/young people. As a former public educator in an ISD and a current teacher educator (for 43 years) at Texas A&M University, I do not believe that public funds should be diverted for private use. Education should be a public good--and provided by adequate funding of public education. Education savings accounts would be used to pay for education in private entities--with little or no accountability to taxpayers/the public for student outcomes. I do not want my taxpayer dollars diverted to private use. Rather, I support increased funding for our public school system in Texas so that ALL Texas students could be educated AS A PUBLIC GOOD.

Kristin Latimer, Special education teacher
Public school teacher
Austin, TX

I oppose this bill. It will take more money away from our students. I already use my own paycheck to provide supports to texas students. Please don't take more away and give to the rich.

Noemi Delgado
TSTA
San Antonio, TX

I am against SB8. Teachers and support staff are worth higher income as well as the protection and support for public education.

Lara Busse
Self
Harlingen, TX

I am against vouchers. I am against SB 8. I believe in public education. I believe everyone should have the opportunity to be educated. I believe vouchers will drain resources from our public schools.

Carveth Hall, Mr.
TSTA
Schertz, TX

I oppose SB 8.

C. A. Hall

Rebekah Raabe
self/ special education teacher
Waco, TX

Saying charter schools and public education in the same breath is a contradiction. In my low-income, mostly black and brown district, we are severely under-funded and under-staffed. Even so, we are held to a certain standard of attendance and STAAR test performance both for our own professional ratings but also our school as a whole; and in fact our funding is based primarily on these two things. Charter schools are not bound by these same requirements. Yet every year right before STAAR test season, we get a huge influx of low-performing students enrolling at our campus who were expelled from local charter schools for 'discipline'. These students will now negatively impact our scores and funding (even though we didn't teach them). The irony here is that charter schools' funding is NOT based on STAAR scores, so they could've kept those students the whole time anyway.

In regards to instructional materials- parents should not have control over this. Unless they have studies pedagogy, the intricacies of pacing, all of the TEKS, they don't truly understand how these things work. Not to mention the fact that teachers ourselves get so little say about what and how we teach. If anyone gets rights regarding instructional materials, it should be us! Myself and so many others so desperately want to teach real sex education, but are not permitted to in Texas. We are doing our students a gross disservice by so heavily restricting the information they're allowed to learn about; we certainly don't need to narrow it down any further.

School choice and instructional veto also extremely negatively impact students with disabilities. Charter and private schools aren't bound by the same requirements regarding ADA, FERPA, LRE, and many others guaranteed under IDEA. Students with disabilities in these schools are able to use resources from their local public schools, but the services will be far less effective in the rare instances they're utilized considering the lack of familiarity staff and student will have with one another. Private schools can choose not to accept students with disabilities at all. Charter schools have a little less leeway with accepting students, but they can certainly expel them (even for behaviors directly related to their disabilities).

In closing, think about teachers. We love your students so much. We genuinely love our jobs, or at least what our jobs should get to be. Please don't make our jobs harder. Please vote 'no' to SB 8.

Krystal Stanford
Self teacher
Evant, TX

Vouchers are going to kill public schools. We accept everyone. Private schools do not. This is a way to keep poor people down, and is NOT equitable. This bill passing would be a grave injustice for rural and poor communities across the state.

Douglas Denny, Mr.

Self

Edinburg, TX

1. The education savings accounts will not have any accountability to the State of Texas in funding it like public schools do.
 2. This would divert public dollars that could be used to increase teacher salaries and properly fund schools with the surplus of money that is currently available.
 3. The bill attempts to divert lawmakers from seeing this diversion of public money as the bill would also abolish STAAR testing. It also leads to the commissioner of education getting more authority.
-

Tanna Fiske, Teacher

Self

Austin, TX

Please DO NOT take money away from public schools.

Jenny Smith

Paducah ISD

Guthrie, TX

Instead of diverting tax dollars towards vouchers and ESAs, we need to focus on improving public schools. This bill may be beneficial for more urban school districts, but it would be a disaster for rural schools. We need to prioritize improving school district employee insurance and pay, which would improve retention & recruitment, which would create a better learning environment for all Texas students.

Michelle Herrington
Temple ISD
Temple, TX

I am writing to make known my strong opposition to Senate Bill 8, regarding school vouchers. I am completing my 27th year as a proud Texas educator. I currently work as an Educational Diagnostician in Temple ISD. I was a teacher for 25 years in Texas public, private, correctional and home school settings. Most of my career has been spend in public education. I did teach for 4 years at a private Christian school. The school voucher program is something with which I passionately disagree.

My time in private school showed me there is a vast difference in private and public education. Private schools do not have any requirements regarding state assessments, providing special education services for students with disabilities and providing free or reduced lunch. Students with any type of disabling condition were did not have their needs adequately addressed. This was not a fault of the private school. It merely resulted from the limited resources available to such a small school.

Many of the students who will receive the public funding are already attending a private school. Therefore, the funds will come off the top, so to speak, even without any current public school students leaving. I understand that parents at private schools feel they pay taxes without receiving the educational opportunities their tax dollars fund. That is a personal choice they are making. My family made that same choice for several years for our own three children. However, my family and current private school families are "opting out" of public education by choice. They are saying, in effect that they don't like the public education options available, and because they are able to do so, they will pay out-of-pocket to send their children elsewhere. Now they are saying, they like where their kids are, but they want their tax dollars to pay for that. That is not a fair option.

If ANY state or federal education funds are provided to families, ANY school those funds go toward should be required to follow ALL state and federal guidelines set forth for any public school receiving the funds. For example, the private school at which I worked did not participate in the state assessments required of public schools. That would need to change if they receive state or federal funds of any kind.

In essence, this bill is merely a way of appeasing wealthy families who can already afford to send their children to private schools. but now want to do so with public funds. That is unacceptable and will severely restrict the resource available for students in public schools.

Please vote against ANY bill which pulls funds away from public schools. Any politician who says this bill does not defund public education is using semantics to present the bill in a disingenuous manner, as it will most definitely result in reduced funding for public education.

Linda B Pringle
Self,retired teacher
Spring, TX

I am opposed to vouchers and bills establishing them as they are bad for public education.

Rodney Martine
Self Retired Ag Teacher. And Ag Teachers Assn of Texas Member
Wheelock, TX

I strongly oppose this bill and ask that the House reject it. This ed savings account provides no accountability to the state of Tx like public schools do. It diverts public dollars which could be spent on teacher salaries and to properly fund our public schools. While it does proportion to eliminate STARR it still is a diversion of public funds and gives way too much authority to the commissioner of Education. This would only serve to hurt public schools and those unable to seek other options. We should not use public money to fund private entities. A recipe for disaster. Should I be able to not pay my property tax because I don't use the parks and pay a country club instead? Please do not advance this bill.

Deron Robinson
Self / Denton ISD
Denton, TX

This amounts to a new entitlement that will cost the state almost \$1 Billion. This is not a conservative governance concept. In addition, voucher programs in other states have not proven to increase student outcomes. The state should continue to reject vouchers.

karina rodriguez
TSTA
Pflugerville, TX

Parents already have rights. This has nothing to do with parent rights and you're taking funding from public tax dollars. Let's keep public tax dollars for public school districts. We need to have equitable education across the whole state and if you take money away for the vouchers rural school districts will be hurt the most as well as wealthy school districts. Texas public school districts are already hurting with their budgets. Do not make it harder on the districts.

Diana Rincon, Mrs
TSTA member
Alice, TX

No to any type of voucher system! Public school is better than ever and could be even better if monies were properly allocated. A cut in funds is never the answer!!

Jennifer Harris, Ms.

Self, a parent of a public school student and former private school student
Austin, TX

My name is Jennifer Harris, and I am writing to express my opposition to Senate Bill 8 and urge you to vote NO on this legislation. I am a lifelong GOP primary voter. I'm a parent of a student who has attended both private and public schools. This legislation flies in the face of many of the values the Republican Party I grew up in once valued and prioritized: transparency and accountability, small government, local control, and support for public school teachers and education.

ESAs or vouchers like what is proposed in SB 8 should be roundly rejected.

Taxpayer dollars should solely fund public education, not private schools and private, for-profit education organizations. Shifting dollars away from public schools to private schools removes important levels of transparency and accountability.

This bill would give up to \$10,500 in state tax money to subsidize private school tuition for individuals who receive special education services, who are educationally disadvantaged, or who are attending public schools and have 504s, who are in D- or F-rated campuses or have siblings in the program. That could be an estimated 70% - 75% of students in Texas.

Private schools aren't required to accept all students, including those with disabilities or special needs. In fact, private schools are more likely to reject these students. Tax dollars should not be going to private institutions that don't have to play by the same rules as public schools and are not accountable to taxpayers.

SB 8 also increases the number of state assessment administrations given to students from third to twelfth grade. The bill requires more state tests. The bill would add two tests in each grade for grades 3-8 and increase high school exams from five to six. It may eliminate STAAR, but it ramps up testing under a different name and gives more control to the commissioner of education to over-test our children. The bill gives the education commissioner more control and removes all State Board of Education involvement in the state assessment program.

So many proponents of this ill-advised use of taxpayer dollars are also employing harmful, hateful rhetoric toward our public school teachers, locally elected school boards, and schools. This must stop. Calling teachers "woke" or "groomers" or claiming they "indoctrinate" students is patently false. It's manufactured culture war rhetoric that tears down people and institutions for partisan political gain. I've worked in GOP politics long enough to know if you can't win on the merits of the policy, you fall back on misleading information, innuendo, and personal attacks. That's what's happening with SB 8 and related bills against our teachers and schools. As a parent who values our teachers and our local schools, I say strongly -- enough.

Thank you for your time. Please carefully consider the concerns raised and make the right decision for the future of public education by voting no on SB 8.

Johnna Billingsley

Self

Porter, TX

Good after. My name is Johnna Billingsley and I am a student at Lone Star College Kingwood. I am an aspiring educator. I am writing today to beg our lawmakers to REJECT SB 8. This bill, if passed, will essentially segregate schools because minority students will be the ones that cannot get rides to "better" schools leaving them at a school that will lose what little public funding they currently receive. As a mother of minority children, and coming from a district that is underfunded already, this scares me for the future of my children and others like them. I bet if you to please VOTE NO on SB 8!!!

Bethany Millington
Belton ISD
Temple, TX

I am against school vouchers. I firmly believe this will not provide true, equitable educational experiences for children. Instead of pushing school vouchers, we can work to support our public educators and schools. These public funds should only be used to fund public education. This is not equitable for our students who are serviced through IDEA. Private schools do not service ALL students and do not have to follow IDEA requirements. Taking money from public schools is not going to benefit the children of this state.

Alice Janak
Vysehrad ISD
Hallettsville, TX

Please please vote no for this bill. As President of a small PreK thru 8th grade school I can see where this will hurt our enrollment. Also I want to be sure the children of Texas are taught in schools that are held accountable. Your consideration of this is greatly appreciated.

Terrie Goodloe
Godley ISD
Godley, TX

This Bill would be horrible to our Public Ed system. You would cause havoc in our Public Ed system, not to mention the exorbitant costs to our State. The added testing is not necessary. All private or charter schools should also be required to adhere to the same testing standards of public education as well.

Karla Burkholder
Self
New Braunfels, TX

I am your constituent, and I'm writing to ask you to please contact your colleagues on the House Public Education Committee and ask them to keep SB 8 from leaving the committee for the following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Audra Biyd, Teacher
Education
Stephenville, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.
NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Jeff Irvin, Superintendent
Quinlan ISD
Quinlan, TX

Please vote no on this bill. Private schools will not be held to the same standards as public or charter schools. It will cost the state in millions of dollars to supplement parents, many of whom can already afford private tuition. It also bypasses the higher education board. Parents have choice already. Again, please vote no on this bill and continue to support public schools who serve every child.

Priscilla Lamb
446027
Round Rock, TX

Texas Lege needs to fully fund schools and NOT divert money away toward for- profit, private, charter schools.

Nancy Morgan, Mrs.
Texas State Teachers Association-Retired & United Women in Faith
Abilene, TX

I oppose any attempt to use public school money for any sort of private education, including vouchers for private education. I oppose this knowing that I have to grandchildren that are receiving private education.

Joan Mobley, Mrs.
Self
Princeton, TX

I Do NOT want vouchers in schools!!!!

Jacqueline Pena
Self
Shamrock, TX

Please vote in favor to give Texas parents school choice.

Luis Carpio
self/ insurance
San Antonio, TX

Not only does the committee substitute allow for vouchers/ESAs, it also does not improve the testing system. It actually increases the number of standardized tests, it will test in 11th grade on material learned prior years, it requires Texas colleges to use these 11th grade exams for placement into freshman courses, it will greatly impact district and campus ratings - designed to make public schools look worse.

Lisa Sparkman, Ms.
Self-retired educator, grandparent to public school students
Pflugerville, TX

PUBLIC education funds should not pay for private schools. Vouchers are a bait&switch, aimed only at bleeding public school funding, into the pockets of private investors, hungry to steal \$ as they pretend to build schools. We have schools - fund those Re your constitutional duty. Vote no on SB8.

Miller Beaird, Dr.
Self
Friendswood, TX

Texas public schools are held to rigorous accountability standards, so lawmakers should not allow public, taxpayer dollars to be spent at private or religious schools that do not have to meet the same standards. Private schools do not have to report student achievement data to the state, and they do not have to meet the same standards for hiring teachers.

Education savings accounts take a portion of public funds that would have been used to educate a child in public school and put the funds in a special savings account for the child's family to spend on private tuition and other education-related expenses with no accountability for how the funds are spent.

Private schools do not exist in every part of Texas, especially in rural areas. If a voucher program is created, fly-by-night private schools could pop up across the state, offering "choice" while profiting from public tax dollars.

Depending on the limitations set in the specific voucher legislation, hundreds of thousands of students who are currently attending private schools or being home-schooled could begin to receive vouchers, requiring the state to spend much more on education than it does now.

Edna Gonzalez, Ms.
self / Agriculture Science Teacher
Corpus Chrisit, TX

Funding for Career Technical Education courses is vital and should not be cut. We provide students with lifelong skills and get them career ready.

Michael Riddle, Mr
Northwest Harris County Property Owners Association
Tomball, TX

Parents are legally responsible for their children until age 18 . Therefore parents have the responsibility and authority to make decisions regarding a child's education including content of course material .Parents own the children by law the State should not indoctrinate students to diverse and deviant behaviors . The money should follow their the child for that child's best education.

Nikita Patel
Self
Spring, TX

We should not be taking away money from public schools. Instead of giving vouchers for students attending failing schools let's fix the failing schools. It feels as though we are giving up on public schools.

Shelley Lincoln
Self
Cedar Park, TX

Taking funds away from already underfunded public schools in order to fund vouchers is, in this educator's opinion, the worst idea to date. Our students are already lacking due to the stagnate rate at which schools are funded and so the brilliant idea is to take more away? Giving parents an \$8000 voucher when you only find students at \$6160??? How does that make sense. In addition the playing field between private and public schools is extended uneven. Public schools are held to the same standards as far as testing is concerned. They also can reject students who are Special Ed or are behavior issues. Public schools do not have that luxury. And it is a luxury. The state of public education in Texas is definitely in a precarious position and this bill is only going to make that worse. Please vote against this bill.

Rhoda Poe
self
Orange, TX

Senate Bill 8 is being heard in committee on Monday. This is the voucher bill that is being propose to HELP the educational system. I am contacting my legislator(s) to voice my concerns, and take a stand against public dollars going to private schools. I am not fooled by the language that the vouchers come with ... the same requirements as public schools. If they are to meet the same requirements as public school teachers why are the private school teachers not certified nor have the same educational background as a public school educator. I know how tough it is to educate economically disadvantaged students, and the commitment that it takes. Just giving a voucher does not guarantee that the student will be served or service provided better in another district. It is about the commitment to serve students above and beyond what is required is the question, and that is not always seen in dollars. Please fight against this assault on public education. If education matters, you must ensure that it is appropriately available to all students. You can't take funds away from those that need it most in order to give a choice to those that already can afford a choice. Have a great day. VOTE FOR KIDS EDUCATION!

Steven Cox
Self
Lumberton, TX

I ask the representatives to vote no on SB 8 which would create ESAs(vouchers) for students to leave public school and attend private schools. Private schools are not held the same standard as public schools. This also raises the stakes of the accountability system to public schools and requires none for private schools. This bill does not eliminate the STAAR test. This actually adds more testing throughout the year, which will limit valuable instruction time. This will add a test for 11th grade students who are already taking college entrance exams. Also, TEA should not be in charge of determining which exam and score is appropriate for determining if a college freshman must take developmental education. That responsibility should stay with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Aaron Bodey, Mr.
Self
Robinson, TX

This bill attempts to undermine the education system rather than funding it appropriately and passing legislation that works to fix the problems caused by underfunding and overzealous state testing. The proposed voucher system and increased testing are meant to fix the wokeness of our education system, but I'll only perpetuate the issues that are truly to blame. Firstly, it will spread the 43rd lowest education budget over more schools and take funding from taxpayer funded institutions and move it to solely privately funded ones. Secondly, there cannot be the competitive market desired if all competitors are not competing by the same rules. A private school may claim superiority, but these claims are not supported by comparable metrics. Consider high stakes STAAR testing. Our current system is predicated on the idea that 20 STAAR tests from 3rd-11th grades, in addition to regular teacher assessments, district benchmarks, diagnostic assessments, and three college entrance exams (TSI, ACT, and SAT) are beneficial for student achievement and effective at measuring school effectiveness. Regular testing and growth-focused diagnostic assessments (e.g., NWEA's MAP) are vital to an effective, data-driven education system, but the testing load placed on the youngest members of society is unnecessary and borderline unbearable. More of the same is not the answer. Move to an assessment such as MAP and require all K-12 institutions requesting access to taxpayer funding to administer this single measure, ensuring that all schools are running the same race. If the committee wants Texas to lead in education, then it must start by examining the real problems faced by those in the trenches, not those propagated by politicians, talking heads, and lobbyists, and reject this bill in all of its forms. As a parent, I want what's best for my three children, and as an educator for over a decade, I want what's best for my students; this bill is not it.

Jessica Shults
self
Fair Oaks Ranch, TX

NA

Katharyn Wiegand
Canyon ISD - Trustee
Canyon, TX

As a trustee for Canyon ISD with a responsibility to our 11,000 students, I urge you to vote against any bill that created education savings accounts or vouchers for k-12 education in Texas. Private schools are not equipped to serve all the students of Texas, especially those with special needs or behavior issues. Special Ed students will lose the protections provided through the public school system. Private schools are not required to provide accountability info to parents or taxpayers. Many students would not be able to afford private school with the current amount of ESA stipends proposed. Finally, many areas of Texas, including the Texas Panhandle, have a scarcity of private schools - not near enough to handle the number of students who might utilize an ESA program. Please consider increasing funding to public schools and the teachers who provide excellent education to our students every single day. Our students and our teachers deserve your support!

Jack Davis
Self
Clifton, TX

Public education educating approximately 90% of Texas students must follow state guidelines and privates do not.
PLEASE add funding to public ed instead of adding funding to private schools
Retired Texas school superintendent 40 years as professional & 5 years subbing at Clifton ISD

THANKS FOR LISTENING

Donna Kearley, Mrs.
Constituent
Highland Village, TX

Please oppose SB 8 as it diverts monies from public education. Public education serves all students regardless of needs or geographic area.

Savings accounts help only the owners of private or charter schools.

It does not adequately serve children with disabilities or may not follow guidelines from the Americans with Disabilities Act.

It removes much needed money from rural schools where may not be an option for a private or charter school.

It does not require the same accountability required of public schools.

Please vote no on SB 8.

Sarah Taggart
Belton ISD
Belton, TX

I am against school vouchers. Public schools educate every student, and they do a good job of it despite the insufficient funding and support from our state. If funds are dispersed to private schools, it will not be sufficient there either, creating a competitive environment that takes the focus away from the students and only on creating a utopia for those that can afford to supplement those insufficient vouchers. It will widen the gap, because public schools will be forced to function on even less support, financial and societal, and only those who can afford to pay extra for their school of choice will benefit in any way. The amount of money it takes to run a public school system cannot be reached with the state's vouchers, so those that can will have to shell out to close that gap. All the time, making the education of our children about image and money. Our children's education should NEVER be driven by competitive financial institutions. The other issue I see with vouchers, is that the parents who are running from state control will only find themselves back in the same place, because, when you take money from the state, accountability (STAAR) is sure to follow. The voucher system has been proven to be a failure in other states. Why can't we just VALUE our public schools and fund them appropriately. Teacher's salaries aside, just fund enough positions and support for teachers to be able to serve our students in the manner which they deserve.

Ashly Taylor, RN
Self/Nurse
Frisco, TX

I am asking you to vote “no” on any form of education savings accounts, tax credit, or voucher program.

Vouchers hurt public schools and students. I am concerned because private schools aren’t required to accept all students, including those with disabilities or who are at risk of dropping out.

Even worse, parents lose rights and the protections of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) if they move their special needs child to a private school.

Finally, private and religious schools do not have the same level of accountability to the state as public schools do. Vouchers would allow private schools to receive taxpayer money without having to comply with the same curriculum or fiscal requirements as public schools.

In light of these concerns, I urge you to vote against any ESA this session to help protect our most vulnerable students.

Barbara Hargrove
Temple ISD
Temple, TX

I have been in education for a very long time, and I find this push for vouchers is a slap in the face to teachers and administrators who work in the schools everyday teaching the curriculum the state says we must use. I HATE VOUCHERS AND I HOPE THIS BILL IS DEFEATED!!!! Shame on you and our wonderful governor and Lt governor for pushing this bunch of bologna. Parents have always had the right to choose where their child goes to school; of course all of you "rich people" can pay for your child to avoid the public schools which is fine. You and your committee have done everything to force this down our throats and in the end take money away from public school. I have 4 grown children and 5 grandchildren and they have all gone to public school. If you want to do something for the good of Texas teachers and students is to stop the STAAR test and keep paying these publishers millions of dollars that the public schools could use. I am sure your are one of those Republicans who has no idea what the public schools are doing; you are just a puppet for the governor who by the way did not visit any public schools to push this voucher system; he just went to Christian schools and slammed public schools. SHAME ON HIM AND YOU! NO VOUCHERS!

Otha Graham
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers only promote wealthy families and threaten the 5.5 million kids in public school across Texas by funding private schools that can reject any child at any moment.

Dana Leach
Self, disability advocate
Weston, TX

Vouchers will harm our children's right to a free and public education. Specifically the underprivileged and special Ed students.

Mary Krsnak
self and all educators/ Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Mansfield, TX

Public education WILL be hurt by vouchers!!! And why would we encourage our students with disabilities to attend private schools where there are no regulations or special services for them??? THAT is not what is best for the child! I attended private school and have nothing against them, but we don't need to take money away from public schools, who are already hurting for funds!! It makes no sense when everything states separate church and state...but we are going to send public tax funds to private entities!?! I don't understand how any one thinks that is a good idea! Public schools are for ALL students---we don't pick them and we don't kick them out---we educate ALL students!! We should be rewarded for that much more than we are! We should be recognized for the inclusion of teaching all students! NOT have funds taken away from us!!!!

Margaret Brown, Mrs
TSTA
Houston, TX

Vote no, public schools need stronger financial aid with our tax dollars.

Xavier Miranda, Teacher
SELF
El Paso, TX

Please oppose this measure as it we'll have a detrimental and disproportionate effect on students in low income communities as well as rural districts.

Donna Haschke, Mrs
TSTA/ self/ retired teacher
Buda, TX

Please say NO to vouchers/ ESAs.
TX Public Schools are already underfunded and growth continues in our state. We need to increase funding, not reduce it. Teachers and school employees deserve a decent raise, as well as retirees! Schools must have adequate funding to meet the needs of ALL students.
We are watching and we vote!
Thank you for your careful consideration.
Donna Haschke

Deitra Johnson
Self
Spring, TX

I do not support a voucher program. Public schools are the great equalizer. The voucher system has tried and failed in other states.

Katherine Brophy
self - public school teacher
PLANO, TX

I appose all vouchers.

Ysrael Valencia
Self- Retired
Horizon City, TX

Vote NO on HB 8!

Kimberly Kanke
Self
Houston, TX

We do not need charter school vouchers. Our public schools need all the help we can get.

Robert Pack, Dr.
Self as a Professional Public School Educator
Dickinson, TX

I urge you all to prevent SB 8/CSSB 8 from leaving the committee for the following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
 - It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
 - It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
 - It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
 - It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.
-

Kelli Weeks
SBISD - self Teacher
Houston, TX

I oppose vouchers for posterity

Richard Cochran
Self
Dallas, TX

This is the worst thing you've passed in quite some time. I will move out of the state of my birth, rather than let you misuse my tax money in such a stupid way. I am sick of you vilifying teachers and underfunding our public schools. You should all be ashamed of making our future so dim, by defunding schools and restricting access to books that our students need to read to be competitive with the Chinese. Shame on you, all.

Wynn Robinson
Lubbock ISD
Lubbock, TX

Education Savings Accounts will take away needed resources from public schools. The bill will help the rich people that can afford private schools and hurt public schools. Bad combination!!!!

Amber Morris
Self
Temple, TX

N/A

Sharon A Spears, Trustee Lumberton ISD
Self
Lumberton, TX

Honorable Legislators,
My name is Sharon Jeffcoat Spears and I am a retired educator from our great state. I currently serve as Trustee of Lumberton ISD and Chairman of our board Legislative Committee. This letter is written to voice my opposition to school vouchers and the establishment of an education savings plans. The state constitution guarantees free public education for our students and vouchers will only service students private school select. Funding would decrease for our already struggling finances in our districts. I have forty years of service in education and still volunteer one day each week. My teacher heart is truly concerned and I humbly ask that you do not support SB 8.
Sincerely,
Sharon Jeffcoat Spears

David Robinson
Self Retired
Fort Worth, TX

Enactment of Senate Bill 8. Will result in a two tierd education system detrimental to public education. It will also take money from an already financially strapped public education system. Education accounts is just another name for vouchers and this will hurt poorer rural districts.

Josie Carroll, Housewife
Christians ??????????
palestine, TX

I agree to everything that is right and upright for the future of our children. We are to cry out for our Lord to come and cast down everything that comes against the knowledge of God.

Angie McQuiston
Temple ISD
Temple, TX

I am opposed to the proposal set forth in SB 8 that would establish educational savings accounts for parents to select the school of their choosing using taxpayer dollars under the current conditions of the bill. The summary of the bill itself, "...parental rights and public school responsibilities..." is the basis for my opposition. It presumes that the education of young people in the state is a RIGHT of families, devoid of responsibility, and the RESPONSIBILTY of their education rest solely with the school system. It is this type of thinking (abdicating the responsibility of the family in the role of educating their own children) that has helped get education to the place it is now. Voucher programs that are tied to student attendance and behavior will benefit families with a true interest in bettering their children's educational experience and will benefit outcomes of public schools as well, as it would hopefully encourage families to take an active role in making sure their children are prepared for learning. I would favor a voucher bill that awarded the funds based on the merits of students' attendance and behavior, and that also had a provision built in that allowed public schools to dismiss students who experience severe attendance or behavior challenges at school, as this negatively impacts ALL learners and educators.

Tamara Black

none

Austin, TX

Families have many school choice options including public school transfers and charter schools without including private schools. Taking money away from public schools is wrong. Public schools must maintain quality education for all students and already struggle with unfunded programs, lack of materials, and poor pay for teachers. This bill takes money from the poor and puts the funds in the hands of the wealthy. This is unethical, inequitable, and unfair. Please say no to Vouchers and yes to public education.

Pamela Laflin

Self

Houston, TX

The House Public Education Committee should do its best to provide a quality education for ALL Texas students, to ensure a thriving workforce, well-informed constituents, and meet the requirements of the Texas Constitution. Please concentrate on supporting teachers, public school facilities, and appropriate testing. Any form of vouchers/ESAs divert public money from already struggling public schools and benefit only wealthy families and vendors ready to cash in private schools with little accountability to the families they serve. Please do the right thing and reject SB8 and all forms of school vouchers.

Peggy Berry

Self

Clifton, TX

I am not for SB 8. I am a retired teacher.

Yvette Fernandez

Self

El Paso, TX

What has happened to our state? Our state of Texas has always had faith in all of our public school teachers (before 2016). Suddenly we are found competing with private institutions and now vouchers given to them so that they can educate our students whom we love and have built rapport with. We need those public funds to be distributed for proven tools, materials, and technology. Texas had been better before for our Public school teachers! No to vouchers!

Marie Danysh
Self, teacher
San Antonio, TX

While I support parents having the choice of where to take their children to school, there's nothing wrong with that, I do take issue with using public funds that are specifically earmarked for public education to allow someone to have a private school education. Private education is not giving a whole lot of faith to the public school machine if that's what you want to consider it. It's taking away teachers' ability to impact the future by removing those dollars from our schools. We are not only hurting our students, we're hurting the teachers, we're hurting the communities, we'll be hurting the cities in which these dollars are being moved to other places. The accountability for private schools is different and unless those schools are going to be held to the same standards that public schools are held to, then they should not be receiving public funds.

Again, I have nothing against a private school; there are some schools that are being mismanaged and that are not providing an accurate or a good education for our students. But taking the money that would help improve those schools and giving to a private school that is going to do its own thing and may not even be based in our state, is an undue burden for those public school teachers and those schools that do need the additional assistance.

As a taxpayer, a parent, and a teacher, I don't support SB8. I do not believe that it is going to benefit all of our students - it will only benefit a select few who have the means and the ability to take their children out of public school. I do support parents having the opportunity to provide their children with an alternate education I just don't believe that we should be taking money from schools which are currently underfunded to fund schools that are not.

Jason Hillman, 27 year public school teacher in Texas
Texas State Teachers Association
Buda, TX

I am opposed to vouchers. In a state with an economy that ranks ninth among nations, we spend close to 50th on public education per student. Instead of reallocating existing funds for Vouchers, it is time to put as much investment into students as our major industries put into developing their own infrastructure.

We cannot afford to ignore the vast potential that our students have. If you underfund Texas public education, you will be delegating Texas to a lesser status when other options are clearly available.

It takes good money to attract and retain quality educators, buy necessary supplies, and build schools that are the centerpieces of our communities.

Do your job and put the money in the hands of the students.

They are going where we show them the way

Let's make it a first-class trip!

Texas Proud

Ron Schulze
Texas FFA and CTE education
Corpus Christi, TX

Those that use the educational savings accounts have no accountability to the State of Texas in regards to it's funding of public schools. This bill will divert funds needed to increase teacher salaries which will decidely help with teacher retention! It will also not allow the proper funding of schools from the surplus now used. This bill will do AWAY with STAAR testing by diverting funds elsewhere. Another consequence is increasing ther Education Commissioner getting greater authority and latitude to make decisions that should be made by educators, not just one person.

Natalie Sylvester
Self - Teacher
Sugar Land, TX

A free and fair public education is pivotal to democracy. SB8 and its school voucher system only work to undermine our free and fair public education and our democracy. School savings accounts divert funds from already underfunded public schools. Moreover, \$8000 is not enough to cover private school tuition, and most families (I.e. the 60% who qualify for NSLP) cannot afford to cover the difference. Private schools are not accessible in rural communities. Private schools are not accessible to special education students. Private schools are not accessible to emergent bilingual students. Private schools are not accessible to section 504 students. Private schools are accessible only to a specific kind of student, the students they choose to serve. Public schools do not choose our students, we do not deny, we do not turn away - we educate. No matter who the student is, we accept them into our classrooms - we educate. The tired, the poor, the huddled masses - we educate. Private schools can never equal public school in diversity of student body and opportunities for all students to access not only core content, but fine arts, sports, technical education, military readiness. Public education makes it possible for people to achieve their American dream. SB8 seeks to take away opportunities from everyday American students by taking away money that is necessary for public schools to function. In a time a budget surplus, stripping public schools of essential funds can only be seen as an attempt to dismantle and privatize public education. It can only be seen as an attack on our children and their futures.

Support American students, support our children. Protect our future, protect our democracy. Vote against SB8.

Donna Baker
self retired teacher member of TSTA RITRED
Fate, TX

This bill is nothing but a very thinly disguised voucher system. Texas public schools have already seen money siphoned off to charter schools. Texas public schools need more not less money.

The Governor is obviously trying to cater to church schools. Notice where his press conferences have been held! We must keep church and state separate! Public money is for public use.

This bill will also destroy small rural public schools. The sponsors propose extra money to small districts the first few years, but when that is no longer available, how will our smaller districts survive ? They will be forced to cut back on offerings and finally close, leaving parents to have to choose less regulated private schools.

Not all private schools are equal. Just because they are private does not make them good schools. Private schools do not have to follow state guidelines. Furthermore, private schools do not have to accept students. They can pick and choose their students.

Public schools are the backbone of the Texas education system.

Mindi Penrod
Self
Houston, TX

This is a bad bill and everyone knows it. It is nothing more than a coupon for the rich who already send their children to private school. It will gut public education that the Republicans could have fixed within that same amount of time, but they didn't want to! It gives SOME parents choices, but takes them away from others, thus propagating socioeconomic segregation. Vote no on this bill any any that attempt to stuff in vouchers. No holding funding hostage to get your way either!

Amanda Curylo
Self, School Counselor
Temple, TX

I am against private/charter school vouchers. If parents choose to opt out of public education the cost should come out of their own pocket.

Cassandra Spearman, Dr.
Self/Education
Belton, TX

It is never appropriate to allocate public funds to fund private schools without oversight. Private schools are not monitored or follow the same accountability measures as the public school system. As a school administrator, I have received several students back from private schools when they violated their rules or when they needed specialized services. Public schools do not have the same luxury. If they receive public funds, will they be required to keep the student and work through their issues, or will they be allowed to send them back to the public school? I have served in public education for over 20 years. Each year, we are asked to do more with less. If there are available public funds, use them to fund some of the unfunded mandates on public education. We have had multiple public information requests for records and requests to review the curriculum. Evidence that we are teaching/indoctrinating students against their religious beliefs has not manifested. This is a narrative that politicians are pushing with an agenda to fund private education. Parents are a vital part of the education process, but teachers spend years in college learning how to teach effectively. They continue their education by engaging in hours of professional learning, becoming members of professional learning communities, and earning advanced degrees. They have to be trusted as the professional. You are asking for untrained people to oversee what is appropriate in their classrooms. Parents need to partner with teachers. This bill is written in a way that is divisive and paints the picture that teachers cannot be trusted without parental oversight. The treatment of teachers has led to them fleeing the profession. Our legislators should be finding ways to support them rather than pushing the agenda of their political parties. Furthermore, school boards are elected officials, meaning the community has already selected someone that they trust to create and enforce school district policy. If they fail to meet the expectations, the public can vote someone else in. Having a third party outside of the commissioner to review their decisions removes the authority allocated to them by the voters, which is a threat to our democracy.

Barbara Yunker, Ms
Self Retired
Bedford, TX

I'm saying vote NO to vouchers

Joyce Lemmons
Rogers ISD
Rogers, TX

I do not support this bill. Until you confidently explain how private/charter schools will be held to the same accountability public schools are held to, my stance will stay the same. Dr. Buckley, the Chair of the Committee, stated on Thursday, "The reason for the invited testimony only is because we have already heard from the people who do not support any type of ESA/Vouchers." Does that not speak volumes to the number of people who have already discussed this? Do your job, house committee. Listen to your constituents.

Erin Machajewski
Self, Educator
Fort Worth, TX

"Savings Accounts" are a politician's verbiage. How about "Voucher Schemes" or "Costly Entitlement Program" that strips money from public school districts to divert their public funds to private schools? That's more accurate.

Many private schools are religious institutions; vouchers don't uphold the separation of church and state. Public funds don't belong to private entities.

Further, this slippery legislation would disallow participants who do not live in a city—what about our rural Texas children? This costly entitlement program would harm Texas's rural communities.

Moreover, let's consider our students who have Special Needs—are you really willing to defund our public schools and put them and their programs in jeopardy? I hope not. I hope you all do right by Texas's children. Texas parents who accept a voucher would lose out on a myriad of important parental rights outlined in the Texas state education code and in federal law, especially protections for our students receiving special education services.

Lastly, voucher schemes eliminate public accountability of schools and tax dollars.

Remember: School choice already exists— Texas public schools, charter schools, home schools, virtual schools, and private schools.

Please drop this welfare-for-the-wealthy pipeline.

Please listen,
Erin Machajewski, Texas public school Educator

Rene Hoffpauir
myself
Winnie, TX

I am providing public comment regarding CSSB 8. I strongly urge you to consider the points that I plan to address here. First I want to say that CSSB 8 DOES NOT provide many critical pieces necessary for quality education of all students in Texas. It DOES NOT put parental choice over a private school's right to only accept a specific type of student. Private schools can still pick and choose which students they will accept. This bill DOES NOT address high stakes testing by abolishing it, but give the commissioner more authority and does not require that private schools administer and are held accountable using those same high stakes tests that the public school is required to administer. This bill DOES NOT guarantee protections and/or funding for students in Special Education. This bill DOES NOT improve teacher retention or address inadequate funding of schools. It DOES NOT do anything to close academic gaps or guarantee that services are provided to students based on their individual needs. This bill DOES NOT include a hold harmless for public schools as they lose students to vouchers. It takes a great deal of commitment, time, and investment to educate economically disadvantaged children. This investment is not just about money. Giving a voucher does not guarantee that a student will receive a better education. Giving will take away funding from students who need it and give a choice to those who can already afford it. This is a very bad bill which has been presented in a shady, non-transparent way. It is an obvious attempt to dismantle the public school system in Texas without informing the population of Texas of the consequences of the bill. It is an obvious attempt to ignore constituent wishes and push an agenda that is not overwhelmingly supported by voters.

Eleasia Lewis
TSTA
Dallas, TX

I oppose this bill. I ask that no more bills that divert resources from current public school be considered.

William Clifton
Self--retired
Waco, TX

Please do not support any voucher legislation in Texas as it will significantly damage public education for the majority of Texas citizens.

Martina Meritz
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please Vote no. This is unfair and harmful to so many.

Raymond Stubblefield
self
Houston, TX

There are too many unanswered questions and concerns for this bill to move forward without open, public testimony.

The bill in current form erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and doesn't meet IDEA protections. Schools receiving students with a voucher are not held to same standards public schools, specifically academic accountability. And, I believe the bill gives too much authority to the commissioner of the TEA. Finally, the bill takes much needed funds from public schools.

John O'Brien, Superintendent
Van Vleck ISD
VAN VLECK, TX

SB 8 is not good for Texas public schools, and especially not good for rural Texas. With schools all around the state having to layoff staff because the lack of funding predicted for next school year, SB 8 would make it even harder for schools.

Oscar Mendoza, Educator
Self
El Paso, TX

Nobody wants school vouchers Gregg Abbott is trying to take tax payer money and line his pockets and his donors pockets.

leslie currens
self
Austin, TX

I believe in public schools, and I believe the legislature should support public schools financially. I do not believe that *my* tax dollars should be given to anyone to attend an unaccountable private school. Parents can and do choose private schools, and this is fine. But that does not mean the rest of us have to pay for that. Meanwhile, public schools would perform better if they were adequately financed. Please use state money to pay Public School Teachers better and raise the very low per student funding. Diverting public tax money to private schools enriches the few at the expense of the many. I do not support vouchers, in any form. Please do not pass private school vouchers. Instead, please focus on improving public education, which is one of the few things that the Texas Legislature is directly tasked with doing in the Texas Constitution.

Sharon Sackett
Teacher
Bowie, TX

1. The education savings accounts will not have any accountability to the State of Texas in funding it like public schools do.
 2. This would divert public dollars that could be used to increase teacher salaries and properly fund schools with the surplus of money that is currently available.
 3. The bill attempts to divert lawmakers from seeing this diversion of public money as the bill would also abolish STAAR testing. It also leads to the commissioner of education getting more authority.
-

CHANDAI PHILLIPS
Self
Richmond, TX

Oppose

Steven Wiess
Self
Weatherford, TX

I'm a concerned parent that is definitely for parental rights and school choice. I am paying attention and for my reports that do not support school choice, you are on my chopping block come election time. Make sure you stand up for school choice and parents right

David W. Griffin, Community Liaison
Texas State Teacher Association
Dallas, TX

Vote NO on SB08

Mary Hutka, Mrs.
Self retired educator
Austin, TX

Public education needs more money, not less. Vouchers taking away funds will cripple public schools. Charter schools won't accept special ed students or any students that don't meet "their" criteria. Our state needs educated citizens to prosper. If you allow this you are saying you don't care about the children of Texas. Vote no!

Sylvia Campbell
self, retired teacher
The Woodlands, TX

To the Members of the Public Education Committee,

I urge you to vote NO on SB 8. The people of Texas do not want vouchers. Vouchers/ESAs just divert badly needed funds from public schools to largely unregulated and unaccountable private schools.

NO on SB 8.

Thank you,
Sylvia Campbell

Kelly Hastings
self, retired
Southlake, TX

Since you are not allowing any public comment, which is very sad, I am commenting. SB8 should not become law, as it simply does not level the playing field for students. Financially, this is unsustainable. However, the biggest point is that public funds will go to private school WITH NO ACCOUNTABILITY. If public schools are held accountable because they are funded with public money, and I agree that they should be held accountable, so should private schools.

Stephanie Lewis
self/teacher
Quinlan, TX

First and foremost remember the separation of church and state that is designed to prevent government funding of religious organizations. The overwhelming majority of private schools are religion based. Please do not take funding from families and children who don't have any other options but the public school system. There are no private options in MANY communities and passing this bill will only hurt these communities.

Ross Garison
My children
Denton, TX

SB 8 is not helpful to all Texas kids.

Texas is already near the bottom when it comes to funding my children's public education. That deficit in the legislature's investment in the future of the state of Texas will be exacerbated by this legislation that will pull funding away from ACCOUNTABLE public schools and provide it to UNACCOUNTABLE private schools. If the legislature truly wishes to improve education, perhaps they can ask experts in the educational community what would help accomplish this.

Roslyn Baylor, Mrs.
Retired Teacher TSTA
Fort Worth, TX

I have taught and volunteered in the Public schools for over 40 years. Our schools in Texas need more funding to Teacher pay, student allotment and other resources that will improve student performance. Please say No to the Voucher Program.

Karin Johnson, Dr.
Self. School improvement specialist
Austin, TX

NO to vouchers. They're bad for Texas, they privatize education, they will defund public schools.

Keith Shull
Fellowship Academy
Midlothian, TX

I support the school choice initiative and all the related proposed bills

LouAnna Smiley
Self
San antonio, TX

Vouchers will not help education. I have been a charter school teacher. Never know where the money goes except for the pockets of the owners. And owners not from Texas. Put the money in the schools and invest on teachers. I'm tired of working 2 and 3 jobs just to pay my bills.

Russell Bryant, Mr.
TSTA
Wichita Falls, TX

I urge you to reject SB 8 and recognize it for what it is. An attempt to put vouchers in place. Vouchers do nothing more than take funds away from public which are already woefully underfunded in Texas. I urge you to reject this bill.

Landon Buffe
Public Educator
Hamilton, TX

To whom it may concern,

A couple key issues that are concerning about SB8. As a public educator I see the following as major concerns.

1. The education savings accounts will not have any accountability to the State of Texas in funding it like public schools do.
2. This would divert public dollars that could be used to increase teacher salaries and properly fund schools with the surplus of money that is currently available.
3. The bill attempts to divert lawmakers from seeing this diversion of public money as the bill would also abolish STAAR testing. It also leads to the commissioner of education getting more authority.

Thank you for your time.

Landon Buffe

SARAH WEISS

Self/Teacher

Moody, TX

I oppose SB 8. School vouchers only offer choice to the private schools that can refuse admission of students to their programs. Proponents of this bill are pulling the wool over parents' eyes and leaving this detail out.

Robert Grant, Former Sgt

Self

Tyler, TX

Public schools should not be limited on funds for education of Texas Kids.

Dana Barnes, Dr.

Self and Public Education

Fort Worth, TX

As a public educator and as a proud resident of Texas for the past 54 years, I know that the community public school is the backbone of society and democracy. I am baffled by the actions of this legislative session. The lack of honoring and respecting our teachers and this profession is horrific. The legislatures are making it clear that even though we have \$37 billion in excess funds, teachers do not deserve a raise, public education does not deserve to be funded based on 2023 inflation, and that the funds that are available should go to private, homeschool, charter, 3rd party overseers, etc. The purposeful destruction of community public schools will directly correlate to all businesses, community supports, real estate, and our students suffering. Each community school should have the resources to be safe, academically successful, and engaging to every member of the community. EVERY child deserves the best education. Public schools, not charters or other educational facilities, SHALL educate every child. We accept, enroll, and provide specialized supports for any child in need no matter their history, their need, or their ability. I am truly begging for the representatives of Texas to understand the impact public education has on every aspect of our great state. We are not a business and cannot be treated as one. We have human capital, not a product. Our parents, teachers, students, and community members deserve the very best and should not have to go to another institution to receive their constitutional right. Please vote NO on vouchers, ESA's, and any other name that takes money out of public education and gives to institutions who do not honor or feel the need to support EVERY student.

Jimmy Lee, Mr.

Self

Paris, TX

I oppose any voucher or ESA. Public school money needs to stay in public schools. There is little to no accountability attached to the private and charter schools.

Annabelle Estrada

Self

Dallas, TX

This violates the separation of church and state and punishes students with disabilities, as well as take away critical funding. Texas should support and be proud of its public schools.

Kenneth Gilchrest

Self

Wolfforth, TX

TLDR: in general, vouchers are publicly funded discounts for the wealthy. The money for vouchers should be used to increase teacher numbers (more teachers per student) in public schools.

I am in opposition to school vouchers. Parents already have a choice of where to send their students through their choice of where to live. Furthermore, diverting funding away from public schools only weakens the school systems, which will still be required to strengthen the workforce and overall economy. Vouchers come across as elitist, using public funding to pay for private schools for the wealthy who don't need the public funding. Even if vouchers were used to full advantage by the average parent, and a mass exodus of students from public to private schools ensued in the metro areas where private schools exist, one or more of three things would likely happen: 1) private schools would simply become like public schools, bloated with students without enough funding or (certified) teachers. 2) private schools would only take the top students and turn away everyone else, basically allowing the wealthy elite to receive discounted private education at the expense of the public and the rest of the students. 3) the ability to switch schools to any private school that will accept you and the general concept of 'school choice' will push open transfer rulings even across public schools wreaking havoc on district funding and athletic district parity.

The money would be better spent on upgrading school facilities and increasing the number of teachers on campuses. The strength of the private school is not better teachers (most aren't even certified), better facilities, or better curriculum. The strength is in class size, with the average true teacher to student ratio being 1:10. Increase teachers per classroom, and you will see public schools outperforming even top private schools.

Calli Ward

Self, Teacher

Amarillo, TX

Instead of offering vouchers, please just allow better resources for students and professional development for teachers. Our classrooms are packed, and having fewer teachers or money for classroom reduction teachers is hurting the ability to teach proactively. Without proper support, more kids will slip. Giving vouchers does not fix the problem, it only exaggerates the real issues.

Vernell Gregg
Self - Retired Educator
The Woodlands, TX

As a retired Texas educator since 1997, I have been opposed to the use of public funds for vouchers from the very beginning when they were introduced here in the early 90's. Regardless of what they are called, taking money from the traditional public schools is bad. Through the years, I have voiced my opposition to vouchers to my state and national representatives and Senator Tan Parker, and former Senator Jane Nelson can tell you that I have written and visited their local and state offices about this matter several times. They can tell you what increasing the number of charter schools has done to their school district, Lewisville ISD, and the vouchers would make things even worse. Although there are some very good charter schools, there are far too many that are a disaster. Look at the number that are opened and failed within a short time. I urge you to take a look at history and see the damage that some charter schools have done and I sincerely hope you will not pass any legislation that deals with vouchers.

Former Secretary of Education, Lauro Cavozos, under President Ronald Reagan, was against the vouchers because he knew the damage that they would do. Now, more than ever, our public schools need help but vouchers are not the answer. Parents are and have always been a vital part in educating our students. In fact, I always solicited the help of parents and they assisted me in many ways. I believe that what is needed is for our representatives to listen to educators and give them a voice in shaping our future. I was a successful teacher because I was able to collaborate with my colleagues and use our knowledge to decide what was best for our students. It worked then and will work now, if given a chance.

I hope you will help teachers deal with the many problems they have by adding more funding for special programs in the traditional public schools. Addressing the needs of the poor should be the main concern at this time.

Thank you for your commitment to serving.

Sincerely,
Vernell Gregg

Kelly McKey
Mom
Prosper, TX

We have a right to know what our kids are learning. They're our kids and we should have a say and a choice. I know some people don't have any options but public school. Which in some districts are teaching crazy things. Those parents deserve a choice too. Public schools need some competition challenging them to raise the quality of the material and match standards of what kids are capable of. Our children need better than what they've been given.

Sarah Hays
Self; retired
Lubbock, TX

This bill would take money from rural schools where children don't have the option of private or charter schools instead. This bill would harm small towns, and discriminate against Hispanic, Native American, Asian, and atheist students to enrich Christian schools. This bill should not pass.

Debra Garison
Myself
Lewisville, TX

Strongly OPPOSE.

Diane Durbin, Ms.
Self, Retired
Houston, TX

Please vote against this bill. It will not provide underserved students with more opportunity for a flood education. Research shows that measures such as this do not improve educational opportunities or attainment for underserved students. Money should be spent on research-based improvements to public education. Public education is one of the most important Constitutional responsibilities of state government and that responsibility can certainly be done better.

erin miller
self
spring, TX

I am against vouchers.

LeAnn Hampton
Self - Retired Educator and current Early Childhood Consultant
Garland, TX

I am a retired educator and speech/language pathologist and now work as a consultant with both non-profit organizations and public schools. I am aware of the financial issues facing our schools and am very concerned about the impact vouchers/education savings accounts will have on the public school system. I am asking you to oppose vouchers. Thank you very much.

JUSTIN GARISON
Self high school teacher
PLANO, TX

Oppose

Pamela Benson, Mrs.
self employed
Austin, TX

School choice should be the right of every parent. Please endorse the right of each parent in the State of Texas to be able to make this choice for their child.

Joshua Tabor
Denton ISD
McKinney, TX

This idea of educational savings accounts has been proposed before and has been proven ineffective. Now it is being packaged as a 'parental rights' issue, with claims that are not entirely true. Parents already have the right to see what their child is learning in school, and they can access the district curriculum by simply asking for it. I have worked in education for over 20 years, and whenever a parent has expressed interest in their child's education, they have been informed of what is happening in the classroom and on the campus.

Furthermore, I am concerned that if the state is willing to allocate \$8000 per student for these accounts, why are public schools not already receiving that level of funding? This increased funding would go a long way in addressing the financial difficulties faced by public schools and educators.

Overall, I believe that educational savings accounts are not the solution to our educational problems. Instead, we should focus on adequately funding public schools and ensuring that parents have the resources and information they need to be engaged in their child's education.

Roslyn Baylor, Mrs.
Retired Teacher
Fortworth, TX

Please VOTE NO to the Voucher Bill?? This will Greatly Impact our children in Public Schools whose families can not move or afford private schools! Our Public Schools Need Stronger Support & Resources! We need to increase Teacher Pay and Put more Money in Tutoring Mentoring and After School Programs to Improve our Childrens Education! Also finance Trade Program!

Diana Fitzpatrick, Mrs.
La Grange ISD -- Director of Finance
La Grange, TX

SB 8 doesn't prioritize parental choice over the right of the private school to pick and choose their students.
SB 8 doesn't abolish the STAAR, it just replaces it with STAAR 2.0 with even more Commissioner authority.
SB 8 does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs.
SB 8 does not include a hold harmless for public schools that lose kids to a voucher.

SB8 is bad for public education!

Eloy Alvarado
Self. Teacher
EL PASO, TX

There needs to be less government involvement in public education. Education is not a business and should not be micromanaged as such. Private education should not be funded by the public as they are not held to the same standards as public schools. Throughout history we have seen an attempt to control the narrative by those who would stand in the way of reason and empirical evidence. There should be an objective presentation of fact when it comes to education and not the agenda of those who would seek to cover up or ignore difficult subjects. Censoring history is part of the systemic oppression of the people who would otherwise be free.

Since an additional measure has been added for those who would be teachers, then we should defer to the professionals who not only are considered highly qualified by the State, but who also are required by the State to engage in continuous education and professional development. In this, teachers are similar to doctors and lawyers. And no one is proposing the notion for parents to assume that they are better qualified to litigate. (As they saying goes regarding those who would represent themselves in court).

Thomas Jefferson said that “information is the currency of democracy. “ If that is true, then disinformation must be the weapon of monarchs and despots.

Gloria Ortez
self.. School library cataloger
Denton, TX

This would be so detrimental to public education. The money used for vouchers would greatly affect the resources available for public school students. Public education has it issues just like anything else but is still the best way to educate children. Public education also levels the playing field for all students.

Amy Gentry
Self, teacher
the woodlands, TX

Please vote NO on SB 8, the voucher bill. Vouchers divert funds from public schools to unregulated and unaccountable private schools. The people of Texas do not want vouchers.

Kathryn Hickerson
Self - retired public school educator/administrator
Hurst, TX

This bill will raise the stakes of the already high-stakes A-F accountability system only for ISDs, not for the private schools that voucher recipients will attend (as private schools are not subject to state ratings). So much burden is already placed on the ISDs, what with high teacher turnover rates, constant state mandated testing, etc. Putting money into the voucher system so that parents can choose a school not mandated to follow the already established state requirements is totally unfair! Increase funding to the ISDs and throw vouchers out!

Pamela Chiu, Mrs.

Representing myself and my students

The colony, TX

I teach and mentor students from some of the best private and public schools in north Texas. The public schools are no longer teaching as much as even 10 years ago. Parents need choices. In the last five years public schools have become indoctrination factories. Let parents choose, let crappy schools fail. I sent my daughter to private school for high school because of the failures of public school; it was hard; it would've been a lot easier if the state would have allowed the money designated for her education to follow her.

Stand against the teachers unions, they are not for children's education, they are for indoctrination. Vote for school choice.

Hilary Toma

Self

The Woodlands, TX

I urge the Committee to vote NO on SB 8. Vouchers divert funds from public schools to unregulated and unaccountable private schools. The people of Texas do not want vouchers.

- Vouchers divert funds from public schools to private and charter schools, which do not have to accept every student including those with disabilities.
- Public schools must have elected school boards who represent the local community; private and charter schools are not accountable to the local community and do not have elected boards, but have boards consisting of family members, cronies, and business associates of their owners.
- Public schools are required to meet financial standards for transparency and accountability; private and charter schools are not.
- Public schools are rated on students' achievement on STAAR; voucher students would be required to take STAAR, but private and charter schools would not be rated based on students' performance—and, parents of voucher students could simply opt their child out of the STAAR test.

Kind regards,

Hilary Toma

Roseree Reed, Teacher asst.

Roseree Reed Para / Professional

Houston, TX

Public Education

Brittany Eldred

Quitman ISD

Yantis, TX

I am writing to ask you to please keep CSSB 8 from leaving the committee for the following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Maria Welch, Mrs.
Self (mental health)
San antonio, TX

Hello,

I say no to vouchers for many reasons:

We do not need them. There is so many options for school choice that parents are having a hard time picking schools. Our public education has been providing in an excellent way for our kids. They go above and beyond for our children. No one is denied to inappropriate education regardless of your abilities. I can't say the same for private education. Where their main motivation is to look good on paper, and therefore not provide the right accommodations for children that has any type of disability. Usually kids that cannot keep up with their curriculum are asked to leave. This helps them look good by keeping the kids that can easily get A's. Both of my children have ADD and the accommodations that the public school have given them have helped them excel and reach their potential.. our public schools get less and less money, they still perform as best as possible, I say no to vouchers because our public schools need the funding so every child gets the correct kind of accommodation and education that they need. Sincerely,

Maria Welch

Nancy Beck
Self
New Braunfels, TX

My husband and I graduated from public school in Randall County, 1968. Our son in Harris County 1995. Our family of 10 are not in support of vouchers. Such would weaken the more rural, small town schools. We are also active Christians and strongly believe in the separation of church and state. We're not in favor of state tax funds going to church schools.

Lori Blaylock, Dr.
Kaufman ISD
Kaufman, TX

I am NOT in favor of the passage of SB8, specifically, the establishment of an education savings account program. This program will be detrimental to public schools and to the communities that support them.

Kimberly Phelps
Self
Lubbock, TX

I am Not in favor of my School Taxes funding Private Schools!!!!

Brooke Meabon
Self
San Antonio, TX

As a proud parent of two public school children who are in the Spanish Immersion Program in Alamo Heights ISD and receiving a top of the line education, I am very concerned about the effects that the proposed SB8 will have on public school funding. Our public schools must be preserved and protected with adequate funding. SB8 takes much needed funding from our public schools that are open and available to all Texas children and directs it to private schools and vendors, some out of state, with little to no accountability, At a time when our public schools are facing lack of funding in top of inflation, we can not afford to lose a single penny. Additionally, we are all aware of the teacher retention crisis. SB8 will only inflate this crisis. I urge you to vote against SB8 and the harm it will cause.

Caroline Saucedo
TSTA
San Antonio, TX

Vote no

Christine Cole
Self
Houston, TX

Parents have always had rights in regard to their children's education. The objectives taught at each grade level, are published on the TSA website, readily available to those who want to know. The savings program, AKA vouchers, will rob public schools of needed funds, further complicate the education of students with learning differences because private schools do not share the mandate public schools have, to serve all students, and set testing standards for public schools that private schools get to ignore. It gives private schools the ability to select the students who will attend while taking funding needed for schools who must educate all who are enrolled. This is unfair and inequitable to Texas children particularly in rural communities. The TX legislature has been horrible in their treatment of our hard working, caring teachers. Honor Texas parents, students, and teachers by supporting public schools.

Kelly Koepf
TSTA
WINDCREST, TX

It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools

Diverts money from programs that serve our most vulnerable students, like special education and our students that are in poverty stricken areas.

It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws

It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve

Private schools are not obligated to serve the students they do not want, this will take money away from the services needed to serve those students who are not "wanted" at any other schools.

It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system

As a teacher just taking away one and replacing with another does not do anything to serve our schools and students. It also cause teachers to be retrained into a new system.

It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority

As a teacher I had to be certified and go through classes and testing in order to even get a job. The amount of disrespect for teachers among parents and this legislature in embarrassing. I feel that even though I have a masters degree and many, post grad course and training this legislature keeps adding more and more to our plate to make sure we teach what the state wants, not what the students need.

THE STUDENT DOES NOT COME FIRST IN TEXAS. BIG business is the winner here, but yet they complain about not having workers that can do a job for their company. I just feel that the goal is make the students in Texas as behind as possible. The less educated the population the better.

Marilyn Brown

I represent other Grandparents and parents who share my values.

Fort Worth, TX

Parents deserve the right to use an education savings account which contains their tax dollars to send their children to the accredited private or public school of their choice. There are many problems within some public schools.

1. In the early 90's, standards were lowered so failure rates could be lowered. As a teacher, I saw that students did the minimum work required. With lower expectations, came lower learning. This set students up for failure in higher level course, especially in math.
2. Administrative support of discipline decreased. Teachers are over whelmed with the paperwork required to document persistent problems with a child. Parents have become less supportive of teachers. Every day I see numerous students in a class ignore their teachers attempts to have them sit in their chairs, stop talking, and do their work. This disruptive behavior is unfair to the students who do their work, behave, and are wanting to learn.
3. Parents do not want the liberal educators pushing CRT and transgender ideas on their children.
4. We are seeing some of our most qualified teachers leaving because of the problems they are forced to deal with.

Please call me if you have any questions. I am a retired math teacher working part time in our public schools.

Rosa Ramos

Self

San Antonio, TX

I urge you to vote in opposition of this bill. We as parents have an obligation to control what our children should be reading however, we should not impose our beliefs and thoughts onto children and deprive them of their rights.

Susan Riley

self - teacher

Belton, TX

I am against the passage of this bill. Taxes are paid by all citizens to support public education. They are not just paid by parents, but by all adults whether or not they have children in school. Making public funds available to use for private institutions or for home schooling is a misuse of those funds.

Donna Stevens, Ms

Self

NRH, TX

Vouchers have No place in our state! Please do not use special education students as a scapegoat! There are few private schools available to students with special needs! I know! My daughter had special needs and no private school would take her! Public Ed has done an outstanding job and they need the basic allotment increased at least \$1000. Do not waste my taxpayer monies! Vote against vouchers!

Catherine Parker
Tax Payer
Killeen, TX

I am strongly against this proposal. Taking away money from already strained schools is NOT a solution. School's are paid by student attendance and I am not sure how some district's could compare and even keep staff members. How can tax payer dollars pay for private schools? We are to provide a free public education. We need to focus on the more pressing concerns that our schools are dealing with such as safety, standard testing and funding. That is what is important.

Jeran King, Mr.
Self/ teacher
Orange, TX

PLEASE DO NOT ROB OUR ALREAY UNDER PREVILEGED STUDENTS WITH THE PASSING OF THIS BILL. SOME OF OUR STUDENTS NEED MORE HELP THAN OTHER AND IT IS MUCH LESS THAN RESPONSIBLE TO AIDE THOSE WHO NEED THE LEAST AMOUNT OF HELP. LETS DO WHAT BEST FOR EVERY STUDENT IN THE GREAT STATE OF TEXAS NOT MOVE FORWARD WITH THIS BILL.

Calvin Crider
Self/Retired
Fort Worth, TX

Establishing education savings accounts will divert much needed public tax dollars to private entities that have no accountability for how the funds are used. The amount money designated is woefully inadequate to fund private school tuition much less the ancillary costs to send a child to a private school. The loss of money available to the public schools is tax money that should be applied to improve the public schools and to address the addition of special courses for reaching underserved students.

The use of tax dollars for private schools or other private programs is addressed in the Texas Constitution and it is specifically stated that tax dollars are for public ventures. This bill as drafted is an attempt to circumvent the Texas Constitution provisions directing the use of tax dollars. It is an overreach to implement a way to weaken the public school system. The basis for a free society is a free, well-funded public school system. Until the public school system in Texas is better funded, this effort to divert funding away from public schools should be rejected. It will serve no value especially to rural schools and will cost urban and suburban schools the opportunity to improve their programs for all students.

I respectfully urge you to reject this bill as drafted by amending it to delete any reference to education savings accounts, vouchers or tuition reimbursement schemes that divert tax dollars to private or parochial schools where religious indoctrination can replace basic education that is accountable to the Texas Education Agency. Without oversight these schools will be totally unaccountable.

Genevieve Price
self - teacher
Garland, TX

Voters in Garland just passed three bond proposals that will fund improvements to GISD. Similar bond packages are regularly passed by voters.
We support public education and we need you to show your support too.

Vouchers will take funding and resources away from public schools and will benefit families who already have the privilege of choice. Please vote NO VOUCHERS.

Lydia Walden
Como-Pickton CISD
Commerce, TX

I oppose SB 8. As a 40 year educator - I know this is not good for our public school nor our Texas students!!

Eric Holguin
Self
Corpus Christi, TX

I unequivocally oppose this legislation. Public school should be funded properly and school vouchers take away from our already depleted schools. Vote AGAINST SB8.

John Jurkovich
Self
Houston, TX

Stop corporate welfare.

Genevieve Collins, Texas Director
Americans for Prosperity
Dallas, TX

I absolutely SUPPORT parents choice and ESAs. This is right for Texas and texas students. Please pass SB8 to ensure better student outcomes, better opportunities and less testing for students. ESAs can provide life-changing educational outcomes for kids and help create a better Texas of tomorrow. This is a MUST DO for this session.

William Watkins
self, Managing partner Leveille Interests LLC
Austin, TX

Tx has an obligation to support a good free public education under Article 7 of the constitution ,This bill will drain resources from that purpose . It is a subsidy of wealthier Texans over public school children. It will be the death knell for rural schools and programs . Everyone who supports this and private schools over our public schools, teachers , and kids should be ashamed of themselves. It is morally unacceptable to prioritize taking care of political donors and wealthier Texans on this issue. I went to public schools here , as did my children and my grand daughter currently is. The fact that this is the only way I can comment on this is bull shit as well.

David Lancaster
Self, retired
Lampasas, TX

Against. Private schools should not be given money from State of Texas. Public schools need much more money.

JoAnn McKenzie
Westminster Democratic Study Group
Austin, TX

We support public education and oppose SB 8.

Sarah Ashmore
self
San Antonio, TX

I am a parent to three public school students, and I strongly disagree with educational savings accounts, vouchers, or whatever system of giving public dollars to private education you'd like to call it. I hear members wanting to save underprivileged students from "failing" public schools with this bill. The reality is that, as our lawmakers, they are YOUR schools. Your policies, underfunding, and unfair accountability measures have made the so-called "failing" public schools what they are, if you really believe that our schools are failing. Public school's job is to educate every Texas student that comes through their doors. Your job is to make sure that they have the resources to do so. As a parent and an educator, I do not believe our public schools are failing. We, as a state, are failing our schools, teachers, and students. Private schools are fine. They are a fine option for those who wish to pay for them as a choice for their own families for their own reasons. They are in no way better than public schools, by any measure that I have ever seen, and because of a lack of accountability and testing data for private schools, no one can reasonably argue that they are better. I also have a huge problem with unconstitutionally funding parochial schools with tax dollars. This country was founded on the separation of Church and State. Additionally, Texans pride themselves on excellence and fiscal accountability. The bill holds only those students who avail themselves of ESAs accountable (at the cost of the public school system, no less?), not the schools receiving the funds. The solution to our "failing" public schools (of which I would wager there are very few in actuality) is not a hasty, expensive exit by some students. The solution is for you to do your jobs and fully fund public education for EVERY student, as you are constitutionally required to do. Raise the basic allotment. Attract the best educators. Fix the accountability system. Stop driving away excellent teachers with policies that make their job and lives more difficult. Take responsibility for what you have wrought, and do NOT pass any kind of voucher.

Guy Choate, Mr.
self
San Angelo, TX

Please vote against this terrible bill. This bill will do nothing to improve public education. In fact, it will only drain money from an already starved public education budget. This is bad law and chips away at your Constitutional obligation to provide an efficient for PUBLIC education. Thank you.

David Ring
Self-Teacher
Lubbock, TX

SB 8 is another attempt to privatize education on the backs of Texans. Vouchers only allow a greater pool of candidates for schools to choose from to allow on their campus, not for families to choose their schools. Vouchers will diminish the quality of education state-wide by eliminating any accountability for curriculum or instruction. It will eliminate due process for students and employees alike as charter schools are not beholden to state standards. It will allow schools to recruit athletes without question creating unfair advantages for some schools over others. Rural areas that depend on public schools/buildings will be devastated as those who can afford to send their rural student elsewhere will, and those who can't will be left behind. \$8,000-\$10,500 will not cover the costs to rural families. Allowing fees of 3% and 5% for processing companies will create an unfair market of state-sponsored for-profit bureaucracies without public oversight or input. Charter schools will continue to have the problems we've seen like IDEA in San Antonio and Spurs luxury boxes, superintendents renting property to their own campus to walk away with seven-figure salaries, and parents and guardians will be left wondering how the legislature could have led them along on false promises. Some may benefit from vouchers, but those are the same people who are benefiting already from their station in life. It is disingenuous and antiquated to use minority families' struggles to justify a false "liberation" from public education as equivalent to emancipation. Every member of the Texas legislature is able to afford to take four months a year off every biennium to a tune of \$7200/year. No member is a public school teacher and few of you have stepped foot in a genuine classroom in Texas that isn't prepped for a photo op. Public education teachers and education support personnel have been labeled as 'woke', 'groomers', 'greedy', 'lazy', and 'terrorists'. By adopting SB 8 you are hoping for us to fail after we didn't fail due to the standardized testing scheme implemented over the last decade. Stop hiding behind attacking an agenda you disagree with (in public for some) and be honest with yourself in asking whether a voucher system is actually going to make classrooms more effective, efficient, and safe? The false claim of being for small government is obvious in the legislation that has been passed eliminating local control in education and other issues. To think public school employees are the enemy show how out of touch some are in the Texas government. While you focus on cultural boogy-persons you ignore student mental health by failing to fund nurses and medical professionals in every district, over-emphasizing poorly-written standardized tests that impact student, teacher, and campus alike, and line the pockets of ineffective education corporations whose failures year after year are rewarded with lucrative contracts from this state. It will leave Texas kids behind.

Kassie Loe
self and Agricultural Science Teacher
DeKalb, TX

KEEP THE LIBERALS AND THEIR WOKE AGENDA OUT OF TEXAS AND KEEP THE LGBTXYZ COMMUNITY OUT OF OUR SCHOOLS

Cassie Gregory
Self
Cleveland, TX

This is disastrous, irresponsible proposed legislation that will only further the gap between classes and destroy public education. We have to do better for our kids, stop wasting time and money on this and increase funding for public education. That is the responsibility of the Texas Legislature. Not more unfunded mandates and programs that destroy funding for public education.

Mike Rackley
Greenville ISD
Greenville, TX

As a life long resident of Texas, a member of a Public School Board of Trustees, a graduate of public education, and tax payer, I must strongly object to the idea using our tax dollars to subsidize private schools. Not only is this a waste of our tax dollars, but an insult to the thousands of school personnel in the state. My wife is a retired teacher with 36 years of experience. Each year, the state required more and more of our teachers, but are provided with less and less support. Now, there is a proposal to grant private school children with a stipend that is even more than what is allowed to a child in public education. Our public schools are required to provide programs for students enrolled in private schools such as speech now, but yet the private schools are not held to any standards or rated in any way similar to the public schools. This is an injustice to our entire school system of Texas

I encourage you to vote against any such proposal(s) now and in the future. Give our teachers and students a break and provide them the support they need and not waste our tax dollars on private schools that are not held to the standards of our public schools.

Linda Conner
Parent/ grandparent
Belton, TX

I am a parent of four children who are now adults, but went through K through 12 in public schools in TX. I also am the grandparent of 2 children who are currently in public school. I am against SB8. I think the funding could be better spent by investing in our public schools by hiring top-notch teachers, paying our current teachers livable salaries, and offering them the resources to become the best teachers possible. The reason that teachers are leaving the profession at the high rate they are is because they don't feel valued by our school districts or our state. Our tax dollars do not need to be funding private schools. They need to fund the public schools to make them better for all students.

Israel Cortez Jr.
Tsta
Magnolia, TX

Not in favor of it

Bobby Slovak, Mr.
Self—retired public school teacher
Willis, TX

Please vote against any proposed legislation that would provide public money to parents to send their children to private or parochial schools. My parents gladly sacrificed to send me to a Catholic school for nine years. They did not complain about paying public school taxes because they saw that as part of their civic responsibility. I support parents' right to send their children to private or parochial schools, but it is the community's responsibility to help raise the child by supporting public education.

Davelyn Davis
self/Admin Asst at an ISD
Granbury, TX

Please consider voting this down and all possible voucher bills.

Betty Abedor, Ph.D.

self retired public school teacher and university professor

Montgomery, TX

SB 8 by Creighton Public citizens do not want Vouchers to be used as presented in this SB 8. Vote NO on SB 8, the voucher bill. I not agree with the use of Vouchers. Do not divert funds from public schools to unregulated and unaccountable private schools. Vouchers as described in this bill are not positive for education of our children.

Brandy Stanford

Self - ISD CFO

Salado, TX

ESAs/Vouchers do not provide parents with school choice. Private schools are not required to accept all students and there is absolutely no transparency or accountability for the funds that would be attached to ESA/vouchers. As a graduate of public schools, a parent of children that attend public schools, and a public school employee, I personally know the accountability standards for our teachers and testing requirements for our students. I am also very well versed in the financial transparency, unfunded mandates and lack of funding that our districts face. Instead of creating a society divide of private vs public schools, dedicate time and funding to improve public school education. Public education is a service to all and private education is able to pick and choose who they serve. Parents will face the same issues with private education as this is not the solution to fix any current problems.

Deborah Fay

Self / School Counselor

Copperas Cove, TX

As an educator more money should be spent to help fund public schools not defund them with vouchers. This would equate to the defunding of the police movement except on educators. The State has not given educators a raise in over 20 years. Pay us for risking our lives everyday to educate children in overcrowded circumstances with overwhelming paperwork.

Joey McQueen, HS Principal

Lampasas ISD

Lampasas, TX

I oppose this bill

Ruth Northam, Mrs.

BISD

Belton, TX

I am in agreement of the parents receiving vouchers for their choice in at school education, private education or home schooling.

Marissa Rivera

self

Cypress, TX

It is beyond upsetting knowing this keeps getting brought up for vote when not one representative locally has held any kind of town hall or any kind of dialogue about this bill. The fact all of the talks were held at private schools and the public could not get in or ask real questions is beyond fake. This whole murky approach is a slap in the face to educators, parents and the school children themselves. Why now after almost 15+ years of control is the only option to tear it down and not actually make important overdue changes or support it?

Diane Robbins
Self
Richardson, TX

Please vote NO on SB8 and all other voucher bills

John Snelson, Athletic Director/Head Football Coach
Dickinson ISD
Dickinson, TX

What are we doing...PLEASE VOTE NAY

Janene Adam, Mrs
Self
Katy, TX

I am a retired Katy ISD teacher and I have 4 grandchildren in Texas public schools. When I taught parents always had the prerogative to opt out of reading any book we studied. We always were cognizant of our students' special needs. Parents who want alternative education can choose that. But our tax money should not go to private schools. Our democracy is based on educating ALL children. Give extra money to public schools if you feel they are lacking. Help all kids instead of subsidizing wealthy parents.

Janee Alcodray
self, teacher
Beaumont, TX

This bill will not help with teacher retention which is detrimental to our schools success. It doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address the individual needs of students. This bill does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs. This is a disservice to a large part of our student population, specifically those at risk and of low income. I am against this voucher bill as an educator with over ten years of experience in public education. Public dollars should not go to private schools. It takes true commitment to teach economically disadvantaged students and the voucher does not guarantee that they will receive better education elsewhere. We cannot take funds away from those who need it most and education should be accessible and appropriately available to ALL students!

Kim Gonzalez
Self
Lubbock, TX

I am opposed to SB 8. Please vote no in this bill.

Gina Irwin
Self /school counselor
EL PASO, TX

As a public school employee of over 30 years, parent, grandparent & tax payer I am strongly in opposition of vouchers. We need to keep the integrity and prosperity of our public schools.

Paula Boroughs
self - teachers and parents
Amarillo, TX

As a parent and a 33 year veteran teacher, I am saddened by the fact many in my state are turning their backs on public education. We are a country founded in part on educating the masses. This will do nothing but deter that. This who can afford and choose private school for their children are already managing that. This voucher system will not make a difference for those. But what it can do is exclude students from a Free Appropriate Education which they are entitled to. Do you think my students who have special needs should be able to be discriminated against and not be allowed to attend "select" schools. That is one of the ways they boost scores in some private and charter schools. I am literally heartbroken that my immigrant students will be further discriminated against because parents do not feel comfortable at school much less making choices that are not even viable to them. You may blame public education for all the woes in the world but think about how much worse things would not be without amazing teachers pouring into these kids every day. Rather than a literate public, we will have a literate elite only. If it were not for public education, most of you would not have gotten the education you have. But public education is now a public enemy in this state. School "choice" is a form of discrimination which I am sad to see you considering.

Sincerely,
Paula Boroughs
proud educator

Kelli Killion
Myself- Teacher at Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD
Plano, TX

Good evening,

I was just made aware that a sub for SB8 has been sent to the House Public Education committee. While I do appreciate that there are many attempts within this bill that could be beneficial, I am, and will always be, against any voucher program, even those disguised as ESAs, tax credits, or in any other form. Voucher programs in any form have been proven to fail. They take money from our already underfunded schools and hurt our public school children, which account for 90% of Texan children.

I hope that you will see this bill for what it is and vote No on SB8.

Please be aware that Texas Educators and public school parents are watching carefully, and we will donate and vote against you in your next primaries if you allow this. Please do what's right for the majority of Texas children.

Best regards,
Kelli Killion
A Texas Teacher

Jason Hancock
Self - police sergeant
Lubbock, TX

This bill will simply be a work around for vouchers in Texas. This Will lead to less money reaching our public schools. Public schools are the life blood of rural communities. As they continue to be defunded these small towns will fail. These are the towns that grow our crops, and ranch animals. The bill will directly contribute to destruction to the economy of Texas.

Owen Taylor
Self - Texas public school teacher
Kyle, TX

Please stop this bill. Public education is the BACKBONE of our democracy. We cannot continue undercut public schools in order to funnel public money to private interests. PLEASE vote against this ridiculous bill, vouchers are NOT the way forward for our great state! Please invest more in public schools, not less!

Amelia Jimenez, Ms
My son
San Antonio, TX

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6
For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken. Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

Proverbs 3:26-27

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

Proverbs 1:7-9

My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

Proverbs 3:1-8

As a mother, I believe in training up my child in God's way through His Holy Word. I stand firm in God's Word. I pray for you and your families, that Almighty God protects you and shields you. He is my buckler, my fortress, my Hightower, my Rock, and my FIRM FOUNDATION.

Psalms 91:1-16 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of that the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

I pray that you make the right choice. The Holy One of Israel has the final say.

Patricia Martin, Mrs.
Self Retired Teacher
Fort Davis, TX

Tax dollars should only be used for public education. As a retired public school teacher, I know from personal experience that when parents have a concern about curriculum the teacher can work with those parents to make adjustments for that child.

Nathan Cook
Self
Belton, TX

Article 7 of the Texas Constitution states, 'it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.' Feb. 15, 1876.

It does not state that we are to provide for and maintain non-public schools. Some people will always try to 'add' to the context of what was written. We must consider the intent as well. The intention of Article 7 was not to support non-public educational entities using taxpayer dollars.

Until we change Article 7 of the Constitution, this bill and others like it should not be under consideration. Thank you for your time.

Brandon Scheu
self-Teacher
Winnsboro, TX

I am opposed to this Bill for the following reasons:

1. The education savings accounts will not have any accountability to the State of Texas in funding it like public schools do.
 2. This would divert public dollars that could be used to increase teacher salaries and properly fund schools with the surplus of money that is currently available.
 3. The bill attempts to divert lawmakers from seeing this diversion of public money as the bill would also abolish STAAR testing. It also leads to the commissioner of education getting more authority.
-

Kimberly Reinhardt
self
Corpus Christi, TX

Voucher are a discriminatory system that diverts public money to schools that do not sure the public. That is fundamentally WRONG and I do not accept it. Please fight for the right for ALL students in TX.

Barry Newton
Teacher
Sundown, TX

This bill is just another detriment to the overall education and mental wellbeing of all students and teachers in Texas. The mental health of students is not good and as a teacher I see it decline even more everyday with the emphasis on testing. Do the right things for kids and educators and vote no on SB 8!

Heather Perkins
Moody ISD
Morgan's Point Resort, TX

I am not for this bill. Please do not end our education system

Mary Simmons
Self / Concerned Parent
Orange, TX

We need our tax dollars to go to public school and our public school teachers, to help with a better educational programs and athletics program and also after school programs to help our kids with their learning abilities.

Rose Hargett-Neshyba, Dr.
Lake Worth ISD
Willow Park, TX

Please oppose SB8. This bill allows for vouchers, increases the number of standardized tests, and requires Texas colleges to used a new 11th grade exam for placement into freshman courses. Vouchers give private schools choices, not the parents. It also take monies away from our most needy students. SB8 is a detriment to our public schools.

Tana Palafox
Self
Abilene, TX

As a concerned citizen, teacher, and parent, I strongly urge my representative to vote NO on SB 8 and school vouchers. While I understand the desire to provide parents with more flexibility in choosing their child's education, the implementation of vouchers would have far-reaching and negative consequences on our public school system. School vouchers would divert crucial funding away from already underfunded public schools and siphon it off to private schools, which are not held to the same standards of accountability and transparency as public schools. This would only exacerbate the inequities in our education system, with children from low-income families and disadvantaged communities being left behind. As my representative, I implore you to prioritize the needs of all students, not just those who can afford private school, and vote NO on school vouchers.

Janis Daemmrich
self, self-employed
Austin, TX

Call them what you like, ESAs are vouchers and vouchers are bad for public education. I urge you to vote against this bill.

Barbara Mayo
NEA
Cedar Park, TX

This bill must be passed

Alexis Wilson
Self - Educator
Spring, TX

This bill adds vouchers and additional testing and is not good for our students. Also having only invited testimony is a way to silence those who do not agree. Vote no to SB 8

Sara Fox, Dr.
self
Conroe, TX

Vote NO on SB 8! Here are reasons why this is a bad bill. Vouchers divert funds from public schools to private and charter schools, which do not have to accept every student including those with disabilities. Public schools must have elected school boards who represent the local community; private and charter schools are not accountable to the local community and do not have elected boards, but have boards consisting of family members, cronies, and business associates of their owners. Public schools are required to meet financial standards for transparency and accountability; private and charter schools are not. Public schools are rated on students' achievement on STAAR; voucher students would be required to take STAAR, but private and charter schools would not be rated based on students' performance—and, parents of voucher students could simply opt their child out of the STAAR test.

Daniel Olivares
Self
Sunnyvale, TX

It's absolutely asinine to be talking about defunding public schools while our teachers across the state need a raise. Private schools aren't forced to allow every student, aren't required to report results and your solution is to give them our tax money?

Focus on funding public education. Give back all the recaptured money that Texas keeps to school districts. Stop playing games for the donor class and reject this bill.

Kori Acevedo, Mrs
Fruitvale ISD
Canton, TX

Teachers need \$10k raise! Across the state!
No vouchers. Taxpayer money should be spent on public education!!

I was on a great team of 5 teachers. 3 are leaving the profession!

Do something to help educators and schools!

Philip Dodd
self - retired school teacher
Kingsland, TX

We (Texas) need to take a national leadership role in providing educating opportunity for Our children by Strongly supporting School Voucher programs. Our public educational system is being destroyed by the woke left and voucher systems will provide a means for Parents to had a Loud say in the education of their children. Please support S B 8, for Texas children and Parental Rights. Thank you.

Molly Deramus, Ms.
Self
Plano, TX

It has my experience that sending money away from public schools to other choice options does not improve students' education. First, private schools will not be held accountable to high score achievements like public schools are. Religious schools which are private will also require students to attend their denominational courses regardless of whether that child is of the same faith or not. As we saw in 2020, those who are not held to high rigorous education will not perform as well. Public schools are monitored to ensure state standards are upheld, but that is not the case for schools not in the public education system. My tax dollars should go to fund what as it allows access to everyone. Private schools require an application, and this means that someone can say whether a student can attend or not. Giving the public the money does not guarantee a student will be accepted or not. Fund the selection of better teachers in public schools if you want a better educational system. Fund better public school facilities if you want a better educational system. Defunding schools is like defunding the police department. If you take it away, then you remove the access to education. This will take us back, not forward.

Thomas Daugherty, Reverend
Self
Burleson, TX

I oppose SB8 in the interest of and need for better public education for all Texans.

James Watt, Mr.
Self; Retired private and public school educator
Spring, TX

Dear Representative Creighton, I am contacting you again to express strong support for the establishment of education savings accounts. I believe that in today's educational environment, school choice/freedom is needed to give parents the assurance that their children will be educated both with sound academic standards, as well as through acceptable behavioral and moral standards. That can best be done by making sure that an amount of school tax dollars sufficient for admission to alternative schools is accessible to parents. Much of the school tax dollars spent annually per student should follow students to the schools of their parents' choice, while leaving a portion of student monies with the public schools. There have been and are noteworthy and commendable educational savings account programs in place in other states. Texas should follow the best practices of these exemplary programs. Thank you for your continuing leadership in promoting support for this important issue in our legislature.

Heather Ramsey
Lexington ISD
LEXINGTON, TX

Why more standardized tests? You are stressing teachers and students out for nothing. Tests shouldn't be a factor in the learning process. You are having to lower the "passing" rate so low so that you can have students pass--INSANITY

molly alexander
Self
BELLVILLE, TX

No.

Lesley Rivas
Mexican American School Boards Association
Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

We understand that ensuring a quality education to our youth is among the top values for Texans. Therefore, the Mexican American School Boards Association submits this written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 8. Our organization is composed of school board members serving across the state and focused on advocating for our communities and ensuring that every student in Texas has access to a high-quality public education. As filed, SB 8 proposes a school voucher that grants Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) for eligible Texas residents and reimbursement for rural districts. We understand the arguments made by supporters of this bill - that it would provide parents with more options for their children's education. However, we believe that this bill will negatively impact our public schools and thus, harm the very students we are committed to serve.

Texas ranks in the bottom 10 states for per-pupil spending on K-12 education, spending a little over \$3,000 less per student than the national average. This has disproportionately affected Latino students, who make up the majority of the total enrolled student population, as well as those identified as economically disadvantaged. State spending, although nominally increased, has remained relatively flat due to increased inflation and enrollment. In fact, 2023 spending per pupil is estimated to be below 2014 spending rates after being adjusted for both fluctuations.

This bill will only exacerbate the existing inequities in our public school system by diverting scarce resources away from public schools and towards private schools, which are often unaccountable to taxpayers and have fewer requirements for transparency and equity. This lack of accountability could result in greater disparities for marginalized communities.

Voucher expansion itself would pose a high cost to the State, further preventing funds from being allocated to more urgent matters that would greatly benefit Texan students. In other states, voucher programs have risen to expenditure levels their proponents either did not anticipate or ignored. New Hampshire's Education Freedom Account program ballooned to \$14.7 million in costs last year, when department leadership had anticipated it to be \$3.3 million. A recent study found that seven states witnessed at least a doubling of expenditures of public funds related to voucher programs, resulting in nearly each state diverting hundreds of millions of dollars from public education to private schools. Here in Texas, Dallas ISD, a district with a student body that is 71% Hispanic and 89.4% economically disadvantaged, has lost an estimated \$349 million in funding to charter schools in the area in the last decade.

We urge you to vote against this bill. Instead, we ask you to protect our public schools and to make the financial investment our schools and communities need. Thank you for your attention on this important matter.

Jennifer Cottle, Dr.
Self, Early Intervention Specialist & Adjunct Professor
Nevada, TX

Please vote no on this bill. As a rural citizen and a former Special Education public school teacher, I strongly oppose diverting funds away from public schools in favor of private schools. We need more support for our teachers and students, especially in our rural districts.

Brett Stawar
self
Port Aransas, TX

Please do not advance the school vouchers as it will only hurt public education and cost the state so much more money. The entire recapture problem, followed by the bill intent here with additional testing, education savings accounts, and more will make Texas education falter. The oversight needs to remain at local level with a strong state board of education skilled to make these decision. The fabric of our nation is built upon public education.

Jason Hammett
Self Texas High School Coaches
Marshall, TX

No against vouchers. Vouchers are not conservative. Vouchers will only lead to corruption and undermining Texas small towns

Stacy Anderson
Self
Houston, TX

No vouchers!!! Stop bleeding public education

David Matthews
Dawson I.S.D.
Purdon, TX

This bill is an atrocity. Public education has been the backbone of our country . If private and charter schools are kept to the same standard as public schools, testing , taking ALL students regardless of discipline or educational problems it might be fair . What his bill does is cripple and destroy public education . I will campaign and vote against any representative or senator that votes for it .

Chelsea Billings
Self- Ag Science Teacher
Poteet, TX

Public dollars that are currently being used should be used to increase teacher pay. Many other careers who have less impact on society are making more than teachers who spend their time, and personal money to make sure our students are being taken care of. The diversion of money should be sent towards teacher funds and to help raise pay for teachers. Most teachers cannot even afford rent without having a second job. We don't need more funds to be taken away from the career who needs it the most.

Cindy Nick
Myself- retired teacher
Tyler, TX

While I support school choice and ESAs I do not support a state mandated test for those who opt in. Private Schools and Homeschool Parents should not be required to give the same test given in the public schools. The state test is aligned to a state curriculum and would not be reflective of a students mastery of content actually taught. Furthermore, it attaches strings which would ultimately lead to state control of private schools and defeats the purpose of school choice in the first place. Additionally, SB8 completely ignores the rights of middle class parents like myself to participate in this program. Please amend SB8 and send a true universal, no strings attached bill to the floor! Texas parents are depending on the 88th Texas Legislature to get this right!

Katherine Lehmann
Self
Houston, TX

No vouchers! Fund the public schools.

Hertha Salazar
Self
Adkins, TX

Oppose voucher for posterity

Juana. A. Munoz
Self, Do not pass the bill.
San Antonio, TX

We do not want this bill pass, we would be out of a job, if less kids come to public schools. And public schools have better opportunities and extra curriculum activites..

Carol Tanner
self, teacher
Temple, TX

I am speaking against school vouchers as a public school educator who has worked in a charter school system. I know that my voice will not matter because this is part of the Texas legislature's agenda to move towards Christofascism, but I will try regardless. The charter school system is made to go unchecked and students and teachers have and will suffer because of it. The truth is that Texas is a very diverse state and the voices of those that aren't conservative Christians have been made to be silent, but these kinds of laws harm so many children and their families. I know that you've heard testimony after testimony of people who are harmed by the laws that you create and you continue to pass them anyway, so it is apparent that you do not care about actual Texans, only your agenda. For the farce of the Democratic Process, I am including my voice against this SB8. In my charter school experience, I was asked to teach multiple subjects that I was not qualified to teach, there was no school nurse, there was no gym or PE for the students, there was no job security for teachers who did not bend to the will of the school "CEO". The SPED students were not appropriately managed. I know that the idea of unregulated education is the goal in order to push an agenda of an education steeped in ignorance and religious teaching, and I'm aware of the end goal. As a parent, my responsibility is to make sure that my children are aware of reality because I cannot trust that they will get that education at school, public or otherwise. I am so ashamed to be a Texan. Everyone I know and love feels the same way. You are harming so many people. Please stop. Y'all like to say "Don't California my Texas"... well, don't Nazi Germany my Texas.

Stacey Myers
Self
Austin, TX

Please vote against SB8. Our public schools are already hurting for funding and taking money away from them and giving them to other schools will cause further degradation. We need a community of educated children to improve our future and taking away from public schools which is where everyone can get an education would cause a larger gap in class and educational differences. Even with a voucher, most people can't afford a private school, so why not improve funding for public education and improve education for all! Please vote NO on SB 8 and all voucher related bills.

Liz Callarman
Self
Belton, TX

Vouchers will hurt Texas public schools. Currently Texas public school receive just over \$6000 per student in order to educate them. This bill will actually give families MORE money, \$8000, to send them to a school of their choice, Private schools. They will only allow benefit rich families that already send their children to private school as most private school tuition is over \$8000. If we really want to invest in Texas schools and Texas children, then we need to pay Texas public schools \$8000 per child. School of choice does not mandate that our Texas children will be educated by certified professional, nor will they be help accountable to the same rigorous standards as the TEKS and the STAAR test. We need to invest in our public schools to invest in our State's future.

Emily Doherty
self
Garland, TX

OPPOSE SB 8

Jim Rosebrock
Self-Rancher
Belton, TX

Will take public money from taxpayers and give to private schools with no accountability. Shouldn't even be up for discussion.

Julie Hinaman
Self, not employed
Cypress, TX

As a parent, taxpayer, and voter, I OPPOSE SB8/CSSB8. I OPPOSE vouchers and education saving accounts that will defund our local public schools, that do NOT protect parents & students (esp those receiving special ed services) , lack academic and financial accountability/transparency to taxpayers and ADD UNNECESSARY BUREAUCRACY to our state gov't.

The 80 page committee substitute for this bill took a BAD bill and made it even WORSE. Why in the world are you trying to ADD more STAAR (rebranded) tests for our children to take???

If you have enough extra money (\$32B) to add yet another parallel school system, then you should FIRST increase the basic allotment enough to address inflation since 2019 AND give teachers a raise, fully-fund special education at public schools, and find school safety initiatives allowing for LOCAL control.

This bill allows the state comptroller to skim 3% off the top and send ls another 5% to “education money brokers”. All along the voucher process, kids will be “screened” so that only some will get the vouchers and few will actually be accepted by private schools. Vouchers do not equal acceptance. Public schools accept ALL kids.

The Texas state constitution requires the state gov't to fund public schools. Focus on your constitutional commitments, Representatives.

Wendy Baskey
Self - relationship manager
Arlington, TX

I am very much against this bill. I do not want my tax dollars to subsidize private schools, where there is no accountability to the tax payers. I do not want my tax funds diverted from our already struggling school system. I have never disputed my property taxes; however, if this goes into law, I will fight to pay as little as possible. The other concern is that children with special needs will be left behind because private schools do not have any requirement to support these students. If parents want to send their children to private schools, that is certainly their choice, but not on my dime. Many private schools are religious and I expect the government to adhere to separation of church and state. My tax dollars should not be used to pay for any religious schooling. Thank you for your time and please vote against this bill. It is harmful to our children, teachers, and communities.

Norman Dolch
self retired educator
Valley Mills, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers because they take money away from public schools. It is fine for parents to decide to home school their children or send them to private schools. It is their choice. A school district should not share its funds with private individuals. Public education is important for our democracy to exist and diluting its funding is inappropriate.

Sarah Laberge, Mrs.
self
Richmond, TX

Please vote no to vouchers. It does not help our communities as a whole at all.

Karen Linnartz
self
San Antonio, TX

My Children have been lucky enough to attend the same Public Schools in NE ISD that my husband attended. My daughters have had an education that I consider to be top-notch, taught by some of the best certified teachers Texas has to offer. If funds leave public schools and you attend a school outside the public school system, you will not know if you have certified teachers. I need public funds to stay in public schools. Vote NO to vouchers!

Daina Alston
self, teacher
New Caney, TX

Please don't vote for this bill. Vouchers in Texas will take much-needed money away from public schools (which are, for the most part, doing a good job of educating students) and make the education of our special needs students more difficult. Please put student needs first.

Andrea Keane
self
Grapevine, TX

Please do not vote for this. It will devastate funding for our public schools!!!!!! And reduce opportunities for students. Please vote NO.

katie farkash
self
Austin, TX

I oppose vouchers of any kind. No for SB8. I believe Senate Bill 8 will hurt children who attend our already underfunded public schools. As such, we oppose legislation that authorizes state funds to be used to pay for private school tuition and related costs.

Kady Gallagher
Self- educator
Lubbock, TX

My tax payer dollars should NEVER go to a private entity. I work in public education as an already underpaid teacher, and it makes me sick to think my hard earned money would go toward private education entities getting rich. Fund public education correctly and everyone flourishes. Defund it, and those families you are already mad at for "living off of government assistance" will only increase. This idea is elitism and racist and disgusting.

Nancy Jones
Self, retired educator
San Antonio, TX

I graduated from public schools and I taught in public schools for more than 30 years. Public schools are the foundation of our democracy. Private schools do not all maintain the democratic virtues our constitution upholds. I vote Republican. Vouchers do not serve our children. Vote no to vouchers.

Richard Wechtenhiser
Self, Mgr
San Antonio, TX

Vote NO on SB8

John Ingram
Selfschool
Burnet, TX

Crippling our schools is absolutely wrong. Public schools can thrive when given strong competent leadership and adequately paid and motivated teachers. PLEASE, before you further diminish our schools, give leaders the tools they need to compensate and motivate our educators so our kids can all succeed. Public money diverted to people not trained or motivated to teach is just wrong. If successful, that action will doom us to live among poorly prepared citizens lacking the skills or motivation to succeed. Please try demanding success from our schools using another measure...not the stupid testing we have endured over these past years. Vouchers in any form are probably unconstitutional anyway. Thank you

Shonda Cannon, Mrs.
Denison ISD
Denison, TX

I would urge the House to stand strong against vouchers. It is wrong to take public funds and divert them to private schools who are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. As a legislative body, you took a stand against vouchers. Electronic Savings Accounts are just another name for "vouchers." Do not lose credibility with the public by passing this bill.

Terri Ramos
SELF-Labor Liaison
San Antonio, TX

SB 8 by Creighton - should be opposed. Public Education allows for the acceptance of children to go to school. The foundation of public schools was to educate our children. The basics of our education system eroded when those outside out of the public education system changed the environment and systemically changed the quality of our education system. We deserve equal availability for all children to be educated and protecting public education is the best way to get it done.

yolanda Young, Dr.
Fort Bend ISD
Richmond, TX

As a tax payer, I am highly irritated at the idea that my tax dollars would go to vouchers to help fund private school tuition through an ESA. Take that money and give it back to public schools so my kid's teacher can have a decent wage.

Glenn Thompson
Seagraves ISD
Seagraves, TX

I have been a registered Republican voter in the state of Texas for over 25 years, and I have always tried to stay informed of issues and vote accordingly. I know that school vouchers are made to look good to the general public and seem to be favored by Republicans. I however know that they will not be the best thing for all students. The state has failed to invest in our public schools, and teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. What is really going to happen with school vouchers is an increase in segregation. I know that economically disadvantaged students can receive vouchers, but students in most rural areas, like where I live and teach, will not have any other school option. Parents with money will be able to use the vouchers in rural areas because they will be able to drive their students to other places for private education options, but economically disadvantaged students will not have that option. What needs to happen is an investment in public education and paying teachers what they deserve. Teachers get a horrible reputation because yes there are bad teachers out there. I know a ton of good, loving teachers who devote their lives to young people, and the lack of respect and support for them is disgusting. We need to stop bills like this that are made to look good to many but are not going to have the positive effect that they propose.

Lucinda Smith, Mrs.
Education
Temple, TX

I do not support this bill. Until you confidently explain how private/charter schools will be held to the same accountability public schools are held to, my stance will stay the same. Dr. Buckley, the Chair of the Committee, stated on Thursday, "The reason for the invited testimony only is because we have already heard from the people who do not support any type of ESA/Vouchers." Does that not speak volumes to the number of people who have already discussed this? Do your job, house committee. Listen to your constituents.

Yolanda Lyons
self
Temple, TX

Regarding public education, including parental rights and public school responsibilities regarding instructional materials and establishing an education savings account program, I am for school vouchers, which improve public education allowing competitiveness with other private schools. This savings account program also supports the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Sheehan Melanie
Self
Odessa, TX

We must not divert monies that are desperately needed for public school to unaccountable private schools. It does not protect students served under IDEA federal laws. It replaces STAAR with just another high stakes test that isn't best for students.

Courtney Mallory
Stephenville ISD
Stephenville, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers. Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students. Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud. Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement. Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially. It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas. NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Jessica Gray
Self
Watauga, TX

The redirecting of tax dollars away from public education is abhorrent. Families CHOOSE to send their children to private institutions. The responsibility of funding that choice and education should rest solely with them. This is a theft from taxpayers and children in every public school. You are cheating our already drastically underfunded public schools to cater to wealthy families and religious institutions. School vouchers do nothing to support children in rural areas of Texas, low-income households, or students with special needs. Do the right thing for Texas children FOR ONCE!

Dakota Tefertiller, Mr.
Tsta
Smyer, TX

This money needs to be spent on helping public school education schools not private businesses.

Clarissa Riojas
McAllen Federation of Teachers
MCALLEN, TX

No matter what an education voucher is called, the policy is the same. Vouchers are a scheme that divert public funds to private schools and vendors, and then continue to undermine traditional public schools and charters, teachers, and students. The lack of public accountability in any voucher program leaves the system open to mismanagement of financial resources, and also lacks academic accountability of the schools that receive the private voucher money.

It doesn't matter if they are called Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs), special education vouchers, virtual vouchers, or a "bracketed" voucher set-up to protect rural schools from the harmful impacts of this scheme: any voucher program will have a long-lasting, negative impact on our state.

John Milton
Self, Education
Caddo Mills, TX

I am opposed to SB 8. I believe public schools should be fully funded, but instead, public funds will be used to fund private education. Private education does not have the same accountability that public schools have. The bill will turn loose a VERY substantial sum of money with no accountability mechanism. This seems to go against big government and go against conservative spending.

It appears that the accountability requirements being added to SB 8 will add more testing to Texas students. The changes to the accountability system will make things more complicated for schools if the current STAAR requirements are not lifted.

Bill Caldwell
Self- retired educator
Lubbock, TX

Vouchers are a terrible idea for Texas schoolchildren.

Jacqueline Drake
Self
Killeen, TX

No, Public School Voucher

Shaunna Richter
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please vote no vouchers

Kyle Uber
Self - School Director
Denison, TX

Education Savings accounts are detrimental to public education in Texas. This would directly move funds away from public education, which is already an issue. Please use these funds to better support our public school teachers. This bill would expand the equity gap already created in Texas. Simply fund and support our public school students and staff!

Marcia Staff
self - retired
Denton, TX

Now is not the time to take any resources away from public schools in Texas and direct them to private schools by way of vouchers or otherwise. We have learned from Charter Schools that deemphasizing public education has a negative effect on all Texans. The public schools--unlike charter schools and private schools--take every student who shows up and does their best to help them become educated citizens. Please empower the teachers--the real heroes in this story--and use any funds you can to pay them a living wage and provide them the kind of health insurance that you enjoy. The future of Texas depends on strong public schools that are funded adequately. Any action that you are proposing that does not accomplish those goals is a waste of my hard earned tax payer money. As a product of the Texas public schools (and higher education) and their dedicated teachers I ask that you put the children of Texas first (before any special interests) and respect and fund Texas schools and their teachers. Say no to vouchers in any form!

Andrea Collier
Temple ISD
Temple, TX

Instead of removing funds from public schools for vouchers funds should be reinvested in programs

Stephen Owen
Self
Fischer, TX

I am 69 years old. Born and raised in Texas. For 30+ years I worked in the oil and gas industry. Upon retirement I decided to start a second career at 66 as a public school teacher. It has been the most rewarding work experience of my life.

Public schools are not perfect but the hard work and dedication of Texas educators does generate a skilled and knowledgeable group of young people ready to face today's challenges. Our school is a diverse population of different cultures and economic statuses.

In theory I am not in disagreement with the school voucher proposal. In fact it appears to be an attempt to push public education back to my childhood school days of segregation. That is not the education experience I want for my grandchildren.

The argument that God is not in the classroom is not true. I pray for students and staff all the time. I do not impose my beliefs on others but I live my life each day as a devoted Christian. As a person who believes in the first amendment, I also respect the right of others to practice their religious beliefs.

We live in the greatest nation in the history of mankind and the greatest state in that nation. Please do not allow our public education system to be a political football. Work with parents, work with schools and work with the business community to make the education of our young people productive. Please do not push us back in time.

I am against passage of SB8.

Sunnie Fox
Self Real Estate Agent
Cedar Park, TX

NO to vouchers! Public education has undeniably played a crucial role in shaping my family's trajectory, providing equal access to education, high-quality learning experiences, comprehensive support systems, and fostering community engagement. It has been the bedrock of our growth and success. While acknowledging the challenges that public education faces, I remain opposed to the implementation of school vouchers as an alternative. Vouchers risk diverting resources from public schools, widening educational inequalities, and undermining the inclusive and equitable principles that public education stands for. It is imperative that we continue to invest in and improve our public education system, ensuring that it remains a cornerstone of a prosperous and equitable society.

The fact that this isn't open to in person comment is disturbing beyond measures and is sickening that the elected officials are more interested in their own pockets than the future of our public schools. If it really is parent choice, listen to the parents of the 5.2 million children in Texas public schools. No to vouchers!

Karen Liska
Taxpayers and homeowners
Houston, TX

Do not pass voucher program to take \$ from public schools. Our taxes are paid for public school / NOT private

Vernon Bruce Chancey
Self
Conroe, TX

I'm opposed to SB 8.

Texas has a duty to provide all children a solid k-12 public education. SB 8 is nothing but a voucher bill with some fancy promises that are intended to obfuscate its true intentions—to get the state in the private and parochial school business while weakening public education.

Vote NO on SB 8.

Tiffany Ireland
Self!
Richmond, TX

I am honestly appalled that this is even being proposed. I am a strong believer in the importance of public education and this bill completely undermines public education. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that our public education system is functioning successfully and to write policy that provides public education with the resources needed to be successful. This bill does the exact opposite of that by providing families with the funding to choose private education over public education. It sends a message to the public that even our state government does not trust public education, so why should they.

Public Education was established by America's Founding Fathers with the strong belief that preserving democracy would require an educated population that could understand political and social issues and would participate in civic life, vote wisely, and protect their rights and freedoms. The reasons why public schools came into being—preparing people for jobs and citizenship, unifying a diverse population, and promoting equity, among others—remain relevant, even urgent.

I grew up in a lower middle-class household with three siblings. We were zoned to one of the best public-school districts in the state, Fort Bend ISD. All four of us went on to higher education; one is now a medical doctor, I have an MBA, and the other two are very successful in their careers. I credit our success directly to the excellent K-12 education that was provided to us by the public education system.

I have no issue with private schooling or the families that choose it for their children's education. My issue with this bill is that government would be purposely writing policy that undermines the public education system. The public schooling system cannot thrive if private schools draw off substantial numbers of students, resources, and parental support. In order to succeed, public schooling must enroll sufficient numbers of children from all social classes, including the most affluent and well-educated families. Instead of incentivizing families to leave the public education system, state policies should be supporting the improvement and success of public schools. The most shocking thing about Senate Bill 8 is that it provides families who choose private schools with a larger financial voucher than what the state is providing public schools to educate that same child. The current basic allotment is \$6,160 per student, so why is the voucher providing families with \$1,840 more than the BA. Why not increase the basic allotment for public schools by that \$1,840 per student which would go a long way in providing support to public school districts? This additional funding would allow districts to increase pay (attracting and retaining quality teachers and staff) and provide additional learning resources to students.

Public schools reflect our values and influence our future, so fully fund public education instead!

Christine Yates
self/parent
Conroe, TX

As a parent with a child in the Texas public school system I wholeheartedly OPPOSE this bill. I am disgusted that this bill is even being considered, given over half the students in Texas attend Title 1 schools and are already at-risk for school achievement. Texas schools, children, and teachers deserve to be fully funded. Furthermore, it is insulting as a parent to allude that we are not actively involved in parenting our children when it comes to "instructional materials" brought forth in the curriculum being taught.

Amanda Michael, Mrs.
self, educator
Forney, TX

I am an educator and I'm writing to ask you to please reconsider CSSB 8.

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for everyone to stand up for your against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Kim Bird, Dr.
Salado ISD Board of Trustees
SALADO, TX

Please stand firm against vouchers and education savings accounts that do not provide fair and equitable educational opportunities for the children of Texas. Stand firm against our governor, Lt. governor and other Republican leaders who are attempting to blackmail Republican legislators by refusing to support other bills that will increase funding for public education or call special sessions that cost tax payers unnecessary money and keep legislators tied up all summer.

Sandy Brown, Mrs.
Self
Argyle, TX

Please vote NO! We do not want vouchers with our tax dollars.

Harold Smith, Dr.
Self
Arlington, TX

I do not support HB8. I am a Texas educator with 58 years experience. My tax dollars should not go to church schools.

Richelle Brown
Self
Georgetown, TX

I am opposed to a school voucher program of any kind, I believe we should be fully funding our existing public schools. I am opposed to more testing. I would like to see the legislature work on attracting & retaining qualified teachers through better pay and more support for our existing public schools.

Nick Harpster, Dr.

Self

Lubbock, TX

I request that you vote no on SB 8, as this would be one of the greatest redistributions of wealth in Texas history from the state's poor and middle class to the richest Texans

It will divert billions of dollars away from public schools and into private Christian schools putting our children's education at risk.

Private school teachers do not pay into the Teacher Retirement System (TRS). Revenue diverted from public schools to pay them will mean that there will never again be a cost of living increase or a 13th check for retired teachers if this voucher bill passes.

Additionally, private schools are not accountable to taxpayers; they are not required to report student achievement data to the state.

Private schools do not have to accept all students; they can discriminate, and there has been research that shows they often do. Passing this bill essentially makes segregation legal in schools again. We don't need to go backwards in our rights and protections as citizens.

No credible research exists to suggest vouchers (aka Education Savings Accounts) improve academic performance. There is no reason why parents should pull students from an underperforming school, as the state should be doing their proper due diligence to make all schools well performing schools, rather than waiting for those that can afford to send kids to private schools to pull their kids, further reducing funds and possibly even tax dollars from those schools; exacerbating the problem until school districts close and consolidate schools.

Plus, costs of vouchers are exorbitant. Vouchers subsidize tuition for existing private school and homeschooled students, putting a huge new financial burden on the state. Texas already ranks 40th in per-student spending and the rate of inflation since 2019 is 14.5%, per the Comptroller.

Choice already exists within the public school system - Districts have transfer policies, magnet schools, career/tech academies, etc. Parents also already have rights to understand and discuss what their students are being taught. It is called attending school board meetings and joining the PTO. If parent's are that interested, they need to participate in what is already offered. Additionally, parents should not have rights to choose what their individual child learns or not. Facts should be taught in school, and if they don't want their kids to grow up knowing history and reality, then they can have the option to home school their children, which honestly is a horrible idea, but parents should not be allowed to influence the subject matter and pick and choose, or piecemeal their child's education. There are processes for determining the requirements and subject matter for a proper education, and parents personal beliefs should not be factored into this. Thank you.

Somer Garcia

Self, stay at home mom

Highland Village, TX

Thank you for voting to allow vouchers for students that want them. I think it's an important way to keep all schools accountable and have schools compete for kids! If schools don't like children leaving, then they should look to see what they are doing wrong and change!! Allow parents to be involved in their childrens education and stop teaching kids about anything other than core subjects!

Carolyn Wahl
Self
Flower Mound, TX

Private schools have always been an option for those that thought the public education system was not "good" enough for their children and in making that decision, took on the financial responsibility for their choice. If we as a state believe we need to "fund" families to be able to choose private or school other than public education, than we're saying that our state public education system is not on par. If that's the case, then we should be solving that issue and not adding to it by taking money out of public schools. My children were both educated in public schools that more than prepared them to go on to college. Not every school district is created equal, but again, we should be working to improve the public education experience and not drive money to non public schools. I do not support SB 8 and am fundamentally opposed to the establishment of an education saving account program.

Mark Klyn, LSSP, Schoolboard Trustee
Self
Henrietta, TX

I am against using public funds for private education. We have school choice in many forms in Texas. This bill is a veiled handout to wealthy Texans. The Texas constitution requires adequate funding of public education. The problems this bill attempts to address are largely a creation of the lack of adequate funding for public schools. It will worsen the situation. I urge you to reject this bill, vote against it, while providing adequate and appropriate funding for public education missions and staff.

Leslie Casiday, Mrs.
Self- Texas Teacher
Livingston, TX

I am a Texas teacher, who was raised by a Texas teacher, who had grandparents that were Texas teachers as well. As far as SB 8 goes, this bill is bad for Texas students and parents:

It would cost Texas big time. This bill would create an education savings account program that would give between \$7,500 and \$10,500 in state tax money to subsidize private school tuition for individuals receiving special education services, who are educationally disadvantaged, or who are attending public schools and have 504s, are in D- or F-rated campuses, or have siblings in the ESA program. That could be more than 75% of students in Texas.

The bill requires more state tests. As a dyslexia teacher for the past nine years, I already see what the state tests do to my students who struggle to read, I can't imagine how much more anxiety we would cause our children by adding more exams. I am also a mom of five, and this year my third grader took the test for the first time, and both days had tears, because she was afraid of not passing. I don't know when in education it became okay to rely so much on a state test, but this sure is not the same education system I grew up with, and I am a product of the public school system in Conroe ISD, graduating at the top of my class and then went on to Texas A&M to receive a B.S. and M.Ed. We tests students so much already, and the stakes are so much higher than they used to be, it isn't fair for our children.

The bill gives the education commissioner more control and removes all State Board of Education involvement in the state assessment program.

Tom Kammerer
Self retired teacher
The Colony, TX

My wife and I are opposed to any bill supporting a voucher system in Texas. We support Public schools in Texas.

Marnie Pate
Port Aransas ISD
Port Aransas, TX

I am a taxpayer in Port Aransas, TX and I am on the Board of Trustees for Port Aransas ISD. Our school district will pay approximately \$28,000,000 in recapture this year and I am offended that we are forced to send money to the state so that a private school or home school can be created and then not follow the same accountability standards as public schools. PAISD does not have enough money to run our district after sending recapture to the state because our windstorm insurance has more than doubled this year (with less coverage). We are not the only coastal ISD in this predicament. Why are you making us beg for adequate funding?

Furthermore, the additional tests that will be required in SB8 cripples a school district as small as ours because we have very limited staff. A campus essentially shuts down during testing.

Please do not pass this bill. Go back to the drawing board. Ask educators and superintendents in the State of Texas what is best for their students and staff.

Tom Wilson
Self: retired school administrator
Houston, TX

Any type of school voucher system will be detrimental to the public education system of Texas. Invest in Texas public schools and make them the best for all students!

Karen Beunson
Self
Robinson, TX

NO to school vouchers. I do not want my tax money to go to private schools

Tonya McKenna
Teachers
HURST, TX

Please vote no to vouchers

Sally Smith
Self-actuary
Fort Worth, TX

Public funds are intended to benefit the public. In the case of education, public funds are meant to provide a free education for every child in the state. Voucher programs misdirect public funds for the use of individuals.

Not all Texas families will have the ability to benefit from this bill. Families in rural areas with few private school options will not be able to use these vouchers.

This bill will take money from our already underfunded public schools. How will that shortfall be covered?

Please weigh the needs of the vast, vast majority of Texas families against the few who this bill would benefit. Please vote no on SB 8.

Delaina Taylor
Stephenville ISD
Stephenville, TX

Vote no!!!

Stephanie O'Dell
McKinney ISD
McKinney, TX

Please oppose any form of vouchers or ESAs. Neither of these will benefit ALL students in Texas. Support public schools and teachers and they will succeed. Vouchers will not help the student who cannot get to a charter or private school. Therefore, ALL of our public schools must be high performing. Come visit McKinney ISD anytime. I will give you a personal tour.

And think of the rural districts that do not have any private schools. Vouchers will not help them.

Also, more testing is not the answer. Testing actually takes away from instruction time.

Please talk to our teachers in public schools and listen to them. ALL of our school staff need to be paid more. These people are teaching our future. Show that you support public education by investing in it.

Tamara Herbert
Self- Retired Teacher
Houston, TX

Parent Choice means parent can choose public school or private school. Your bill does NOT change that choice. So call your bill what it is- Take away money from Public School Bill and give to Private School Bill. Which I am against!! So your Bill is NOT NEEDED!!!!!!

Also as a Public School Teacher for 34 years, stop Lying about me indoctrinating children. I taught the curriculum that the Republican lead state mandated.None of which was CRT.

I realize now Republicans need to be ousted from office because Republicans do not work for the people. You work for lobbyists and money!! You are dividing the people with lies!!!

And we DO need weapons of war off the streets!!! Do your job to protect people!!!! Raise the age AT the Least!!!

Brian Bolinger
Self - Executive
Austin, TX

DO NOT APPROVE VOUCHERS IN TEXAS!!!!

We do what is right for Texans, not national politics.

Vouchers are bad for Texans for the following reasons:

1. Vouchers **DO NOT IMPROVE PERFORMANCE**. See the studies conducted in Louisiana, Indiana and Milwaukee. All vouchers do is take money away from public schools without improving education in the state.
2. Schools are already underfunded by our legislature. Many are currently operating in a deficit. Now, the legislature is attempting to intentionally bankrupt public education. Texas ranks 40 out of a total of 51, in which Washington, D.C., is counted along with all 50 states when it comes to funding levels. The Lone Star State received an “F” mark for its funding of public schools. Our legislature should be ashamed and commit more money to public education, not less.
3. Private schools pick and choose who they accept, not the parents, leaving the most needy and costly students to be educated by public schools who will have been bankrupted by our legislature.
4. Public tax dollars should stay with public schools and support the school district and local community not with private schools owned by out of state corporations with no oversight.

Again, **DO NOT APPROVE VOUCHERS IN TEXAS!!!!**

Dianna Simons
Self
Austin, TX

Vote NO to vouchers.

Tommy Hooker, Superintendent
Thrall ISD
Thrall, TX

Do not support the bill!

Linda L Estrada
Texas State Teachers Association
Donna, TX

It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools

It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws

It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve

It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system

It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority

Texas public schools are under attack, and we need to stand up against out-of-state school vendors looking to defund our local public schools!

Jon Robbins
Self, retired
Richardson, TX

I request that you vote NO on this school voucher bill and any others. Keep our tax dollars supporting our public schools.

Alexander Merritt
Dallas ISD
DALLAS, TX

I am an assistant principal in Dallas ISD.

The initial price tag for this bill is \$800 million, and the voucher provisions will balloon to billions of dollars in the coming years! This funding should be directed to our public schools that have faced double-digit inflation, teacher retention issues, and other programmatic needs - not to private schools or vendors with little to no accountability.

Contrary to the rhetoric, the proposed House Substitute for SB 8 does not "get rid of STAAR" or "reduce testing".

The testing provisions in the House substitute for SB 8 would do the following:

Maintain the STAAR provisions for students in grades 3-8, minus the eighth-grade social studies exam.

Add three testing events for grades 3-8 STAAR with mandatory through-year testing unless otherwise provided by commissioner rule.

Raise the already high A-F accountability system stakes only for ISDs, not for the private schools that voucher recipients will attend because private schools are not subject to state ratings.

Lack a thought-out transition plan or timeline for students.

Remove all State Board of Education involvement in the state assessment program.

Elizabeth Pekins, SECOND GRADE PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER
Hanna Springs Elementary School
Lampasas, TX

Vouchers are not good for public education. It takes money away from districts that are doing an excellent job educating children. This bill caters to a select few. Please do not support vouchers!

Kevin Noack
Pastors for Texas Children
Palmer, TX

Senate Bill 8 will not benefit Public Ed in any way, shape or form. Please either do not bring the bill to a vote or vote against it. Texas can't fund public ed now, what happens when there is another item to budget for. Also, in its current state, it actually adds testing requirements.

Jay McWilliams
Big Spring ISD
Big Spring, TX

I am not sure why legislators do not understand the fact that our state has had parental choice for years. A parent has the right to enroll their child wherever they choose to live, and they also have the right to homeschool their kids, enroll their kids in an online HS curriculum, or take them to a private school. However, our state has never paid for these choices, that burden lies on the parents. The idea that taking tax dollars designated for public education to pay the tuition in a private school is absolutely absurd. These same private schools that have NO accountability, no financial transparency, and do NOT accept all students would benefit greatly from the added tuition dollars being funneled into their school. Public education is the backbone of this great state, and you as a state legislator need to work harder on fully funding public education instead of constantly attacking the work of our dedicated teachers and administrators. Parents have a choice, have always had a choice, and I believe that is the way it should be. However, again, not at the expense of our kids in public education. Call it what it is- Vouchers are bad for public education and bad for all concerned.

Mary j Peters, Mrs.
Self
Hondo, TX

As a retired educator in a rural district, I am respectfully voicing my opposition to the education savings accounts. Such a program would negatively affect small rural districts where parents have no option other than the local school district. In my 34 years in public education in Texas, every time this discussion about parent choice comes up, students suffer because cutting funding hurts the most vulnerable.

Students need specialized services that many private organizations cannot or won't provide—special education, 504, speech, etc. if they do offer services, there is little to no supervision about how these services are administered. The public education system is monitored and held accountable.

If public funds go to private schools, they should face the same supervision and accountability standards that the public school districts face every year.

Please look at all areas of this large diverse state and all the children and parents before focusing on an urban, entitled minority who will ignore the small communities.

Education will lift families out of poverty and give them opportunities for the future. An educated workforce is necessary for our state to thrive.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and service to all of Texas.

Sincerely,
Mary Jo Peters

Willa Moffett
Self
Orange, TX

I agree with right of parents involvement relating to all of their childrens educatoin

Lisa Jester
self
Highland Village, TX

Please vote "NO" for student vouchers. My taxes are for public education. My taxes are NOT for private schools that are not supervised and scrutinized by the state of Texas (TEA). In addition, how can you give more money for a "voucher" than you do for each public school student? And..don't even get me started on all my tax dollars being "recaptured" and not even used for public education by the state of Texas as they are meant to be allotted. Y'all in Austin have done enough to ruin public education...how about you start listening to the school districts for a change (teachers, administrators, superintendents, etc).

Robbie Phillips
Self/Texas retired teacher
Missouri City, TX

My name is Robbie Phillips, and I am a retired HISD teacher with 41 years of experience. My daughter graduated from a public high and an ivy league college. I have a unique perspective on SB 8 because I sent my daughter to private school during her junior year. This decision was not based on any dissatisfaction with the quality of the education that she was receiving. The truth is that she was at a critical point in her life, and her father and I decided that she needed a different school experience. We were willing to sacrifice to send her to private school. At no time would we ever expect or accept taxpayer money for our child's private school education! This would be grossly unfair and detrimental to the educational outcomes of students whose parents could not pay for private school. Every child in Texas deserves to have a quality education despite their family's economic status. The state of Texas currently ranks 40th out of 50 states in funding for education. I fear that this assault on public education will create a bleak future where the majority of Texas citizens will be poorly educated. Now is the time to pour more money into public education, not less!

Baronda Bradley
self--Mother of Three
Arlington, TX

Vouchers will further weaken our state's educational goals. The education community – including teachers, administrators, student advocates, school associations, and PTOs – is largely unanimous in its opposition to vouchers, as am I, a mother of three public school-educated children. We need wholehearted, coalesced support of public schools in order to make sure our children are equipped educationally for the future.

June Watson
Self
Winters, TX

We have to keep funding for Public Schools the Same

Bethany Kennedy

Self

Austin, TX

Please vote no for SB8. This bill would increase the privileged's privileges and make the spectrum of equity widen. When schools have the ability to pick and choose who they want to educate, that is not equitable. Requiring some schools to meet certain standards that others do not isn't equitable. If an education establishment wants to accept money from the government then they should be held to the same standards that public education is held to.

Please vote no for the kids, for our future, and mainly for our kids future.

Gwen Pauloski, Dr.

Self — adjunct professor, UH; retired Houston ISD teacher

Houston, TX

This voucher program is highly unpopular in Texas for many reasons. Diverting tax payer money for non-public schools has never been acceptable. But in a state that severely underfunds our public schools, it's a profoundly cynical move. The lie that "public schools are failing" is spread to help justify the diversion of public tax dollars to charters and now to privates. Parents have choice in this state — enroll your child in a public school funded by public dollars, or tap into your own funds. The lipstick smeared on this particular substitute bill is not disguising its flaws. The same segregationist impulse that plagued our state 150 years ago is still animating these campaigns to rip money away from public schools open to all, and divert that money — our money — to school options that leave some of our children behind. The relentless disparagement of public schools by Texas politicians was one reason I retired last June. But of course that is the point—to so discourage and disparage those who could be supporting public schools that there will be nothing left.

DEBRA ZUNIGA

Self/Teacher

San Antonio, TX

All my four children attended public education and I have been teaching at a title 1 public school for the past 21 years. I'm a true believer in public education and more funding NEEDS to be going into public education and not be taken away! Especially for many of our students who have disabilities or are economically disadvantaged. They need more money given to their public schools to better meet their needs and have master teachers to help reduce the gap they were born into at no fault of their own. Over the years I have seen many students leave to charter schools only to return because they were not successful as these schools do not meet their needs.

Peter Warshaw, Mr.
Self - retired public school teacher and administrator
Round Rock, TX

It is my belief that SB 8 is not only potentially destructive of our public school system, it is unconstitutional. The Texas Constitution requires that the state support the public school system; as such, directing public funds to private schools is in direct violation of that mandate. Additionally, the removal of funding from the public schools for this purpose will ultimately negatively affect the students who don't qualify to access the funds, or whose families cannot afford the remainder of the fees charged by private schools for admission and/or attendance. Finally, the creation of education savings account will benefit only those students whose families are currently in a position to take advantage of this benefit. While those families will see a reduction to their private school bill, those who are left to attend a public school will suffer from reduced funding to schools, programs, and teachers. Texas will then be, in effect, creating two separate tiers of education, which will be anything but "separate but equal". I urge you to vote against this bill, a misguided if not intentional attempt to water down Texas' public schools and establish a system that favors the wealthy, extending the divide that is already so pervasive in our society today.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Warshaw

Kelly Rizk
self / educational publishing executive
Austin, TX

An educational savings account program or any form of school voucher system will be harmful to the children of Texas and to our local school districts. Please fund our schools fully and reject all voucher programs.

Jason Pitts, Coach
New Diana ISD
Diana, TX

Vote no to vouchers. They are the death of public education, which is your constitutional obligation to provide. This debate should die a quick and painful death. Vote no to vouchers! Vote no to vouchers! Vote no to vouchers!

Adam Bender, Mr.
Self - Elementary School Principal
Burleson, TX

As a school administrator and educator, I am opposed to vouchers or education savings accounts. It is inappropriate to provide a means for funding to be pulled from schools that have oversight and accountability to the expectations set by our legislature and the Texas Education Agency and in turn give that funding to private schools that do not have any oversight or accountability. This bill also does not provide appropriate meaningful change for the state accountability system. It is unconscionable that our legislators would take money away from the majority of our students so that a few students can attend private and charter schools that do not use research-based practices and are never evaluated for the effectiveness of their programs and whether their student's are achieving the academic skills needed to be successful, productive citizens in our state. Vote no on SB8 and on any other bills that support vouchers or ESAs.

Wendy Thibeault
Self and teacher
Temple, TX

Approving this bill will destroy our public education system. We get by with an already flawed system that makes our funding dependent on something that is out of our control—attendance. It is not our job to allow for school choice, our job is to fund a public education system that is available to all students in our state. While in an ideal setting, choice would be fantastic but not at the cost of a system that cannot take another financial hit when it is already struggling to stay afloat. Please consider the determine this will cause for our state’s public school welfare!

Lisa Gertsch
self
Spring, TX

I do not support vouchers or ESA's! They divert money from public schools which support all student, not just those that are admitted through an application process. Private and charter schools are not accountable to the local community, so they should not be funded by the local community's taxes. Public money should not be sent to schools that do not meet the public standards of financial transparency and accountability.

Please vote NO on this bill. Thanks. LSG

Mike Pitcher, Mr
Self - Educator
Garland, TX

I am an educator and constituent in Garland, Texas, and I’m writing to comment In opposition to SB 8.

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school’s choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community’s public schools.

Rodrigo Reyes
Self
Thrall, TX

Please OPPOSE SB-8.

Paula Jarrell
self
Hemphill, TX

I do not want my tax money going to Vouchers. If any parent or guardians want to educate their children in religion, then they should do on their own dime and NOT MINE.

Jennifer Mathesen, Mrs.
Temple ISD
TX, TX

As a Special Education Director, it is critical to my students and their parents that if funding is to be diverted from public education, the requirements and protections for disabled students follow those funds. Private schools that accept public dollars must meet the same standards required of public schools, including but not limited to meeting Child Find requirements, following federal timelines regarding evaluations and IEP services, and accepting ALL students who apply to attend. It would be nothing short of discriminatory for these students to not receive the same services and protections required in public schools.

As a parent and taxpayer, I believe it is essential that we have a well educated populace. This means that all students meet the same requirements and standards for testing, curriculum, and that teachers are certified in accordance to state standards. Private schools that accept public funding must also meet these standards and be rated annually.

As a Christian, I absolutely support the separation of church and state and am curious as to how using taxpayer funds upholds that well established standard. Private schools that accept public funding must also adhere to the separation of church and state.

As a thinking citizen, I find it appalling that we would rather send tax dollars to places that do not have to undergo the same rigorous accounting process that our public schools do than to use those clearly available funds to support an underfunded existing public school system that values ALL students.

I encourage all state representatives to vote NO on this bill.

KC McClain, Maj Gen (RET)
Self
Plano, TX

I taught public school for 4 years prior to join the Air Force. I fully support public education as it is the key to promise of America...that promise is that regardless of where you begin, you can achieve in America. Achievement is only possible through a fully funded public education system. Tax \$ going to private schools is antithetical & erodes quality public education. If parents want to send the child to private school, they certainly can; however, tax \$ shouldn't be used to facilitate their personal decision. Much work needs to be done to strengthen public education. This bill only further weakens the system.

Zechariah Baker
Self
Temple, TX

I am a proponent of public schools. That doesn't mean I don't like private schools or homeschool. I have many friends who have chosen private schools or homeschooling that have been ideal fits for their children. However, I don't believe that public funds should be used for private schools.

Did you know that private schools:

don't have to offer gifted/talented enrichment?

don't have to offer free breakfast/lunch to federally qualified students?

don't have to accept special needs students?

don't have to offer fine arts, sports, or electives?

don't have to accept students with behavior issues?

don't have to offer diagnostic services for students who are struggling academically, behaviorally, or socially?

Public schools serve the public good.

Linda Cantu
Self
Houston, TX

I strongly oppose SB 8 by Creighton.

Sara Lyons
Self
Houston, TX

This does nothing but funnel money desperately needed by our public schools to parents who can already afford private school. This will raise the cost of private school and leave our children in a worse situation. Stop dismantling public education.

Kathy Daughety
Self Elem. SPED Teacher
Jacksonville, TX

SB8 will only take money away from public schools and their students. Vote NO.

Scott Rawlings
Self - Ag Teacher and Rancher
Boyd, TX

Strongly against - This bill supports upper class kids and parents - they ALREADY have choice!

Evelyn Miller
Myself
Ingram, TX

Keep money in public schools. If people want private schools, they need to pay for it. Private schools do not help the poor students. They cannot provide their own transportation and they do not get free lunch and free breakfast in the private schools so they would not benefit from them.

Sarah Terrell, Ms.
self
Houston, TX

To the members of the House Public Education Committee, I urge you to vote against SB 8, the school vouchers bill. As a concerned taxpayer, I do NOT want my tax dollars to fund private schools that are not open to all children, whether because the tuition is unaffordable even with a voucher, or the school is choosy. This is an open invitation for corporations to profit from separating the easiest to educate children—those with support from home, no learning differences, and no behavior issues. The private schools are not transparent or accountable to me as a taxpayer, yet I will be forced to fund them and line their pockets. Such a system will also promote segregation.

Vouchers will gut funding for public schools and weaken our state's ability to offer equal education opportunities to everyone.

Please OPPOSE SB 8. Vote to keep public education public; oppose SB 8.
Very truly yours,
Sarah Terrell
Houston

Betty Moseley, Mrs.
NSARTA/TRTA
San Antonio, TX

Although I am fully in support of Parent's having the right to choose their child's optimum place of education, I do not think public funds should be used to furnish a private school education. Charter schools are totally different from Private schools, usually furnished by a religious organization. As a public school retiree, I realize that some children do better in a small setting such as a Charter school but Public monies should not be used in a Voucher system to furnish a religious education. I am a staunch supporter of Christian values, but feel are better taught in the home. However, if a Parent wants a religious education, they should be prepared to fund it and not expect tax payers to foot the bill. Thank you!

Lois Massey
Self
Dallas, TX

Stop trying to force school vouchers on Texas education! Fully fund public education and if a parent wants religious indoctrination, they can pay for it without tax dollars! This bill hurts children! Stop claiming this session is about saving kids while doing nothing but hurt them with your anti education and pro gun agendas!

Cheryl Wilson, Mrs.
Self/ retired teacher
Comfort, TX

Please vote NO on Senate Bill 8. This will have an extremely negative impact on Public schools in Texas. Taxpayers do not want their monies funding private schools or charter schools. We need our representatives and senators to fully support the public schools systems, students and teachers. We literally put our lives on the line for our students and it is time Texas stands up for and supports our Public Schools. We don't need vouchers, we don't need high stakes testing. We need to be respected for the professionals we are. VOTE NO!

Laura Flores
self
Temple, TX

I am submitting my recommendation of "DO NOT PASS". I am a teacher at a public school district and I feel this bill penalizes all teachers. There is no accountability of how funds would be tracked or how any assurance can be given that students would receive the quality education the proponents are spearheading. Hard working tax payer dollars would go to rich private schools that can and would kick back any special needs student or behavior student back to the public school setting when low performing test results were returned.

Francesca Beaumont
Self
Houston, TX

As a tax paying homeowner, I don't want my taxpayer dollars or anyone else's to be used for private school vouchers. Public schools are the backbone of building communities and citizens. This is clearly designed to subsidize people who are already sending their children to private school and deny needed funds and services to the vast number of public school students across our state.

If people want to send their child to a private or religious school, they can do that. I'm not going to pay for it. If a child wants to play baseball in school, I'm happy for my school taxes to pay for that. If that same child wants to join a club team, I'm not going to pay for that. That's on the family. It's the same thing. I'm going to pay for public schools that build my community, increase my property values and educates the future. Public school is where we learn the world is a bigger place than our bubble.

The State of Texas has a constitutional obligation to provide PUBLIC FREE SCHOOLS, not private nor religious. Public schools outperform private schools across our state. They educate everyone to a higher standard than most private schools. I also don't want to hear the argument that this allows children in failing schools to move. They can already. Hey - why don't you use this money for teachers and FIX THE SCHOOLS?

This is unconstitutional and unacceptable. It's graft for the rich and religious. Please vote no on this terrible idea.

Wendy Zeiger
Self/educator
New Braunfels, TX

Vouchers will be the downfall of public education.

Jose Vasquez
Self
El Paso, TX

No public tax money for charter schools. Stop profiteers from ruing our public schools.

Marie Pousson, retired public school teacher
CVPE
Houston, TX

As a public school educator for 28 years before retiring, I am horrified that once again this state continues to try to privatize education instead of supporting public schools with a basic allotment that meets or exceeds the national average. SB8 IS BAD for public schools and a voucher program only benefits those who can afford to send their kids to private schools anyway. Private schools do not have to accept all students, seldom have services for special needs students, and this will place dollars intended for the many in public schools into the hands of the few who can pay private school tuition. Public education is the future of our nation. DO NOT PASS SB 8 BEHIND CLOSED DOORS.

Rita Guerra
Self
Aubrey, TX

Parents do Not want school vouchers- this will deeply affect public schools ability to provide students with quality education. Please do not defund our public schools- this will hurt our rural communities.

Jennifer Perry, Mrs
Self - marketing consultant
Highland Village, TX

I ask that SB 8 NOT pass. Public education needs to be fully funded and vouchers or an education savings account program will take away dollars from public education. Our children are the future of TX and their education deserves to be fully funded. Both of my children attend public school where teachers workloads are burdened by unfunded mandates. We would not accept this in any other business model. Our Texas students and teachers deserve better. Please vote NO on SB 8 and any other voucher program.

Ashley Perraud
Self
Austin, TX

Vote No on education vouchers - it hurts public education which is already largely underfunded by the state.

Jonathon Salama
Parent
Austin, TX

I have kids in public schools I just want to let the committee members know that parents should get the right to choose schools for their kids because it is the democratic thing to do the the district's in Texas the majority of them failed to offer equal education most in big cities like Austin are corrupt we need more audits more oversight, fraud and abuse in spending bond money . Most schools cater to influential parents who are rich while neglecting poor kids I am incoring the department of education to take over big cities districts then do audits share with the public many many surprises .thank you

Melissa Eskins, Mrs
Spring ISD
Spring, TX

This bill will damage the education system of Texas beyond repair. It will cause the public schools to become the dumping grounds for struggling, special, or disadvantaged students and teachers. Educators will become more scarce in the public school system than ever before.

Samuel Harrison
Christians
Bells, TX

I say yes! This might surprise you because I am a public school agricultural science teacher. However, I am a Christian who believes my children should not be forced to believe one thing at home and answer another's beliefs at school. I know that even if this bill passes my children will be going to public school due to availability and remainder cost; but just because I can't take advantage of the bill doesn't mean that those who have the ability shouldn't be able to choose.

Celia Ray
self
Temple, TX

As a public school educator, I believe that public funds shouldn't be used for educational institutions with no accountability or oversight.

Public schools have to accept each and every student - private schools do not.

Public schools have an accountability system for academic and financial performance - private schools do not.

I also think that vouchers should not be considered until the public schools are fully funded and funded above the national average.

Public schools are funded based on attendance, not enrollment which means we only receive approximately 95% of the funding. Texas is \$4,000 behind the national average in per-pupil spending.

Finally, I ask that the House budget invest more money in the public school basic allotment to address the rate of inflation.

Renee Fernandes, Mrs.
Self
Highland Village, TX

We started our 2 children's education off at a private school in the Dallas area. We thought it would be a wonderful place with small class sizes and excellent teachers. We very quickly learned that although the classes were small, the teachers were lacking. We moved to the public schools within the Lewisville School District and have never looked back. Our kids are thriving now! Public education is strong in TX. It won't be if this bill passes. We came from private to public because our tax dollars support professionals who are degreed, trained and held accountable. That is not true in the private sector. If you are going to funnel money from the public schools then hold those private schools who do get tax payer dollars to the same standards. Please vote no. I want to go on the record as letting you all know that I am opposed to this because of what it will do to our excellent public education in TX. Please vote no.

Mike Lefner
Self
Temple, TX

I do not approve of a bill that does not hold an entity like a private school accountable to public tax dollars as public schools are. If you accept a public tax dollar you will be held academically and financially accountable like a public school. Otherwise all rules looking over public schools and finances and academics should be allowed to be decided by the individual school and not the government.

Also, a public school is not allowed to turn away a child for any reason and a public school must take a student regardless of race, beliefs or finances. It must be strictly enforced that if one dollar goes to a public school, they must accept and educate any child that is presented by a parent and provide all the services necessary. Included special needs kids.

Donal Kirk Pate

Self

Flatonina, TX

Fayette County children of every race/color, income, or faith should be free to learn and pursue their dreams in a great public school, regardless of ability, where they live, or what they look like. However, those who choose the tailored educational content of private schools must do so at their own expense.

But School Choice (aka vouchers) is a deceptive maneuver, a slippery slope plan. If the Texas legislature had its way, the slippery slope would be dramatically more slippery and steeper.

School Choice is a ruse, a patina of respectability, for the redistribution to private schools of two public resources.

It is a redistribution of wealth from Texas taxpayers to the already wealthy through vouchers. While proponents explain the transfer to education accounts in terms of General Revenue and not from the Texas Permanent School Fund, the general revenue's sources of income include retail sales taxes (almost the highest in the nation) and selective sales taxes (alcohol, motor fuel, and tobacco). Vouchers involve a redistribution of wealth through state tax income from you and me to the private education sector.

Second is a redistribution of educational content from reason, critical thinking, and unfettered learning to ideological content—political, religious, or a noxious blending of the two, a Texas two-step: give public tax money, and the educational content will follow through unaccountable curricula.

Then there is the Trojan Horse of educational content outside Texas with virtually no public accountability, shifting learning toward tailored political and religious education. For example, the K-12 charter schools are sponsored in various states by Hillsdale College in Michigan. In addition, the college's Barney Charter School Initiative of K-12 education may creep into Texas, resulting in a dramatic crash of far-right educational content onto unsuspecting families. This represents a noxious mix of political education and religious ideology. .

Senators and Representatives, please don't allow Texas to be next in the dissolution of public education and the demise of reason, critical thinking, and unfettered learning.

Together we must demand an end to giving public resources to private schools. Hence, nothing stands in the way of us providing every child in Texas a fully funded quality public education.

Amie Misch

Self - Texas public school teacher

Lewisville, TX

This bill harms every single public school student, teacher, and employee. A vote for this bill is a vote against Texas kids and Texas teachers (including those who are parents!).

Sharon Gillespie, Ms.

self

Austin, TX

I strenuously oppose vouchers/education savings accounts by whatever name they are called. Taking monies from public school funding to give to private school funding will undermine the viability of public schools in Texas, which have been the lynchpin of democracy in our state. Education in Texas is underfunded. If enacted, this bill would leave the state with a more poorly educated populace than it has at present because of even more catastrophic underfunding. As a former public school teacher and one who knows and appreciates the value of education, I cannot urge you more strongly: Kill this bill, please!

Timothy Ruttan
Self, Physician
Austin, TX

Please vote No on SB 8. Vouchers are not the right approach for Texas schools, and will damage our already challenged public school system. It amounts to a subsidy for the wealthy and goes against the idea of excellent education for all. Tax dollars should not subsidize the wealthy to send their children to private schools. If some version is passed, it should be restricted to children whose families qualify for free and reduced lunch only and not be given to families earning above that level.

Jo Foley
self/none
Henderson, TX

SB 8 is a good and important bill , one that we need to pass. I Support SB 8.

Dre' Grace
Self
Amarillo, TX

I oppose vouchers for private schools. I am a resident of Randall County and I am disappointed to see that you are currently voting yes for school vouchers toward private schools. The problems with the ESA plan are numerous and I know you have heard them all - it mixes church and state, the rules aren't the same for public and private schools with no accountability, and the money given to private schools hurts rural schools very hard. Our current school district has already had to cut staff this year. I urge you to stop this process and recognize what you are doing is not good for kids or schools.

Randy Pittenger
Self
Belton, TX

Since the House Public Education Committee has chosen to allow only “invited” testimony, instead of honoring your constituents with an opportunity to address this egregious attempt to push a voucher bill through the Legislature, I am writing to express my opposition to SB 8 and CSSB 8.

I am also writing to reaffirm my absolute opposition to any agenda to promote government handouts to select constituents in the form of private and home school vouchers (aka: education savings accounts, tax credits, “school choice,” etc.).

There is nothing in the committee substitute (CSSB 8) that would make the voucher bill acceptable.

Most people recognize government handouts without demonstrated need and accountability as a liberal, rather than a conservative, agenda. These voucher scams are a ridiculous position for anyone claiming to have fiscally conservative values.

The Texas Constitution specifically states that Texas has a duty to provide “public free schools,” not “private free schools” or even “free schools.” The Texas Constitution: “...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.”

Please keep your focus on making suitable provision for our public schools - that means adequate and equitable funding, not diverting public funds for private and unaccountable personal choice.

By the way, I would be equally appalled at any effort by the Legislature to provide a tax credit/rebate/voucher to use for country club dues in lieu of using public parks, private security in lieu of local law enforcement, or any other publicly funded service or system voucher scheme.

I agree with Raise Your Hand Texas and many other public school advocates in stating that CSSB 8 is unacceptable because:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school’s choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you all to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors and profiteers looking to defund our communities’ public schools.

I will continue to publicly oppose any movement and any individual who promotes this liberal ideology that is clearly motivated by greed.

We can do better Texas. Our children, our public schools, our taxpayers, and our communities deserve better. No vouchers!

Jesus Perez, Mr.
ECTA
San Antonio, TX

I do not support voucher programs.

Lisa Castellano
TSTA
Olmito, TX

I oppose vouchers

Margo Green, Ms
Green
LUBBOCK, TX

I encourage you to vote NO on SB 8. I personally do not want my tax dollars spent on private education rather than funding our public schools. The bill would take public tax dollars away from already-underfunded public schools and funnel them toward private, often-religious, wealthy schools. By further gutting Texas public schools of the resources they desperately need, we would only be further exacerbating education inequality in Texas and making it even more difficult for Texas' most vulnerable children to succeed. S.B. 8 would be one of the greatest transfers of wealth in Texas history from the state's poor and middle class to the richest Texans. Again, I would respectfully ask that you vote NO on S.B. 8, a bill that would only help the richest schools, and would leave our state's public education students behind.

Bonnie Knight
Austin ISD
Austin, TX

Unbelievable how politicians are so quick to sell out our Public Education schools that have served this nation for generations! VOTE NO on SB 8. These funds do not belong to the private sector that includes private and charter schools. These organizations are for profit, they are not held accountable to the high standards as those in public education. Here's a point-by-point list of the why to VOTE NO on SB 8:

SB 8 diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools. Any entity that gets PUBLIC FUNDS needs to be held accountable!

SB 8 erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal law. How UNFAIR!

SB 8 does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve. Again, how UNFAIR!!! This is proof they do not care for students!

SB 8 replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system. NO comparison! While I loathe STAAR, it is imperative that these funds are strictly for PUBLIC EDUCATION. The rich people who want their kids in private schools can pony up out of their own deep pockets.

SB 8 gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority. Morath is already too big for his britches and, honestly, needs to be replaced. He certainly doesn't need any more authority.

Do what is right for the children of Texas! All children deserve a free public education! Stop selling out America's schools, students, and educators to big business, who don't give a whit for Texas children because for them, it's all about the money. VOTE NO on SB 8!

Karen O'Grady, Services Manager

Self

Buda, TX

I am a Texas parent & grandparent. I have the honor of working with small, school districts across the state & have spoken with many rural district administrators. We are not fooled by the narrative that is being pushed about parental choice, better education & more resources for all. None of us are stupid as many of our legislators want to believe. We understand that voucher programs are a scheme that divert public funds to private schools & vendors, and they undermine traditional public schools, teachers, & students. The lack of public accountability in voucher programs is rife for mismanagement of financial resources, & also lacks academic accountability. Regardless of what you call the program, the fact is, vouchers hurt public schools because they impact the funding traditional public schools receive. They reduce much needed and already lacking funds from districts. We know that lack of funds leads to reduction in teacher pay & benefits, or fewer teachers. It also lessens the quality of the teachers a district can afford. In many districts, it will mean cuts to programs like, special ed, ESL, reading, STEM & extra curricular activities. Can you imagine a Texas without high school football? The smallest of districts could be so adversely affected by voucher programs that they could be forced to merge with other small districts, or disband completely, leaving some communities with no education option at all. Ask yourself the impact on a rural community with no education options.

Now, think about your constituents, the taxpayers of Texas, the folks you were elected to represent. Less than 6% of Texas children are enrolled in private schools. In other states where vouchers programs have been implemented, as many as 89% of the families using vouchers to supplement tuition at private schools, were already enrolled in the private school prior to the program being implemented. This, showcasing that the parents who could already afford private schools are the primary beneficiaries of the programs. Essentially, providing another financial benefit to the wealthy, while leaving the burden on the Texas taxpayer.

While vouchers do a great job in providing financial assistance to parents who could already afford private schools, private schools are not an option for many student populations. Students with disabilities, academic or behavioral difficulties & non-English speaking students may not be accepted. Public schools are required by law to accept & provide a quality education for each. There are no standards by which private schools must teach these groups.

To recap, vouchers undercut the communities they claim to serve. They use taxpayer dollars to fund private schools that do not have to account for their spending or the academic outcomes of their students. Vouchers are not a responsible use of these funds. Vouchers hurt our public schools & communities across the state. Our public dollars MUST stay in our public schools.

Jenna Hogan

Self

Plano, TX

I urge all of this committee to vote no to SB 8. As a public school educator and a graduate of private k-12 schools, I have the unique experience of both educational settings. In fact, I became a public educator because I believe all Texas children deserve a high quality education like the one I received. The best way to ensure this happens is to invest in our public schools, not only with full funding for competitive teacher salaries & benefits as well as instructional materials but also invest our faith and trust in our public schools to do what the legislature requires. SB 8 undermines public school funding and trust in a public good that is a pillar of our communities. If something isn't working, we teach our students to fix it, not walk away and pay for something else. Help us fix what's not working by saving this money for our public schools, there will be a much better return on investment as it will improve the lives of so many more Texans than educational savings accounts for a few.

Anne Perry, Dr.
self (retired teacher)
Franklin, TX

Please, please do NOT vote in support of the SB 8. I understand the House amendment has designated the voucher program for students with disabilities, those who are on free lunch, and those who have attended poorly-performing schools for the past two years. While the amendment is admirable, is anyone going to require that private schools accept students with disabilities? Probably, they will not be accepted. Even if they are accepted into a good program, the parents will be charged a lot more than \$8,000. This program would leave public schools with the same responsibilities to educate those with disabilities and less money to do so. Giving parents a choice is important, but not at the expense of public school students. Please do NOT, under any circumstances, vote for SB 8. Thank you.

Alisha Bridges
Self teacher
Rockwall, TX

Vote "no" on SB8. Public education should be fully funded by the state. Diverting funds to charters, home schools, private school, etc. hurts public education which is guaranteed by our state constitution to serve all children - not just a select few. I will continue to use my vote to support officials who stand by public education.

Kelly Pattillo
self - Parent of public school child
Georgetown, TX

I am writing to OPPOSE SB 8, for several reasons.

- 1) Vouchers undermine our public school system by diverting money from the school districts. Taxpayer dollars should not be supporting private schools, especially when those schools are not held accountable for student outcomes and are allowed to discriminate against students (for example by refusing to accept students with disabilities). The proposed committee substitute reduces the number of children eligible for vouchers, but over 70% of Texas children would still be eligible under the new guidelines. The additional funds that would be diverted to vouchers should be spent increasing the basic allotment, increasing teacher salaries, and maintaining our school campuses. Parents should absolutely be free to choose a private school for their child - but at their own expense, not the taxpayers.
- 2) The proposed committee substitute increases the number of tests our children have to take, which is the opposite direction we should be moving in. I agree with the principle that schools should be accountable for their performance, but the current assessment and accountability process is broken, and simply calling tests something other than "STAAR" is not the answer.
- 3) I strongly oppose any legislation that would restrict what topics teachers can discuss at school. This recent hysteria about children being "indoctrinated" at school is based purely on partisan politics. It's not based in anything that's actually, demonstrably happening in our schools. Please, spend your time and energy addressing the genuine, serious, objectively true issues that are facing our students and educators.

Thank you for your time.

Alisa McElroy
Self - Mother and Teacher
Cypress, TX

Vouchers are terrible and the trick of saying this removes STAAR is a lie. Vote NO.

Mary Piehl
Self; Retired
Tomball, TX

I am aware of the overwhelming 80 page sub presented to SB 8, particularly page 50, where proposals regarding vouchers have been covertly buried. I am opposed to ANY form of taxpayer redirection of public education funds, whether it's cast as a voucher, an ESA, a tax credit, or as any other ambiguous euphemism. Public schools are systematically being misrepresented and defunded, apparently by design and apparently for political reasons (certainly not for the good of most Texas children). I feel strongly enough that I am willing to bolster/donate to opponents of any committee members who support this legislation, whether or not I'm their constituent.

Chonita Ruiz
Self
Cypress, TX

This bill has a hidden agenda and is not best for the students, families, and educators. Vote "Nay" for this bill!

Suzanne Miller
Self
Haslet, TX

Absolutely not! This will dismantle public education. You cannot give public funds to entities that do not follow public requirements

Steven Miller
Self
Halset, TX

Stop trying to push vouchers on Texas. We do not want it and they only benefit those who already afford private education. You cannot give public funds to entities that do not have to follow public requirements

Laurie Gustafson
Self
Dallas, TX

Vouchers will bankrupt our public education system in Texas and costs too much. This is a subsidy for those who can afford private school and does nothing for the rest of the students in Texas. This is bad public policy. Please do not pass this bill.

Jennifer Martinez
Self
Houston, TX

The way this is playing out is shady. This bill should be allowing for public comments. Vouchers (school choice) is a thinly veiled attempt to reinstitute segregation back into public schools. It's focused on separating the affluent from the socioeconomically disadvantaged. If the Texas Legislature truly valued its citizens, students and position as a business friendly state then it would appropriately fund public schools rather than trying to sneak vouchers into other bills. Vote no on SB8.

Dr. Harold Smith
Self
Arlington, TX

I ask you not support HB 8. I am a 57 year veteran of teaching Texas students.

Jan Richards
Self
Austin, TX

These last few weeks of session are vitally important for the future of our public schools. The House Public Education Committee is hearing the committee substitute for Senate Bill 8, which includes the largest voucher program in the nation.

I'm writing to ask you to please contact your colleagues on the House Public Education Committee and ask them to keep CSSB 8 from leaving the committee for the following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Kathleen Misch, Mrs
Self
Dallas, TX

Instead of giving vouchers to a select few that can afford to send their children to private schools please fully fund our public schools. Our public schools have been running at a deficit because you have done nothing to help with inflation for our school districts. We have a great district and you need to support them. You also need to realize the vouchers aren't helping rural schools or children with severe learning disabilities. Please fund our public schools!!

Matthew Hudgins
Teachers everywhere
Garland, TX

Vote NO

GARY KENT BOYD JR

Self

TEMPLE, TX

I am against school vouchers in Texas. The establishment of a voucher system will steer money away from public education. I have no problem with private schools. However, private schools have the ability to effectively accept or reject whoever they wish and are not subject to state standardized testing. Therefore, it is my belief and those of most Texans, that private schools should not receive state funding. I understand that this is framed as a "parental rights" issue, but we all know that private schools will only accept the students that are "easier" to educate while public schools are required to accept everyone. Public education is one of the last institutions that brings people together from all walks of life together. Vouchers will eliminate that.

And, from a strictly political point of view, I fear that this issue will do irreparable damage to the Republican party. I have voted for Republican candidates and causes for the majority of my life. However, I believe that because "far right" Republicans are pushing this issue, it will eventually cause more moderate Republicans to abandon the party. Many public educators in Texas are fairly socially and fiscally conservative and many of them (like me) have been reliable Republican voters. However, this line in the sand that Republicans are drawing over vouchers will, I'm afraid, damage the party and ultimately deliver Texas into the hands of Democrats, as voters (not unlike me) wonder if the party I have known and supported has abandoned me.

Rochelle Lyon, Mrs.

Self, Retired

Franklin, TX

As a strong supporter of public schools, I am against giving parents vouchers to send their children to private schools. I have 8 great grandchildren in public school. My granddaughter is a teacher in the Houston ISD. My property taxes are very high. If I'm going to sacrifice because of taxes, I want public schools to benefit. Let parents who want private school pay for it.

Kelli Frisch, Mrs

Self

Temple, TX

If private schools and charter schools receive vouchers then they should have to play by the same rules as public schools. They would be required to do all of the same testing, provide for all sped services, accept all students that apply as well as all of the discipline regulations. Since the types of schools are not equal this should make them like public schools.

Jennifer Hopper

Self

Austin, TX

Say NO to SB 8 and YES to fully funding our public schools. Private schools receiving tax dollars must be fully regulated and subject to the same accountability and transparency as public schools. School choice should mean families choose their schools and not the other way around. Private schools should not be able to cherry pick students while receiving larger allotments per student than public schools. My husband is a 5th generation Texan who grew up in Sonora and his mother still lives there. His public school was the center of their community as he was growing up and that little town educated him well enough that he was able to attend UT Plan II, went on to Duke for Law School, and then returned to the state he loves to build a law practice and raise his family. We would like our own daughter who is attending UT law school to stay in Texas, too. But as a woman she is already unsure that this will be a safe state for her to be pregnant and now she is considering the possibility that it will also be a state that has gutted its public school system. The public school system which allowed her access to UT Law and the public school system in which her mother dedicated years of teaching service. Please do the right thing for the future of Texas and say NO to special interests. Say NO to SB 8.

Richard Schulte
NEA Dallas
Dallas, TX

No vouchers from public tax dollars

Amber Fielding, NA
Self
Cypress, TX

Please give public schools the funds they deserve and get ride of STAAR/EOC testing. It is a waste of money. Teachers and support staff deserve better pay and our kids deserve more funds per student.

Jon Youngblood
Retired Teachers
Frisco, TX

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to you today to express my strong opposition SB 8, which would hastily push through a number of changes to public education in Texas. We are a home of two retired teachers and believe in public education.

I am particularly concerned about the provisions of SB 8 that would:

Allow parents to sue public schools for any reason they believe their parental rights have been violated, without having to prove that any harm has been done. This would create a chilling effect on teachers and administrators, who would be afraid to teach controversial topics or provide students with the information they need to make informed decisions about their lives.
Establish an education savings account program that would allow parents to use public funds to pay for private school tuition or other educational expenses. This would divert money away from public schools, which are already underfunded and struggling to provide a quality education for all students.
I urge you to vote against SB 8. This bill is a dangerous and unnecessary attack on public education in Texas.

Maryemily Chernoff, Mrs.
Mother to 5 Texans
Irving, TX

Please support this bill. Texan parents are the adults most invested in their children's education, and should have access to tax dollars to enroll their kids in the schools they choose.

Sofia Chamberlain
Self
Austin, TX

I am writing to ask you to please vote NO on SB 8 for the following reasons

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Franya Wilhelm
Self
Arlington, TX

Vote NO in this bill.

Amber Lasseigne
Self
Carrollton, TX

The fact that only invited testimonies will be heard means you know that you are not acting on behalf of average Texans. Please do not approve this bill.

Constance A Goodwin, Ms.
Self — Retired public school teacher (39 years)
Lubbock, TX

Hello, my name is Connie Goodwin , and I am calling to respectfully ask that Members of the Education Committee looking at this bill on May 15 and vote NO on S.B. 8.

And here is why:

- 1)S.B. 8 would be one of the greatest transfers of wealth in Texas history from the state's poor and middle class to the richest Texans.The bill would take public tax dollars away from already-underfunded public schools and funnel them toward private, often-religious, wealthy schools.
- 2)By further gutting Texas public schools of the resources they desperately need, we would only be further exacerbating education inequality in Texas and making it even more difficult for Texas' most vulnerable children to succeed.
- 3)Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers; they are not required to report student achievement data to the state. They do not have to accept all students; they can discriminate.
- 4)No credible research exists to suggest vouchers (akaEducation Savings Accounts) improve academic performance.
- 5)Texas already ranks 40th in per-student spending and the rate of inflation since 2019 is 14.5%, according to the Comptroller.
- 6)Choice already exists within the public school system - Districts have transfer policies, magnet schools, career/ tech academies, etc.

For these reasons, and as a now retired public school teacher who taught in the public schools for thirty-nine years, I would respectfully ask that you vote NO on S.B. 8, a bill that would only help the richest schools, and would leave our state's public education students behind.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Constance A. Goodwin

Kevin Rutkowski
Self - software consultant
Austin, TX

No public money should go to private schools. Our public schools are underfunded. Vouchers for private schools would simply subsidize well off families who are already sending their kids to private schools.

If there are vouchers, they should only be allowed to be used at schools that meet all the standards of public schools, including requirements to serve every student and have all special education supports required by public schools. They also should be required to operate solely on the amount per student equal to the voucher amount and not a penny more.

Public education is critical for a functioning Democracy, and we need to keep the system we have and improve it rather than tear it down by removing more and more funding.

Maureen Waldie, Ms.
Self - Retired
Dallas, TX

I urge you to vote no on SB8

Ping Chen
Self
Belton, TX

Parents should have the right to choose how they want their children to be educated regarding education materials, public schools should provide full transparency at all times. I fully support education savings accounts program to tax payers to allow parents and guardians to choose how and where they want their children to be educated, that includes private schools and public schools. Government and public schools should have limited authorities over parental rights who should have the final decision regarding their children's education. Education should go back to basic academic learning plus strong moral foundations, hard working ethics to compete with the rest of the world, in stead of pushing social engineering and so call social justice in school children. Kids should feel safe at schools and not have to worry about a male student being permitted in girls shower or locker room or restroom, because they feel like a girl that day. They may use individual restroom but should not have access to the girls facilities for safety reasons and vise versa for the girls who think they are males. Gender identity confusion kids need counseling and support and often times have had history of being abused or bullied. Transgender surgery for minors is child abuse and mutilation and it leads to serious life long medical issues and half the life expectancy of those who had the surgery and hormones therapy for transitioning. Look to medical studies done in Europe regarding this issue, they are realizing the magnitude of the fallout for the transgender treatments done to the minors. US is 10 years behind and should stop pushing the transgender agenda and learn from the world medical community.

Jane Ogden
self, retired college professor
Marshall, TX

SB 8 gives public dollars to private schools, leaving underfunded public schools to educate the neediest students with even fewer resources. The United States has been a champion of public schools as a tool for social mobility. SB8 works to undo that legacy and should not be adopted.

Tricia Sobhani
Self
San Antonio, TX

Public school is a state-constitutional requirement in Texas. Every child deserves an education. And schools NEED the funding to be able to achieve that. My son is in public school and receives services under an IEP. He needs to continue to receive such services and supports. If private schools get that money HE LOSES OUT! They won't have money to pay for SPED and they will lose those teachers. Show you care about our children, by not allowing private schools to take our public school funds.

Jim Vaszauskas
Self
Mansfield, TX

I am opposed to my tax dollars being used for vouchers or esa's. Please stand firm and vote no

Danielle Evans
self
ROUND ROCK, TX

I'm really disappointed that this bill continues to be pushed along despite how clearly the public has expressed that we don't want it. The voucher proposal will hurt our public schools and STAAR testing is already too invasive. It's time to reduce testing if anything. As for the vouchers, if parents want to send their children to an alternative school that is under no obligation to accept children with disabilities or in any way be accountable for its curriculum, that is their right but it should not be subsidized by the state (i.e. taxpayers).

Chad Edwards
Self
Millsap, TX

As a public school board member and more importantly a tax paying citizen, I ask that our legislature fully support and fund our public education system as required by the Constitution of our state that you took an oath to protect. I do not want my tax dollars going to private establishments and neither should you.

Mica Rudd
Stephenville ISD
STEPHENVILLE, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Penelope Ogle, Mrs.
Texas Educator
Sealy, TX

Why are private schools not included in STAAR testing? If parents want to choose a private/voucher system.. then they need to be rated on the same scales.

Nancy Humphrey
self
Richardson, TX

I sincerely ask you to oppose CSSB 8 and the voucher system it would create.

Our public schools are dealing with more than ever before following the significant learning loss our students experienced following the COVID 19 pandemic and yet inflation and rising costs consistently reduce our budgets. Public education needs more support from our State Legislature and leaders – not less. I implore you to prioritize supporting our schools to ensure they can provide every single student that walks into public schools with the high-quality education that they deserve.

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) will only further deplete available funding for public schools, which, unlike private schools, accept and support every student that enrolls, regardless of their circumstances. Furthermore, as our schools are a public institution funded by public dollars, they are held to strict accountability standards for both student outcomes and the district's financial management. Taxpayers have a right to know how their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent. ESAs strip them of this right while they fund private schools that lack the same accountability and transparency standards.

The State cannot simultaneously withhold essential funding for public schools and then claim at the same time that it is our schools that are failing children. Provide us with the resources we need to deliver on our promise of a great education our to students and then hold us accountable for the results. Public education has always been the cornerstone of our great democracy and investing in our schools is imperative for its successful future.

I urge you to support our public schools and OPPOSE CSSB 8.

Cyral Miller, Ms
Self
Austin, TX

Vote no on school vouchers! Our public schools deserve full funding, not to have money stripped away to fund private schools, many of which are religiously based and thus, should not be funded by my tax dollars! Vote no!

Margaret Savage
self
Austin, TX

SB 8 diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools. I encourage you to vote NO on SB 8. My children's public elementary school raised \$58,000 between the fall and spring fundraisers with donations from parents and family members. We have two fundraisers per year to meet the needs of our school and students to make up for what the school does not receive from the state. Please do not divert any more money away from public schools! Please vote NO.

Tricia Fowler
Self. Parent and Sr. Program Manager
Round Rock, TX

As a parent and someone who has been a classroom teacher as well as having worked in the education space for more than 25 years I have a solid understanding of how schools are funded. I also understand how significantly underfunded Texas schools are now. The savings account program would take needed money out of public schools. That money would be diverted to schools that are not accountable to state and federal regulations. We need to do all that we can to better fund and support public education in Texas.

Jennifer Bolston
Teachers
Spring, TX

Do not allow public school vouchers for private school funding. This is not an equal trade. Or hold private schools to the same standards as public. State mandated tests. Accountability ratings and pay that equals job requirements. Also, school safety.

Katherine McGovern
Self
Dallas, TX

SB 8 is a theft of my, and other, taxpayers money paid to support PUBLIC SCHOOLS and the thousands of Texas students all over this State who attend them! The proposed "Voucher/School Choice" bill is anything but - rather it creates a false premise that the Texas PUBLIC SCHOOLS are NOT good enough to teach Texas children! The Texas Public Schools have a remarkable record of producing successful participants and graduates who become the foundation for each generation of Texans contributing to the welfare of Texas' economy! Texans who do not want to take advantage of the free, public schools are given the choice of enrolling their children in whatever alternate option they choose - but they should NOT be given my hard-earned tax dollars to finance their personal choice! Rather all of my tax dollars should stay with the public schools to support and finance the education of Texans! It is particularly irksome to see that, in spite of our Constitutional Requirement of Separation of Church and State, SB 8 would syphon off the much needed tax dollars from Public Schools to finance private, religious schools thereby paying state tax dollars to teach specific religious beliefs. We are free in Texas and America to practice whatever religion we choose - but there should be no governmental subsidy through a "voucher" program for this purpose! VOTE NO ON SB 8!

Catherine Allen, Ms.
Texas PTA
Beaumont, TX

School vouchers hurt Texas public schools because they direct funding away from an already critically underfunded system.

Vouchers:

Do not ensure accountability.

Vouchers send public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to the public for producing results.

Are a step backward in serving students with disabilities

Over the past 30 years, federal and state laws have evolved to ensure students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education. Private schools are not required to provide special education services mandated by federal and state laws.

Violate separation of church and state.

The U.S. Constitution prohibits any government "establishment of religion." Tax dollars directed toward private schools of religious origin violates this principle.

The U.S. Constitution ensures the "free exercise of religion"; no government has proper authority to dictate a religious community's expression of faith. Regulation and oversight always accompany the allocation of public tax dollars, thus violating freedom of religion.

Provide choice for some, not 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.

Vouchers do not address 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.

Drain critical funding.

Vouchers drain additional resources from the public school system.

Public funds should remain in the public school system that serves the vast majority of Texas students.

Karen Kulmaczewski, Ms
Self
Saginaw, TX

There should be no establishment of Education Savings Accounts. These accounts would only serve those who have their children in private schools already. The purpose of the public school is to educate all the children of the community regardless of income. Private schools are for those parents who CHOOSE to send their children there. The end result of these savings accounts is to give a massive tax cut to the wealthy in the community and undermines the purpose of public education. I pay taxes to my school to educate all the children with opportunities that are equal. I have no interest in paying for another family's private education.

Melissa Hernandez, Mrs.
Self
Lubbock, TX

I am an educator and constituent in your district, and I'm writing to ask you to please contact your colleagues on the House Public Education Committee and ask them to keep CSSB 8 from leaving the committee for the following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
 - It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
 - It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
-

Eduardo Aleman
TSTA/NEA. retired teacher
Kilgore, TX

The vast majority of students attend public schools

Haden Steffek
Self, physician
Copper Canyon, TX

Yes to SB8. I am supporting competition for education. Our public schools need to evolve. Competition will force that evolution. The decades of poor outcomes despite vast financial governmental investment point to a need for change. Vote yes for SB 8.

Louie Luna, Honorable
Myself
San Antonio, TX

I am diametrically opposed to the use of vouchers in this manner.

Genese Bell, Dr
A voter
San Antonio, TX

I hope to see real school choice where parents can choose to send their children to schools with shared values.

Melanie Klutts

Self - retired educator and 6th gen Texan

Dallas, TX

Call it whatever you will, but vouchers are harmful to public schools. It has been well documented in places where this has been attempted. It removes funding from schools that serve ALL children and reroutes it to wealthier folks who are already in the private system. It's just another way to reward the rich for their votes. Texans do NOT want this. They have communicated that again and again, yet republicans persist in pursuing it, in order to secure reelection. Vile and hateful. This is a diverse state. We should be helping those who need help, not rewarding the wealthy with more perks.

Cherrise Thomas

Self

Vidor, TX

Please vote against SB8. It does not financially support our public schools nor does it hold schools that would receive vouchers accountable to the same standards that public schools are using the same funds. SB8 does not reduce, change, or eliminate STAAR testing, which is developmentally inappropriate! Having administered state testing for 23 years, I have seen the devastation first hand. Teachers and schools are maxed out with the requirements handed down by TEA without any regard to time or funds required. SB8 will only make the money shortfall worse!

Sharon Bates

M6self

Cleburne, TX

Please vote no on SB 8. Vouchers will seriously harm our public schools.

LAURA SMITH

self retired teacher

THE WOODLANDS, TX

SB 8

Please vote NO to SB 8. We don't need vouchers. They only support the wealthy.

Kelli Moulton

Self

Corsicana, TX

Opposed to SB 8

Senate Bill 8 threatens a high quality education for all by pouring public tax dollars into private schools that don't have the same requirements, accountability or transparency as public schools. When State leadership saw they couldn't get a voucher bill through, but they saw the overwhelming support for STAAR/Accountability reform, the mirage was formed. Combining the two bills in an attempt to entice Texas into vouchers...we cannot be fooled.

Tanya Bougacha
Self
Wylie, TX

No vouchers. Fund public school. Give teachers raises
No vouchers
No vouchers
Keep church out of schools
Keep your religion out of public schools
Your religion not mine

Todd Marshall
Self
Texarkana, TX

SB 8, the voucher legislation that will be heard in the House Public Education Committee on Monday, has been a topic of great concern for many individuals. The lack of financial transparency in this legislation is a significant issue, as it could lead to misuse of funds and a lack of accountability for those receiving voucher payments.

Additionally, testing accountability is another concern related to this legislation. Vouchers could potentially allow students to attend schools that are not held to the same testing standards as public schools, leading to a disparity in educational quality and opportunities.

It is crucial that lawmakers carefully consider the potential consequences of this legislation and ensure that it aligns with the best interests of all students and the public education system as a whole.

Krista Benson
Self Educator
Garland, TX

As a Texas public Special Education teacher with 19 years of experience, daughter of a retired Texas Special Education teacher, and mother to a 3rd grader attending Texas public schools, I am staunchly against Educational Savings Accounts / School vouchers.

-As a Texas for 32 years, I'm proud that Free Public Education is a guaranteed right in the Texas State Constitution.

-School vouchers are inequitable. Most students I have taught with significant behavioral needs are not welcomed at any private or charter school. However, schools are required to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education to all students.

-School vouchers will mostly benefit wealthy families. For example, more than three-quarters of voucher participants in Arizona already had a child enrolled in private school.

-School vouchers are proposing paying up to \$10,000 per student to families. However, the state currently pays 6,160 per student to school districts. Just think of all the amazing things our INCREDIBLE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS could do FOR STUDENTS with an additional \$3,860 per student per year! Instead, Texas ranks in the bottom 10 states in per-student funding.

-Parents already have school choice! They can choose to have their students transfer schools within school districts, they can transfer to another school district, they have their choice of Free Charter Schools, and they have the choice to homeschool with no government oversight.

-Education is a public good. It benefits not just individuals, but society as a whole.

Gwendolyn Wittenbrook
Self/dietitian
Plano, TX

I live in Frisco ISD and am AGAINST SB8. This takes away money from local public school and will allow the schools (not the parents) to choose.

Quincy Whitehead
Ecisd
Odessa, TX

Do not pass vouchers!

Patricia Cain, Mrs
Self
Pasadena, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Patrick O'Brien, Rev
St pius x catholic school
San antonio, TX

If you allow charter schools, this is only fair!

Help.us raise good wholesome kids that love God and all his people!

Christina Cabral
Self
Allen, TX

Vouchers are bad for public education. Siphoning public money to private institutions that are not held to the same standards is irresponsible and will damage education. There are no requirements or safeguards for children needing special education and no protection under IDEA. Millions of children would be affected for decades to come. Services that are needed so each child can reach their potential, receive vital reading and math supports, and other services could be turned away.

This bill would pull more funding away from the local schools serving these kids and create a greater deficit and gap in education. If we truly want to support education, fully fund IDEA and increase funding to local schools.

Rachel Naugle
Self. Assistant Director for Curriculum and Innovation in Pflugerville ISD
Pflugerville, TX

I am adamantly opposed to any voucher program that removes funding from local school districts. Our schools are already struggling to keep up with rising costs of fuel, energy, and food prices that have hit my own personal pocketbook. In my over twenty years in public education, I have seen us school districts constantly beg for more money while the state, through the Robinhood plan, takes our local taxpayers' money and keeps it for itself or enters into "contracts" with out-of-state education consulting companies. Now, the state is saying my property taxes should go to a private school when the state isn't adequately funding my own kids in my own school district. And not only will the money go to private schools with zero accountability, money will also go to "educational assistance organizations" to manage the program? Just fund public schools to the level they need to remain solvent or risk dooming the next generation of Texas kids forever.

Mindy Ingram
Myself
Fort Worth, TX

I oppose any bill that includes school vouchers specifically SB8. These all lack accountability and proper regulatory actions are needed to ensure the funds are used properly.

David Disselhorst
Educators for choice
Stanton, TX

It's time to give parents more choices by empowering parents to make decisions so as to provide better educational opportunities for their students. Especially those that live in under performing districts. Also it protects our children from the deceptions of gender identity and transgender therapy.

Phillip Hernandez
Idalou isd
IDALOU, TX

I strongly appose Sb8 voucher program!!

George Mayben
Self
Lometa, TX

If it were not for the private (non government) schools, the public education system would be financially bankrupt. At this time, and in the past, these private schools subsidize the public education system. In addition to financially being bankrupt, there would not be enough teachers for the system as many have already chosen not to teach in the public system and have moved to the lower paying/less benefits private system. If the public system was doing such a great job of educating there wouldn't be a need for as many private schools that now exist. Public education is against the financial assistance because it knows there would be a large movement of students from public to private and they would have to be held accountable for the loss. It is time to try something else because the throwing money into the public system is not working. It only helps those that financially benefit from the system. Every two years we hear the public system needs more money but after receiving it there is never any measurable improvement in the education of the children. We elect Representatives and Senators to solve problems, in the hopes that they disregard old non-effective policies and try new ones in an effort to solve or at least show a marked improvement from the status quo.

Crystal Adams, Mrs.
Students and Teachers on Texas
Fairfield, TX

If you are going to give away state money to private school and homeschools, then they should be held to the same standards that public schools are held to. They should have to meet all regulations and requirements including the STAAR test, attendance, safety standards, teacher certification, and all other state mandates for public schools. The money allotted for each student in Texas should be EQUAL for every student. A student attending a public school should be equal to the allotment for a private school or a homeschool child. Students in the district where I live currently receive \$6100 (minus the percentage of attendance). It would be ludicrous to give a private or homeschool student \$9000, when you don't even think a public school student is worth that much. The majority of students in Texas attend public schools and you should be supporting the majority of the students or you will end up with a society with greater crime, lawlessness, and poverty. Voucher or Education Savings Account are detrimental to Texas and to our society as a whole. Do NOT pass this bill!!!!!!

Alison Takata
self/student
Austin, TX

Dear Honorable Committee Members, I urge you to vote no on SB8. This bill - specifically education savings accounts - will hurt our public schools by taking money away from public schools. Thank you.

Boggs Leslie, President, Carrell Boggs Consulting
Self
Odessa, TX

Protect our public schools. These schools educate our workforce. Our nation needs well-educated students. By voting for education savings accounts, you are defunding our schools. Fully fund our public schools, then we can talk about tax credits/vouchers

KAREN BROWNING
Ridgetop Elementary School Austin ISD Parent
AUSTIN, TX

Please vote in opposition of any voucher program. We should not be funding private schools and schools with no accountability with public money. Let's fund our public schools appropriately, investing in our children, teachers, administrators and facilities. Voucher programs are a cynical way to deal with the problem created by poorly funded schools and teachers who lack the support they need to be successful.

Christine Spofford
self - teacher & parent
Mineola, TX

I am a public school teacher for a rural, title 1 school. I am also a mother of a student who attends this district. In order for our students & children to get an education that is worthy of their time and effort, **DO NOT TAKE FUNDS** from us. It is that simple. We need students in school to generate money to keep the schools running. Private schools should continue to stay just that, private. Privately funded by those who choose to attend.

Cherry Langford
Broadway Baptist Church
N Richland Hills, TX

A vibrant public education system is what our state needs. This bill further shows a pattern of GOP leaders dismantling our system. Draining funds, increasing testing is the exact opposite of what our kids need. I oppose SB8.

Melissa Curtis
Self
Sulphur Springs, TX

I disagree with the use of vouchers to allow funds that would normally go to a Texas public school to instead be directed to the student's family to be used for private school tuition, online courses, tutoring, educational therapies, or other approved reasons.

Carli Kane
Self
Dallas, TX

No Vouchers

Daryn Polanco, Mrs.
Self-public school principal
San Antonio, TX

This is the most underhanded attempt to defund public schools that I have ever seen. I am ashamed to live in Texas and ashamed of our representatives. Fund our public schools appropriately so we can continue to fight the good fight to educate all students, not just a select few.

Pam Walding
Self/Westwood ISD
Palestine, TX

There's a song love love love 3 little words that mean so much. I say no no no to this. I can't see any benefits from it. Parents already get to chose. And you are going to cost the people of Texas more money. This is not going to make our kids better educated. Please don't destroy the public education system. It still works.

Stephanie Williams
Self / educators/
Richmond, TX

Please do not pass this bill. Public schools educate all students and we cannot continue to do this well with less money and more tests.

The solution to improving schools is to focus on teacher evaluation, growth and development.
Next we need higher constraints on leaders.

Ashley Bearrows
Self - HCA Accounts service manager
Highland Village, TX

Do not ensure accountability. Vouchers send public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to the public for producing results. Over the past 30 years, federal and state laws have evolved to ensure students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education. Private schools are not required to provide special education services mandated by federal and state laws. The U.S. Constitution prohibits any government "establishment of religion." Tax dollars directed toward private schools of religious origin violates this principle. The U.S. Constitution ensures the "free exercise of religion"; no government has proper authority to dictate a religious community's expression of faith. Regulation and oversight always accompany the allocation of public tax dollars, thus violating freedom of religion. 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. Vouchers do not address 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. Vouchers drain additional resources from the public school system. Public funds should remain in the public school system that serves the vast majority of Texas students.

Maria Gabriel
self former paraprofessional
Burleson, TX

Vote NO on school savings account programs that will take funding away from public schools in Texas. This is a terrible idea. Make Texas schools the number one in the nation. Use those funds to improve our standards to bring all school children up to college prep levels! Maria

Mindy Place
Westwood ISD
Elkhart, TX

Public education has, quite clearly, become the red-headed step-child where Texas legislation is concerned. I would wager that the majority of the Texas State Reps are a product of said establishment. That being the case, please consider the future of Texas (including our future legislators). Diverting funds (via ESAs in SB 8) to private schools will further demean Texas teachers (who NEED and deserve a significant raise). This loss of funding will ultimately foster a future of a dumber Texas, overall, as qualified teachers leave the profession.

The fact that a student is worth less in a public school (\$6,000/year) than in a private school (\$8,000/year) is also unacceptable. In addition to the issue of funding, the STAAR test system is broken. An eight/nine-year-old should not (developmentally) be expected to sit for hours being tested on knowledge which is not representative of the third grade level TEKS standards. Please consider killing SB 8 - the future of our great state depends on you to care about our kids NOW!

Bradley Willi
Self
Lewisville, TX

Vote against. Please spend time working on fully funding public education and raise the basic allotment.

Diana Long
Texas Legislative Educational Equity Coalition (TLEEC)
AUSTIN, TX

Chair Buckley and Members,

TLEEC opposes SB 8. SB 8 takes the state farther away from the goals of fair school funding and parent and community accountability over education quality. Texas public schools serve all students as part of the state's constitutional obligation to provide an efficient public education system. SB 8 creates a separate, inefficient system of publicly funded educational assistance organizations.

The education savings account (ESA) program would funnel between \$7,500 to upwards of \$10,500 per qualifying participant, taking that money out of public schools that must serve all students and that are held accountable by state and federal education laws.

Private school voucher programs across the country rarely require financial transparency or academic accountability measures, and SB 8 is no different. The bill contains no financial or academic reporting requirements for participating EAOs. The aggregate STAAR report in the CSSB 8 does not align with state reporting or accountability standards for public schools that allow for transparency to parents. As such, CEAOs would not be held accountable for students' performance in reading and math, learning progress or accelerated learning by grade level, graduation rates, or postsecondary outcomes.

Studies have found that private school vouchers do not improve student achievement. For instance, researchers at the University of Arkansas published a four-year study analyzing assessment data from students who used the Louisiana Scholarship Program. The results concluded that students using the program did visibly worse on state assessments four years later than their counterparts in public schools (Mills & Wolf, 2019). Similar negative trends have held true across programs in Indiana, Washington, D.C., Alabama, and Ohio.

In contrast to the calls for greater transparency in public schools, parents enrolling a student with disabilities into the ESA program waive their rights to any state or federal disabilities or special education protections. A 2020 study by Education Week found that private school voucher programs across 29 states rarely require transparent reporting on student achievement or graduation rates or information as basic as teachers' education qualifications. Most of the programs allowed private schools to discriminate against students' religious and gender identities for admission. Only five states of the 29 required that students with disabilities be admitted to private schools benefitting from the voucher programs.

Overall, the programs obscured transparency on school and student performance, reduced accountability for meeting students' needs, and permitted discrimination from students' accessing the private education touted by the programs. This an inefficient and unaccountable use of public education funds. Please uphold the state's duty to support students in public schools and vote Nay on SB 8.

Jason Fossett
Belton ISD
Belton, TX

Invest in public schools! Say NO to vouchers!

Casey Helmick, Ms.
Self & educator
Haslet, TX

This bill does not support my own children or the children I serve in public schools. Taking public funds away from public schools and presenting it to private schools is abhorrent. Public schools are already underfunded and over-mandated. We need new funding formulas that allow all students to succeed.

In addition, these last minute amendments only add to the testing pressure that exists on public schools but not private schools.

Public comment should be available for any bill that is going to affect this many Texans. The fact that you are not allowing public comment is vastly concerning.

Please listen to educators and parents from all of the state who do not want vouchers to be part of Texas public schools.

Sheila Lashley
Myself
Azle, TX

Vouchers are bad for Texas...especially our rural schools. Fully fund public schools.

Kathryn Stevens, Retired Public School Teacher
Myself
Corpus Christi, TX

This bill is a disgrace. It will benefit private schools with little to no accountability and subsidize private school education for wealthy parents at the expense of public schools already underfunded and burdened with heavy regulations. It further attempts to regulate speech in public schools but no mention of similar regulation for private schools. The bill proposes more regulations on public schools while giving public school money to unregulated and unaccountable private schools. Travesty!

Asela Acosta
Self teacher & adjunct instructor
Laredo, TX

As a result of the pandemic, instructional knowledge/understanding is below the level that students should be. It happens that this is not only public schools but private as well. Most of my private school students are not doing well in class; they're great kids but they lack many mathematical understanding that unfortunately they didn't get because their parents thought they would be better at a private school, and we can already see what a detriment it caused in their educational background.

Private schools tend to follow religious cultures whose emphasis is not necessarily in education but in religion or whichever "expertise" the school claims. What's so great about our country is the freedom to follow whichever religion we chose; what's so great about our country is that we can honestly say everyone has access to public education that depending on hard work can allow all students to succeed no matter if they're a special education, 504, regular, or pre-ap student.

We're losing so much money not only as a school but as a district. So many teachers are retiring sooner because there aren't enough teachers with the expertise that is so desperately needed, and they're also leaving because we are given so much additional paperless paperwork that is becoming overwhelming to all schools no matter the level of educator, be a teacher, counselor, administrator, or principal. As a teacher, I can tell you that it is going to be difficult to live with the retirement that has been set by our state, but that nonetheless we educators keep working for.

Please reconsider the importance of public education on the general population. Please remember students of special needs. Please keep in mind students that are of poverty background and the constant tease it can cause for going to a private school. Please keep ALL students in mind. Please show the fairness of our country when you cast your vote in favor of public schools.

Susan Anderson
Self/Teacher
Austin, TX

Teachers say, "NO," to SB 8 because it is bad for public education! Please do the right thing and oppose this bill!

Lana Collins
self, retired teacher
San Antonio, TX

I urge you to vote against this bill as it would jeopardize the public education for all students, as well as parental rights and public school responsibilities regarding instructional materials.

Lauren Curtis
Self/Teacher
Grapevine, TX

Vote NO for school vouchers. Fully fund Texas public education.

Jennifer Erickson
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I am opposed to the addition of vouchers which would decimate public education in Texas. Adding the language at the last minute without open public comment is reprehensible. Find public education properly, don't divert money and harm our children for the benefit of select wealthy individuals.

Aurora Porras, Mrs.
Self Teacher
El Paso, TX

I strongly urge you to oppose SB 8! Public schools need your support and funding at 100%! Funds should not be diverted for vouchers for homeschooling, private or charter schools!

Emily Rich
Self
Dallas, TX

This bill and how it is being presented defies the concept of fair and equitable public education. This is a disservice to all levels of society - denying opportunity for advancement through diversity of students and making educational occupations less desirable on a large scale.

Sue Tabor, Ms
TRTA
Wichita Falls, TX 76308-4438, TX

No to Voucures. Please DONT VOTE TO DUMB DOWN TEXAS~~~~NO VOUCHERS??????????

Ryan Steglich
Self
Austin, TX

I do not support this bill. Please eliminate all vouchers, and keep the volume of testing required to the same or less.
Thanks,
Ryan

Gail Madison
Retired educator representing myself
Lubbock, TX

An vote B8 is a vote to take money away from the rural schools in West Texas. I do not want my tax money to go to middle class parents already sending their kids to religious schools. Besides defying freedom of religion, every cent going to them is harming rural schools.

Patty James
Self/Public Affairs
Cypress, TX

I, a parent of 2 students enrolled in public schools, DO NOT support this bill & I encourage my elected representative to vote NO. You all would better serve ALL of your constituents by increasing monetary support for PUBLIC education that is accessible & available to ALL K-12 students. It is disappointing to see yet another attempt to take dollars away from public education.

Liz Harryman
Self-mom
Fort Worth, TX

Please vote no to sb8, keep money in public schools, vouchers are not the answer. we need more for ALL children in Texas.

Grant Golden
Self
Georgetown, TX

I am deeply concerned that you are restricting open testimony on SB 8. The motives for denying citizen voice seem very clear. I 100% do not support this bill. I raised 5 children in public schools. I always had rights as a parent. I could always access the curriculum, library books, ask questions, and remove my child from activities I didn't approve of. This is disingenuous and we see the real reasons behind this legislation. I respectfully ask that you allow public testimony and that you vote against this legislation.

Cynthia Roberts
Self
Duncanville, TX

Most fiscally irresponsible legislation I've ever seen. Please do not even consider this insult to Texas teachers and all Texas students. Vouchers don't require Charter schools to accept and educate all students including those with special needs. We don't invest enough in the public schools we already have. I am tired of funding that should be static, being redirected by Gov Abbott and his cronies.

Clinton Gill
Texas State Teachers Association
Lubbock, TX

I strongly urge the committee to vote AGAINST SB 8! Private schools do not take all students, do not take the STAAR test, and have the right to get rid of students that misbehave. Public schools do not have any such options. Until the committee is willing to fund public schools appropriately and treat private schools in the same manner as public schools, there should not be any discussion of vouchers. The House has already voted not to use any state funds for any form of voucher and it needs to stay that way! Do what is right and stand up for the public school students and educators of the state of Texas!

Carrie Clawson
Self parent
Keller, TX

No private school vouchers! Invest in ALL Texas children by increasing funding for public schools across the state. The future of America depends on the education of ALL children.

Malinda Golden, Dr.
Self
Georgetown, TX

I am disturbed by the recent actions of our House Pub Ed Committee. Trying to push through SB 8 this week was disappointing and lacked the very transparency you claim to want. Transparency and voter voice should also apply to the work of our representatives. I ask that the testimonies be open to all and that you please vote against this legislation.

Jessica Lowe
Self
Temple, TX

Please support SB 8! I support school choice! Allow this bill be applied to anyone not just those who live in poverty everyone should have a right to have their tax dollars follow their child.

Ana Molina, Mrs.
self
Missouri City, TX

Vote NO on SB 8 Voucher Bill

This would take our tax dollars to support private schools. This will take the dollars needed to support and improve public schools. At the school I work, this whole year we were missing a person for the self contained SAILS program (Succeeding in Academic and Independent Living Skills). Public schools work with children that do not speak, may not know how to use the restroom, or may be aggressive. They are taught all those skills with teachers and paraprofessionals that do not make a lot of money. Those classes have so many needs that teachers end up buying from their own money. Do not take any more resources from our public schools. On the contrary, bills should be put to fully fund schools. Right now schools districts collect the money, sent t to Austin and receive back less than 50 %, and is based on attendance, not registered students. To make things worse, the inflation has not been considered for the last few years. Please do what is right, and fund education. Otherwise the state will pay the cost in the near future.

Lynsie Thompson
Self
Springtown, TX

As a lifelong special educator in public ed, the standards set forth in this bill would be a discriminatory detriment to the rights of students with disabilities. Educational savings accounts without accountability tied to them, while also blantly disregarding the equality rights of students with disabilities outlined in IDEA, are inherently discriminatory towards students with disabilities.
Vote NO.

Virginia Machrowicz, Mrs
Self /retired
College Station, TX

I am emphatically opposed to any efforts to diminish public education. These thinly disguised efforts to promote and fund private schools by establishing some kind of school “savings account” is an anathema to the values and principles our nation is founded on. No, you may not take my property tax dollars and strip schools established for all children to fund elite academies and prep schools or charter schools or religious schools. Those who prefer to send their children to private schools of any kind should pay with their own money. The legislation this term is a big disappointment in many ways

Mike Johnson
Myself
NRH, TX

Please vote no on any bill that creates a voucher system. Calling education savings accounts doesn't change the fact that it is a voucher. This will hurt public schools.

Joan Ross
Self Retired Registered Nurse
Del Valle, TX

I am firmly against SB 8 (Private School Vouchers). I got my education in public schools and found it to be broadbased and stimulating. It led me to a 55 year (yes, 55 year) Career as a Registered Nurse, the last 12 admittedly part time. But my inquisitive education base began in public schools, after which I paid for myself to go to baccalaureate in Nursing, followed by a Master's Degree in Nursing with a dual major in Administration and Clinical applications. Good education need not only go to the highest bidder!! DO NOT APPROVE THIS VOUCHER BILL!!

Abbigale Vincent
Self Parent of 4 school age children
Murphy, TX

I absolutely oppose this bill. School vouchers are a bad idea for Texas and for all public education. It will do nothing but strip our already underfunded schools of more funding.

Gray Ginther
Self
Austin, TX

I am opposed to any use of public funds for private education, be it "education savings accounts," vouchers, or whatever scam the legislature cooks up to divert taxpayers Public Ed money into private coffers. Public tax dollars should stay in Public Schools.

Carrie Baker
Self, Stay-at-home parent
Flower Mound, TX

As a parent and taxpayer, I am strongly opposed to SB 8 and any kind of school vouchers. This bill takes public funds -- MORE than are given to my child and the other 49,000 students in Lewisville ISD -- and hands them to "schools" that have zero accountability. I oppose any bill that doesn't increase funding for public schools and diverts money away from them.

Kiran Gyr
Self : Project Manager
Richardson, TX

No on School Vouchers/Coupons, yes on supporting Public Education

Leticia Hallmark
Myself
Buda, TX

The Texas Constitution requires that the State provide a free and public education for all its citizens. It does not say that parents should be given tax payer money to send their children to private schools that do NOT have the same rules or accountability measures as public schools. Providing a savings account for individuals is NOT the same thing as providing a free and public education. This is a voucher system that takes much-needed funding away from the public schools the State is required to provide and gives it to private entities making profits off our children and tax payer money. It's vastly detrimental and inequitable. Please do NOT do this. It is not what the Texas taxpayers want nor is it what's best for the children of our great State.

Nicholas Jones
CFISD / Teachers
Katy, TX

The education saving account program or voucher program would be a mistake. I have taught in low income and upper income schools, schools in San Antonio and Houston area. The changes seen just in the small nine years is due to a lack of funding and appreciation of your employees; known as teachers. You have chosen to ignore the core issues like pay and accountability. Teachers are paid as if they are a cheap resource and our responses have been heard all over the state as more and more have chosen to go else where for their employment. While treating teachers like temp, you have also agreed that you'd rather teachers and administration be disrespected by students and parents than to put your foot down. Good parents and leaders realize that love and leadership is tough and not always fun. Instead of coddling children AND parents, lines must be drawn. Lines that teach kids how to act and respect others, including others in society. These core issues that need to be addressed will not only have profound impacts on schools but society. Students will have more self esteem, pride, confidence and this will lead to better mental health and grit that society is missing. The choice to fix our schools and improve our society, yes even Texas society is within reach with support of public education and educators. The choice that must be made by our representatives and leaders. Funneling funds away from public education will not fix these issues but make them worse. It's is robbing Peter to pay Paul at its finest. These problems will not go away but will be exasterbated.

James Burnside
Playwright
Austin, TX

No vouchers!

Cecily Riesenbergl
Self
Amarillo, TX

Vote No on vouchers! Fully fund public schools! We don't want tuition welfare for wealthy people with our tax dollars that will bankrupt the state and destroy public education! We're fully aware that Abbott et al just want to privatize education for profit and we won't stand for it.

Brenda Howard

Self

Belton, TX

My name is Brenda Howard and I am speaking for myself and FOR SB 8.

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. I have included statistics for Arizona and am open to questions.

Audrey Nath

Self- pediatric neurologist and mother of a public school student

Houston, TX

While the idea of "school choice" may appear positive on its surface, the reality of a voucher program is that funding would get siphoned away from our public schools. These funds, then, only help SOME students pay for private school: students who 1) live in a county that has a private option, and 2) don't have any disabilities which could preclude private school admission. Any type of school voucher program leaves our rural students and students with disabilities behind. As a pediatric neurologist, I know that our students with neurodevelopmental disabilities have SO much potential, and do not deserve to fall through the cracks. As a parent of a public school student (my 6-year-old is in kindergarten at our neighborhood school in Houston ISD), I am a **STRONG** proponent of strengthening our public schools and the wonderful community my son has been able to experience, not **DEFUNDING** them. Please do **NOT** support this legislation. Thank you. -Audrey Nath, MD, PhD

Jennifer Garza

Self

Bryan, TX

I am a woman, a straight party line republican, a conservative, a Christian, a southern Baptist pastor's wife, a mother of four, and a public school teacher. I urge you to vote against school vouchers. This is not the answer. It will only further divide our state and nation and destroy our public school system. Private schools are not going to enroll students from difficult backgrounds and if they do they will not allow them to stay for long. We need to use those tax dollars to rethink the way we fund, structure, and support public school. Please talk to the teachers in the schools! They have ideas and are innovative in their thinking! Please be innovative! Look at nations like Finland and others that are seeing success. Let's do better. This is not the answer, but answers are there and we are **TEXAS!** We are capable of **ANYTHING** if we really want to be the best we **CAN!** We just have to decide we are going to do so and do it!

Dan Williams
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Public money should only be used for public schools. No tax dollars for private schools. No government entity has ever improved by cutting funding. There are many ways to bring underperforming schools up, but taking money away is not the answer.

Robert Turner
Self, as grandparent
Weatherford, TX

School Choice benefits EVERYONE.
<https://www.prageru.com/video/why-public-schools-should-want-school-choice>

Richard Campbell
self--retired
Franklin, TX

I, as a citizen of Texas , am absolutely opposed to the passage of SB 8. It is a detriment to the public schools of Texas. It takes state money away from public schools that is needed for their students. The only people that SB 8 would help are those who can already afford to send their children to a private school. And if those people wanted to do it., they would have already done it. The average tuition for private schools in Texas is approximately \$10,500. That does not include books, uniforms , transportation, participation in extracurricular activities, and other fees These "extras" won't even be covered by that \$ 8,000 that SB 8 wants to provide.

Politicians seem to want us to believe that all private schools are so much better than public schools. If that is the case, then why are the public schools burdened with requirements and restrictions imposed upon them by Legislators and Governors that really have no clue what it is like in a classroom that private schools don't have. If the State of Texas has \$18,000 (\$10,000 to give to a rural school if they lose a student to private school and \$8,000 to give to the family who wants to send their child to a private school) why not give that amount to the public schools to allow them to increase their budgets to provide education to their existing students. CSSB 8 requires those students who transfer from public to private school to take standardized tests that are required in public schools. Who do you think is going to administer those tests? Certainly not the private schools. And you can't require them to do it. The public school they transferred from? No. The student is not enrolled and therefore not eligible to take the test in my opinion. There is much more that I could say but am only allowed 3000 characters and I was not an "invited" participant.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,
R.L. Campbell

Mark Terry
Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association
Austin, TX

The Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) submits this written testimony in opposition to SB 8.

TEPSA is fundamentally opposed to any voucher plan, including Educational Savings Accounts (ESA) and/or any other way it is framed. We do not feel that this transfer of funding is good for students and their communities.

We oppose many other aspects of this bill including:

- Allowing private schools to select the students who will be allowed to attend their school via an application process.
- Failing to address the individual needs of students, especially those most vulnerable.
- Failing to guarantee state or federal protection of rights to students receiving special education services. In fact, the bill expressly states private schools and vendors are not subject to the rights that students receive only in public schools.
- Failing to provide funding to public schools in a manner that assists in attracting, rewarding, and retaining teachers.
- Failing to reduce or eliminate the STAAR Testing Program which increases the pressure on students, principals, and schools. It also increases the authority afforded the Commissioner of Education.
- Increasing the high-stakes nature of the A – F Accountability System for public schools, but not for private schools as they are not subject to the STAAR Test.

TEPSA and our members do not have confidence in assurances that “public schools won’t lose a dime” with the voucher bills as introduced, especially with SB 8. We also predict long-term damage to the public schools of Texas.

We reiterate, TEPSA stands in opposition to SB 8 and urge you to vote no.

Amber McClung
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please vote against this bill.

Julee Manley
Self
Salado, TX

I urge you to take a stand AGAINST SB 8 because it will divert much needed funds from public schools. I stand for public schools and oppose any voucher system.

James Manley
Self
Salado, TX

I oppose any form of vouchers or education savings accounts. I do not want tax dollars supporting private or charter schools. Funding should go to public school and students.

Kimberly Bodley
self
North Richland Hills, TX

I am a mom of a 1st grader at a public school in Keller ISD. I DO NOT support any type of voucher system in our public schools! Vouchers take away funding from already under-funded schools, and would only work to degrade our public schools and have a trickle-down effect that would be catastrophic to everyone in our community (whether you have children in the public school system or not). Taking money away from our schools, would mean cutting back on programming for groups like special needs children who need our help most. And less funding for public schools means the potential job cuts for our school teachers who already go above and beyond for our kids. The children that come through our school district will be the leaders of our communities in the not-so-distant future; don't we want the best for them? Don't we want to give them every opportunity at being the best and brightest members of our communities, even if they can't afford private school (voucher or not) or don't want to be in private school? Not to mention the fact that the vouchers wouldn't even begin to pay the price of a private school tuition anyway. Additionally, a downgraded school district would mean that our community would be a less desirable place for people to want to buy a home, which would mean that our property values would go down. I think of it like this: our taxes all go to pay for our public services like public school, public health, public safety, transportation, roadways, parks, etc. If we say yes to vouchers to someone who doesn't want to send their kids to public schools, what's next? Do we reimburse people who want to pave the stretch road JUST in front of their house? Or the person who wants to forgo access to a park and would rather have us reimburse them for their own landscaping? How would that leave our public green spaces or roadways or other public entities? The whole point of living in a community is to pay your share of taxes to maintain the public services so that we can all share in the services together. No one is forcing you to use those services, and you are free to get the private education or landscaping or whatever it may be of your choosing, but that is the price you pay for living in a community. Please think about what is best for ALL of your constituents as you cast your vote today, we are counting on you.

Suzanne Schnitz
Self
Salado, TX

I oppose SB 8 because it will divert public school funds to private and charter schools. Public school funds should benefit public schools and its students. I do not support vouchers in any form.

Kevin Carbo, Sr., Honorable
Mesquite ISD
Mesquite, TX

I am against this measure because: 1. It is not good for the children attending Public Schools. The STAAR testing additional test, that will be required to be taken by our children, will raise their anxiety level higher than it has ever been. They will go through this anxiety three times a year. 2. Parents already have a choice where they want their kids to go to school. Vouchers don't give them freedom of choice. It give private schools the choice of who they want to accept in their school. 3. Using public funds leaves less dollars for public education school to provide a proper education for 5.5 million kids in Texas. 4. Vouchers are an excuse to help affluent parents to get a cash reward for sending their kids to Private School. Vouchers were meant to be used by low performing school. That is only .6% of the schools in Texas. 5. Charter and Private Schools don't have any accountability with the State. Public Schools have vast accountability and the perform at a high to medium standard. Charter schools are failing. In closing, this feels like a ploy to extract tax payer money from the education coffers to put into the pockets of private interest. This is a shameful ploy and a disgrace of a plan.

Jennifer Ramirez, Recruiting and retention HR
Belton ISD
Belton, TX

Please stand firmly against vouchers for Texas public school! This is not good for many students and families but especially it is not good for students with disabilities. Private school can reject students with disabilities and take public school funds.

Noel Schnitz
Self
Salado, TX

I do not support vouchers or education savings accounts in any form. My tax dollars support public schools and Texas public school students.

John Hutcheson, Retired Educator
TSTA
Arlington, TX

Please oppose any attempt to divert money from our already underfunded public schools, as SB 8 proposes. Also, encouraging teachers to leave public schools for private only weakens the Teacher Retirement System.

John Black
self
Dallas, TX

Taxpayer funds should only be used for students in public education school districts. SB8 represents the worst of education policy for the State of Texas and the millions of public education students. Public education needs more support, not this toxic attempt to further dismantle an education system that should build a future work force across the state.

Traci Underwood
Cypress Fairbanks ISD
Cypress, TX

I am a parent and life long Texas resident, graduate of public schools, and a career educator in Texas public high schools. I strongly disagree with SB 8 and the move for school vouchers. Our public schools provide robust and varied opportunities for all students and we are not promoting any kind of political agenda or viewpoints in our classrooms. TEA and the curriculum approved for the state are where any changes should be considered if our state Govt officials have concerns about what is being taught in public school. Do not vote for SB 8 - support our public schools, students, and educators. Thank you - Traci Underwood

Cathy Murphree, Ms.
self
Richardson, TX

I strongly oppose any sort of education savings account/school voucher program. I have been a parent and a teacher in public and private schools. I value both. I feel strongly, though, that my tax dollars should not in any way support a private school or a parent who chooses to send their child to private school when there is a public school available. This is not right to be using public tax dollars in that way.

Ashleigh Bishop, Mrs.
Self, teacher
Palestine, TX

SB 8 will decimate rural students, educators, and schools. This bill will be disastrous for students with disabilities, considering there will be no federal or state protections that public schools are required to offer. Rural students will have no school choice in most cases. Teachers who are employed in schools that are not public schools will not be held to the same standards and will also not be protected.

Doing the right thing is sometimes hard. Please resist the lobbyists, the PACs, the political pressure, and think of the students who will undoubtedly suffer if you push this bill through.. WITHOUT voter support.

Not only that, but voters will NOT stand for this lack of representation. If you do not take care of our children and ensure fair education for all, we WILL make our voices heard on voting day. It is time to bring the people back to politics and do the right thing for the population of your state.

Rucker Preston Sr.
Belton ISD
Belton, TX

We do not want school vouchers in Bell County.

Elvira Bravo
Self
Temple, TX

No to vouchers

Kelly Haack
Self
Rockwall, TX

This SB will devastate public education. Public education is the forefront of our democracy. Public education provides a future for our children in order to build a better life for themselves and a society. If you dismantle public education it will be the demise of our country. Shame on the men and women supporting this SB, when they have benefited from public education in order to be where they are today as representatives of the people. Shame on the people who voted these representatives into office. We have to do better and I will make sure the representatives who wrote and supported this bill do not get my vote and I will continue to tell others their names, so that more can be informed.

JAMES WILSON
Denton ISD
Denton, TX

We are adamantly against SB 8. The creation of an ESA or Voucher for school choice is not financially feasible. There are currently 250k students in private schools and 750k students in home school that our state is currently not paying for. This voucher program would create additional expenses for the state. Long term it would cost our state 10 billion annually...

Bill Smith
Self teacher
Dallas, TX

It is my personal opinion that the money should follow the child, and the parents should have a choice of where that money is spent. Therefore I support a savings plan or a voucher, that's the case may be. The money should not be locked in to being used in the public school districts call especially if those districts are failing the children.

April Graham, Dr.
Self - teacher
Lubbock, TX

Please support low income and rural families and DO NOT pass this bill. We need better funding and support for public schools, which educate the vast majority of our Texas children. If you kneecap the public schools by redirecting funds to private schools, you will be denying those rural and low income children their fundamental right to education and creating a society of under-educated workers and citizens.

As a public school teacher, I must follow laws that compel me to serve kids with disabilities, be transparent, and put the mental health and safety of my students foremost. Private schools are not beholden to the same standards, nor must they admit every student. There is a place for private schools, but they cannot be the only option and they must not receive taxpayer dollars when they are not held to the standards set by federal and state policy - and when they are not accessible, even with vouchers, to every family.

Robert Stanley
self
Gladewater, TX

Please consider that this bill removes all accountability from the students education with the savings account program. This will lead to Texas have more issues with developing students to meet career, college, and military readiness.

VOTE NO!! VOTE NO!!!

Carrmilla Young, Dr.
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

This bill does not support the needs of students, schools, or districts—public or private. The testing and accountability provisions miss the mark—adding more testing rather than identifying authentic and relevant ways to assess student learning. Vouchers are not the solution to parent choice. As a parent, I have choices now. I know what they are and how to access them if I choose to. As a school principal, I find it disappointing that the accountability requirements are imbalanced and the voices of constituents near and far are being ignored. There is much to fix about public education but this bill would cause irreconcilable damage to the institutions that support the majority of Texas children. Please use this historic budget surplus to lead bold and necessary changes that can serve as a model for the nation. Vouchers are not the way. This bill is poorly constructed and misses the mark on just about every angle. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Steve Champion
Self
Plano, TX

Are y'all that far removed from public education in this state that you will put forth this law backed by your financier's and a corrupt governor? This may single handedly destroy public education as teachers leave and charters can't handle the numbers and special needs. Our constitution specifies a free public education not charters not tax payer funded savings. Grow a pair, visit a school, look at all the information available to parents so they can understand what is going on in their schools. Don't blame the school's if that information isn't read, they're required to have it posted, usually weekly. Get out of your castles on the hill and do some actual research on the problems facing public education here in Texas before you inadvertently destroy it.

Jane Woodward
Self - retired
Stephenville, TX

Public funds should not be used for private schools. We must fully fund and support our public schools so that all children get a quality education. It is for the public good - that means all - and all means all!

Dera Ronquillo
BFT/AFT
Paige, TX

Please Vote No on SB 8! This is NOT in the best interest of students and public education! Don't try to make deals in secret! Please listen to our Voices and end this Bill!!

Betty CONSTANTINE
Self - Retired Social Worker
Arlingtont, TX

As a mother, veteran and retired Social Worker I am asking you not to pass SB 8. Public school funds were NEVER intended to be used for private schools. Please remember that the founding fathers of our country valued the separation of church and state. They also believed in the power of public education. Please fund public schools to the fullest. They are the backbone of our communities. The children of the Texas deserve the best and it is not a narrow Christian education. If parents want private school education for their children, let them pay for. I do not want my tax dollars grooming our children that we are a christian nation. We are not. We are a country where people can practice their religion freely. That is the America I was raised to believe in, that I defended when I served in the U.S. Air Force, and that the homeless veterans I served while working at the Dallas VA believed in. Please, I implore you not to pass SB 8, it is a bad bill and a horrible choice for Texans and especially for Texas children.

Marissa Beierman, Mrs
Belton ISD
Belton, TX

I do not support this bill.

Amy Pena, Mrs.
Self, public school administration
Watauga, TX

As a state, we are ranked 41 in public spending. So our solution in supporting public education is not going to found in offering the wealthiest 5% a discount. An educated public is the foundation of a democracy. Why on earth are we trying to minimize our democracy by not educating our people? Why are you trying to shut down public education? Vouchers will not solve a problem. If you truly want to support, mental health, democracy, parents, and most of all children: you're going to have to fund the public institutions designed to do exactly that.

Casey Pugh
Self
Ransom Canyon, TX

Please cancel sb8. This is an awful idea for our state and our children.

Bradley Beierman
Belton ISD
Belton, TX

I do not support this bill.

Piper Ogan
Self/Small business owner
Fort Worth, TX

I'd like my parental rights to public education for my kids to be a priority. It is disgusting that our tax money is being considered to be put into placement in private schools when we currently do not have adequate funding for our public schools. Find out public schools, pay our educators and retired educators who work so hard for all students. We don't need to funnel that much needed money away to institutions that are not required to take all students or live up to the same standards as our public schools. Say no to SB8!

Jacquelyn Neylon
Self
Dallas, TX

I am a mother to two kids in Texas public schools and am writing in opposition of SB8. There is far too much contained in this bill. The Parental Bill of Rights, STARR testing changes, and a voucher system for a majority of Texas public school kids are three very different topics and should be treated as such. 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 current budget proposals come nowhere close to meeting inflation related cost increases. 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 current 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?

I am also opposed to the increase in testing that SB8 proposes. Don't be fooled by the claims that this bill eliminates STAAR testing. It doesn't. It can actually increase the frequency of standardized testing to three times a year instead of one. Not to mention that this bill increases the power of the TEA Commissioner, an appointed position, and decreases the power of the SBOE, elected positions. Texans deserve to have a say in our public schools and the SBOE is an integral part of that. Removing representation is not okay.

This entire thing feels very rushed. First, the last minute 80 page addendum. Second, the committee vote set with no time to prepare. Third, the public hearing with only invited testimony. What are you trying to hide? The majority of Texans DO NOT WANT a voucher/ESA program. They want adequately funded public schools and teachers and staff to be paid a fair wage. They want the state to care for all of our children instead of funneling money to banks that will administer these programs, the companies that will start up new schools to accept all that voucher money with no strings attached, and to the testing companies that will develop the new standardized test that is supposed to replace the STAAR. All unconservative. Use that money to fund schools for all. Reject any form of voucher or ESA program.

Kristine Lytle
self - teacher
Houston, TX

Do not allocate precious tax funds to schools that are not required to accept every student regardless of race, ethnicity, religious belief, or disability, and who are not held accountable to report student outcomes to the public. Fully fund our public schools so that we can meet the needs of every student.

Lee Josephson
Self/ retired school teacher
McKinney, TX

As a retired public school teacher, I believe you are going to damage Texas's future with the passage of this bill. Children with special needs, physical and educational, need the most experienced educators not a new strip mall school that happens to charge 10k! Get behind the teachers and facilities available today instead of creating this chaos and experiment with our future. Vote NO for school vouchers please.

Lee Josephson

Sharon Gardner
Self-teacher
Grapevine, TX

Please vote “no” to all vouchers.

Kimberly Hayden, Ms.
Self
Houston, TX

NO TO VOUCHERS!! I am a retired elementary school teacher, a homeowner, and a taxpayer. I DO NOT want my educational tax money being used for a voucher program that funds private schools that are not subject to the same oversight and standards as publically funded schools. If a private school receives tax money--they then become publically funded. Educational vouchers are a ridiculously hypocritical idea. Most private schools do not hire certified teachers, which means the teachers aren't necessarily knowledgeable about how to teach or what they are teaching. Many parents are paying a lot of money for their children to receive an inferior education. Some private schools don't hire teachers that have college degrees! With this in mind, how are vouchers supposed to ensure a quality education for children? What if the school is a front for an antigovernmental or neo-Nazi organization? Are you going to allow public money to fund such institutions? With no oversight and regulation, private schools can teach anything they want with no consequences. Anyone who supports this bill is foolish and they will pay the consequences when they are next up for reelection. Teachers are also voters!

Leslie Byrd
self
Arlington, TX

Please do not allow this bill to pass and take funding from underfunded schools throughout the state. Private schools are an option for the privileged. This choice to withdraw tax dollars casts aside quality public education being offered. Texas can do better than this!

Public School is a required right and children who are required to attend public school deserve a quality education with complete resources from all taxable income.

School systems are doing all they can without being continually crippled by the choices of those more fortunate.

David Titus
Self. Howard ECC
San Antonio, TX

This bill is not in the best interest of most texans . Please listen to your constituents. Thank you. David E. Titus

Julie Peckham
self
Austin, TX

Do NOT use public school money for private school vouchers!!! This is wrong and will take away from what we have going for public schools. I am furious that this is even being considered

Joseph Greive, Mr.
self
Bryan, TX

I support school choice and letting parents decide where their money is spent.

Dayna Beck
Self
Bastrop, TX

Vote NO on SB 8! My mom, who was a teacher in New Braunfels public schools for 20 years and a lifelong Republican, and myself (a Democrat) are both against our tax dollars going to support private school vouchers.

Anne Darr
Self, Educator
Fort Worth, TX

Please vote NO on SB 8. The facts speak for themselves. Public schools welcome EVERY child, create communities, provide educational programming and related services for students with disabilities, are held accountable, and are required to comply with state and federal laws. Private/parochial schools pick and choose their students, are ill-equipped to serve students with diverse learning needs and disabilities, are not governed by representatives elected by the public, and are not held accountable for student academic outcomes or responsible spending. Therefore, diverting funding from public schools and giving that money to private/parochial schools is a reckless, irresponsible, inequitable way to spend the taxpayers' money as well as an invitation for corruption, misuse, and fraud.

KayLynn Lyon
Self
Farmers Branch, TX

NO to SB 8!

Ryan Baker, Dr
Self: educator
Flower Mound, TX

I have children in public school. They desperately need funds. I oppose any legislation that diverts funds from public education. I oppose SB 8.

Tami Lowrie
Self- teacher
Conroe, TX

Unless private schools are required to accept the amount received through the education savings account program as the full and total cost to the parents, this is just a way to give a financial break to those well off while taking \$ from the education the less fortunate are left with- furthering the gap between the “haves” and “have nots.”

Parental choice is only a true choice when the parents have an equal opportunity to choose! I fully support a parents right to choose- but only support using government funds if EVERY child has the same opportunity to take advantage of that choice. When the average cost of a year of private school tuition is over \$11,000 and does not include the incidental fees added here and there, it is not reasonable to expect many students from a lower socioeconomic level to be able to pay the amounts necessary to cover what the “savings account” does not cover. All that would result from creating this savings account is to put more money in the savings accounts of those who already can send their children to school. Instead invest the money in our current school system to improve the system for all!

Charlie Melton
Self
New Boston, TX

-I urge you to not vote this bill out of committee. For the following reasons

It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.

- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Malissa McArthur
self --Private school teacher
LaVernia, TX

Vote NO on vouchers! Private schools have no accountability and I don't want my tax dollars going to religious education. Do that on your own time and dime. I just started teaching in a private school this year and I have witnessed them first-hand kicking out kids with learning disabilities. The parents are given a list of public schools in their area and the child is given a goodbye hug. Y'all say this would bring about competition but it wouldn't be a level playing field if the private schools can choose their students and kick out those who struggle. Plus they are not burdened by prepping for the developmentally inappropriate STAAR test! NO VOUCHERS!!!!

David Hamlin
Self
Lubbock, TX

Vote no on this bill

Kourtni Parnell
self/Texas Educator
waco, TX

Please vote against SB 8. Keep funds in public schools! Believe in your public educators and show them support by keeping funds in public schools!

Eileen Parvin
Self
Garland, TX

Say no to vouchers. I am a 30 retired teacher of public schools and know this will only hurt public education. Putting money into private education will only take it away from public schools. These teachers work so hard for their students and get no support from Republicans. This extra money should be going toward a raise for them. SAY NO TO VOUCHERS.

ReNae Esterby
self-teacher
Belton, TX

Please do not take money away from public education for vouchers. We are already struggling to keep quality teachers, buildings, and materials. If you pass vouchers, you are telling teachers that they mean nothing. You are losing more and more quality teachers. Please respect public education and educators.

Jennifer Halm
Self/ School Counselor
Grapevine, TX

Our public schools DESPERATELY need your help. We are in a crisis. The future of our state is looking extremely bleak if we don't get public education under control. We need to pay teachers more and fund more per student. Not give away our already mediocre funds through vouchers. Please do the right thing. I have been a public educator in Texas for 25 years, and it's never been in worse shape. I am a school counselor, and mental health, social, and academic needs are all at an all time high. Honestly, crisis level. I am looking for a way to leave because it is just too hard. I would love to stay if we had any hope of things getting better. Please fund our schools!

Nancy Bennett
Self
Granbury, TX

Please vote NO to vouchers. Public schools are TX's best option. If parents want private schools (religious or other), they should pay their own way. Texas will not prosper without a solid public school system.

Sara Windham
self/school employee
Salado, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8 and any 80 page amendment to it. I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Our focus should be on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers. Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting public tax dollars from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would exacerbate this issue and further hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to provide the same services or follow the same accountability expectations as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud. Voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement. Lastly, vouchers rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. Private schools are not required to provide transportation, particularly transportation on a modified bus or vehicle that may be required by a student with a disability. The additional cost and lack of transportation service is prohibitive to middle to low income families of students with disabilities and confirm that the voucher push has nothing to do with pursuing better education options for ALL students. It's clear that the target audience is discriminatory and exclusive of these students.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.
NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Doris Deal, LPC
Self
San Antonio, TX

I do not agree with this bill. You lease do not support it.

Brooke Kemp
Self
Arlington, TX

I am strongly opposed to SB 8. I believe it to be a violation of separation of church and state as established in the US Constitution. I am a born and raised Texan, so I understand Texas pride, however I will never put Texas above my country and it's established rules. I find it incredibly disturbing and borderline treasonous to even suggest such a bill. My PUBLIC tax dollars should not be going to private schools with religious affiliations. Private schools are not bound by public accountability and as such, should not be receiving public funds. In addition, passing SB 8 would only further strain our districts. Texas already pays one of the lowest per student rates in the nation. As if that isn't embarrassing enough, now some of you are trying to take more money away from our local districts. Stop making my child's education your political ploy. I'm disgusted by the blatant disregard for what the majority of Texans want on many fronts. Stop answering to your pocketbooks and start representing your constituents—accurately. Stop looking for ways to stack the cards against our public schools. Give our educators the raise you always promise during election times and maybe they wouldn't be leaving in droves. Stop vilifying our school districts and educators with false accusations of CRT and other such nonsense. Pay more (a lot more) per student and you just might be surprised by how well our public schools would perform. The things I've seen over the years at my schools have been nothing short of amazing. Quit wasting money on the STAAR and looking for more ways to be wasteful with our public tax dollars. It is ridiculous. Our children deserve better. Your constituents deserve better. Do better!

Lindsay Reyes
Self
Little Elm, TX

It is absolutely unthinkable that our Governor would take money from our public school system and deplete them of the very resources they need all while funding private schools.

Catherine Bonner
Self, retired teacher
Sulphur Springs, TX

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

As you discuss SB 8 , please vote against the establishing of education savings accounts, or vouchers. I truly believe that our tax payer money should be used for public schools which are accountable to the state rather than private schools who do not have to accept all students nor or accountable for providing extra services needed by students with learning challenges.

I would also ask that you consider providing a COLA for Texas retired teachers now as opposed to requiring an amendment to the Texas constitution. I am a retired teacher and am not eligible for social security. My husband died seven years ago, and I am not able to have even a small amount of his social security. Social security recipients received over an 8% increase in their retirement payments. As Texas is blessed with a very large surplus, please use a portion of it to support retired teachers, many of whom have never had a raise, the last one being almost 20 years ago.

Thank you for your willingness to serve our state in an elected capacity.

Sincerely,
Catherine Bonner

Terry Aslin
Self
Gatesville, TX

This is not the parental choice, it's private school choice. True choice would be if the kid from SOC wants to attend HPISD. It's a scam and the majority of Texans oppose using tax dollars for private education that has zero accountability. You guy monetize education if you pass this. You will have For Profit scams popping up everywhere to grab the money and go, just like for profit college education. No to vouchers!

Monica Sanchez
public school parent
Austin, TX

I am against SB8 as this bill is completely detrimental to the future education of black, brown & disabled children who are the majority of students served by public schools. As a native Texan, I am COMPLETELY ALARMED by the rogue behavior of Republican leadership attempting to hijack the democratic process from We The People of Texas with several bills, including the anti-trans legislation that was voted on today, and this SB8 bill. It's very disappointing that our leaders would choose to act in a manner that actually harms the majority of constituents across our state. We are no longer "the Great State of Texas" due to your mediocre, racist leadership. There is simply no other explanation. Let the record show I am against SB8. Monica Sanchez, Austin Texas

Adawndria Fisher
Self
McKinney, TX

Block SB 8. It's the downfall of public education!

Mike Peters
Educators
Fort Worth, TX

The establishment of the ESA is fundamentally wrong and is only worded in a way to disguise taking public school funding and putting it in private hands. This is not supported by the vast majority of the citizens of the State of Texas.

Lynn Tinney
myself
Austin, TX

I would like to voice my support for school vouchers in the form of an account that could be used by parents to send their children to the schools that they feel can best serve their needs. I think this is a win for families, especially lower income families. I also think it can be a win for Texas public schools since the competition can make them better in the long run. As I understand it, public schools tend to improve where vouchers have been tried.

Luciano Barraza
Self
Austin, TX

I am against this.

Jennifer Daniels
Texas PTA
Fort Worth, TX

I stand against this bill which will take our education tax dollars away from public schools to help subsidize the tuition of private and religious schools. This type of program fails to serve students from disadvantaged or marginalized backgrounds. There is no data to support the impact of vouchers on student achievement. This also presents a real danger in terms of fraud and misuse of taxpayer funds, since these kind of programs are unregulated and lack transparency. Without strict regulations, regular audits, and transparent reporting of student academic results, this program can misuse public funds and harm students and their potential for learning and achievement. Instead of diverting funds, the 88th Legislature should focus on investing in public schools and strengthening the teaching profession, so current and future generations of Texans, regardless of their zip code, will continue to have high-quality educational choices in our neighborhood public schools.

Kimberly Brady, Mrs.
Mom/Parent/Public Middle School Math Teacher (AHISD)/Community involved citizen
San Antonio, TX

As a tax payer in my community, this is not okay. As a public school teacher within the same community, this is not okay. As a mother of my two children who attend public school within our taxing jurisdiction, this is not okay! If everyone is held tthe same accountability measures and ALL schools aren't held by the same standard (STAAR, Special education, intervention programs), then why are we allowing these students into private schools that don't have any of these programs mandated, nor funded? As a mom, as a teacher, as a human, this is absolute absurdity! This money should be used to actually fund a reasonable cost of living salary to those of us in public education actually busting our rears day in and day out to ensure the success of our students. I'm very disappointed with the lack of priority and acknowledgement by our State in regards to our public educators. Very very sad!

Kristina Woods
Self
Cypress, TX

I do not support a voucher law in any form including, education(al) savings accounts. Draining money away from public schools via giving money to those who want their children in religious or private schools is a breach of obligation to the families of Texas. Your goal should be to create high quality, equitable schools that serve the needs of ALL children. Taking even more money out of our public education system stands to further erode the ability of the system to do its job.

Please provide our public education system the funding iit requires instead of continuing to concoct schemes to further defund what is the right of every child in this state - excellent, equitable public school.

Elizabeth Collins
Self
Conroe, TX

I am against vouchers.

Ariana Tramber
Self
Austin, TX

Please open up the hearing to public testimony. My child is in Sp. Ed. where we are protected under the IDEA law. I do not want the state to create an education savings program or vouchers. I want them to adequately fund public education, do not allow our tax dollars to go to private schools or micro schools that are not required to provide a free and appropriate education to ALL children. Private schools can deny enrollment and expel students who have disabilities, who identify as LGBTQ+, even they will reject students who are of different race, ethnicities, nationalities.

Savings programs will not improve education in TEXAS, it will actually take money away from our already underfunded schools while funding special interests that do not have the obligation to serve ALL students. Funneling money to private education will take away funding from rural town students. Taxpayer dollars should not be used to support and establish a religion and allowing savings programs to fund religious private schools will go against our country's first amendment.

Sue Ellen Stokes
Self/parent and school volunteer
McKinney, TX

I demand that the elected officials of this body represent the children of Texas. Taking money away from public schools is an abdication of your fiduciary responsibility. I am requesting that SB8 goes no further. You have a responsibility to the citizens of this once great state. Education is the key to making the state great and you are damaging it irreparably.

Chris Jones
Winters ISD
Abilene, TX

Please do not pass SB 8. We do not need this as part of our public schools. There is way too much cost of state tax money involved, and requires more state testing, which we don't need. We also don't need the education commissioner gaining a higher amount of control in state assessment programs.

Debora Wales, Ms.
High School Teacher
Beaumont, TX

Funds for public schools should stay allocated to public schools and not to charter schools, private schools, or any other non-public schools. Public schools already struggle including updating editions of textbooks (many are at least 2 editions older than the latest publication edition). Buildings require proper maintenance. Buildings also require needed replacement of items such as flooring and HVAC. Classrooms need replacement and/or updating furniture (e.g. desks and chairs), whiteboards, classroom projectors, document cameras, Smartboards, etc. Students, especially those who live in low income districts, need the funding for home wifi, one to one laptops/Chromebooks for students and teachers and general school supplies, free breakfast and lunch, etc. Teachers should not have to use their own money to provide supplies for students. These are just a few of the reasons public school funding must remain allocated to them, not to charter or private schools.

Daniel Rivas, Mr.
self
Manor, TX

I oppose all vouchers.

Julianne Morris
Teacher BISD and parent of 4
Belton, TX

It's wrong to do this without public testimony.

Christopher Anders
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I do not agree with SB8. Private schools should not receive public money! My tax dollars should not fund other kids private education. We need to fund our public schools so they can serve our children better.

Cynthia Jackson, Mrs.
Self/Educator
Cibolo, TX

As an educator, I work more than 60 hours or more a week. We are required to gain certifications and do professional development trainings to maintain our certifications and stay on the cutting edge. We are the only profession that does not receive compensation for our efforts. Take for example nurses, they're responsible for gaining certifications and taking professional development courses, just as we are. However, they are well compensated for their efforts. They actually make twice as much as an educator. Furthermore, we are primarily responsible for educating everyone within every other profession. Without a educator, there would not be any doctors, lawyers, graphic designers, and even senators. As an 18 year educator, I barely cross the thrush hole of 53,000 a year. Implementing vouchers will take away any opportunities, we have as educators, to become properly compensated for our efforts. Moreover, time would fail to tell how many parents I've sat in front of to inform them that their student was academically below because for the last few years they've attended one of the local charter schools. These schools should and need to be held to a state standard to ensure their properly educating children. It is not fair to the student nor is it fair to the unknowing parent. For these reasons, I ask that you consider voting no for bill SB8. Thank you for your time.

Stephanie Tsapakis
Self
San Antonio, TX

This bill is rushes, and it is undemocratic that there is no public testimony at the hearing. Public schools are already underfunded, and vouchers would hurt them even more. Our local public school, didn't even have enough funds allocated this year for copy paper. Teachers are limited on the number of copies they can make! This is absolutely unacceptable considering printing notes, worksheets, etc... Is imperative to successful learning.

Please, vote "no" on ALL bills related to education vouchers. The public does not want this, and the vast consequences have not been thought out!

Stephanie Williams
Self
Southlake, TX

Vouchers are wrong for texas. Protect public schools for all texas children.

Bethany Estrada
Self-respiratory therapist
Lockhart, TX

I oppose vouchers. Please support and fund public education.

Emily Ulatoski
Self - Educator
Georgetown, TX

Vote no to this bill! It takes money away from public schools yet adds more responsibilities that aren't placed on private schools.

Samantha Ballinger
Self, teacher
Frisco, TX

Educational savings accounts are an attempt to defund public education and unconstitutionally fund religious education in the state of Texas. This bill does not help the majority of Texas but instead a small subsection of the population. I urge you as an educator and a parent to please understand what this will do to public education.

Helen Hansen, Ms.
Self
Leander, TX

I respectfully request that you do not vote SB 8 out of committee. SB 8 will divert much need funds from public schools that are already grossly underfunded. I have been a public school teacher for 24 years. I have poured my heart and soul in to the work of educating all students not just the select few. This bill jeopardizes all that I have worked for my entire career. All student including students of color and special needs students deserve a public education. Please support public education, public educators, and all students and vote no on this bill. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Helen Hansen

Casey Polen, Mrs.
College View High School
College Station, TX

As a veteran of public education, a parent and a grandparent, I beseech you to Vote NO to SB 8. Please protect public education in Texas. Our students, citizens, and school employees deserve more. We need time and funding to recover time and instruction lost due to COVID. We are a rich and powerful state. We can and should do more for our children. Students and families are in mental health crises. Teachers are at the breaking point due to stress and heavy workloads. Students need mental health care, family services, less testing, and much more. As much as we would love to be, we cannot be all things to all students. The state leaders have a duty and a responsibility to the young people of our state. Please expose special interest groups, PACS or big business that is pushing for vouchers. Charter schools and private schools look great on paper but they aren't held to the same standards as public schools. They can cherry pick students, can remove students with behavior problems easily and quickly and many other things that make them appear to be outperforming public schools. Thank you for believing in and supporting Texas public schools.

Kay Douglas
Self
Huntsville, TX

Until the State of Texas fully funds and supports its public schools NO public funds should be diverted to fund home, private charter or parochial schooling. They can pick and choose their students and are not held to the same accountability standards. This ruse will gut the public schools and cripple the mandate to provide a free and appropriate public education. I am AGAINST SB8.

Jorden Dial
Prosper ISD
Prosper, TX

Please do not vote to approve this. It will be detrimental to public education.

Carrie Boden, Mrs.
Self
Arlington, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Jill Rhoden
Self
Austin, TX

I DO NOT support vouchers OR establishment of an educational savings account.

I DO support raising the basic student allotment for ALL Texas PUBLIC school students to \$8000.

Heather Beck
Self
Rusk, TX

Any bill that takes state funds away from public schools is a bad bill. ESAs, vouchers, or whatever else you want to call them are not okay. I teach in rural East Texas. If you think these are going to help our kids, you are wrong. We don't have a plethora of private schools in the area. The ones we do have charge far more than \$8,000 for tuition and are 40 miles away or more. Our families can't afford the difference. They can't afford transportation to other cities. They can't afford meals. ESAs aren't for rural communities, and we have a lot of them. I know you have heard a lot about giving money with no accountability and so maybe making these kids take the same test seems fair. But where are they testing? Will that be at a local public school using their resources to test a child they have received no funding for? Speaking of testing, I know some of you will say "eliminating STAAR" is worth voting for this. I have been teaching long enough to know that the next test coming will be worse. Also, it looks like testing will be more often under this bill. If you truly care about children and their education, you need to keep public money in public schools and test according to the federal regulations. Why Texas feels the need to test more than is required by the federal government is beyond me. Fund your public schools.

Amy Conine
Self/realtor
Corinth, TX

I oppose this bill, and I oppose education savings account programs.

Lisa Phillips
Self
Houston, TX

Opposed to any voucher/ESA plan because it removes funds needed for real public ed. This is a plan to help students who don't need help-those already in private school. In addition, it sends tax funds to entities who are not accountable for outcomes and who do not have to accept all students, regardless of their abilities. Finally, it allows people to burrow further into silos-public school is one of the last places where people from all walks of life interact with each other. We need to spend more on public schools in Texas to help students to become ready for the modern workplace, not set up these mechanisms to siphon off funding to non-government entities.

Jean Hoelscher
Self
San Angelo, TX

All public funds for schools should remain with public schools. Religious schools should be separate and all religious people free to allow their children to attend whatever school they wish. BUT public tax money is paid for ALL children and not for a particular religion.

Marci Petter
Voter
Temple, TX

Did any one of you visit public schools to discuss this bill? Did any one of you visit Catholic schools to discuss this bill? Islamic? Judaism? The governor's tour of this "emergency item" consisted of 7 private Protestant schools. Of course these parents are in favor of this item! Convince me- a product of private school and public school education, and a retired public school teacher. I vote Republican 95% of the time (the same supposed acceptance rate as private schools) Right now, Gov. Abbott would not be acceptable to me in the next election.

Jennifer Moss
Self, Parent of SBISD students
Houston, TX

I OPPOSE vouchers/education savings accounts. They take public monies from our already underfunded public schools and funnel them to private schools that are completely unaccountable—they can pick and choose who they accept, they don't have to measure or report data on how their students are performing academically, and they don't have to show they are being fiscally responsible with the monies they would receive. They don't solve problems for rural communities, they don't solve problems for economically disadvantaged communities — all they do is provide a rebate for families that can already afford to send their kids to private school. If folks don't like the Memorial Park golf course, we don't give them a voucher to join Houston Country Club; if folks don't like the Memorial Park pool, we don't give them a voucher to join the Houstonian; if folks don't like the Houston Metro bus system, we don't give them vouchers for limo rides. The Texas Legislature needs to stop acting like the blame for whatever shortfalls exist in our under-supported and under-funded public schools lies somewhere other than with the Texas Legislature. Do your job...FULLY FUND PUBLIC EDUCATION!

Laura Bow, Mrs
Self/teacher/parent
Happy, TX

Please vote against vouchers. They discriminate against special needs students since private schools do not have to accept them, not to mention they have a negative affect on rural schools. The additional testing measures included in the bill in no way reduce STAAR. You can do better. Also, let's not give the commissioner of education more power with less oversight. Please keep in mind you are making decisions for ALL students. Thank you.

Jennifer Horn
Self
The Woodlands, TX

I am against vouchers. We need to keep our public schools strong.

Martha DeVarenes, Ms
Self
Arlington, TX

I strongly object to funding private education with publicly funded vouchers.

David Richeh
Self, retired
San Angelo, TX

Our family opposes SB 8

Tanzanyika Williams
TSTA
Hockley, TX

Vote no!

Vouchers fail all students!

Tanzanyika Williams, Parent/teacher
Self
Hockley, TX

Vouchers divert fund's from public schools!
Hurts special education students!

Barbara Elmore
Taxpayers
Fredericksburg, TX

Public schools are for all children. Private schools, which will survive without public money, are for a minority. I know and respect those who enroll their children in private schools, and I doubt the money you offer will making a dent in private school tuition. Instead of pretending that public schools disrespect parents and that parents don't have choices already, I want tax dollars I pay to support the schools that most children attend. I expect statewide leaders to give public schools what they require to excel and quit demonizing them. Let parents do their jobs, teachers do their jobs, and let school administrations hire, fire, and direct. No micro-managing schools from Austin, Houston, Conroe or anywhere else around the state. Support public school excellence, not "parental choice" drama.

Tanzanyika Williams, Teacher/parent
TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
Hockley, TX

It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools
It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws
It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve
It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system
It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority

Tanzanyika Williams, Mrs.
Texas State Teachers Association
Hockley, TX

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GILDA DUFFY, MRS.
SELF/RETIRED EDUCATOR-LIBRARIAN
Boerne, TX

Thank you for your service in making Texas a better state. At this time, I am strongly urging all Texas legislators to vote "NO" on SB8.

Kristy Bailey
Self
Brownsboro, TX

I urge the committee to have further discussion on SB 8 to include discussion with rural school administrators to better understand the implications caused by SB 8. School choice already exists in Texas! Legislation is not needed to guarantee that choice but it is needed for public school success.

Charlie Pond
Clear Creek ISD
League City, TX

I am opposed to any form of voucher program. Call it what you may it simply takes money away from public education.

Tanzanyika Williams
Texas State Association
Hockley, TX

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Olga Angelo-Day, Mrs.
Self
Leander, TX

The passage of this bill will have far reaching negative consequences on education Texas. It does not support the American value shared of quality education to create informed citizens to preserve democracy.

Linda Guy
self
Austin, TX

As a native Texan, educated from elementary thru grad school at all Texas public schools & mother of 2 successful Texas public school students (now college grads & productive members of our community), retired Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (MSN, UTMB), aunt of a former Special Ed student, voter and taxpayer, I strongly oppose SB 8 & all other efforts to use Public money to fund private schools. Our public schools are vital to our communities & deserve all the support we can give, especially in this time of great divisions in our state & nation. Please stop these absurd efforts to de-fund Public education!

Ida Miller
none
San Marcos, TX

This is not the bill to address Texas education issues at this time. Do not vote for this bill Thank you.

Priscilla Lamb
self/educator
Round Rock, TX

I'm a parent and an educator. I already have the right to choose a school that best suits my child. I understand that private schools and charter schools have no accountability and no motivation to do what is best my children. Public School dollars need NOT be taken away from public schools to help fix private schools. Properly fund public schools, PERIOD.

Carol Bryant, Mrs
Retired educator
Canyon Lake, TX

While they won't let you testify on Monday, you can submit electronic testimony on Senate Bill 8:
[<https://comments.house.texas.gov/home?c=c400>](<https://comments.house.texas.gov/home?c=c400&fbclid=IwAR3YwnrsbTyAKcRkyoq-MzxSkw08HOekdLLsTNbFehWTTN0g9AhjcmSgcEo>)

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Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Kori Fitzner
Belton Independent School District
Temple, TX

I am strongly against SB 8 because it pulls funds directly away the majority of students in Texas who attend public schools. Public schools serve students across socioeconomic, ethnic, and social backgrounds, providing individualized services that all students need to be successful. Directing money away from public schools will directly harm the children of Texas.

Kelly Fife
Self
Belton, TX

This is a wrong bill for TX and its future. You are essentially gutting public education so that wealthy individuals can get more money from the government. How? There is no true accountability in the bill. You, the legislature, demand and hold accountable public schools through various laws, yet you waive this for students in this bill if they go to private schools. You fund those students at a higher rate than public school students (14th Amendment issue perhaps?). You state you are for parent's rights, yet you know, because you have mandated it by law, that parents have rights to everything being taught, including reviewing materials used. So the question becomes one of what this bill, why now? Maybe Dr. Buckley should look more towards his ancestry for the answer instead of where he is currently looking?

Norma Parry
Self/retired teacher/substitute teacher
San Angel, TX

As a former teacher who has funded my granddaughter in a private school for five years, I am opposed to diverting funding from public schools and those teachers into private institutions, much more so if those private entities are not subjected to the ridiculous and costly testing rigors that punish public schools (teachers and students). Eliminate the STAAR, save billions, and put that funding into currently underfunded schools/underpaid teachers. Do not give money to private schools.

Phillip Reeder, DR
Self, retired physician, parent of child educated entirely in public education system
Woodway, TX

Please oppose all publicly-funded payments to “private” schools. Any such payments divert taxpayer money away from already underfunded public education. Such payments to private schools promotes endorsement of exclusive dogma counter to the established principles of democracy and will ultimately damage the beneficial cohesiveness of our diverse communities. Any action which may degrade truly public education threatens the economic and social future of all communities since our goal of public education is to produce a discerning literate populace and skilled labor force.

JOEL ENGE
Self School Director
TYLER, TX

I support SB 8 in its original language and components.

Jennifer Connelly
Self- Teacher
Frisco, TX

If you look at any of the data from other states using the voucher system, you will see it does not help the students who everyone claims it will help most. The data shows the majority of people who use the money are the people already going to private schools. Those in low income, need transportation to the schools, which is not provided, as well as many of these kids will not get selected by private schools to attend. If you really wanted to help children you would help the schools that are already set up, aka public schools. AND if you are supporting private schools, then you need to hold them to the same expectations as public. Why are public schools failing? Because of the outrageous expectations and rules from the state that they must follow. There are bigger problems than this self-serving political move that is being voted on.

Julia Williams
High School Student
Hockley, TX

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Kevin Samples
Tax payer and educator
ROCKWALL, TX

Dear Committee Members,

As a public school principal, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the Education Savings Account (ESA) program. While the idea of providing families with greater control over their children's education expenses may seem appealing, the reality is that ESAs are detrimental to public education. I have served as a principal of high poverty campus and a campus with a smaller number of impoverished students. We focus on providing opportunities for all kids and the consideration of removing funding for political reasons is a slap in the face of founding fathers who believed in public education being designed to remove barriers from students being self-determined individuals.

One of the most significant problems with ESAs is the lack of accountability compared to public education. Public schools are held accountable for their students' performance through standardized tests such as STAAR, which are a significant portion of district accountability. However, there is no such requirement for ESAs. This means that there is no oversight or accountability to ensure that students receiving ESA funds are receiving a quality education.

Moreover, ESAs would take away much-needed funding from public schools, which already struggle with inadequate funding. ESAs are projected to provide more funding than what is currently being funded per pupil in public schools. This double standard is unfair and would create a significant imbalance in funding between public and private schools. If the thought of a greater fund for ESA is being considered, why not fund the same amount being considered to public schools. The increase of funding for students by \$50-\$100 is not adequate enough to compensate for inflation in costs in serving students. What is going on? We have a significant surplus. As a tax payer it should be your priority to adequately fund public education, not just throw pennies to check a box. (so we can say increased funding for public ed.) Just sad to see people not committed to excellence for all kids and continued focus on listening to a small percentage and allow that group to drive policies. Its time for people to stand up for what is right and listen to people that are in the trenches putting in the work to help kids become self-determined adults, all the while teachers and educators are being under paid.

Finally, ESAs would also have a negative impact on the quality of education provided in public schools. Public schools would lose both funding and students, leading to a decrease in resources and a reduction in educational opportunities for students who remain in public schools.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider your support for ESAs. Instead, we should focus on strengthening, funding, and improving public education, which is essential for the success of our students and our communities.

Sincerely,
Kevin Samples

Brooke Green
self
Richardson, TX

I am appalled that these hearings aren't open to hear to public testimony. The state of Texas children are too important. We need to continue to say no to vouchers. Vouchers will siphon money out of a public budget that should be fully devoted to public, not private, education. As a taxpayer, I'm extremely concerned with the lack of accountability with this system that has continuously changed even through this one Legislative session. You are trying to push through bad and rushed legislation. Our children deserve better.

Thank you for your time,
Brooke Green
Richardson, TX

Averie Johnson, Elementary scholar
Self
Hockley, TX

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Maxine Williams
Self
Hockley, TX

No to vouchers!
Vouchers fail special education students!

PATRICK DUFFY, MR.
SELF/RETIRED FROM AMERICAN AIRLINES
Boerne, TX

Thank you for your service! Let's keep Texas a great state! I am urging all legislators to vote "NO" against SB 8-School Vouchers. I live in Boerne, Tx./Bexar Co.

Douglas Chadwick
Self
AUBREY, TX

I am opposed to any effort to allow public tax revenue to be used to support private for-profit or not-for-profit educational institutions chartered in Texas or other states or locations.

Hilda Elliott
Self
Denton, TX

I am asking you to use all available funds for use in public schools and for you to vote against SB 8 so that Texas students and teachers can feel valued by the state of Texas.

Meghna Roy
Self
Austin, TX

Stop the vouchers. Fund public education. Texas does not want vouchers. Texans want public education funded and teachers paid. The legislatures must accept will of people.

Judy Buker
Self
Colleyville, TX

Voucher and education savings accounts will leave our most vulnerable children without access to the same quality of education as others. Our public schools need to be fully funded. This bill will do the opposite. As a parent of children in public education, I cannot sit by and watch the state I love continue to hold back funds from public schools. Use the rainy day fund to fully fund public schools.

Kelly Timmons, Col
Self
San Antonio, TX

School vouchers steal from the public schools and hurt all students. Fully fund our schools using the \$ billion surplus in today's coffers.

Heather Foster
Self, parent
Sugar Land, TX

Vote NO!! on SB 8

Paige Bontrager
Retired
Bushland, TX

Pushing this through without public testimony is appalling. Public school is a staple of freedom. This is another example of elitist behavior. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

Deena Martin
Self
Richardson, TX, TX

No vouchers! Texas is already failing to educate every child equally. Vouchers will leave behind our most vulnerable population. The poor people of color. We are better than this

Sammy Jones
Self/Educator
Woodway, TX

Dear Official,

I currently work in a school district that is represented by the underserved and underprivileged. This bill will hurt not only my kids, but millions of other Texans across this great state. This bill does not represent the values of its citizens and does not serve the greater good of the students and families of the state. I believe this bill will benefit the elite, who represent only a small portion of the state. Parents already have the right to choose. If they choose to take their kids to a private institution, they have the means to pay for it. Any help needed should not come at the expense of public schools. This bill will take money out of the hands of public schools, who desperately need serve these kids. Texas schools are already under funded, and to push this bill through will be a tragedy and injustice to the kids in the state. I believe this is just an agenda that has not been thought through clearly and fully. I ask you, on behalf of thousands of educators, to not push this bill through. And call on you to fund public schools fully so that we can serve all the great kids of Texas. Thank you.

Sammy Jones.

Dennis Shine
Self
Dalls, TX

Need more funds for school

Ann Teich, Mrs.
Self
Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I am a retired Texas public school educator (34 years) and a former Texas school board trustee (8 years). Please vote no on the SB8 committee substitute and on SB8 as originally submitted. These proposed bills would siphon money from traditional Texas public schools. Texas public schools have been underfunded for years, teachers and staff have worked more for less (I know this firsthand since I was one of them), and it is your obligation to ensure that all Texas students, teachers, and support staff in traditional public schools have the money needed to achieve a 21st century education.

If passed in either version, the proposed bills would present a costly administrative nightmare for the state of Texas and open up millions of Texas tax dollars to fraud. Only the most educated parents will be the most successful in applying. There are many recent stories of educated Americans applying for federal and state monetary aid who have committed fraud. Immigrant and low-income parents/families will be at a distinct disadvantage in applying. I have assisted immigrants in applying for benefits through the State of Texas' Health and Human Services. The application process is very hard to navigate, and it's easy to make mistakes that result in denial of benefits. I can imagine that the application process for ESAs will be the same: difficult. How is any of this fair for many low-income, immigrant Texas parents?

Texas parents already have a choice when it comes to educating their students: home school, charter school, private school, or traditional public school. The proposed ESAs won't even cover a year of private school, by the way. Also, if parents of special education students choose private schools, those schools are not required to provide special education, nor are special education students attending private schools protected by FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education) under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Furthermore, private schools do not receive federal funds.

Please vote no on the committee substitute for SB8 and on the original SB8. Please represent the majority of the people of Texas when you make decisions about educating Texas students. The majority of Texas students and their families choose traditional public schools for their education. They deserve the money allocated for that purpose.

Kaye Windel-Garza

Self

League City, TX

I believe this bill will devastate our already underfunded public schools by taking needed revenue and shifting it to private entities. I also believe that allowing religious institutions to receive public funds to educate students is a violation of separation of church and state. I attended private religious school and public schools. What they offer generally is smaller class sizes and the ability to kick "problem" students out. As messy as it can be, public education is there to educate all children. Why don't we provide the resources to improve that so that everyone gets a quality education?

As far as parent input, parents have ample input into what students learn. School board meetings, district personnel who speak to the public, teacher conferences and PTA are all ways parents interact with their child's school. The TEKS are public information and our district asks teachers to post what kids are learning. This is not new. In my 18 years of teaching I have found it to be the norm and likewise as a parent. You will likely not find this level of transparency in private schools because they don't have to. Parents are in my school every day, volunteering in the library, subbing, participating in the watchdog program, being room parents, copying, and having lunch with their students. They have the chance to be on our behavior committees and CIIC committees.

During the pandemic shutdown, we all found out how important public schools were to the fabric of our communities. We need them to be strong, active places of learning. Please vote no on SB8.

Stacy Barnwell

self, substitute teacher, former home educator

San Antonio, TX

I home educated my children. I do NOT support educational savings accounts and vouchers. They funnel money away from public schools, which our society needs to function. Vouchers and ESAs do not empower parents. Instead, schools with little to no accountability will benefit while families will eventually realize they've been misled and have even fewer choices.

Shame on you for consistently weakening our public schools through poor funding and onerous requirements while trying to channel money to institutions with little to no accountability or transparency. Stop the hypocrisy. Stop the nonsense.

Again, I home educated my children, and I fully support public schools. I am against educational savings accounts and vouchers.

Mary Anne Weatherred

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Please vote no on SB8. Vouchers in any form hurt public education in Texas. Keep our tax dollars out of private hands that don't answer to the tax payers. Public comment in previous versions have shown vouchers are not what Texans want or need. This updated add on is no different. Instead, I ask that you use budget surplus to fully fund our schools. As a parent of 2 students in TX schools, we love our public schools but need the legislature to help them continue to thrive.

Leticia Barbosa, Texas Public School Educator
Self
San Antonio, TX

Greetings. I am a 22 year education veteran I teach in Edgewood ISD. I am a successful product of public education and proud parent of a public school student. I am third grade teacher in San Antonio's 2nd poorest zip code. I am begging you to vote NO on senate bill 8 for the following reasons. 1) It diverts much needed funding from our public schools which service this states most vulnerable population to unaccountable private schools. 2) It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws. 3) It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice to determine which students to serve. 4)It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system. The family we have built on my campus, in my classroom, is the only family many of my students can depend on. If they are to grow to be successful productive engaged citizens, public education is their ticket to that life. Thank you for your time, your efforts and for keeping my students at the forefront of your decisions regarding public education in Texas.

Jason Gilstrap, Dr.
Floresville ISD, Superintendent
Floresville, TX

I am registering in opposition to SB 8.

As a proud supported of public education, I foresee many flaws in SB 8. I am sure you are aware of each of them but I would like to point specifically to the lack of transparency and accountability for tax dollars.

Numerous bills considered by this committee begin with or include requirements for public education, in the name of accountability. Each of these add something, no matter how small, to our plate that private institutions are not required to do. One could say it is an attempt to set public education up for failure.

The Open Meeting Act provides transparency of public funds which is not currently required for private school. If this bill is approved, why would they continue to be an exception? This body prides itself on creating transparency and accountability but would fail tax payers with this bill.

Gail Gilstrap
Self/Teacher
Floresville, TX

I oppose this bill.

Tabitha Stewart
Self
Fredericksburg, TX

I do not support SB8. Public funds are for public educational opportunities. Your job is to support the creation of the most academically rigorous, culturally diverse, and emotionally safe public educational institutions in the nation. Stop trying to redistribute my tax dollars to non-paying religious institutions.

Erin Brautigam
Self/ stay at home
Spring, TX

I am against vouchers...

Terry Palin, Mr
Myself
San Antonio, TX

I urge you to oppose this voucher bill as it will take funds from public education. Public schools should be given more funds, not have money taken from them for voucher programs.

I also object to the way this bill was brought forward, almost in the cover of night. Texas students deserve better than this nefarious bill.

Rhonda Hanson
Self
Haskell, TX

Anything you are limiting to INVITED TESTIMONY ONLY proves you are trying to push your ideas and wants through underhandedly. It's dishonest and reprehensible to call yourself a "representative". VOUCHERS AND ESAs NEED TO BE STOPPED IN THEIR TRACKS. Fully fund public schools properly and STOP TRYING TO LINE YOUR OWN POCKETS AND THOSE OF YOUR CRONIES AND CONTRIBUTORS. Texas education funding and its priority is an embarrassment and every single one of you will regret shafting the students of . this state. I'm a Texas teacher of 30+ years and a voter. I will remember come election time - and yes, I am a conservative and tend to vote Republican but both parties are a complete disgrace and it's basically voting for the lesser of two evils.

Midge Epstein
NA
CorpusChristi, TX

I am against this bill. When people make a choice to send their children to a private or parochial school, they are accepting that they will bear the costs. We did this at times with our children. Public funds should not be used to support such schools. Keep these funds for public schools. We need to fully fund our public schools.

Joanne F Day, Miss
Self / Molecular Biologist for Texas DSHS Laboratory
Austin, TX

I believe that Texas needs to fully fund PUBLIC Education. I do not want any of my tax dollars nor any Texans tax dollars going to a private school regardless of affiliation or the lack of affiliation, religious or secular. We all use public services; free public schools have been a part of this nation since its inception. Yes, things have changed over the course of the time. Our educational system has evolved to serve ALL children that are in this country to get a free PUBLIC education. School choice is just that the choice of the parents because they have the responsibility for their children's education and if they choose to send their children to a private school then they should use their money to pay for it not an allotment of "their" tax dollars. Public tax dollars are pooled for public services so that we all have skin in the game. You can't nor should you separate out any one taxpayers' bit to use as an individual. Using public dollars to fund school choice is not an answer to making our schools better. Private schools, as with many private contractors are not transparent and do not have the same oversight as the public sector. They do not have to comply with open records or meeting laws. Private schools do not have to accept ALL students who apply which can lead to an even larger inequality in our educational system.

SB8 is not the answer to have the best PUBLIC schools in Texas. We need to fund our public schools with public tax dollars. Public education has fostered a cohesive democratic society. Private education will not, it will foster an us vs them along lines that we have been working to erase. Please do not reverse the progress that we have made on our collective journey.

Margaret Fyffe
Tisd
Temple, TX

People should not be subsidized for school choice. It continues to ostracize people with special needs, low income and once again serves the wealthy.

Dean Gilstrap
Self - retired public school educator with 38 years of service
Henrietta, TX

You can dress it up any way that you want to but education savings accounts is just vouchers and will take away money from public school funding. This money is then given to organizations that do not have to follow all the rules that the State has in place to make public schools accountable. If an organization takes any funding from education savings accounts then they should have to take any student that shows up and must continue to educate that student regardless of the students test scores, attendance or discipline issues. If public schools had the ability to hand select their students, I am sure that most public schools could compete with any private or parochial school.

Karen Duffy
Self 1st grade teacher
Houston, TX

Please focus on education as a whole- not discriminatory. Sb8 vouchers will cause education to become secular. Those students not fitting the private school model will be sent back to public schools requiring educators to catch them up. My colleagues and I perform multiple actions each day which include counseling, band aiding, teaching, modeling behavior and providing safe havens. You and the TV legislature this session have demoralized our profession as we are indoctrinating students. With what- the TEKS the state has provided. Students have major anxiety attacks about passing the STARR of which the state pays millions to Pearson, based in England. Why not focus on what's really important and that is funding schools appropriately? Vote NO to school vouchers and stop making school teachers feel like what we do is wrong. I work day and night for my students so they can have opportunities their parents ate not providing. My colleagues and myself get cussed out by parents for grades given to students and then pressured by admin because scores aren't good enough. Teachers are leaving by the 100s because they can work elsewhere with less pressure. Texas has a qualified teacher crisis and SB8 will compound this problem.

Janet Wommack
Self
Bronte, TX

Vouchers of any kind will eventually hurt public schools in Texas.

Colleen Cabaj, Mrs.
Self
Waxahachie, TX

I am strongly against this bill, as are all my family and friends. It will ultimately destroy public education, and it will lower education standards. Public money has no business in the hands of private entities, especially with zero accountability. It will decimate rural areas and only serve to help the wealthy. A large number of students will be left with no options, teachers, already fleeing in droves, will be forced out even more quickly due to less public money, and rural areas will lose their center- a center for work, community, and opportunity. We need to bolster public schools with more money per student, higher teacher salaries, and more resources. Great public schools are the backbone of this country, and are the main reason this country is so amazing.

Linda Parker, Ms.
Myself
Palacios, TX

Our schools need more money, not less! Our greatest asset are our children, so we must provide ALL of our children with equal opportunity for the best outcomes for our State.

Rachel Keith
Self, Non-profit Community Relations Manager
Roanoke, TX

As a mother of a daughter in Texas public school, the wife to a 6th year Teacher in Texas Public Schools, the granddaughter of a Texas Special Education Teacher in public schools, and a Texas public school student myself I ask you to vote NO to SB8.

Private education programs are not required to follow state and federal laws for curriculum which not only leads to discrimination but giving these schools \$4000 more dollars than our public schools are getting per student is disparate care. Our legislators should be fully aware that this is discriminatory spending. SB8 will adversely affect all public schools.

Also, voucher programs have historically made the costs of private education go up - harming families who believe they will suddenly be able to afford the private tuition. This is only making this education less attainable.

Furthermore - standardized testing is a burden to school districts, teachers, parents, and students. Lessons are created to teach to the test, rather than provide understanding for foundational principles and learning. This has crippled our education and keeps us in the lowest spots in the United States education rankings.

Please vote no.

Celina Thomas, Dr.
Hutto ISD
Hutto, TX

As a Texas Public School Superintendent, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

David Tesch
Self
Richmond, TX

Reduction of state funding for public education will leave already underfunded schools with even less of the resources they need
Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely
This bill makes state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination
This program is projected to cost Texans over \$800 million dollars!

You cannot, in good conscience, approve this, or any bill, that would take away funding from the majority of schools, and give it to the already wealthy.

As a former elementary school teacher of fourteen years, I have seen firsthand, what is needed for our public schools, and what happens when they don't have the resources they need.

I implore you to do what is right, and properly fund our already struggling public schools, not just the ones who don't even need assistance.

Patrick Hammes
none
Brownsville, TX

Hello my name is Patrick Hammes and I am a retired Special Education Teacher in Brownsville, Texas. I taught for 33 years in Texas and worked as a Public Education employee for 38+ years overall. I am writing on SB 8 and the attempt to silence the voice of educators and educational advocates in Texas for first trying to strong arm a vote on this bill without any input, and now to schedule a hearing for this coming Monday May 15th with no public comment. SB8 as it has now been written/amended is a disgrace. SB 8 does not provide a sorely needed increase to public education, instead it recommends.

1. Reduction of state funding for public education will leave already underfunded schools with even less of the resources they need
2. Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely.
3. This bill makes state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination
4. This program is projected to cost Texans over \$800 million dollars.

Texas Public Education Committee needs to vote this bill down and amend it to provide a greater increase in the basic allotment, equalize funding between public education and charter schools, delete all recommendations for voucher schools.
We have a great history of public education in this state address the concerns of teacher shortages, excessive testing, and work on an educational system that is second to none not only in our country, but in the world.

Dan Gordon, Rabbi
Self
Houston, TX

Public school education is a cornerstone fair and equal America. And funding for the schools has been diminished to the point where the children's learning has been compromised. It is much more expensive and to have a divided population of those can afford equality education, and those who cannot not allow the ignorance of lawmakers to jeopardize our future

Holly Holland
Self, Retired
Abbott, TX

Please oppose SB 8.

Widad Kinard, Dr.
Self/ educator
Corinth, TX

Please vote against all voucher bills. Reduction of state funding for public education will leave already underfunded schools with even less of the resources they need
Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely
This bill makes state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination
This program is projected to cost Texans over \$800 million dollars

Althea Washington
Public Schools
Houston, TX

As a public school educator it is imperative to consider the needs of all students and not just those who will have access to private institutions of learning. It is the federal government to appropriately provide Free Appropriate Public Education. That does not include withholding funds which would cause public education institutions to sufferer. No matter what is said, this will become an elitist stance and will leave so many students and families at a disadvantage. It is truly disheartening to see how little the government values educators of all institutions of learning especially those in the trenches striving to make a difference.

Roy Ellzey, Dr.
Self - Retired Professor of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
San Antonio, TX

Even though my children are now beyond the age that this bill will affect, I know that both my daughter and son were well-served by the Texas public school education system from elementary grades through high-school. And, given that recent state funding for public education is somewhat less than it should be, SB 8 will only divert more of the funds from public education to poorly regulated private schools. This will negatively affect public education many ways from the classrooms to the sports fields.

Paula Waller
AUSTIN
Austin, TX

As a retired educator with 28 years of teaching and administrative experience, I urge you to properly fund our students public education. Instead of helping our students receive a quality education, the implementation of SB 8 will leave already underfunded schools with even less of the resources they need.

Additionally, this program is projected to cost Texans over \$800 million dollars.

SB 8 is a loser for our children.

Genesis McCormack
Self
Rosebud, TX

I support this bill. This bill protects parental right and parental consent of minor children.

Kay Parker
Self- CPA
Bullard, TX

Please vote no on this bill. Public education needs to be fully funded/supported instead of using taxpayer funds to shore up private schools without accountability. Don't let the outside interests drive your vote for this bad bill. Listen to the teachers and take care of rural schools.

David Oestreicher
Self - public education employee
Hutto, TX

As a Texas Public School employee, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

David Konefal
Self
Conroe, TX

Reduction of state funding for public education will leave already underfunded schools with even less of the resources they need. Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely. This bill makes state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination. This program is projected to cost Texans over \$800 million. Reject this bill.

Claudia OESTREICHER
self - teacher
HUTTO, TX

As a Texas Public School teacher, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Rebecca Howard
Self
Conroe, TX

No vouchers. American children should attend school together. Vouchers support segregation.

Melissa Endicott, Dr
Self
Houston, TX

As a parent of three twice exceptional children (gifted with disabilities) I oppose SB8 for several reasons. Vouchers are always portrayed as a benefit to serve kids like mine but in reality this bill would make it worse. Public schools must accept-all kids as they come, while private schools are allowed to pick and choose often eliminating my kids from being able to attend. Even if they accept my children, they don't have to provide FAPE, and can even choose to remove my children based on their disabilities. The illusion of vouchers is that money would allow my children to attend "better" schools but 8K in the face of 35-42k tuition per year is merely a drop in the bucket. As a family we simply can't make up that difference. Instead my children will be attending our local public schools which have allowed them to blossom, while their schools are continually underfunded. This manufactured failure of public school based on the poorly designed STAAR, chronic under funding and continual unfunded mandates needs to stop.

Additionally the inclusion of STAAR modifications are laughable. You can't claim to eliminate 5 EOCs when you replace them with 5 new untested exams. Forcing schools to administer 3 STAAR exams per year per subject further shoves the testing mindset throughout the year at the cost of authentic learning. Testing this year for some children accounted for 8 full hours of testing in 4 separate subjects. My child lost 32 hours of what could have been authentic learning and yet that bill increases testing. Instead of spending 98 million dollars a year to reinvent the wheel in a poorly designed, badly written exam that penalizes children with disabilities, why not use a nationally standardized tests that already exist (such as MAP) and meet the federal guidelines. Think of how better spent that money would be on additional teachers, smaller classes, and actual learning. It's almost if Texas is afraid to see where their kids rank in the nation (hint we are near the bottom).

If standardized testing was the solution to better schools, Texas should be in the top 5. Unfortunately you can't test your way to success. You must invest in public education that benefits all students, and the state as a whole. Better educational outcomes result in higher lifetime earnings, improved healthy and in turn a strong state.

Stop the madness. Say no to vouchers, say no to STAAR, and definitely say no to SB8.

ERNESTO LOPEZ, Sr.
BEST/AFT
BROWNSVILLE, TX

Vouchers for private use is only met for upper wage earners who if they really wanted to send their children to private schools, it's their choice but pay for it. I did that for 2 of my children. It's a sacrifice. Allowing to target special needs children is a farce because these institutions do not have the means to service this population. You are sending a message that you do not trust public schools. **THEN PUT MORE MONEY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO SERVICE ALL STUDENTS BETTER INSTEAD OF THROWING CRUMBS! AGAINST VOUCHERS AND MORE TESTING.** Students & teachers are burned out with so much testing as it is.

Kendra Estes
Self - Nurse
Austin, TX

As a Parent and Texas Public School District Employee , I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Robin Davis
PTA
Grapevine, TX

I would like to express my opposition to SB 8 and any type of voucher/ESA program. Considering Texas ranks among the bottom 10 states in funding per students, it is clear that public school children have not been a priority. To inadequately support public schools and then provide a means to further damage their effectiveness by offering a option take money from them is beyond all understanding. The Texas Constitution Article 7, Section 1 specifically addresses the need for our elected officials to support free public schools so ALL our children can receive a quality education. Please fix public school finance, rather than dismantle it. Our children deserve better.

Jason McAuliffe
Hutto ISD
Georgetown, TX

As a Texas Public School employee, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.
Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Signe Santoro
Self
Austin, TX

Allow PUBLIC testimony, not just invited testimony, which could result in shewed results

Lilia ESKELSEN
Self - retired
El Paso, TX

As a Texas voter and taxpayer I am horrified that the legislature is even considering diverting public dollars from public schools to private schools that are not accountable to the public in the same ways our public schools are. This is disgraceful. The very term 'choice' is a lie. Private schools (not parents) have the choice of the students they wish to serve. That's why they are private. What the vast majority of parents choose is their neighborhood public school. What they want is a well-resourced school with the staff and services to prepare their students to succeed in the world. How about we fund that? Do not allow this sham of private school vouchers to go forward.

Dede Fox
Dede Fox
The Woodlands, TX

Vote NO on SB 8. NO to vouchers which decrease funding to excellent public schools in Montgomery County and are of negligible benefit to wealthy families with children in private schools (the good one cost more than \$30,000 a year). Not to mention that private schools rarely accept student with learning differences! I'm a grandmother of two in public school and two in private school.

Bryan White, Superintendent
Patton Springs ISD
Afton, TX

As a public school employee I cannot support vouchers in any form or fashion. I am also against the expansion of any standardized testing in any form or name. I urge you to vote no against SB8.

Elena De La Rosa
Self
Rosenberg, TX

This bill will not sufficiently fund the education of those children who are in a lower SE level. The \$8000 is not sufficient to pay the tuition for the year and those schools have the option of dismissing those students they don't deem adequate to return to their home school yet keep the funds without returning them it to the home school. This is not in the best interest of the student.

Carol Bertsch
self - lawyer
San Antonio, TX

I strongly OPPOSE this bill.
The House should oppose vouchers in any form and focus on productive efforts to support our public schools this session.
Thank you.

Tammy Cunningham
Self
Haskell, TX

Vouchers absolutely make not sense for rural public education. They will be the end of the rural public's school.

Molly Reardon
Self - Assistant Principal at a High School
Pflugerville, TX

As a Texas Public School Administrator, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.
Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Erin Francis
Self
Waller, TX

Parents do not want to provide tax payer money to fund private schools. As a parent I choose to send some of my children to private school and I do not believe anyone else is responsible for the tuition I pay for that. I also have 3 kids in public schools that need more funding!! Fund these schools so we are not in the bottom half of the nation for school funding. Teachers need support and more financial support, not bills that make them the enemy. Stop this disgusting attempt to dismantle public education!
Parents and tax payers do want this.

Andrew Boehmer, Mr
Private citizen
Jacksonville, TX

This is a BULLSHIT attempt to strip yet more vital funding from our public school system. I sincerely request that you vote NO.

Shaleah Rose
Self/ Private School Teacher
Flower Mound, TX

As a Christian school, graduate, a public school, retiree, and now a private school teacher, I am asking everyone to vote against this bill. I understand the value of taking care of all Texas children. They all deserve a fully funded and free, public education. Public tax dollars should not be used to supplement those that have already chosen to send their kids to private schools. Many children in rural areas, as well as areas of poverty, should have quality public schools. This can be achieved by fully funding the public school system. Schools already have choice. It is my opinion that children in poverty and children in our rural areas, will be hurt if this bill passes. The majority of Texas students attend public school. They deserve to be fully funded and not have politicians try to divert funds to those who wish to privatize. Texas has spoken on this many times. They do not want vouchers. Thank you for your consideration.

Faith Reynolds
Self
Midland, TX

I support the SB 8 bill and parental rights.

Sandy Colwell
We the people!
College Station, TX

Please give us a choice!

Stacy Keszei, Mrs
Self
Montgomery, TX

Parents should have the right to choice where and how their children attend school. School choice-

Daisy Clark
Self, law enforcement
Kountze, TX

I stand in favor of this bill

David Demel, Mr.
Self
Willis, TX

I support school choice.

Kimberly Burke, Vice President
Self
Southlake, TX

Pass this bill. It's important that the education system does not exclude parents from their child's education.

Nancy Schlirf
Self retired airline flight attendant
Colleyville, TX

This bill will drain badly needed funds from our public schools. There is too little state oversight in charter and private schools. My daughter, a public school nurse, left a chapter school years ago after the principal wanted to turn her clinic into a clinic/library. This would have put her in jeopardy of losing her state nursing license since the new plan did not meet state health standards. If private schools receive more state money they should be held to the same standards as public schools in Texas.

Jan Cleveland
None
Bryan, TX

Please pass

Hugo Peña, Mr.
Self
Houston, TX

Pass this bill. Convince the House to pass this bill.

Melissa Cobb, Mrs
Self; govt employee
Weatherford, TX

Please support parents' rights to guide their children's education and avoid work indoctrination. Our tax money should follow our children's education choice.

Linda McClain, Dr
On Sight Vision Care
Georgetown, TX

Supporting parental rights

Michael Gohlke
Self
Corpus Christi, TX

Support passage!

John Hutka
Self
AUSTIN, TX

Please honor the success of public education as stated in the state constitution. Vote no for this bill.

Connie Turner, Ms.
Self - retired Texas teacher and concerned citizen
New Braunfels, TX

You are committing a crime if you allow public funds to go to parents for private school choice. If parents do not want their children in public schools, they should personally fund that change. Period.

My tax dollars need to help public schools that are open to everyone!

1) I see the home schoolers not being educated regularly in New Braunfels. I personally know parents who admit they just don't want to get up every day, get everybody dressed, and fight the traffic in the morning to drive the kids to campus. **THIS IS LAZY AND IRRESPONSIBLE PARENTING** now called "choice".

2) Many more parents will abuse the privilege and keep the money, increasing our shoddy "home schooling".

3) You will hurt public schools that you love to regulate. Instead, please support public education.

Do NOT vote for vouchers!

Thank you.

Leroy Henson, PASTOR
Self
Crockett, TX

Please pass this bill.

Victor Villarreal
Sb8
Pflugerville, TX

I Support for SB8 and free school choice

Sandra Charles
Self
San Antonio, TX

I support school choice

Carmen Towns, Mrs
Baptist Church
Fort Worth, TX

We need the right to choose school

Kashka Charles
Self
San Antonio, TX

I support school choice

Aaron Boyle
Moose Lakes Base Camp & RV park
Forney, TX

Please do anything possible to engender free agency in education.

Alan Johnson
Self
Denton, TX

In the future I will be voting for those who support this bill.

Patty Day, Mrs.
Self
Amarillo, TX

Please stand for what is right for our children and grandchildren. Give parents the rights they deserve. Please help our children not be brain washed and maimed. Thank you for listening to my plea.

John Graves, Mr
Self. Trucker
Brady, TX

Parents deserve the rights to choose what their children are taught in school

Lynn McCoy, Lady
Self
Plano, TX

Please, support parents in their decisions for their children! Stop public education's stronghold on funding which does not represent American values!

Helen Preston, Mrs.
Self/ artist
Abilene, TX

I urge you to support SB 8. We need school choice.

Luis Cabrera, Pastor
Godly Wave
Harlingen, TX

I support this bill 100 percent. It's time for Texas to lead this nation back to God and common sense. We need to protect our kids in schools at all cost. These kids are the future of America. We cannot afford to lose their minds to evil and wicked agendas. Schools are meant to teach basic reading, math, science, history, etc.....not to be indoctrinated with pornography or LGBTQ agenda. Please support this Bill. God is watching all of us and so is this nation. Where Texas goes so does this nation. Let's lead our nation and let's protect our precious kids.

Joshua Taylor
Self, N/A
Longview, TX

I believe that the parents should have the right to select instructional materials and criteria.

Deloris Rhyne
The children
Abilene, TX

I do not want other people deciding what is right and for my kids there is too much wrong in our world. Christian values are already under attack In school our schools we need to take a stand and do that now.

Jeanne McMenimen
Self
Hutto, TX

I support SB 8 and ask you to vote for it.

Brenda Bernstein
Self/warehouse forklift driver
Abilene, TX

Please advocate for parents choice and child welfare.

Hilma Levis, Ms.
Self
Santa Fe, TX

I agree with the wording of the above bill.

Lutricia Valdez
Self/ hair stylist
San Angelo, TX

All I care about is the quality of education, the schools being safe from shooters and bully's and for the public school establishment TO NOT GO WOKE!

Tonesha Holland, Dr.
Self, Principal
Hutto, TX

As a Texas Public School Principal, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Kay Seabough, Mrs.
"Self"
Flower Mound, TX

Parents have the right to protect their children and school choice for their children!! Enough of this "woke" agenda!

Julia Martinez
Self, officiant
Pflugerville, TX

I strongly oppose this bill and any attempt to strip funding from our public schools.

Maryann Casserino
Self
Georgetown, TX

Approve

Ana Figueroa
Home
San Antonio, TX

As a tax paying resident, voter, and parent of 5 children, I want and can decide what my children need and can learn in the private and public institutions.

Stephanie Holdren
self
AUSTIN, TX

Please vote against SB8 and keep taxpayer money with public schools!

George Morris, Mr
Self
Abilene, TX

I back parental rights in deciding the content of our children's instruction education

Erika Hatfield
Convention of States
Heath, TX

I am FOR SB8. School Choice encourages competition, which in turns creates better creativity to solve budgeting, better schools and higher academic achievement.

Shari may
self
Humble, TX

I support this bill

Loma A Gibson
Self
Big Sandy, TX

SV 8. Stop the woke ! Parents know better than Government

Mary Heffernan, Mrs
Self
Austin, TX

Please know Parents rights for children under legal age is important. We should never proprot that parents are not responsible for being directly engaged with being there during every level of growth for their children. They will continue to be the one responsible and has the right to teach, guide and educate their children from early childhood, elementary age, adolescence and teen years. We all know that there are already reasonable sound laws in place to protect children when parents break the law if abusive, etc. The government should never take over parents rights on the moral code or freedoms of religion and more to force a school idea on a child without parental engagement. I do not have enough space to even touch on school choice issues or school boards abusing parents who do not agree with their ifeas that are in conflict with religious beliefs. Please know I support SB 8.

Agnes Lichtenwalter, Ms.
Self
El Paso, TX

I ask that you vote in support of SB8.

Dianna Buchanan
Self- retired
La Vernia, TX

Reduction of state funding for public education will leave already underfunded schools with even less of the resources they need
Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely
This bill makes state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination
This program is projected to cost Texans over \$800 million dollars

Richard Backus, Mr
self
San Antonio, TX

The savings account program will only further lower the quality of education in our state by enticing parents and students to move to private schools where the requirements are lightly regulated and a broad level of skills needed to succeed in a society will not be a part of every student's curriculum.

Sara Spurlin
Self-self employed
San antonio, TX

God needs to be brought back into schools so they will not be massacred left and right

Jennifer Stowers
self- public educator
Lexington, TX

As a Texas Public School Teacher, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.
Jennifer Stowers

Eddie Hyer, Mr.
Self / Disable
Abilene, TX

Please consider this we have lost a bunch of young folks an if this does not pass I think the drop out rate will increase !!!

Mary Grace Ketnr`, MS.
self, retired (UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures)
San Antonio, TX

There are too many questions about this complex bill to pass it in this form! It will do nothing more than clog up the courts, and you'll have to deal with it again in 2025. Do not waste everyone's time. Vote NO.

Cory Moreno, Mr.
Home
Springtown, TX

I vote to empower parents.

Leonor Vargas
Self
Austin, TX

I do not support this bill-it will hurt many families, educators and communities.

Thelma Kounce
Grandmother
Houston, TX

We need to have the right for our future generations education. Not the government, not anyone that is not in the right mind to make any suggestions or choices. All parents need to be presented with all curriculums before the children are taught. I am not in agreement if kids being taught anything to do with gender identity, transgender or anything to do with that or even being taught about sex that is in appropriate and disgusting. Kids at the right age should not be tempted to experience sex period or confuse kids of what gender they want to be.

Will Bates, Mr.
Self
Poteet, TX

I am opposed to this bill.

Taryn Painter
Texas Public educators
Lubbock, TX

As a public school educator, I am highly opposed to SB8. The focus of tax dollars needs to be on the already underfunded public education system, not on private schools and vouchers. I also think it's abhorrent to ask public school students to have to sit through multiple tests that private schools are exempt from. Focus on bettering the system that is already drowning.

Jose Contreras
Myself
San Antonio, TX

I would not vote for you and my family and neighbors will not be voting for you in the next election

William Clayton
Self
Fort Worth, TX

We strongly encourage you to pass this bill for freedom of choice

Bonita McVey, Ms
Self
Austin, TX

This is very important. Saving our children is saving our future. Transgender dysphoria is a mental illness of adults who may be traumatize.
blockers and hormone therapy and surgical procedures are irreversible! I've seen many kids that are about 18 regret that they did this to their bodies. They do not tell the children about the side effects of all the treatments which is basically lying to them. And what the public schools are teaching his hatred of self and hatred of others. This is ammunition for a Civil War. please support parents rights. Thank you.

Jodi Risenmay, Ms
Self
Round Rock, TX

Parents should be the ultimate decision makers for their children in regards to curriculum, health care, and school choice. The money should follow the child so that Parents can choose which school is right for their child. Schools and the government should remember that parents pay the bills, in the form of compulsory taxes. Parents should get transparent accountability in every aspect of where that money is spent.

Brad LaPlante, Athletic Director
Hutto ISD
Hutto, TX

As a Texas Public School Athletic Director, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Carlos Bonilla, Rev
Self
Pasadena, TX

No coment

Roy Fitts, Mr.
Self
Arlington, TX

I want to register my support for school choice and letting school tax dollars follow the student where he/she may decide to go.

Connie Rose
Self/ Engineer
Cypress, TX

I support SB 8 For the parental rights and to stop the indoctrination of our Children.

Kathleen Farrow
Self. Retired
Richardson, TX

As a grandmother who has young children in the Dallas County school system, I plead with you to see that this bill SB 8 passes. The woke agenda must be stopped. Our children must be protected. Things have gotten out of hand and must be restored to common sense and not bend to those who are infiltrating sex grooming and other disturbing issues on our most valuable resources, our children.

Tracey Schneider
Parents
Conroe, TX

Strong Public education is imperative to a successful democracy. It is responsible for providing an educated work force & military. When you take public tax \$\$ away you are damaging public schools already underfunded public education. Private schools are not accountable in the same way public schools are.. private school's don't accept students with high needs,, such as autism, low IQ, physical & mental disabilities. Many private schools are religious oriented. Separation of church/state! I don't want my \$\$ going for someone's education in a manner I don't believe in. If you give the \$\$ to Christian schools, you will have to give it to Muslim, Buddist, Devil worship schools too. One's personal choice for private education is one's personal responsibility. This bill DOES NOT have the support of Sen. Creighton's district, nor the majority of Texans.

Johanna McCrary
Self
Lubbock, TX

In favor for this bill. Please pass!

Michael Rumbaugh
Self
Cedar Hill, TX

I STRONGLY support SB 8 & hope that my Reps & Senators do as well.

Jerry Teer, Pastor
Landmark MB Church
Texarkana, TX

Vote for School Choice!

Brian Schill
none
San Antonio, TX

SB 8 is a dangerous bill that would inflict financial harm on an already underfunded public education system. Texas is well known to be way down on the national list of funding per student and student achievement, and our children cannot afford to be subjected to this additional slash in funding. The public education system is known to be a major factor in America's economic success and its leadership in the world. And private schools can manage on their own, as they have for a very long time. SB 8 violates the constitutional provision of separation of church and state.

Dennis Borel, Executive Director
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
Austin, TX

The education of students with disabilities is an important function of our education system. As a former high school teacher, senior manager of a Texas public charter school and, since 2000, the executive director of the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD), I view CSSB8 as directing public dollars to private schools while simultaneously weakening rights and educational equity for special education students. Whereas public schools and public charters must comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), private schools won't. Public schools are open-enrollment, accepting all comers. Private schools won't adopt open-enrollment. Unlike public schools, private schools will keep the ability to charge and will charge families additional tuition, often thousands of dollars. If advocates for private schools will shift their positions to guaranteeing federal rights and truly making access to their services available to all kids with disabilities via open-enrollment and no surprise billing for extra tuition, then we would be glad to have a discussion. CSSB8 is not that.

Oliver Stillwell, Rev.
Northeast Ministerial Alliance
Humble, TX

I would like to see parental choice for the education of their children.

Clinton Thornburg
Self
Houston, TX

For. Please support

George Embley
Myself
Lubbock, TX

I fully support the right of parents to have a say in the education of their children, and fully oppose politicians and bureaucrats who believe that the state should have the final and only say.

MICOL KONVICKA
Self
Pipe Creek, TX

I 100% support this bill. I have 6 great grandchildren in school and feel.it should be their parents who decide where they go to school.

Rebecca Cart
Self
Kemah, TX

Parents should have a voice over where to school their own children vs where they reside! Public schools are all about indoctrination of our children instead of education! Trying to instruct us Parents what we can & can not do with our own children, their education, & trying to silent Parents, their voice! This has to be stopped & can be by giving Parents a choice of where they can school their children's education! Public schools have become an indoctrination system by allowing anyone educate them, as in the LGBT community & influencing our children that is a way of life! That is the Parents job, so that infuriates me to no end! I don't want my child or any children subjected to this type of lifestyle. If those people in that type of community have & want that for their children then they need to open their own school system without funding from our Gov't! Parents need to have choice in whom educated our own children & their curriculum!

Rebecca Shaheen
Self
Austin, TX

The House committee substitute for the SB 8 voucher bill is 80 pages in length and has not been vetted with testimony through the House Public Education Committee. With only invited testimony happening on the 15th of May, witnesses will be heavily skewed towards support of this bill. I oppose any bill that takes money away from our already struggling public schools, doesn't give a significant pay raise to our educators, doesn't decrease and deemphasize STAAR testing (this bill adds testing and raises the stakes).

With an initial price tag of \$800 million, the voucher provisions in the committee substitute for SB 8 will balloon to billions of dollars in the coming years. This funding should not be directed to private schools or vendors with little to no accountability, but instead to our public schools that have faced double-digit inflation, teacher retention issues, and other programmatic needs.

We have to do better and this bill doesn't do that. We cannot continue to ignore what is happening in our public schools. People are leaving, but it's not to the fault of the public schools. Trust me, I worked in these schools up until last year. They are understaffed and therefore cannot handle the increased amount of special ed needs, mental health needs (I am a former school counselor), and discipline issues that arise on a daily basis. Test scores would absolutely increase if our public schools could be staffed properly. My son is in a magnet program and advanced math class in Austin ISD. His 6th grade math class is called geo-track, meaning this year he was supposed to learn 6th, 7th, and 8th grade math in ONE year. He took the 8th grade STAAR test this year, and although we don't know for sure, he most likely failed. He has never failed a math test. Why did he fail? His year started with a math teacher with a PhD. But the discipline issues in his ADVANCED math class caused her to have to focus on discipline instead of teaching. The administration had bigger fish to fry and were busting at the seams putting out other fires. The teacher ended up leaving in November, they had a sub for 3 weeks, a new teacher came in in January (they were very lucky to find one). But my son was already too behind. Had the school had proper staffing (including behavior specialists that could assist and train teachers), my son may have passed his STAAR test. That is just one of many examples I have. I left school counseling because of lack of resources. I was exhausted and had very little to give to my own children. It wasn't sustainable.

Please do not support a bill that hasn't been allowed to be heard by both sides. Educators are tired and a lot of them don't have the energy to voice their opinions on this bill. But there are enough advocates to stand up for them and say NO to SB8. I hope you will to.

Lamar Lawson
Self
Windcrest, TX

I support this bill. The money should follow the student.

Louis Blanchard, MR.
Self
Richmond, TX

Please support SB. 8!!y

Jody Hodges
Self
La Grange, TX

I am in support of SB 8. The establishing of an ESA is essential in guaranteeing parental rights as they are the primary educators for their children.

Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Dr.
Self
San Marcos, TX

Stop trying to push vouchers, savings accounts, etc. as a way to destroy public schools and to privatize education and monetize our students. Education is the one of the most important functions in society. Don't mess with Texas education! Respect our dedicated teachers!

Destinee Harris
Self
Dallas, TX

I support this bill. Please vote for it.

Tina Beaver
Self, self
Rockwall, TX

Yes on SB 8.

Michael Huddle, LtCol
COS
Conroe, TX

I support this bill.

John Darlington
None
Arlington, TX

School choice , time to put kids first and corrupt teachers unions last

Kathy Shannon
Self
Flower Mound, TX

I ask that you support SB 8, for school choice

Andrea Hughes
Self - Retired
Dallas, TX

Since the founding of America parents have had the responsibility and the duty to oversee the kind of education given to their children. No government or educational entity should be able to supplant that authority or that right. Educators now claim that they should have final authority over our children's' education and that is WRONG. It has led to the dumbing down of our children and based education on feelings rather than Truth.Please do your part to restore parental rights in Texas. Vote for SB 8.

Cindy Riley
Self
Ransom Canyon, TX

I am against woke.

Gaylon George, Mr
Self/Retired
Leander, TX

It's unfortunate, but in today's world of public education, the schools have fallen prey to indoctrination instead of education. Parents, grandparents alike are funding a morally corrupt education system and must be allowed to direct their child's funding to the school of their choice that best meets the needs of their child. Schools that provide the best overall education will succeed and thrive. Those that don't will necessarily fail and the education system and it's children will be the benefactors. I call on you to support SB 8 for school choice. It is what is best for the education of all children in the competitive global world that they will face.

MJ Strong, Mrs
Self
Carrollton, TX

Important for parents to be able to select school of choicr

Ellen Leyrer, Mrs.
True Texas Project
Plano, TX

I stand in support for SB 8.
Thank you!

Stacy Bostick
Self/Teacher
Belton, TX

I am against school vouchers. As a taxpayer and teacher I have many issues with vouchers. My tax money should be spent on improving and strengthening public schools as these are the schools that teach ALL students. We educate students, regardless of financial status, race, behavior or learning issues, who their parents are, or anything else. We are inclusive. Private and charter schools, on the other hand, pick and choose who they educate. They are not prepared to teach students with a variety of learning disabilities or behavior issues. Regardless of the vouchers, the majority of families will still not be able to afford to send their child to one of these schools. This would only serve to benefit the upper class, many of who can and already are paying for this service, while removing those funds from the students who most need it. Many children in our state do not have the experiences that money can buy and taking money away from their educational experience is just another disservice to them.

As a teacher of 24 years, I can honestly say the I have NEVER had a student join my public school classroom from a private school who was not behind my students in learning. They are almost always in need of something their private school could not provide. I know, for instance, that my school has provided speech services for private school students because their school is incapable of doing it. I recall receiving a student mid-year and the mother saying that her son would likely be bored because he had been in a private school. Just a few short weeks later, I had to inform her that he was behind my students. I keep hearing that these other schools are "better", but how could we know that? These schools are not held to the same standards and testing as public schools. It is easy to appear "better" when you get to pick and choose who you educate.

I often agree with Governor Abbot, but in this case, I do not. It is my understanding that Monday's hearing is an "invited testimony" only, which prohibits "open testimony" from the public. Therefore, I am sending this correspondence in the hopes that it will make some kind of difference in your decision. While you are meeting on Monday to decide what is best for ALL students, I will be spending the day in my classroom with "my kids". I only have 8 days left this year to make a difference in the lives of 39 children and that is exactly what I intend to do. You have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of many more children. Please show me through your vote that you want what is best for them, too. Please show me that you support students with learning difficulties, with unstable family lives, those from lower and middle income families, and those with behavior issues. I am doing my job to teach each and every student. On Monday, I am asking you to do the same. Vote no to vouchers. Support the schools that educate ALL Texas students.

Respectfully,
Stacy Bostick

Lori LaBree, Mrs.
Self
Nolanville, TX

The only way to improve public schools is to compete for the education dollars. Any arguing otherwise is only supporting the status quo. Education dollars must follow the student to the parents school of choice. To attract those dollars, public schools will start listening to parents and stop all the nonsense. This will not hurt teachers. We have good teachers being forced to go along with the union's priorities not the needs of the students. These teachers will also gain choice. Thank you for your consideration.

Maria Cortes
Self
Houston, TX

We pay taxes, school taxes, and we are afraid of sending our own kid to the public school. Parents need to feel safe knowing their kids are safe. We need to stop the indoctrination, and to protect our children's innocence.

Leslie Rincon, Ms
Self- paraprofessional
Pinehurst, TX

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Where is the research that shows that private schools are a better option? It appears you are diverting money because you believe people need to make choices for their children if public schools are not successful and too liberal. etc. And private schools are better? Show us that data! The lack of funding in public education will only make this worse for all.

Start making a difference by actually making a difference. Stop avoiding responsibilities and giving people a way out! Stop this nonsense!

Morgan Perez
Self
Fairview, TX

We need our tax dollars to come back to OUR kids schools. The state has a surplus and is now trying to take away that we can charge students outside of the district to attend. This will be detrimental to us and the whole reason we bought a home where we did was because of the schools. This will lower their funding even more so since they already don't get much of our tax dollars.

Gaudy Montemayor
Self, educator
San Juan, TX

Parents need to have the right to send their children where they deem best for their education. We all pay school taxes and should NOT be imposed to only public school. Our taxes should also provide parents with the right to send our children to our chosen schools not be dictated to only send them to public zoning schools. We all pay equal taxes, therefore we all deserve equal choices without pre-determination. If my taxes will be used to serve other parents choices, then returning my tax investment in a savings account form for my children's education is only equitable.

William Rackley
Self
San Antonio, TX

I feel strongly that school choice for our children is very important and an ESA would be beneficial in helping them achieve good goals in their life's

Philip Owens, Mr.
Self
Texarkana, TX

Parents are responsible for their children. We pay through taxes for education. Teachers and the school are responsible for teaching the basics to prepare for life or college or both. We as parents know what is required for everyday life as well or better than most teachers. Our opinions are the final word, not the schools. Do your damn job and get back to teaching math, history, English, literature, government(our government), economics, home education and business math. Stop the political indoctrination. Thank you.

Joanie Rutherford
Self/ dental hygienist
Plano, TX

All monies should follow the students in order to allow freedom of choice for all students.

Deborah Koehn
Self
Pflugerville, TX

Vote for parents rights and school choice.

Ermel Doyle
Self retired
Jasper, TX

Parents have the right to be involved in all considerations concerning School activities.
Each bill to be sent to the Texas Legislature should be first introduced to each parent for consideration and input.

Lisa S Robinson
Self/retired educator
Houston, TX

Vote no on SB 8. Vote no on any form of vouchers or ESAs. Also vote no on any increase in standardized testing. All of this is harmful for our traditional public schools and our students who we teachers work so hard to educate. Keep this bill off the House floor. Thank you!

Cyndi Casper
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I believe parents have the right to choose which school their children could go to. I also believe that parents should have a say in what is taught to the children. I am praying that you do the right thing to save our children's education and lives.

Carol Hans
self
San Antonio, TX

Wow! I'm glad to be able to defend public education in Texas! I'm very concerned, being a retired teacher! The reduction of state funding for public education will leave underfunded schools with even less of the resources necessary to provide a solid education for Texas public school students. Private schools have the right and ability to pick and choose students, and discrimination in them is very likely, especially for students with disabilities. State and federal protections for students with disabilities are not required in private schools!! This program is also projected to cost Texans over \$800 million dollars and provide fewer resources. I oppose SB 8!

Susanne Murray
Self
San Angelo, TX

Please support SB8 and school choice. Let the money follow the child and parents. Protect our children from the radical experiment launched by teacher's unions.

Larry Rasbury
Retired Republican
Granbury, TX

Please vote for school choice like FL and AZ have done and have seen greatly improved education for all!

Greg Smith, Dr.
Fast Growth School Coalition
League City, TX

The Fast Growth School Coalition is vehemently against SB 8 due to the ESA (Vouchers)

Michael Walton
Self, The Justice Foundation
Lubbock, TX

Texans overwhelmingly want educational freedom in Texas. This has been clearly demonstrated through polls and an actual vote on the issue in ballot boxes last year where 88% of republicans in Texas are recorded as wanting educational freedom. I hear the Teacher's Unions and the District personnel who are fighting this tooth and nail, only cry out "This will hurt public schools, it will take money away from public schools." Yet in every state where this has been implemented the public schools have improved dramatically. They're denying this or refusing to listen, but the empirical evidence, if brought before a court, would prove that what is being said about educational freedom is wrong.

It's what's not being said that's the problem. What's not being said is that the schools don't want to change, the Teacher's Unions have a political agenda, and money and power to back it up. They don't want competition because they don't want to be accountable to the public. The agenda is Marxist and is manifest through BLM curriculum and LGBTQ. Both of these agendas are designed to turn children away from their parents and away from our Constitutional Republic. It's the establishment of a state religion because it takes faith to believe that a man can be a woman and a woman can be a man. It also takes faith to believe that (BLM) an organization whose founders have publicly avowed themselves as Marxists, have genuine motives of racial reconciliation when their constant war cry is reverse discrimination and revenge.

The reason this is such a big issue, and is being voted on this year, is because centralized government run public schools have repeatedly broken the trust of families all over the state of Texas, and none of the Teacher's Unions or School Districts are bringing up this breach of trust, they are only concerned about money and power. This has become obvious in the testimonies that have come forward. None of these who oppose school choice that I've heard, have once mentioned what's best for the children. It's about money, and from the Teacher's Union's perspectives, Power. Power to engineer social change through manipulating a captive audience of children that they haven't parented, to make them into an image that they've imagined is best for the world. They don't have a right to this authority, but they've taken it and are willfully using it to manipulate the vulnerable hearts and minds of children who don't belong to them. All in the name of their secular religion.

Because of the way our centralized, government run public schools are set up, our children are vulnerable and many of the Teacher's Unions and Schools don't have to be accountable to parents for what they teach. This has got to change. By introducing competition through educational freedom, we unlock the true potential of our students, teachers and schools, and end educational tyranny. LET OUR CHILDREN GO!!

Barry Boudreaux, Mr
Self
Kingwood, TX

Vote for it.

Alton Biggs, Mr.
Self
COMMERCE, TX

Chairman Brad Buckley is allowing only invited testimony to speak at the hearing. This is a boldly undemocratic move to silence the voices of the majority of Texans, but that should never happen! As a citizen of Texas who spent more than 32 years in the public classrooms of Texas, I'm outraged that this committee would attempt to ram this piece of legislation through without true public comment it deserves. I urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 8 for the reasons given below.

Public schools in Texas have been underfunded for years. I point out that it is your Texas constitutional duty - one of the few you have as a legislator - to properly fund education. SB 8 will strip nearly a billion dollars (more than \$800 million) of state funding for public education leaving underfunded schools with even less of the resources they require to perform at a level we all expect. The \$800+ will flow from public school education to private schools. There is a huge problem with such a move.

Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely. They do not have to follow all of the rules that public schools do. In addition, there is an increasing mountain of evidence showing that private schools do not education students at the level of public schools. The bill goes a step further by making state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination.

I urge you to take a look at the Texas Education Agency's own statistics comparing achievement by students in public schools verses those in private schools. The data are neither Republican data nor Democratic data. They are simply the numbers that are easy to understand. One would think that such data would lead you to vote NO on Senate Bill 8.

Because I am deeply concerned about (1) public education in the State of Texas, (2) our students - who are our future, and (3) the democratic process which Chairman Buckley is trying valiantly to undermine, I ask for your vote of NO on Senate Bill 8.

Karen Castle
Self, educator-former principal and current consultant
North Richland Hills, TX

Districts currently have processes to allow parents to review and excuse their student from activities and content they individually object to. They want to decide for me what my children receive which is not acceptable to me! They are lazy parents who would rather "blanket" decisions rather than do their job as a parent for their own child, by communicating their wishes/objections and asking for an alternative assignment.

Amber Hogsten
Myself
Diboll, TX

It is the schools responsibility to teach reading, writing, math, art, and basic science. Not indoctrinate left wing ideology!
Stop the madness.
Sincerely Amber Hogsten

Elizabeth Ullmann, Mrs
Logos Academy
Arlington, TX

School Choice is very important for parents and children.
We need School Choice!

Stanford D. Rogers
self
Buda, TX

I oppose SB8. We should not spend tax dollars on anything we do not hold accountable. No money should go to pay for the education of a student to attend a private school unless that student is subject to the same testing requirements that are placed on our public schools with the results being reported to the TEA.

Maggie Guerrero, Mom
Self
Boerne, TX

Parents should have the right to be inform by the teacher are Liberian of what's been taught in school.

Neil Nusz
Myself
Palo Pinto, TX

Parental Choice, no one else may decide for any child.

Dolly Rackley, Mrs.
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please vote in favor of SB 8 for the purpose of providing choice to each parent for the education of their children without compromise.

Elizabeth Bomba
self, stay-at-home parent
Austin, TX

I am the parent of four public school students in Central Texas. I am opposed to any form of voucher, ESA, or tax credit. Public funds should stay in public schools. I have had a front-row seat to the systematic de-funding of public education. The problems that have been created by politicians who use their platforms to call teachers groomers and pedophiles and to claim that they are leftist indoctrinators are responsible for many of the problems in education today. As a result of less funding, class sizes are larger, experienced teachers have left the profession because pay is abysmal, the number of desperately-needed counselors has been reduced, and the physical infrastructure in our oldest districts are inadequate. Our students need support, especially because our health care systems, mental health care systems, and economic conditions place so much of the responsibility for student welfare on our schools. As an aside, I am a devout Catholic and I financially support my parish and its school. I do not, however, support public funds in my parish school unless the school is also required to adhere to the same requirements that my public schools do. I also know, with certainty, that the most vulnerable students in my children's public schools would be expelled from my parish school after the first week. That's how private schools work and that is just one of many reasons that I oppose this bill.

Rocio Rincon, Mrs
Self - teacher
Pinehurst, TX

My household and I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. You are just passing along problems by doing that!

Instead, you need to focus on strengthening and improving our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in our schools and make a difference. How does diverting money to schools that are not accountable to taxpayers a smart move?

Texas public education funding is ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. No wonder we have issues! Let's place the blame where it really goes! Legislators! Yes! Poor decisions like SB 8!

Yet you are blaming and hurting the hardworking people at the bottom of the totem pole? Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Stand up for the teachers and paraprofessionals working so hard to make a difference. every day while being mistreated and underpaid! And stand up for the students!

How does giving money to organizations that are not required to accept all students even right? And where is the accountability in private schools? Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions! This opens up another can of worms... what about fraud?

And where is the data to support this move? I am aware of research that indicates that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. The impact on communities and the economy in some of those communities is another concern! The financial impact on districts will also trickle down to the underpaid and under appreciated employees that sacrifice so much every day!

Say NO to Senate BILL 8!

Liz Alexander, Teacher
Killeen isd
Lampasas, TX

No

Amy Richards
Self
Houston, TX

Please fight against vouchers /senate bill 8. We need strong public education for our democracy and the ability to educate all children.

James Leyba
Self
Arlington, TX

SB 8

Maria Castillo
Self
Montgomery, TX

It is fair for children and parents justice.

charles lewis
N/A
Gatesville, TX

Stop the indoctrination of our children. No more leftist crap, sexual orientation, drag queen shows and all the bullshit that should never be taught to children! That's a parents job!

Katie Ornelas
Self - kindergarten teacher in Klein Isd
Spring, TX

I am opposed to SB8.

Mike Clyde
Self and My wife and I are both retired educators
Burton, TX

Thank you for your service to Texans, however I would like to express my wife's and my opposition to Senate Bill 8. If this bill is passed, will allow for discrimination to take place, because private schools do not have to accept special needs students as well private schools can pick and choose students as they choose. This bill will also take funds away from public schools who desperately need these monies. This also takes nearly 1 billion dollars a year from public schools.

Again, I would like to emphasize that we will not support any member of either house who supports this bill with their vote.

Thank you,

Mike and Patricia Clyde

Matt Young
Self
Sulphur springs, TX

Against SB 8

I have been in public education as a teacher for 26 years. It has changed dramatically what we are required but the passion teachers have has not. We don't draft our students. Most times we found out who "our kids" are when they walk in the door. Never have I told one of those kids no you are not in my class. As in all occupations there are those that are outstanding those that are good and those below average. In education we work to improve the below average or we move on.

At the same time it is amazing how crucial the mix of teachers is. Providing someone that can connect to every kid in the building. And it is amazing how it happens.

We have a massive list of "things to teach" but ultimately we prepare our youth to be successful adults, to chase their dreams and to be productive members of society

Working in public schools, please note we send kids to Ivy League schools, to prominent fine arts programs, and to high level math and science colleges.

I could list for days things we do at public schools

I could also list the struggles at public schools. Personally I feel it is not a time to pull away from our public schools but grow strong behind them. Meeting their needs. I asked on social media what support my friends had for vouchers. I found 1 person.

That's it 1

I want to know who are the people wanting vouchers? Who should be wanting vouchers?

Last question in gov Abbott going across the state punching parent choice why not go to a public school. Aren't those the parents this bill should be targeting? Showing parents of public school children how it could change their lives?

Curious. It doesn't make sense

I could say a lot more and would love to discuss with someone

Personally I feel like no one will read this

Because no one has listened so far

Robert Wilks
self, retired
Boerne, TX

I am writing in opposition to SB 8. I do not want my tax dollars going to any religiously-affiliated institution. I do not want my tax dollars going to making rich kids even more privileged than they already are. I do not want my tax dollars going to teach an incomplete view of history. These so-called "school choice" schemes weaken the public education system by re-distributing funds away from it and into private schools. Don't try to deny it. This bill would HURT low-income and minority students, not help them as the sponsors claim. Vote NO.

Gaye Rosser, Ms.
Self; Public educator
Round Rock, TX

As a Texas Public School educator of twenty three years, I strongly urge you to stand up for public education and the children of Texas by opposing SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Tara Awezec
Self - retired contracts manager
Lucas, TX

I am in full support of SB 8 because children need educational options that best fit their needs. The tax dollars we send to the state to support education should be provided to parents rather than to the public schools. I have lost faith in our public school system because (1) the unions are too strong and use their voice for political activism rather than advocating for children, (2) the public school system is rife with left-wing ideology that I do not agree with, and (3) public schools are failing our children because they cannot read or do math at grade-level. Our public school system will never improve if there is no competition for funding or students. Please enact SB 8 so that Texas children have a fighting chance at a great education.

Danny Anderson, Dr.
First Baptist Church- Rio Hondo
Harlingen, TX

Please give Texas parents the freedom to choose where and how their children are educated and allow the funds to follow those wishes.

Norma Simpson
Self
McKinney, TX

School choice for children is a must, to protect our children from left wing ideology.

Darcy Gohlke, Mrs.
Self/retired professor
Corpus Christi, TX

I am in favor of school choice for all and allowing parental involvement and awareness on curriculum.

Carolyn Musil
NA
Heath, TX

I support having the option to choose schools. I feel that it would enhance the education for students by having schools step up so they are not losing students to other schools that are providing an education

Paul Ahrens
Kids R Kids #61 TX
Katy, TX

We support Senate Bill 8. The House Ed Committee will be voting on Monday. We support the bill.

Terry Kirk
Midessa Heights Baptist Church
Midland, TX

It's critical for a continued free America and for the safety of our children.

Kimberly Tucker
Self - Policy Analyst
Austin, TX

I strongly oppose SB 8. Texas public schools welcome and accept all students. Private schools that accept Education Savings Accounts and vouchers are not required to adhere to federal IDEA standards, failing Texas students. There is no such thing as free money. The money used for vouchers would be taken directly from our public school teachers and students. Our students will not be served by vouchers.

Stacie Gage
Self, mom, construction
Katy, TX

The public school system is horrible, too woke, and the indoctrination of kids is wrong. I as a parent have the right to send my child to a school that we, as is parents, believes is safe and provides an education for my child. My tax dollars should go with him. Get the teachers union out of Texas, unions are only for themselves and not for the employees. Get rid of standardized testing. Clean house of the lazy and incompetent staff that so much of these schools have.

Mary Kellogg
Self
Canton, TX

STOP TRYING TO INDOCTRINATE KIDS. THAT IS CHILD ABUSE

Patricia Ramirez
self-- a retired teacher
Farmers Branch, TX

I am concerned that this bill will result in less funds being available to schools that are already underfunded and serving students with learning differences. This bill will divert funds to private schools that can choose to deny access to students and takes away the protection for students with disabilities increasing the likelihood of discrimination. This bill would cost Texans over \$800 million dollars while failing to support the rights of all students including those with learning differences to a quality education in public schools.

Sharon Richard, Mrs.

Self/Retired public school teacher, grandmother of Texas public school students

Sour Lake, TX

Submitting my comments on May 13, 2023, in OPPOSITION TO SB8. My name is Sharon Richard. I am a retired Hardin-Jefferson ISD middle school social studies teacher, residing in Sour Lake, Texas.

PLEASE VOTE IN OPPOSITION TO THIS BILL!

CSSB 8 does not eliminate standardized testing; it may increase the number of tests by more than double. It changes the law on school accountability ratings, tying those to even more standardized tests than under current law. This bill would give unprecedented authority to a partisan appointed TEA commissioner to redesign our entire education system, starting with new standardized tests and new accountability measures for public schools. Possibly doubling the amount of testing for students? Vote against. Even more \$ for testing? Vote NO. Using state public education funds for home schooling, for religious schooling, for well-to-do private schooling? Vote NO. Extreme loss of funding for public schools is inevitable in such a situation. Vote NO. Voucher/ESA students would still have to take the state standardized tests, but their private schools would not have to administer the tests? That means our public schools would be responsible for administering tests to voucher students they don't even teach or receive funding to oversee. This would likely create another unfunded mandate for public schools. UNFUNDED MANDATES? Our public schools already have enough of that. Vote NO. Private schools wouldn't have accountability ratings? Private schools will have own autonomy and no regulation? In your parental rights bill, parents' & students' rights may actually be reduced; is that information readily available? A disabled child may likely lose IDEA rights? The efforts we see by many of our legislators to try to destroy public education in Texas are simply beyond the pale. And that includes the nonsense culture war efforts and legislation as well. THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION, ARTICLE 7. EDUCATION, Sec. 1. SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE OF SYSTEM OF PUBLIC FREE SCHOOLS. A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools. (Feb. 15, 1876.) Our more than five million rural and urban public school students and hundreds of thousands of public school personnel are depending on our Texas Legislature to firmly support honest, equitable, earnest, and full funding, so that we may continue to prepare our students to be great citizens for the future of our state and nation. Any bill that will strip funding from our public schools in order to appease billionaire donors or for-profit education companies or parents who want subsidy, is a bill that requires an opposition vote. Please vote in opposition to SB8 & any other bill that takes funding from public schools & distributes that money elsewhere.

Shirley Brothers, Ms.

Selt/Retired educator

Alvin, TX

With an initial price tag of \$800 million, the voucher provisions in the committee substitute for SB 8 will balloon to billions of dollars in the coming years. This funding should not be directed to private schools or vendors with little to no accountability, but instead to our public schools that have faced double-digit inflation, teacher retention issues, and other program needs. As a former special education teacher who continues to advocate for students with special needs, I can assure you that a private school cannot provide the unique and specialized needs that these students require and deserve. Please do not mislead the parents of these students into believing that all the services they receive now will be provided in a private school. Educational savings accounts or vouchers or whatever name they are given are NOT what's best for the students with special needs in Texas or indeed - any school student in Texas. Thank you. Please vote NO on SB 8 and any amendment attached to it.

John Peterson

Self

Shiner, TX

No to vouchers! Yes to public education. Government does not need to get into private education!! No control over it!

Norma Zamarripa, Mrs
Self
San Antonio, TX

Request that you vote NO on this bill.

Patricia Boswell, Mrs.
Swlf
Clifton, TX

I am shocked and dismayed this bill has gotten this far. This bill is a slap to all members of the public education sector; students, teachers both active and retired as well as Texas' parents of public school children both past and present. There is no reason to remove public school funding to fund private schools. The people of Texas have not asked for this. I implore you to not push this through.

Sincerely yours,
Patricia Boswell
Former Public School student and Former Texas Educator

Andrew Zamarripa, Mr
Self
San Antonio, TX

Vote "NO" we pay into education we have the right to say what educational material should be taught

Dianne Boone, Ms.
self - retired educator
Dallas, TX

Please vote NO to CSSB 8.

Shannon Baker
Self
Austin, TX

I am opposed to this bill as it will further diminish funds while continuing testing. We can and must do better for the children of Texas.

Gwenette Kane
self (retired)
San Angelo, TX

I oppose SB8 . There are many "school choices" already available to parents and "education savings accounts" seem to have much potential for waste, fraud, and abuse. This bill is not what Texas needs to improve education for ALL children. It would, in my opinion, benefit very few for the cost. PLEASE VOTE NO on SB8

Jennifer Miller
self
Fort Worth, TX

I am against this bill because it will divert funds from public schools and weaken public school programs for children with disabilities. Vouchers will have a terrible impact on our public schools!

Judy Landress, Mrs
self
Ozona, TX

Hearty public schools are the backbone of educating the next generation of Texans. STOP syphoning off funds to make a profit off OUR schools, or propping-up unaccountable charter schools.

Wilner Jeudy, Dr.
American Atheists
Houston, TX

Dear Chairperson Buckley and Members of the House Public Education Committee:

As a Texas resident and State Director for American Atheists, which has more than 3,450 constituents in Texas, I write in opposition to SB 8 – voucher programs and tax credit programs like the proposed “Education Savings Account Program”. This bill would increase educational inequality by taking needed resources from the public education system, a system that serves every child regardless of their beliefs, background, or necessary accommodations. Nine Harvard studies . . . found school choice programs “deepen educational inequality and fail to yield consistent learning gains.” Further, according to Raise Your Hand Texas’s Michelle Smith the program would cost the public 3 billion dollars and homeschooling would cost the state an additional 3 billion dollars. We strongly urge you to reject this harmful bill.

The tax-credit program proposed in SB 8 most closely resembles voucher programs. The legislature is calling these “parental empowerment accounts” where it gives each student \$10,000 each. This money usually comes at the expense of public school districts and communities statewide, regardless of whether a few students benefit. When a public school loses a student to the voucher program, it loses thousands of dollars that help pay for teachers and classroom costs.

The marketing rhetoric espoused by private school profiteers often revolves around the idea that private schools teach kids better than public schools. However, studies from several states show that education outcomes for students using vouchers and scholarships are demonstrably worse than their public school counterparts. Voucher programs without proper oversight and accountability for the use of the funds are ripe for fraud and abuse. In states where these programs have already been implemented without strict accountability measures, parents have used the money to buy expensive electronics, beauty supplies, other non-education related expenses, and even an abortion.

Finally, funding religious private schools at the expense of public schools endangers the separation of religion and government, an essential component of religious freedom. One of the most fundamental principles of religious liberty is that the government should not compel any citizen to pay for another’s religious indoctrination. However, voucher programs overwhelmingly benefit religious schools, some of which teach extremist dogma in lieu of fact. Many such schools also discriminate against students whose identities and beliefs are not endorsed by a particular church, and based on recent U.S. Supreme Court guidance, they lack labor protections for educators. This type of entanglement of religious organizations with government also endangers the religious freedom of those institutions, threatening their autonomy and opening them up to government audits, control, and interference.

Jessica Growden
Self-employed/Self
Fairfield, TX

Please vote yes for this bill!

I live in rural Freestone County. It is high time public schools be forced to compete to earn the trust of parents and funding for students.

Just this week at the School Board Meeting of Fairfield ISD, during open comments, Board Members were confronted as the why they have not completed their Board training hours while they expect teachers and administrators to complete their professional development hours. Several board members just laughed and exchanged glances giving the impression that they do not care to be held accountable and that they do not require the same excellence and dedication from themselves that they expect from teachers and administrators. Our board has not backed our administration and teachers in making crucial hiring decisions that would place highly qualified teachers and support staff into positions that have been vacant, leaving students underserved for far too long. We cannot trust the state to teach constitutional history that affirms every person's right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Parents' and students' rights to freedom of religion means that parents should NEVER be forced to submit their children to indoctrination that stands in direct opposition to their faith. Also, parents should never be forced to enroll their students into a school where the board, faculty and staff are not pursuing professional excellence and putting students needs first. Also, students should not be submitted to political agendas like socialism and critical race theory that undermine their personal motivations to succeed and that bring racial division.

MONEY MUST FOLLOW THE STUDENT. It's time for Texas to step up and affirm the rights of parents and students to pursue the education and school choice that best serves their individual student's need and that protects their religious freedoms and their political convictions.

It's far past time for public schools to be held accountable by parents and for them to be forced to compete for funding. Competition will only serve to make each public school pursue the professional excellence all students deserve.

Jerry Jewell
Self Pastor
Kempner, TX

This legislation has been to long in being exacted. School choice should be up to parents. Freedom to choose where one's children go to school and what they are taught is a parental right. Please enact this legislation.
Thank you, Jerry Jewell

Josh Clements
Self, Teacher
Belton, TX

I am against school vouchers (ESAs) because they steal funding from our most vulnerable students populations, namely our special education students and students from low SES families. That's just plain evil. The reason the story of Robin Hood is such a beloved tale is because he took from those with abundance and distributed it to those who had nothing. Vouchers, or ESAs, does the complete opposite. I can't even believe we are talking about this.

On the surface level, school choice sounds great. Who wouldn't like a say in where their kid goes to school? But if you dig a little deeper, you will find that the students who suffer the most from voucher programs are the very students who would either be denied their school of choice due to private schools lacking special education resources to care for them. In the case of low-income families, the voucher would function like a meaningless coupon for since they lack the money to afford the remaining balance.

If Robin Hood stole from the poor and gave more to the and upper and middle class, he would be evil. Who does that?! Take this bill back to the drawing board, and do better.

Tad Kirkendoll
Self
GROESBECK, TX

It's obvious that the senators sponsoring this bill know nothing about education. Putting a "voucher" bill like this on the agenda at the very last minute was shady and underhanded. It also doubles high-stakes testing, which will further alienate teachers and increase anxiety among our students to a level not seen before.

Please start listening to the professionals with a degree who work with our students every day instead of your own political beliefs which are largely based on skewed research.

Leslie Wiltse
COS
LaGrange, TX

Please SUPPORT THIS BILL

Adriana Gloria
Self
Austin, TX

Funding for instructional materials is required. Who will be responsible for the education savings account

Richard Lutowski
self
Georgetown, TX

Parents who choose not to send their children to public schools must have the option of using ALL property tax money they have paid for the school year to be available to them in order to pay tuition at the private schools of their choice. This is a highly pro-American position given that one of the most anti-American documents in existence, the Communist Manifesto, has as its 10th plank "Free education for all children in public schools." Please support the principles underlying the US Constitution and the founding of America by ensuring that parents can use ALL of their school tax money to choose private education, including home schooling, for their children.

Edward Flores, M. Ed.
Self, retired school teacher
Magnolia, TX

This allows parental rights to be honored and not abused by Leftist ideologies full of lies like the sexual perversion of transgenderism and LGBTQ; and the socialist Marxist CRT that serves only to further divide our nation along racial groups; and the revisionist 1619 Project history that distorts our founding fathers motives as racist.

Jerry Goode, Mr
Self
Waco, TX

Parental rights. Stop woke agenda! Have clear school responsibilities. No trans instruction. No drag queens! No referrals for trans surgery.

Nelda Nowlin

Self.I retired after teaching for 46 years in a public high school.

San Angelo, TX

Public education is failing in Texas.

Sandra Carter-Wattles

Self

AUSTIN, TX

Public education makes america great. We are as smart as our least educated person. Giving money to parents to send children to private school will devalue our public education system and be a violation of church and state for those parents using the money to send children to a private school sponsored by a religion.

Jimmy Lee, Mr.

Self

Paris, TX

Vote NO for vouchers and any form of ESA. Public school money belongs in public schools. Private and charter schools have NO accountability which is both wrong and unfair. Texas can't afford two education systems - we rank in the bottom 10 nationally for funding just one. NO to vouchers!

Wendy Goyen

Self

Plano, TX

I am a legal U.S. citizen, a registered voter here in Texas, and a tax payer. I object to my tax dollars paying for the proposed school voucher program to go towards private schools. If parents choose to send their children to a private school, that is indeed their choice, but they should pay that tuition fully out of their own pocket, not with my tax dollars. I want my tax dollars paying for high-quality PUBLIC education, accessible by ALL, equally. I believe ALL children - no matter their race, religion, gender, etc. - deserve a high quality public education. To allow the school voucher program to move forward is to permit private schools to deny admission to any they deem unworthy, for any number of reasons. It is the new form of segregation, and I refuse for my tax dollars to go toward such discrimination. If you truly care about children, as you claim, I urge you to vote against SB8. Do not pass the school voucher program in Texas.

Anna Bartosh, Mrs

Self

san angelo, TX

Please support SB8. Parents should have a say in their child's education

Thank you

Anna Bartosh

Natalie Cannon, Mrs.
Self, Parent
Austin, TX

As a parent, I am disappointed that you call this a bill for parental rights. Parents have a right to a fully funded PUBLIC education in their local school districts for their children, or they may choose to homeschool or send their children to private or charter school. Vouchers and ESAs are not a right and only serve to defund public schools. Stop trying to funnel public money for a public good into private, for-profit education companies and religious schools.

Jayne Burkhart
Self
Katy, TX

I would ask full support for parent empowerment for their children's education by supporting SB8!!

Rebecca Hughes
Self - Retired
FORT WORTH, TX

My name is Rebecca Hughes. I am a Texas voter who resides in 76116 area. I oppose the New Version of SB8. I oppose all Vouchers, ESAs, tax credits and any other forms of Vouchers. Vouchers will rob communities of Public Education. Vouchers will destroy Rural Areas by eliminating the availability of Public Education. Friday Night LIghts in Rural Texas will cease to happen.

Public Education was a Conservative Value before some wealthy individuals decided they deserved the money connected to Public Education. Their plan is to defund Public Education by convincing parents that their children would be better served in elite private or religious schools. These voucher funded schools will not have to accept children of color, low income, troubled children or disabled children. There will be no standards that have to meet State Education requirements. Those will be all cancelled because the Public will not have any ability to oversee Voucher Funded Private or religious schools.

Voucher programs in other States have performed poorly. Voucher programs are a con manipulated by wealthy individuals who seek additional money by robbing the Public of education dollars.

Vouchers are another way to segregate schools.

Our Texas children and teachers deserve better than backroom deals to destroy Public Education. They deserve fully funded Public Schools where all children have access to world class education. Do not rob Texas Children of quality education. Parents have rights now. They have choices of other types of education. They have had these choices for decades. Make Texas a state that has the best Public Education available to all children. I do not want my tax dollars going to pay for private or religious schools.

I oppose SB 8. I support Public Education.

Kristina Rios de Lumbreras, Dr.
Self/Teacher
San Antonio, TX

I am proud to be a public school teacher in San Antonio. I have taught at two universities (Cooper Union, ASU), Annunciation Orthodox School in Houston, and been a part of North East ISD for 9 years. Thus having seen the different environments, the wealthy don't need any assistance with giving their children the best education, and am opposed to Bill 8 for that reason. I am reminded of a story I read as a child in which a girl marries a Swiss man and goes west as a pioneer to escape her aunt, who wanted to force her to marry a rich man because she always said that she wanted the girl to only interact with "the best people"; the girl suffers many hardships on the trip and the other pioneers aid her in reuniting with her husband out west. For me, this story encapsulates the current state leadership in Austin. I chose to work at a school with a large immigrant population and daily strive to help them create a better life here. For me, these "little ones" in the Christian sense, and all who attend a public school, many of which, like my high school, LEE, have prestigious magnet programs as well, these impoverished and not impoverished, who give me cookies they bake to sell to help pay family expenses, work as many as 30 hours a week while attending high school to help out, and buy me flowers when they can't afford it--these are the "best people", and no voucher should take away funds from students and families of those who use public school to make a better life and to be a part of the solution in the future.

Yanisleidy Medina
Students
Austin, TX

No more woke agenda in AustinISD

Glenda Bumpus
self, retired
Kerrville, TX

I strongly oppose a voucher system. Public money should be used for Public Schools, their programs, and improvements. I strongly believe in teaching our children about ALL of our history. I do not believe in banning books. Librarians are trained to provide appropriate material for our youth.

Nancy Smith
Self
Temple, TX

I strongly oppose any legislation that would provide financial assistance to parents who choose to send their child (children) to a private school. Such legislation would essentially destroy the public education system. Private schools could choose not to accept any student(s), thus creating discrimination and assigning students with greater needs to public schools. Taxpayers should not have to assume the cost of tuition for children whose parents opt to send them to private schools. Much needed funding for public education is a much better alternative.

Kelly Thrasher
Self
El Lago, TX

Vouchers will hurt the children of Texas. They will pull funding from public schools, disproportionately from those that need it most. Diverting tax dollars to private schools does not help those in need. Private schools are not accessible to everyone, even with vouchers. The schools will be more competitive to get into. Please do not pass this bill.

Cindy Babcock
Self Texas educator
Athens, TX

House Public Education Committee,

I've been a Texas teacher for 36 years, and I've never felt so discouraged, attacked, and undervalued as I do this legislative session, and I went through the HB72 and career ladder days.

Please vote no on SB8. This bill does not properly fund public education. It is a voucher bill which Texans do not want. Private schools do not have to serve all students as public schools do. This bill promotes economic segregation since any quality private school charges considerably more than the proposed \$8,000. Private schools can pick and choose students and will not be held to any of the accountability standards public schools have to meet.

Texas teachers have earned a raise as recommended by Governor Abbott's task force on teacher retention of at least \$10,000 as well as an increase in the insurance contribution. Most Texas teachers' workloads have increased greatly in the last few years due to the needs of our students and the lack of parent responsibility and involvement. Parent empowerment seems to be the new buzz word this session, but getting parents to even be minimally involved has become such a challenge that many educators have given up. Being attacked by parents both in person and by email or just being ignored is not parent involvement. Being bashed by our elected officials doesn't help either. Texas public schools are serving more and more students who have not been in school or who have been "homeschooled" and are entering public school without having any reading or math skills. Perhaps this committee should look at accountability for homeschool students because there is none. Yet, Texas teachers are doing their best to try to help these children learn and succeed.

The new proposed STAAR test requirements increase the number of STAAR or other standardized testing. The STAAR test this year was completely ridiculous. From the time most students took on the reading ELAR (My fourth graders took between 3 (1student) and 5 1/2 hours!) to the math test not even having a pen tool, the whole test format was developmentally inappropriate. Go to the TEA website and look at the examples. Could you sit for 5 hours taking an online test? Try doing it as an eight or nine year old. This committee should be spending more time investigating testing than focusing on vouchers and increasing testing. By the way, I do believe in some type of reasonable testing.

Also, the way retired Texas teachers have been and continue to be treated by this state is awful. This is the time to give a meaningful COLA (not 2%) and to increase the multiplier back to where it was (from 2.3 to 2.5%) TRS members are mostly not eligible for Social Security and also aren't eligible for spousal benefits .

The Texas House has already voted down vouchers, so this last minute sneak attack especially without public testimony is unTexan and needs to stop. Vote NO.

Sincerely,
Cindy Babcock
Texas Educator

Connie Woolsey
Self
Decatur, TX

With the attitude of school boards of late, one cannot trust a school district to make the proper choices any longer. Parents are being disregarded and lied to. I no longer believe that the public education system we have in this country is in the best interest of our children. Parents must have a choice.

Elaine Kimzey
self
Kingwood, TX

Texas and the entire United States need high quality public education to insure that all our citizens can prosper and participate in this state and nation. Giving public money to support private schooling will inevitably deprive our public schools of the financing they need to provide quality education. Public schools take students from all socioeconomic classes, with or without disabilities, with varying degrees of readiness. The same cannot generally be said of private schools. Thus, vouchers by any name will give public schools a harder job to do and less money to do it with.

It's important to see the big picture and to understand long-term consequences. I have lived in a country with a two tiered school system. Those who could afford it sent their children to private schools, and everybody else had to depend on the public schools. The problem was that there was not enough public money to maintain enough public schools to serve the entire population. The outcome was a country drowning in mass poverty and social unrest. A look around the world provides plenty of evidence. Proper education for all the people is essential for keeping entire states and nations prosperous and peaceful.

I am asking that this bill be defeated, or that it be amended so as to do no harm.

Michelle Thurgood, Mrs
Self
Heath, TX

School choice is better for students. My son was being bullied but was too fearful to tattle on the perpetrators. We had to home school him because attending another school was not an option! Please fix this problem!

Margaret Wyatt
Self
Temple, TX

If private schools are allowed to accept public funding they must be required to operate under all laws & standards expected of public schools.

Edel Molina
Parent teacher student that's want their choice and money to go where I want.
Midland, TX

As an educator and grand parent of students that attend the charter school, I want that money allocated to the parents of the students that attend charter and give the people /parents back their choice. What happed to my choice?!

Sean Johnson, Esq.
Self
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote against SB8. It will drain money from the public education system and will only benefit Texans in cities where there are private schools. It will hurt rural Texans.

Edel Molina

Teacher parent the people of us and texas

Midland, TX

As an educator and grand parent of students that attend the charter school, I want that money allocated to the parents of the students that attend charter and give the people /parents back their choice. What happed to my choice?!

Sheron and Chester Johnson

Self and husband

Amarillo, TX

We want school choice. Money must follow the student!!!!

Susan Bohn, Superintendent

Aledo Independent School District

Aledo, TX

Thank you for your service to our great state. I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of the Aledo ISD Board of Trustees Legislative Subcommittee, made up of trustees Jessica Brown, Forrest Collins, and David Lear.

We urge you, as you consider SB 8, that you show your support for the children in your district and all over Texas, stand behind the foundation for a ready Texas workforce that is our public school system, and exercise your duty under the Texas Constitution. Vote NO on SB 8.

We oppose SB 8 because:

The bill contradicts our community's interest in accountability, transparency, and local oversight of the use of taxpayer dollars.

ESAs provide no assurances that taxpayer dollars will be managed appropriately and in the best interest of students.

The fast-rising net cost of ESAs will make fewer dollars available for all public schools across Texas.

It sets up a system that would very likely underserve Texas special education students and their families.

Private and home schools receiving taxpayer-funded ESAs would not be subject to the same testing requirements and other accountable measures used to evaluate public schools.

mary logsdon-rodriguez

self

Austin, TX

I am writing to express my opposition to Senate Bill 8. As a Texas resident, I believe this bill is harmful to Texas students, parents, and our communities. Since nearly 90% of Texas students attend public schools, the foundation of our state's future economy hinges on the success of our educators, schools, and students. And resources play a huge part in that. Texas public schools rank in the bottom 10 nationally for per-pupil funding, our educators and students deserve more funding, and our taxpayers deserve to know their tax dollars fund educational programs that are transparent and accountable to the public. Since school vouchers and Education Savings Accounts are used for private schools and private programs, there is no guaranteed accountability for results. These entities are not required to use state curriculum, give state standardized tests, or report student performance outcomes. I am not opposed in any way to private schools, but private schools are not a genuine reality for the majority of students with or without vouchers/"ESA"s. Passing SB8 would not serve our schools or our interests in building a strong future workforce. Disingenuous messaging around vouchers has been propagated by elected leaders, those who should be trustworthy and the strongest advocates for all TX students.

Ovidia Molina
Texas State Teachers Association
Kyle, TX

Texans have repeatedly said no to vouchers and we have also repeatedly asked our representatives to do the same. Vouchers (no matter what name you use for them) divert much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools. Our public schools enroll all students no matter their income, ability, identity or zip code. We have over 5 million students in our public schools and funding for our public schools should be priority, especially when Texas has a once in a lifetime budget surplus. This is your chance to work towards (or at least begin to) fully fund our public schools, by keeping public funds in our public schools.

Our public schools have struggled due to underfunding for far too long. Vouchers will drain funds from our schools and hurt our students, only so that subsidize private education for the privileged few - many of who can already afford it. Please listen to people who know what is really going on in our public schools - educators. Educators know what their students need to thrive and educators have to continually do more to help our students because the state doesn't see fit to invest in their futures. Educators in Texas don't have a surplus of millions in their budgets, you do. It's not just teachers in the classroom asking you to think of our students, we have school boards and superintendents as well as parents and community members asking this committee and the Texas legislature to do what is right for all of the students in Texas and vote this down.

Please help us stop the attacks on our Texas public schools. Again, please don't divert much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools. Instead stand up for our students and against out-of-state school vendors looking to defund our local public schools. I thank those of you who support our public schools - students, educators and communities. I urge all of you to please keep public funds in our public schools and vote NO.

Robert Kannenberg, Mr.
Self
Mansfield, TX

I am writing to support school choice and to eliminate the woke agenda in school systems.

Tom Bartel
self, retired
Plano, TX

I am writing in SUPPORT of SB 8. I believe school choice is the only way that our public schools will improve. Competition is necessary in order to improve. Public schools have a monopoly today. Also, parents should decide where the child should be educated, and the money should follow the child.

Caitlin Landry

Self

Midland, TX

As a conservative homeschooler, I find myself concerned with the fake narrative the TX GOP has fallen for. School choice is not a grassroots movement. It's been a top-down idea from the beginning & the Governor's efforts to drum up astroturf support the past year makes that fact obvious. It is not fiscally conservative policy; it's social welfare. People would be receiving astronomically more than they pay in school taxes, so it's not just "their money following their child." For my family with 3 kids, SB 8 proposes to give us about \$24k/year when we pay about \$3,600 in school taxes. It is in conflict with the property tax relief many of you are touting will be delivered, as property taxes have increased for communities in several states that have implemented school choice. It often ends up costing much more money than originally projected, and don't forget about that pesky economic reality called inflation. We see it when the gov floods a market with money. We saw it happen when the gov started subsidizing higher education. It is gov expansion. It is literally gov money (& influence) expanding into the private sector. Has the GOP really strayed this far from the core tenets of limited government & personal responsibility? Or perhaps you're listening to friends & donors who have convinced you that this is the "civil rights issue of our generation," many of whom stand to gain personally if this passes. Are you willing to allow education freedom to be lost because of cronyism? Because make no mistake, we already enjoy TRUE education freedom in TX. This push to subsidize the choices we already have will only serve to limit those freedoms. My opposition to this bill is not a denial that there is an ed crisis in TX. I don't claim to having all the answers, but here is my humble suggestion as a parent, educator of my children, & a taxpayer: Fix what the gov broke in the first place. Get to the root of the problem & don't just try to level the playing field by bringing us all under the same failing system. Get back to basics. Stop the multi-million-dollar contracts for the ed tech & software that is not serving our kids well. They need pencil & paper. They need reading, writing & arithmetic without the distracting bells & whistles & agenda-driven content. Stop STAAR test & all the junk curriculum alignment it commands (but not the half-hearted effort now put forth in SB 8 in an attempt to cobble together enough support for this bad bill). Are you really interested in mending what is currently within your purview to fix? Are you willing to do what's right for the students in our state, or are you going to keep listening to special interests who make their fortunes off of our kids? School choice is not a silver bullet. It is not even an incremental "win." More gov is never the answer & school choice is the epitome of Ronald Reagan's famous quote: "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: 'I'm from the government & I'm here to help.'"

KayLynn Lyon

Self, Texas Impact , MANY others

Farmers Branch, TX

OPPOSE SB 8!!!!

Michelle Wethers
Spring Branch ISD
Houston, TX

Vote NO on SB8. Support public education.

Do not ensure accountability.

Vouchers send public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to the public for producing results.

Are a step backward in serving students with disabilities

Over the past 30 years, federal and state laws have evolved to ensure students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education. Private schools are not required to provide special education services mandated by federal and state laws.

Violate separation of church and state.

The U.S. Constitution prohibits any government "establishment of religion." Tax dollars directed toward private schools of religious origin violates this principle.

The U.S. Constitution ensures the "free exercise of religion"; no government has proper authority to dictate a religious community's expression of faith. Regulation and oversight always accompany the allocation of public tax dollars, thus violating freedom of religion.

Provide choice for some, not 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.

Vouchers do not address 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.

Drain critical funding.

Vouchers drain additional resources from the public school system.

Public funds should remain in the public school system that serves the vast majority of Texas students.

Janet Brown
self
BELTON, TX

For SB 8

100% for putting parents back in the driver's seat for their child's education and fully supporting the establishment of an Educational Savings Account for that purpose. I'm a taxpayer and voter who wants this. I've been involved with speaking or meeting with our local ISD in Belton over matters such as CRT, questionable SEL practices, child abuse, and sexually explicit age-inappropriate books in the public school library for 2 years.

In a million years, did I plan to be a voice for children and families not being served by our Public Schools and needing more choices. But here we are. The standard response to families is "Move to different schools within the ISD or even change Districts," which is not solving the low reading, writing, and math comprehension issues. Our Texas children deserve better, and Texas deserves better than being ranked 47th in the nation.

Thank you for listening. Please find a pathway to pass SB8 and provide Texas families with real educational choices through an ESA program. We need this.

Deanna Boaz, Mrs
Self
Red Rock, TX

I am absolutely in favor of school choice for parents! Please support this bill!

Tony Funderburk, Mr
Self
Burleson, TX

I support school choice

Lana Grogan
Texas citizen
Amarillo, TX

Vouchers will take away needed money for public education. Please reconsider supporting this bill.
Please vote no.

Christine Loyacano
Teacher
Houston, TX

This is a BAD bill! More tests? NOoreo ey for teachers and staff and money to private schools? Please vote NO

Eric Johnson
Self
Round Rock, TX

As a Principal and parent of students in the public school system, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments

Kennedy Hogan
self- citizen
Temple, TX

Public schools desperately need more funding. They serve the public good. It is criminal to deprive children of a proper education, and the way teachers get treated right now is appalling. PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEED FUNDING.

Jana Howell, Dr.
Self, physical therapist
Grapevine, TX

Please vote no to SB8 and keep tax dollars in public schools.

Gabriela Carbajal
Texas Houston Independent School District
Houston, TX

Gc

Trina Carlton
Self / public school teacher
Amarillo, TX

I'm against this bill due to the detrimental effects on public education. Funding of private schools should not be provided by our tax dollars!

Micah Arrott
Self
Odessa, TX

I am against the passing of this bill

Melissa Childers
Self - retired
League City, TX

Please pass this bill!!

Jonathan Marrs
Self
Odessa, TX

I am against the passing of this bill.

Jolynda McGrath, Mrs.
Myself
Montgomery, TX

I am completely opposed to Senate Bill 8! As one of Creightons constituents, he should know in our town there is literally 1 private school and it only educates to 7th grade. Does Creighton not think children should be educated past 7th grade? Public monies should never fund private choices. As the mother of 2 public school students who are both struggling learners and a 20yr public educator vouchers are not helpful to anyone except those already attending private schools.

Beverly Van Note, Ph.D.
Self, retired college English professor
Round Rock, TX

I strongly oppose Senate Bill 8. Allowing vouchers for private K-12 education will further impoverish our already underfunded public schools. In addition, private schools are not required to adhere to state and federal guidelines for students with disabilities, meaning that many students will go without necessary resources and support and that they may be discriminated against. Public schools are required to serve ALL students, whereas private schools can choose their students, also making discrimination likely and creating an unequal two-tiered system of education in which public school students are likely to fall ever further behind their private school counterparts. Our educational system is intended to serve all, and a vote for SB8 is a vote against quality education for all Texans.

Courtney Beck
Self
Sterling City, TX

I am completely against vouchers!! Which is what this is and politicians are trying to sneak it in!

Evelyn Wedgeworth
Self
Long Branch, TX

I am against school vouchers. Texas should fully fund PUBLIC education. Education for ALL students.

Tim Dean
My family
Richmond, TX

We strongly support school choice! Please vote for it now. The time has come. Thanks.

Orpha Berry
Self
Midland, TX

Please vote NO towards the SB8 bill. As a Texas homeschooling parent all I see within School Choice Vouchers is it bringing in government strings where it currently isn't. This legislation will expand the government now and in the future. The government has a pattern and they never voluntarily reduce themselves. Taxes allotted to families in this bill will go over the average amount they pay into property taxes. This bill will not fix the crisis in public schools. This bill will cause inflation of tuition fees in private schools, which will also lead to higher taxes. Limited government is the Republican platform and this bill does NOT hold to it. Keep Texas free! Work on a tax reform that will allow Texas families to keep more of their own money which then will lead them to freely fund their own children's education. Fix the public schools instead of working towards expanding government!

Ashley Liano
Self
El Paso, TX

Say NO to this bill. As a homeschool family in TX this bill hurts us. I did not choose homeschool to get government subsidies. I chose it for freedom. I don't want your money because it will come with strings attached. Keep homeschool free and unregulated. Where there is government funds there is regulation, so keep it and say NO. THSC coalition pushed this bill to homeschoolers under false pretenses. We don't want it and they don't speak for us. No. No. No.

Lucy Frost
Self
Manchaca, TX

I urge you to not pass this bill, especially without any kind of pilot program or evidence-based research to show how it will affect Texas kids, parents, teachers, and schools.

To make this a law covering the entire state all at once is irresponsible.

Christi Walker
Self
Temple, TX

Why are we voting without a public hearing? And now...only invited.

Renate Sims
Self
Round Rock, TX

Please vote for this bill.

Rosa Rogers
Union/Teacher
San Antonio, TX

There is no accountability for private and charter schools. Public schools are held accountable to the taxpayers and there is government oversight to ensure proper use of funds, meanwhile entities such as idea public school have been using funds to purchase and fly in private jets. There is certainly not enough state government infrastructure to ensure adherence to ethical practices of any kind for all these private and charter companies.

Vote no on SB 8. Public education needs more funding not monies fractured into entities that have no history and no hard evidence that they are successful in addressing educational needs

Brian Bowden, Gregg County Chairman
Republican Party
Longview, TX

I support this bill. Please vote for this.

Linda Frerich
Self
Rowena, TX

No bill should ever be handled in the manner that this bill is being handled.

Carol Nichols
Self - retired
Dallas, TX

I support SB 8

Kathleen Clark, Mrs.
self
Dripping Springs, TX

As a former public school teacher who is familiar with school funding, I'm asking you to vote against the bill allowing vouchers. This will only hurt public schools, students with special needs and low income students. Thanks for your time.

Sarah Patterson, Mrs.

Self

Andrews, TX

I, Sarah Patterson am completely apposed to Bill SB8 because I prefer my current educational freedoms over a government subsidy with strings attached.

Denise Berry

Self / Counselor

Austin, TX

Please say no to educational savings accounts and vouchers. The program as written will not help ALL students. Vouchers divert public funds away from public schools and toward private schools, which are often less regulated and accountable for their use of public funds. This can lead to a decrease in funding for public schools, which can negatively impact the quality of education they provide.

Private schools that accept vouchers are often less regulated and have fewer accountability measures in place compared to public schools. This means that there is less oversight and transparency in how public funds are being used, potentially leading to misuse of public funds and lack of educational quality control. Private schools can choose which students they admit, which can lead to selection bias and segregation based on socioeconomic status, race, religion, or other factors. This can lead to further inequalities in education and limit access to quality education for marginalized communities.

Private schools that accept vouchers may have lower academic standards or not meet the same requirements as public schools, potentially leading to a lower quality of education for students. The House substitute also does not reduce STAAR for public schools. Please vote for ALL Texas children.

Rita Puente

self Compliance secretary

Spring, TX

I want to have the FREEDOM TO CHOOSE the best education for my children's needs and values. I do not want any indoctrination in the school.

Debra Clark

Self

Midland, TX

I am opposed to SB 8 because it is government expansion with consequences for private education choices, as well as for tax payers. I prefer to keep educational freedom for my family. Government funds ALWAYS have strings attached.

We homeschool with freedom, like thousand of other families in Texas, and enjoy the organic learning environment in which our children flourish! We do NOT need anyone helping with our education...hence the reason we homeschool!

Please VOTE NO!

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Kathryn Fossett

self/public school teacher

Belton, TX

Public school need the funding. I do not wish the funding to go to vouchers.

Paula Harolds
Self
Porter, TX

Please vote yes to pass this bill.

Tamela Crawford
Self
Midlothian, TX

The State should be discussing on how to fully fund public education and diverting tax payer funds from public education. The items in SB8 does not support public education but instead imposes the will of a few onto the masses. Your constituents in Ellis County strongly opposes any bill that diverts money from public education.

James Simons
Self / retired
Houston, TX

Please support school choice and give parents an opportunity to put their children in a school that will provide them a good education. Many children are inadvertently being held back because they are in a school district that has a terrible record of educating children. We need more bright children to help our country compete in the years to come.

Sandra Deyer
Self
Houston, TX

Vote no to SB8 which allows for vouchers. Vouchers are detrimental to all Texas children. They represent a racist policy dating back to at least the 1970's. Parents have choice within school districts like Clear Creek which makes me wonder why my representative Paul would vote for such a bill when CCISD does such a good job. Makes no sense

Linda Burns
self/retired public school teacher
ROBERT LEE, TX

An informed electorate is the the base of a democracy. Public schools build an informed electorate. Public schools do not discriminate; they take any student who comes in with a birth certificate. I also oppose any tests added to the state mandated test system. Please sit down and take the 6th grade RLA test that was given this past spring. I will bet that you cannot finish it in 3 hours.

Kathkeen Brenham, Mrs.
Self / retired elementary teacher
Spring, TX

Please support education freedom and school choice by voting "yes" to Senate Bill 8.

Texas parents need the freedom to choose the best education environment, instructional methods, educators, and curriculum for their children's needs and values. I urge you to vote for school choice and education freedom.

Please support parents rights to protect our kids against woke, radical indoctrination in schools, from distortion of, erasing of and rewriting of history, and our nation's Constitution and Bill of Rights. Please support Texas parents efforts toward preservation of basic and advanced studies in math, reading, writing, science, history, physical education, and visual and performance arts. Please vote "YES" to SB 8.

Megan Dublin
Self.
Flint, TX

I would like to see SB 8 passed for universal school choice and no state testing.
As a parent of 6 children who have been in public, charter, private, and homeschool at different times throughout their education I feel that this would be a benefit to so many!!

Stacy Branam
self/parent
Justin, TX

OPPOSE SB8 - do not take public, government, tax-payer funding away from the public school system. The end.

Richard Branch
Self Teacher
McKinney, TX

I am writing to express my anger and frustration regarding the proposed voucher program in Texas. SB 8 is a blatant attempt to undermine public education in our state, and it must be stopped.

First and foremost, the bill would divert much-needed funds away from public schools and into the hands of private and home schools. This is unacceptable. Public schools are already struggling with underfunding, and this voucher program would only make matters worse.

Furthermore, the bill would drastically increase the number of standardized tests that students must take. This is a misguided attempt to hold schools accountable, and it will only serve to stress out our children and harm their education. Our public schools do much more than just teach to a test.

And let's not forget about the absurdity of the commissioner of education being given unprecedented authority to redesign our entire education system, starting with the implementation of new standardized tests and new accountability measures for public schools. This is an outrageous power grab that must be stopped. Our schools deserve to have local control and the funding needed to help their communities not a voucher program that will hurt the majority of students in Texas to line the pockets of rich donors.

The bill's sponsors have dubbed SB 8 as a "parental rights bill," but it actually reduces parents' and students' rights in exchange for a voucher. Private schools and other vendors accepting voucher money would not be required to follow state and federal laws, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), that protect our most vulnerable children.

In short, SB 8 is a disaster for public education in Texas. It would harm our schools, our students, and our state as a whole. I implore you to reject this bill and to instead focus on supporting and strengthening our public schools. Texas can and should do better than copying the disastrous programs of other states. We can write a much better bill in Texas that helps all children and supports public schools and the communities in which they reside.

Charles Rodriguez, Principal
Hutto ISD
Cedar Park, TX

SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas. Texas has never provided public dollars for private education. Separation of Church and State. Public educators need more funds. Let's work together and find a solution that works for all.

Beverly Wright
Self- retired American history and Constitution teacher
Rockwall, TX

I taught American history and the Constitution for years. I am so sad to see our heritage and freedom trampled upon by so-called educators who are nothing more than propagandists who have been propagandized themselves and seek to pass their bias onto yet another generation. They are destroying our country and our freedoms, to say nothing of the personal trauma they cause confusing young people with sexual and racial nonsense at a time when they are growing and learning to be comfortable and confident with themselves. Education should teach reading, math, history and truth, not lies, and should celebrate family life. When in the course of human history public education lies in the hands of those who would destroy America, it is absolutely crucial that parents be able to protect their children, remove them from such debauchery and send them to alternative schools that will provide education based on reading and math skills and teach them how they protect their freedoms. A vote against this is a vote for those working hard to destroy and take over America! Don't fall victim to those who are turning our public education into a mockery of truth and failing our youth and our country. Many public schools are proving that they care more about the party line than they do educating the children. The children are the victims, and so will be the future of America. Let parents choose. Let them protect our kids, and protect America by helping them send their kids to schools other than public education. It isn't education any more in way too many schools. It's public propaganda! Step up and let parents choose! Promote school choice!

Sarah Morgan
Teacher - self
Willis, TX

Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely. Private schools are known for accepting students from wealthy families, few on scholarship but must be of high character. This bill does not give equal education rights to all students therefore students in need of Special Education services, such as speech, must go to an out of school source for those services. This bill makes state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination.

Also unlike public schools, teachers do not have to hold valid certifications to teach in a private school. I held a DODDS (department of defence dependant school) certification and taught at a private school prior to getting my teaching certificate here in Texas.

Spending 800 million dollars on this project for discrimination of students with disabilities is a not a sensible act for the Great State of Texas. We could spend 800 million dollars on more pay for teachers, or use it as grants for schools to meet the needs of all students. Please protect the rights and freedoms of All our Texas children!

Thank you in advance for saying NO to school vouchers, parent choice.... whatever the bill is - SB 8 or CSSB 8.

Kindest Regards,
Teacher of 27 years, Life long resident of the Great State of TEXAS!

Gladys Wall, Ms
Self
Magnolia, TX

Parents have the right to know what their children are being taught and where and how. Public school has no right to indoctrinate our children . They are not property of the government. And concerned caring parents are not criminal. republicans serve your constituents . Stand up for us and don't cave to the immorality of the left. Thank you .

Evelina Loya, Mrs
Self/Texas State Teachers Association-Retired
Rowlett, TX

NO NO NO to vouchers!!!

Instead improve return to work conditions and INSURANCE benefits for public school teachers. WE HAVE EARNED IT. We TOUCH EVERY CHILD not just the wealthy or privileged.

Marieke Lahey
Self - engineer
Houston, TX

This bill is undemocratic, unAmerican, and goes against Texas values. Data indicates vouchers hurt educational outcomes for our kids. It defunds neighborhood schools and hurts communities too. Vouchers are SCAMS. Vote NO on SB 8 and kill it in Committee.

Debi Riggs
Self/School Librarian
Fort Worth, TX

This bill is horrible for public education and offers no support that is desperately necessary for educators and students alike. Please vote against this insult.

Katherine Fabian
Self- Retired Teacher
Waco, TX

Parental rights must be kept in place. There is no excuse for excluding parents in any decision concerning their children.

James Fritz, Mr
Self - full time employment nunya
Cypress, TX

This bill is horrendous and cheats our public school children from the public funding their schools need. Oppose this bill

Hsing Tcheung
None
Austin, TX

No to vouchers! No to the educational savings account program! No direct tax dollars to private institutions! Tax dollars only for public schools! Public schools is one of the reasons our country great is great. We need to think about the future of the country with public schools for all children.

Britt Scott, Mr.
Self, retired
Burleson, TX

I am, in no uncertain terms, against this bill. Public funds should not be used to support private and charter schools. The funds should go to the public schools of Texas.

Susan Cameron
Self/LPC
Garland, TX

Oppose SB 8

James Suttles
Self
Wylie, TX

Senate Bill 8 (SB8) will drain already underfunded public schools of more resources. The additional strain on our rural school districts will have a devastating impact on the education of our children. Funneling public monies into the private sector is not a fiscally responsible strategy. This bill is not the path forward if you want to keep Texas strong. We are Texans, we value our educational system, and we do not take steps to undermine it.

Kristi Vick
self
Kerrville, TX

We support School choice. Please vote in favor of school choice. Thank you, Kristi Vick

Billie Phillips
Self retired school educator
Mckinney, TX

I totally disagree with this proposal. Please vote no

Laura Lanford, Licensed Professional Counselor
Self, counselor
Belton, TX

Stop silencing parents and giving schools more power than parents. Give parents voice and choice. Establish an ESA program. I am a counselor and a firsthand witness to the devastation that takes place when ANYONE has more voice than parents in educating and raising children. Parents know best.

Holly Urick
Self
Kingwood, TX

I am opposed to SB 8 because it is government expansion with consequences for private education choices, as well as for tax payers.

Tara Stewart-Gillis
Self-investigator
San Antonio, TX

Stop the madness.

Ralph Mecklenburger, Rabbi
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I am the retired Rabbi (Rabbi Emeritus) of Beth-El Congregation in Fort Worth. I understand that the Committee will be voting on a substitute for HB 8 on Monday, one which maintains the purpose of providing Texas state support for school vouchers. While I have no objections in principle to private schools, I am very aware that funding for public schools is already over-stretched. Money diverted for vouchers to private schools will diminish funds available and much-needed for public schools. I therefore urge that this bill be voted down.
Sincerely, Ralph Mecklenburger

Yolanda Richardson
Citizen
Lockhart, TX

please pass this bill for parental rights and school responsibilities regarding instruction materials and establishment of an education savings account program.

Sam Carpenter
Myself
Dallas, TX

To do anything to imperil the funding of public schools is unconscionable. You have no duty to private schools but you do have a duty to protect and fund public education. Do your job and protect the majority of your constituents' opportunity to have a quality education.

Dorothea Wallace
First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio
San Antonio, TX

School vouchers are not right for Texas. Please do not vote them into reality! Pay the bills the state owes to our public schools - that would be nice.

Patricia Gomez
Myself
Plano, TX

I urge you to support school choice in the House Public Education Committee!
We've seen ESA programs work very effectively in multiple other states like Arizona, Florida, and Tennessee.
It's time for Texas to step up!
Parental choice has overwhelming bipartisan support from Texans across the state.
Polls show that a super majority of Texans support parental choice.
ESAs will help give an opportunity 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.

Hindatu Mohammed
Self
Austin, TX

I strongly urge a vote against this bill which would take much needed resources away from public schools. Texas public schools already rank among the lowest in the country in per student spending. We need more support, not less.

Rachael Siegel
Self
Lake Jackson, TX

I am opposed to SB 8 because it is government expansion with consequences for private education choices, as well as for tax payers.

Tarisa Schmid
self
Austin, TX

As a parent of one child in private school and one in public, I support SB 8.

Lisa Napper, Retired Asst Supt HR
Self - retired educator
Cedar Park, TX

I am horrified by the attempt to sneak a voucher bill through without OPEN public input that is not hand-picked or invited. If you are going to dismantle public education (guaranteed in the constitution), the least you can do is do it with transparency. Vouchers are NOT conservative. They are NOT supported by the majority of people who elected YOU to represent THEM.

Vouchers are a huge mistake that will forever negatively alter our kids' future and eventually our state. Do not let Abbott & Patrick's special interest lobbyists, no matter how well funded by out of state sources, change the face of education and rural school existence in Texas. They do not get to use our kids for national political gain and change our way of life. That is a sure-fire way for you to lose your job and turn Texas rural communities into ghost towns.

Please vote NO on Senate Bill 8. It also increases testing (another thing most Texans oppose). Listen to your constituents.

Thank you.

Jake Wilson
Self - CPA
Fort Worth, TX

I appreciate the efforts of Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, Senator Creighton, and of the other legislators who are working to give options for a quality education to more parents and students. I was blessed that my family had the opportunity to send me to a private Christian school for 11 years. I support efforts to give more students the same opportunity which I had to receive a quality Christian education.

There is a lot for the legislature to consider in determining the best way to implement school choice. The legislature can compare the different drafts of SB8 and the various other school choice bills that have been introduced this legislative session. The legislature should also assess what versions of school choice bills could be introduced in a potential special session this summer.

Also, it's very important that the legislature passes SB1396 by Senator Middleton as soon as possible. SB1396 explicitly authorizes a voluntary time of prayer and Bible reading, in which students and school employees can participate on school grounds outside of normal classroom hours. That bill is in the House State Affairs Committee currently, and I hope it moves quickly.

Thank You.

Kirstin Martinez
Self- parent!
Spring, TX

Public schools need help not less funds. Vouchers help those who need if the least and will take much needed funds away from public schools.

Linda Pachicano
Self- Administrator
Taylor, TX

As a Texas Public School Administrator, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Jennifer Mills
Self - teacher/ parent
Spring, TX

I have two children and both in public school. I am also a teacher in public school. I have had students transfer from private back to public and the educational and the social emotional differences are huge and not in a positive way.

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Jessica Lange
Self - Mother/Homeschool Educator
Conroe, TX

I am extremely opposed to SB 8 because it is government expansion with consequences for private education choices, as well as for tax payers. Educational freedom is important to me and I would never want a subsidy with strings attached.

Jerri Erickson
self
PAMPA, TX

State money should not be taken from public education and given to private schools that have no accountability, can deny students their rights under IDEA , and cost the public school systems money to test students who have been instructed by a non regulated system.

Deborah Bailey
Self
Bronte, TX

This bill needs to pass to enforce parental rights and protect children's from woke indoctrination.

Gillian Rodriguez
Self
El Paso, TX

NO!

Mary Johnston, Dr
Self/educator
Fate, TX

These last few weeks of session are vitally important for the future of our public schools. The House Public Education Committee is hearing the committee substitute for SB 8, which includes the largest voucher program in the nation.

I am an educator and constituent in your district, and I'm writing to ask you to please contact your colleagues on the House Public Education Committee and ask them to keep CSSB 8 from leaving the committee for the following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Tracey Bergfield
Garland ISD
Garland, TX

This bill is a danger to the students and families of Texas. The majority of Texas students will still not be able to find educational opportunities under a voucher system and will still be in an underfunded system while dollars are being allowed to go to private sources. While there are MANY reasons the voucher system will not meet the needs of families, here are a couple that impact my family specifically.

First, as a parent of a child with a disability, it is NOT true that vouchers intended for Special Education will work for the majority of the students in this category. Federal law currently guarantees families of children needing advanced services that a school district must fund their education in an environment which is able to address their needs. This happens every day in districts through out this state and our country. All private schools in my area, north Texas, who can meet the needs of my son charge in excess of 20,000 per year. The 8,000 voucher being proposed will not cover half of that and my family could not make up the difference, so we would still only have the choice to attend our local public school that is equipped to meet his needs.

Second, as a very advocate for reducing the emphasis on the STAAR standardized test. I find it offensive that the argument for the test is "that we must have a way of holding the schools accountable" but now it is going to be OK to have public funds handed over to unregulated and unaccountable education providers. Until the parents of Texas students can be given a way to guarantee that the public money is used by tested and accountable schools, it is unimaginable that we approve public funds being used.

Drew McConnaughay
Hutto ISD
Hutto, TX

As a Texas Public School Principal, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Norman Polly, Mr
Self
Houston, TX

No Teaching of Transgender,, Drag Queens, Pron, in School Materials or Teaching, or any Demonstrations any Teacher doing this should be Removed. A Mind is a Terrible Thing To Waste on this Junk. Children should be taught on how to Manage Money and other quality Things not Trash !

Aimee Donnel
Self
Houston, TX

I oppose SB 8. I live in SBISD in Houston. With under funded public schools, the voucher program will harm the public school system and the students who will still need to access the public school system because the vouchers won't fully cover private school tuition. Use this money to adjust the public school allotment per child toward to account for inflation. It's the only responsible course of action.

Tina Lacey
Self
CLARENDON, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a public school educator, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Mark Durfee, Mr.
self /Teacher
Troy, TX

I oppose using public tax dollars to fund private school tuition. Most private schools in Texas have an annual tuition rate in excess of \$10,000 annually. The state's portion that will be given to fund the "Education Savings Accounts" is only \$6,000 which will leave a deficit of \$4,000. If this bill is truly designed to help low income families, they will not be able to cover the \$4,000 difference. Transportation is not a covered benefit of private schools. This leaves low income families without the resources to safely and timely transport their children to a private school which may be across town. This bill also does not fully meet the three prong test from *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1970/89>]. If this bill is approved and signed into law, it will drain hundreds of thousands of tax dollars from already strapped public schools. Public money must not fund religious education. Please vote against this and find solutions to make our public schools better rather than create a divisive education system.

Ricky Riddle
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I don't want any of my tax money going to school vouchers and leave books alone it's BS to ban books. I also support solar power stop trying to tax it and stop giving billionaires bailouts

Anna Peters
Self
The Colony, TX

I am opposed to any state funds being directed to help private schooling. Our Texas public schools are excellent in the education and support that they provide. Parents I know struggled tremendously during the pandemic in private and charter schools while our public school districts did a fabulous job supporting our children with devices, internet access, resources, help centers, technology and educators. All education funds should solely be directed to public education and the basic allotment should increase yearly (which it currently is not).

John Faultersack
self
San Antonio, TX

Republicans have so ruined Texas with all the calamitous bills, most of which do worse than nothing. As a result, anything they have suggested, I'm against. Thanks a lot for polarizing things unnecessarily.

Teresa Razo, Ms
San Antonio Alliance #67
San Antonio, TX

Enough about all these tests that are just raking up millions of dollars. The \$2K is not a raise. We demand that teachers get a much needed \$10K raise with small classroom sizes for optimal quality education.

Cassandra McGrath
self/Speech-Language Pathologist
Austin, TX

I oppose SB 8 for the following reasons:

1. It increases standardized testing.
2. It allows the commissioner of education to design yet another test having far-reaching ramifications for schools and accountability ratings.
3. CSSB 8 would require Texas colleges and universities to use the new high school exams to determine entering students' placement into freshman course--WHAT?
4. Students in elementary and middle schools could take up to 42 tests under CSSB 8, compared to 15 tests required by current state law.
5. It would negatively affect school district and campus accountability ratings, making public schools look worse---exactly what voucher supporters want.
6. I OPPOSE use of state funds to give parents access to education savings account (vouchers) that would pay for their children's private or home school tuition.
7. Public schools would be responsible for administering tests to voucher students they don't even teach or receive funding to oversee-- an unfunded mandate for public schools.
8. Private schools accepting taxpayer-funded vouchers won't receive accountability grades tied to their students' performance on the tests-- how hypocritical and ridiculous!

I urge lawmakers to reject this bill which burdens public school students and teachers with more testing, does not compensate schools for loss of funding, gives an unfunded mandate to public schools to test private school students and gives an unelected commissioner (not required to have an education background) sweeping power to redesign an accountability system. Reject this travesty.

Judith Perkins
Self as a Texas taxpayer
Trinity, TX

Vote YES for school savings accounts and parental rights in school choice!
Thank you

Mary Spradlin, Rev.
Pastors for Texas Children
Fort Worth, TX

I write as a parent, a citizen and a pastor in opposition of SB8, primarily for the following reason: This bill will hurt the poorest children in the State of Texas and deepen the divide between "haves" and "have nots" in our state. Those who are "left behind" in public schools will have fewer resources, including fewer qualified, certified, experienced teachers. Our public schools, already in trouble, will become worse, and we will be graduating students who are ill-prepared to succeed, which will ultimately hurt our State. Of course, there will be many children left in public schools; the state cannot afford to provide vouchers for 5 million students. As we see in other states, middle to upper class families will benefit from this, and poor families will be harmed.

The legislature has a constitutional and moral obligation to provide the best public schools that you can. Our governor has made it clear that he is answering to those in power within and outside the state who want to dismantle public education, and he is in a battle that he cannot lose. But that does not mean that the members of the Public Education Committee, and members of the House, cannot do the right thing. This bill is morally wrong. There has been no transparency provided regarding the financial implications, which I understand will be up to \$1 billion a year within a few years. This bill allows public dollars to be used to create another system of education that competes for children, but it in no way creates a "fair" system of competition. It is wrong to say that this is "good" for public education because it will force public schools to compete. If public schools are failing, the legislature and TEA are complicit, and should be working to rectify this.

This bill includes an overhaul of our standardized testing requirements. These requirements are currently more than the federal government requires, and Texas has created an unnecessary system of "high stakes testing" that sets our kids and educators up to fail. I cannot see that CSSB8 mandates will improve on our current STAAR requirements. It appears that this bill requires more testing, and the chief architect of the overhaul is one person, the TEA Commissioner. Changing testing requirements without alleviating high stakes testing does not fix the problem: our children are terrified of the STAAR test. I've heard story after story for the past 15 years of kids who are afraid to go to third grade because they have to take the test, kids who are beside themselves with anxiety who can barely make it into the room on testing day, teachers who have bagged up tests a kid threw up on because they have to send it in to prove that the kid tried to take it, kids whose self-esteem is too much affected by this test. CSSB8 does nothing to help any of this.

Members, your job is to provide excellent public schools in Texas. Please, do not make our kids political pawns. Do what is right for ALL Texas children. Vote NO on CSSB8.

Gina Hall-Green, School Counselor
Self
DeSoto, TX

Oppose this bill'

Heather Bahm
Self
Midland, TX

I am against SB 8, as I feel it violates my freedom as a parent to educate my child without government interference. I do not support this bill.

Trina Dayley, Mrs
teacher in San Antonio
New Braunfels, TX

It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools
It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws
It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve
It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system
It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority

Rebecca Sweer
Self Parent
San Antonio, TX

The vast majority of students in Texas attend public schools. Public schools have many programs that meet the needs of all students. Taking money away from them to fund the minority of schools which many are not successful entities is ridiculous. Texas is already facing a teacher shortage. This will only exacerbate that. Please do the right thing and vote no on SB8. Thank you.

Theresa S Neman, Mrs.
Self/educator
Spring, TX

This bill states that parents must have access to state assessments and answer keys. This bill also calls for a transition to the TSIA. The TSIA does NOT release test or answer keys. As an adaptive test, each person sees a different exam with questions in different orders each time they take the exam. So, the state itself cannot fulfill the requirements of this bill.

In addition, the TSIA2 hasn't passed a validity study. Collegeboard should get the data soon, which means they are at least 7 months from the completion of a study. But they cannot guarantee validity.

The bill also calls for testing history and science, but the TSIA doesn't test history or science.

Finally, vote no to any form of vouchers or savings accounts. Fully fund Texas education. Comply with the Texas constitution!!

Terry Givens
Self - Sales Advisor
San Antonio, TX

Please vote no on SB8. This is not what is best for the majority of Texas students and teachers.

Kendall Bay
Self, Teacher
Spring, TX

Please do not pass this bill. It is a disservice to all the students of Texas and will cause only damage that will take us years to climb out of.

Donna Lynn
Self Teacher
Temple, TX

Everyone should be heard. You do not have a constitutional right to silence anyone. Everyone and anyone ought to be able to say NO TO VOUCHERS!!!!

Doug Johnson, Retired
Self
Midlothian, TX

Vote for the kids future pass this very important bill.

Oliver Coker, Manager
Diamond C Enterprises
Fulshear, TX

I support this bill.

Jennifer Jones
Self; Director of Academics
Buda, TX

This bill is harmful to public education! The bill supports the use of vouchers which will remove funding from public schools and give them to unaccountable private schools. It also erodes the rights of parents of students with special needs, failing to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws. The bill claims to promote parent choice, but truly just reaffirms private schools' abilities to choose which students they serve. This does not and cannot happen in public education. We provide ALL students the right to a free and high quality education! The bill fails to hold private schools accountable to the same standard as public schools, even though money will be stripped from us and given to private institutions. The bill also replaces STAAR with multiple assessments throughout the year, creating MORE testing for our students, without deemphasizing standardized testing in the accountability system. And, lastly, this bill provides far too much power to the TEA Commissioner-someone who does not have the background, experience or credentials to do this. Please keep public schools in mind and think about all of the children who rely on us. We serve as their safe space, where they can be free to be themselves; somewhere that loves them unconditionally and strives to see them become the best version of themselves. Our students deserve lawmakers who will keep their interests in mind. Please support public education and vote NO to this bill. Our Texas students deserve better!

Kimberly King
none
Longview, TX

Please oppose SB8

Teresa Mattingly-Clouse, Ms
SelfSB8
Abilene, TX

My name is Teresa Mattingly
I am calling to urge you to support school choice in the House Public Education Committee ESA Program, parental choice.
Please help Texas school children.

Lisa Orsborn Hernandez
Self/retired teacher
Corpus Christi, TX

I am a retired math and science teacher. I spent the majority of my teaching career in rural districts. During my 33 years in the classroom, teaching everything from Introduction to Physical Science and Consumer Math 1 to AP Physics and Trigonometry, I taught students across the intellectual spectrum. I was glad to have contributed in making well qualified fully engaged citizens. Because I had the lower level classes, many of my students were special needs or at risk of dropping out before they graduated. These are the students who struggled to be successful. These also are the students who cannot function in a private school.

I ask that you vote NO on SB8.

When I started teaching the state of Texas contributed 60% of the school budget, property taxes 40%. Now property taxes are 80% of the budget each year. In a small rural district an \$8000 loss is huge. Multiply that times 7 students, that's a teacher lost. So, instead of 12 teaching units for 300 students, it's only 11. (A certified Teacher is 1 tu, administrators, including athletic directors are 1.5?tu, support staff 0.5 tu). Life skills students are required to have an assistant per student. 4 such students in a small school removes 2 teachers from the payroll. So now down to 10 teachers. All so the higher SES parents, those who can afford tuition at a private school, can get a tax break! Parents have the right to send their children to private school, but not on public school money.

The purpose of PUBLIC education in a PUBLIC school is not to teach kids only what parents want them to be taught. IT IS TO TEACH THEM WHAT SOCIETY NEEDS THEM TO KNOW. The client of the PUBLIC school is not the parent, but the entire community, the PUBLIC.

I ask that public school funds stay in public schools. Vote NO on SB8.

MISTY DAVIS

Hutto ISD
Hutto, TX

As a Texas Public School Principal, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Teresa Blanton
Search
Cedar Park, TX

Public education has asked for your help--superintendents and teachers both-but you didn't listen and offered them a fraction of what districts need to make ends meet. And now you want to solve a problem that doesn't exist. Community members have always had opportunities to voice their opinions in the public school system through board meetings, PTAs, parent/teacher discussions, meetings with administration at every level, and volunteerism. This is just another attack on public education because it doesn't fit the new Republican narrative for everyone to have the opportunity. I expect you to pass this bill because none of you have the integrity to do anything but what you are told. And still I will ask you not to do it.

Kandi Darnell
Self
Devine, TX

No vouchers! Parents already have free choice.

Katherine Brown
Self retired
Lampasas, TX

Against any bill that subsidized private education bc it will destroy our public school system

Tammy Fogle, Mrs
Self
Abilene, TX

This is not good for Texas' students. Do not vote for SB 8. It will only delay fixing the problem. My two kids will receive nothing because they are not enrolled in public schools. Who will fight for them?

Carrie Ives
Self, engineer
Richardson, TX

Adding more testing isn't the answer to improving our schools.

Taking money away from our schools through vouchers given to private schools that don't have to meet the same standards as our public schools is robbing our schools. My mother was a special education teacher. She worked long and hard through her career to make sure her students got what they needed. Public schools are required by law to educate our special students. It's not fair to take money from them and give it to other schools that don't have to meet the same high standards our public schools meet.

While STAAR isn't perfect, it has been developed by educators. Giving an appointed official the power to replace it with something else is removing accountability to voters. There is no guarantee it will be better. Without accountability, it isn't likely to be better.

Making STAAR a smaller part of a school's rating would help reduce the teach to the test problem we have.

I ask you to reject SB 8.

Thank you.
Carrie Ives

Kristi Sellers
the students of Texas
Silsbee, TX

Please improve education of Texas children by giving parents options of school choice. Competition improves positive educational results. It is not fair that only monied parents have school choice for their children.

David Wheeler
Self
San Antonio, TX

Tax dollars should only be spent on public schools. No vouchers.

Delores Ramirez
Self Guidance and Counseling
Odessa, TX

Seeing the religious cloth can put many people automatically on guard and therefore not share as freely as they otherwise would. Which means that we will be in the dark of what is really going on with students. A counselor is taught not to show judgement and instead listen to what a person is going through. That training is important especially with teens that hide so much from their parents.

Vivian Bennett, Dr.
Self
Houston, TX

Please vote "no" to SB8. The bill takes funds away from public schools. Public schools accept all students, and private/voucher schools do not have any financial or academic accountability.

Aaron Phillips, Mr.
Self, Classroom Teacher
Amarillo, TX

Greetings Committee Members, I write you in opposition to many of the changes to public education that SB8 would bring upon our schools. I am opposed to voucher schemes that would further push my district, Amarillo ISD, into a hard financial position. As a "property poor" district, we're seeing increasingly large class sizes and fewer applicants to fill the positions we do have. We're not fully equipped to help students through the traumas they experience and we're lucky to have even a half-time counselor, nurse, or other support in many schools. We should be using record state surpluses to bolster the work of our schools, move toward enrollment based funding, and bring our communities together.

Public dollars must stay in public programs to ensure accountability, to support communities, and to prevent creating segregated systems of haves and have nots. While the federal government has failed to meet it's funding promise for IDEA, we shouldn't double down on harm to students in our special education programs; instead let's fully fund specialized services so we can create successful outcomes for all of our students.

I fully understand that we're all fed up with STAAR, but moving from one high-stakes testing scheme to another isn't going to improve our systems. We need an overhaul of evaluation that focuses truly on growth and success, and not takeovers, abandonment, and blame. We must return to community centered solutions and build schools into the heart of neighborhoods and towns.

I ask that you stand against voucher schemes, that you stand with our schools and our communities, and that you invest in the students and educators that make our state the great place it is.

Thank you!

Jacob Esquivel
Self
Little River, TX

As a public education professional, I strongly oppose SB 8 and any bill which seeks to limit or police what a public education institution is and isn't allowed to teach. Secondly, I strongly oppose SB 8 and any bill which seeks to divert tax payer funds away from public schools into private institutions. You claim to want to help the economically disadvantaged and the students in special education, but the language and the very ideas contained in this bill show that you do not care. If you did care about public education at all, you would immediately pass legislation which funds public schools to a much larger extent, that way these great institutions, which do so much to help communities on on a daily basis, could have the necessary resources to carry out their operations to the fullest. You do not know your constituents needs, nor do you care. I challenge every single one of you to spend even 1 hour without cameras and photographers in a public education classroom. I challenge every single one of you to spend even 30 minutes as an administrator at a public school. You know absolutely nothing about Texas public schools and their current state, and your attempts at stripping them of much needed funding is an absolute disgrace to the communities and constituents which you so claim to serve. You know nothing of the needs of students in special education, of the needs of the economically disadvantaged. You claim to help protect the youth from political agendas while simultaneously shoving your agendas down their throats. You know nothing about public education. All you know is how to grandstand and grift, and even then you are terrible at it because it is so easy to see through your disingenuous claims. If you support this bill, you are a disgrace to this state, to this country. If you support this bill, you are an enemy of progress and education for all. P.S., limiting public comments to 3000 characters is pretty undemocratic, but it's not like any of you care about that.

Tara Burgess
Self- public school administration
Round Rock, TX

As a Texas Public School Administrator, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Sarah Southward
Self/Member of Texas PTA
Garland, TX

Open up the hearing to public testimony and to say no to vouchers, which siphon money out of a public budget that should be fully devoted to public, not private, education.

Paul Gregory
Self- Retired
Magnolia, TX

Let's get it done. I'm tired of the indoctrination and filthy books in our schools.

Jessica Wheeler- Macias
Self, Public Health Worker
Killeen, TX

Do not mischaracterizing what the bill does and marketing it as an elimination of the STAAR test. CSSB 8 does not eliminate STAAR. In fact, it would increase the amount of standardized testing our students must endure, from 20 tests to 48, which would take place throughout the school year.

According to an analysis of the bill by Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment (TAMSA), students in grades 3-8 would move from taking STAAR once a year to a test (to be determined later) three times a year.

Elementary and middle school students would go from 15 tests to 42 tests. That is almost three times as many tests, with no promise they will be shorter, are necessary, or even appropriate.

High schoolers would go from five end-of-course assessments, only three of which are required by federal law, to six tests.

The link between these accountability changes and CSSB 8's proposed voucher? Students using a voucher to attend a private school will be required to participate in these same tests, though their private-school counterparts will not.

Students using a voucher to attend a private school would be required to leave their schools during testing windows to be assessed. How this would work, in practical terms and with any degree of social and emotional care for students, is not laid out in any detail.

All educationally disadvantaged students and students with disabilities including students already attending private schools would be eligible for the voucher. The voucher also applies to students who attended a school district campus that received an overall performance rating of D or lower under the state A-F accountability system for one of the two most recent school years for which the campus received a rating. The siblings of a child participating in the program are also eligible.

The bill would allow an eligible student to have a voucher equivalent to the resources provided in public schools, which could be tens of thousands of dollars.

Unlike the Senate version of the bill, CSSB 8 does not provide a \$10,000 five-year "hold harmless" for districts with fewer than 20,000 students. The absence of any sort of "hold harmless" guarantees that local public schools will lose funding, possibly billions of dollars over the next biennium.

CSSB 8 would not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs and even requires a warning to parents.

Judith Holmgreen, Dr.
Self
Alice, TX

Education is already underfunded; diverting money by way of vouchers will kill public education. Please consider the impact on public education and on students. As a public school educator, I see the incredible value of public education and urge you to vote against SB8.

Dianna Simons
Self
Austin, TX

Everyday Texans do not want taxpayer money supporting charter/private schools. Vote NO on school vouchers.

Stephanie Franklin
Self- High School Teacher
Centerville, TX

As a teacher it is disheartening and a slap in the face for our legislature to continue entertaining bills that are NOT in the best interest of students but are touted as such. SB8 includes vouchers and vouchers is not the solution for the issues we have in public education. SB8 includes increasing the number of standardized tests, NOT eliminating it as the public has been told. I would like for you to find me a parent in Texas that thinks the STAAR test is a good measurement of the learning their child has had- every student, teacher, parent, etc. wants STAAR eliminated! We certainly do not want to increase the number of tests our children need to take. Additionally, "parent choice" has been said time and time again, yet parents don't have the choice to opt their children out of a flawed test! This bill literally could increase the number of tests that students take from third grade through high school from 20 to 48!

Public schools will lose money if vouchers are allowed for private and home schools. Smaller public school districts will lose even more money under CSSB 8 than under SB 8. Unlike the Senate version of SB 8, the House's CSSB 8 eliminates temporary "hold harmless" funding for small public school districts to offset the inevitable financial losses they will incur as a result of the voucher legislation. The measure was included in the Senate version of the bill in an attempt to convince rural lawmakers to support vouchers, especially in areas of the state where private school options are scarce and vouchers less likely to be utilized. The "hold harmless" provision would give those public schools \$10,000 for each student who unenrolls from the school to instead take a voucher in the first five years of the program, after which time there would be no help for public schools that lose vital funding under this bill. The House's CSSB 8 eliminates the "hold harmless" funding altogether.

Perhaps instead of tying teachers hands together, we give them the respect they deserve? There are very few fields, other than this, where so much oversight is deemed necessary. I have a bachelors degree in interdisciplinary studies, and a masters degree in counseling education. I know children. I have dedicated my life to knowing children. What am I compensated for this expertise? About \$18 an hour. I am paid \$18 an hour to pour my life into children, in a rural district, AND apparently I am not good enough for some people, especially those people sitting in the capitol building in Austin Texas. Perhaps try respecting your teachers in Texas, pay them a livable wage, quit using WADA to determine funding for districts, and see what happens. It's never been done before, so what do you have to lose? Right now you're losing teachers in astronomical numbers.

VOTE NO ON THIS BILL AND VOTE YES TO SUPPORTING PUBLIC TEACHERS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Rose Garcia
Self. No company.
San Antonio, TX

Oppose this bill. Giving money to people for private schools is against everything Texans stand for.

Charleen Pokluda
Self
Jarrell, TX

Dear Committee Members,

I write to express my opposition to SB8, the school voucher bill. As an advocate for public education, and a public school teacher, I am deeply concerned about the bill's potential impact on our public education system.

Public education, a cornerstone of our democracy, promises equal opportunity for all. It fosters an informed citizenry, drives economic growth, and promotes social cohesion. SB8 threatens this by diverting public funds to private education, exacerbating financial challenges for public schools, and disproportionately affecting students from lower-income families.

Alarming, our public education system is experiencing a mass exodus of educators, largely due to inadequate compensation. SB8, by diverting funding to private schools, could worsen this trend, making it harder for public schools to offer competitive wages and retain quality teachers.

Moreover, the narrative that vouchers could promote—that public schools are inherently inferior—is misleading. Our public schools, filled with dedicated educators, provide a comprehensive, balanced education to our children.

Additionally, it's concerning that taxpayer money may fund private businesses. Public funds should be used to strengthen public institutions that serve all children, not to subsidize private businesses that lack universal accessibility or accountability.

The upcoming "invited testimony" hearing on SB8, unfortunately, excludes "open testimony" from the public, limiting the diversity of perspectives considered in your deliberations. I urge you to reconsider this approach and foster a more inclusive, democratic process.

Public education is a promise to future generations. Any policy weakening this promise, like SB8, warrants the highest degree of scrutiny.

In conclusion, I hope these concerns inform your deliberations on SB8. I trust you will act in the best interests of our students, our schools, and our future.

Sincerely,
Charleen Pokluda

David Michaelson
Self - public school teacher Denton ISD
Denton, TX

Reject this legislation. After years of neglect and the challenges presented by COVID, public education needs to be reinforced, not defunded by vouchers and destroyed. Not shrunk so it can be "drown in a bathtub."

Patricia Ayub
Smith County Republican Club
Tyler, TX

Please pass this bill. My grandchildren would be blessed by this. Especially my grandson who is autistic and crucial that he be in the right school with the right teachers. If not that money be allotted to us for homeschooling or private education

Garrett Linscombe
Self, program manager and parent
Hudson Oaks, TX

I support this bill

Debra Damman
Self
Austin, TX

Americans should be free to send their children to the school that is best for their child and have our tax dollars work for us.

Rita Pepi
concerned citizen
San Angelo, TX

I am in favor of school choice for parents. They know their children best and they should be able to decide which school best suits their child's needs. Please vote in favor of school choice. Thank you

Glen Stocker, Pastor
Bible Believers Baptist Church
Canyon, TX

I would like this bill passed immediately and I would like there to be a bill introduced called "School Choice for Everyone" This would allow taxpayers without school age children to designate all or a portion of their school tax to go to any legal school in the state. This would weed out the non performing schools in just a short time.

Sheryl Gonzales
Project Destiny Texas
Lubbock, TX

We continue to urge you to stand up for children and their parents and pass SB8 to establish educational savings accounts. Thank you for serving our great state,
Project Destiny Texas

Angela Nickell, Mrs.
self/teacher
Gustine, TX

I am not necessarily against vouchers as vouchers; however, there are too many pieces to this bill to move forward. The easiest example is giving money to the general public to homeschool their children. Most parents are not qualified to teach their children. When (and if) these students return to public school, they are generally behind their classmates. Giving funds for homeschooling will cause some parents to take their children out of school just for the funds, thinking of themselves instead of their children.

Please do not move forward with SB 8 because it will harm our students whose parents choose money over what is best for their children.

Joyce Greer
self, retired
Austin, TX

You know that parents across Texas overwhelmingly support school choice. But for some reason it hasn't happened. Every child deserves the freedom to learn where they learn best. This must be determined by the child's parents. They know and love their children better than a paid educator. The parent must have the right to choose the best education for their child's needs and values. I believe the people who would most benefit from school vouchers would be the poor and disadvantaged whom you purport to serve. They don't have the option to choose their child's education options like wealthier parents. This would even the playing field and allow ALL children to learn in the school, public or private or homeschool, that would best serve their needs.

Cheryl Foster, Ms
Self
Waco, TX

No to Vouchers, No to Education Savings Plans - and whatever else you want to call taking money out of our public school system. Just stop - Please!

Doreen MARTINEZ
Channelview ISD
Katy, TX

I am a public educator with 30+ years. I am opposed to any type or form of a voucher that will take away funds from public schools. The majority of our Texas children are in public school. We educate every child who enters our school, regardless of the learning levels, abilities, disabilities, discipline issues, and more. We need our public funds to educate our children. I ask you to please vote no on any bill that will negatively impact the future of our public school children.

Lauren Smith
Self, Teacher (public school)
Austin, TX

I wish to register my opposition to this bill, as it diverts public funding that should go to public schools to voucher programs that fund students' attendance to private schools. This provision is deeply concerning to me as a public school teacher in a school that consistently struggles to retain strong teachers, largely due to the pay that would be necessary to attract the best teachers to our district. Public money is exactly that - public. It should be used for students attending public schools; if parents wish to place their children in private schools, they, of course, have the option to do that, but I do not want my tax dollars used for this purpose, and I know firsthand how harmful this bill would be to funding for my district and campus. In addition to diverting funding from public to private education, this bill does not provide for reasonable accountability measures for these private institutions and also does not guarantee federal and state education protections for students attending these schools. Please oppose this bill.

Brandon Berry
Self
Midland, TX

Please vote NO towards the SB8 bill. As a Texas homeschooling parent all I see within School Choice Vouchers is it bringing in government strings where it currently isn't. This legislation will expand the government now and in the future. The government has a pattern and they never voluntarily reduce themselves. Taxes allotted to families in this bill will go over the amount they pay into property taxes. This bill will not fix the crisis in public schools. This bill will cause inflation of tuition fees in private schools, which will also lead to higher taxes. Limited government is the Republican platform and this bill does NOT hold to it. Keep Texas free! Work on a tax reform that will allow Texas families to keep more of their own money which then will lead them to freely fund their own children's education. Fix the public schools instead of working towards expanding government!

Alisa Farmer
Self / educator
Killeen, TX

ALL Texas children deserve quality education. Taking money from public schools reduces the quality of the education of our Texas children by:

- 1) taking resources from already underfunded public schools. Underfunded public schools means underpaid teachers, lack of quality materials and facilities for teachers, staff, and students;
- 2) reinstating discrimination in our schools. Private and charter schools can pick and choose who gets to enter through their doors. We saw how “separate but equal” worked. In case you don’t remember, it DID NOT WORK;
- 3) as it stands now, public and private schools have the option of providing appropriate services for our students with disabilities. They do not have accept students disabilities, and of they do accept them, they do not have to provide them with specialized services. Again, you’re inviting discrimination to boldly enter our schools;
- 4) the projected cost of this program is \$800 million dollars, some of which will be taken from the pockets of the educators whose funding you just greatly reduced.

Vote NO to SB 8. I am a voter who also has the power to vote, but do not listen because I’m a voter. Listen because Texas children deserve better than what SB 8 provides for them.

Katie Williams
Self, PhD student
Austin, TX

This bill would dangerously impede the democratic process by preventing all Texas children equal access to education, which is necessary and crucial for becoming critically engaged citizens in the future. The reduction of state funding for public education will leave already underfunded schools with even less of the resources they need. Working parents cannot necessarily afford private schools but are no less deserving to have their children receive quality education. Moreover, unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely. This bill also makes state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination against one of the most vulnerable demographics of Texans. Finally, this program is projected to cost Texans over \$800 million dollars, which could be used in ways that better serve Texans.

Reed Bilz, Ms
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I am writing to ask you to OPPOSE SB8. This bill would take my tax dollars to support private schools. This will take the dollars needed to support and improve public schools.

I urge you to vote NO on SB 8.

Susan Lawrence

Self

Irving, TX

VOTE NO on SB8. I do not support SB 8. Allowing for vouchers will do financial harm to many community school districts. In my professional life, I had the opportunity to visit 40+ school districts. The majority of them were being good stewards of the money sent to them by the state, but they sometimes had to skimp or eliminate some areas. Small districts can't absorb this financial hit and some of the board members represent these small districts. In some legislative districts, there may be minimal choices for education. The public LEA may be their only choice. It is far more important to see that these LEAs have the opportunity to become the best that they may become. These LEAs are often the heart of their community. If the LEAs in sparsely populated areas have to consolidate, that would be devastating for many communities. Vouchers are not the future of education and they have no place in Texas.

Lueng Tcheung, Dr

Self

Austin, TX

Please oppose this bill and do not tax dollars to go to private institutions. Private schools aren't held to the same standards that public schools are, they aren't held to any standards. We want to ensure our public is educated, and by diverting dollars to private schools, we are watering down the public school's ability to educate our public. I'm a product of public school education at every level of my schooling, and I'm a firm believer in the power of public schools to produce people who are clinically engaged and invested in their community. Please oppose this bill.

Mary Mabry

Self

Spring, TX

No vouchers in Texas! Our public schools deserve our undivided resources. Siphoning money to private schools, which are not accountable for tax dollars, and who will never educate our special needs students is not productive.

Warren Norred
self, attorney
Arlington, TX

I have written extensively against SB 8 here: <https://warrennorred.substack.com/p/texas-vouchers-and-pretense-of-progress>.

This type of voucher plan will destroy and back door regulation of private schools. It makes bad assumptions regarding the number of people who will want to get in the system. It requires a new bureaucracy to "certify" schools, therefore ignoring the stated goal to put the question of quality control in the hands of parents, and not educators.

I absolutely support "money following the child" but this is "money going to favored private schools". Texas should revise its public school system configuration to pay for results, and not assume that parents are not as good as nameless certifying bureaucracies. If you are going to do a voucher, the money should go to parents only, and be based on the student taking whatever test that traditional ISDs are taking, and if they pass, then they get \$4k, or something much smaller than the \$8k or so that is being discussed.

Additionally, the section that says school districts can get money from those who are suing them is ridiculous and doesn't belong in a bill that calls itself a "parents' rights" bill.

This bill has many flaws in it, too numerous to mention in 3000 characters. Please read the substack article link. To write the better bill, you MUST accept that parents are actually the best gauge of where their kids should be, and that means jettisoning the need to have certified and approved schools. Pay money to parents, not institutions, and let the parents take care of quality control, just as the state does with food stamps. I'm happy to chat with anyone in detail about the failures of SB 8. 817-253-9999.

Try again next session, but with a much smaller number...\$3k to \$5k, paid to parents, using the results of any commercially available test (or the TEKS) as accountability, with parents paid only after their kids pass the chosen test.

Donna Romine
River City Christian School
Converse, TX

We encourage you to vote for the education savings account program!

Cheryl Kennedy
Self-gardening
Lytle, TX

I am appalled at the lengths being gone to to strip US, and in particular, Texas citizens of rights on every front. SB8 strips money away from public schools that ANYONE can attend, and gives money to private businesses and religious organizations that front under the guise of non profits and are trying to collect taxpayer funds to use rather than their own. In addition: Reduction of state funding for public education will leave already underfunded schools with even less of the resources they need

Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely

This bill makes state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination

This program is projected to cost Texans over \$800 million dollars. Leave the public school funds alone and let those who want a private education pay for it out of their own funds. Our public schools need every dollar plus a lot more than they currently get from the legislature!

Maddison Landon
Self
Waxahachie, TX

I do not believe vouchers are a good thing. I am a public school teacher, and I can see all too well the damage vouchers could do. We have other things to worry about, like how we are required to differentiate our teaching in order to reach every student, yet those same students are required to take a sit-down-everyone-is-the-same test. We also have to deal with poor public opinion of public educators. Do you think taking money away from the people serving their communities for negligible pay is a good thing? We need to be investing more into public schools. Take some of the weight of STAAR away and spend some money actually talking to teachers and figuring out what they need. Teachers are leaving the profession in droves for a variety of reasons. What you need to be working on is creating a healthy atmosphere around teaching that encourages people to enter the profession. Where would anyone be without teachers there to help them read, write, do math, and be a generally decent human being. I know none of you in the Texas House would be there if there wasn't a teacher who taught you.

Deirdre Parry
Parent
Flower mound, TX

As a parent, I do not support vouchers.

Vouchers:

Do not ensure accountability.

Vouchers send public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to the public for producing results.

Are a step backward in serving students with disabilities

Over the past 30 years, federal and state laws have evolved to ensure students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education. Private schools are not required to provide special education services mandated by federal and state laws.

Provide choice for some, not 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. Vouchers do not address 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.

Violate separation of church and state.

The U.S. Constitution prohibits any government "establishment of religion." Tax dollars directed toward private schools of religious origin violates this principle.

The U.S. Constitution ensures the "free exercise of religion"; no government has proper authority to dictate a religious community's expression of faith. Regulation and oversight always accompany the allocation of public tax dollars, thus violating freedom of religion.

As parent who votes in every election, I do not support vouchers.

Tina Sanders, Mrs.
Self
Huntsville, TX

Retired educator against vouchers. Prefer time and money invested in public education which benefits the majority of citizens. A concern is accountability. What happens when a family tries private or homeschooling then changes their mind? Money wasted. Student returns to public school. Not to mention private schools are not required to follow mandated curriculum or offer services for any special needs students. This program only benefits the wealthy and for profit school and its owner.

Stephanie Meharg
Self/teaching
Temple, TX

Against, you can not state "parents to choose the best education" when they are not the same. Government makes rules and regulations that private and some charter school do not follow! Teachers have to be certified and schools accredited in public education but not private. If you think private school is so much better than the public schools, then the government should free public schools from their control and let us blossom! Education needs to stay out of the hands of those that have never taught or have not taught since the pandemic. I do not go and tell my veterinarian how they should do their job because I did not learn to be a veterinarian so I have no place stating how they should do their job.

Doyle Miller
N/A
San Angelo, TX

I appose this bill.

Sharon Hall
Self
Danbury, TX

Empower parents to do what they think best

Michael Novotny
Self, Superintendent
Salado, TX

School choice already exists as parents can have their kids educated through public school, charter school, private school, or homeschool. Admittedly, some families can't afford private school. So if the goal is for economically disadvantaged families to have school choice, then a voucher/ESA bill should include these four requirements:

1. All private schools that accept vouchers should be required to accept all students that apply. Otherwise, many students won't have school choice because they won't be accepted.
2. All private schools that accept vouchers should be required to accept the amount of the voucher as the tuition and not charge above the amount of the voucher. Otherwise, many students won't have school choice because they still won't be able to afford the tuition.
3. Vouchers should only be provided to economically disadvantaged families. That still covers 60% of students. Taxpayers should not have to pay private school tuition for families that are not economically disadvantaged.
4. Private schools that accept vouchers should be subject to the same academic and financial accountability as public schools. If millions of dollars of taxpayer money is spent on vouchers then there should be accountability so we know the money is well spent.

Thank you.

Meghan Lutschg
Self - parent of public school kids
Bellaire, TX

No to any voucher programs! Our children deserve better than another clear money grab. This will decimate the future of Texas.

Ramiro Lopez, Rev
Self - Senior Pastor
San Antonio, TX

I am absolutely opposed to any type of voucher system in Texas and especially SB-8. And I most certainly do not want to have the state and its officials anywhere near my parish day school. Money should be spent making Texas public education the finest in the country. This weakens a system that has been gutted again and again by the state.

Timothy Cox
self
Oak Point, TX

If we aren't able to protect our children from being groomed into a morally corrupt subculture, dare I say cult... a cult that relies on emotional manipulation and half truth lies we are doomed as a state and nation. I pray you have the courage to stand up against the insanity that has built an alter of mental illness and has and is converting our children into ardent followers heading down the path to moral corruption. Please support SB8... make it stronger as opposed to diluting its purpose.

Elizabeth Brannon-Lopez
Self
Red Oak, TX

Transitioning power from locally elected school boards and locally hired teachers and staff to corporations not based in Texas through ESA's does not represent our traditional conservative values. Insisting on one religious representation through curriculum, library books, etc., does not represent our state. Do not pass this bill out of committee. It does not reflect Texans values.

Mary Ellen Wahlheim
Self
Spring, TX

I oppose SB 8 and any voucher or ESAs. Texas public schools need all the funds possible to educate our students for the future! Private and charter schools are not the answer- they are largely unregulated and waste taxpayers money. Please vote NO on SB8.

Christina Howell
Self homeschooling parent
MIDLAND, TX

What the government funds, the government runs. It has it's place, but not in homeschooling. We're already a private school with freedom from government overreach. Please keep it that way.

We don't want your money, we'll keep our freedom. With all due respect, this is my womb, not your wallet. Our standards and accountability come from and are answered to a Higher Source. Please leave homeschooling in Texas truly free. We make the sacrifices we do, bc our children are worth it. We don't need or want your dollar, bc we don't need or want your oversight. Please, stay in your lane.

As for the public sector, that's a completely separate issue. Please don't compare apples to oranges and lump us all together. I don't mean to sound harsh or unfeeling. Public school is a mess that as a taxpayer I would be happy to advise on at a later time. However, for this comment, my concern is to voice the separation and freedom that needs to stay in place for homeschooling in Texas.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Chuck Haag
Public school teachers
Temple, TX

Vote No. our country doesn't need regression. We need compensation. Oh...a question. Do you represent the #public?

Jennifer Phillips
Self
Austin, TX

To whom is may concern:

Vote NO on SB 8, a voucher bill that as amended will actually expand the number of students that could qualify and potentially cost the state billions of dollars. Further, private schools cannot be compelled to admit these students, as many of them don't already, which will result in untested and unproven fly-by-night operations to pop up around the state acting like private schools and failing our students for profit.

Even if an existing private school will accept students covered, the bill does not address the tuition gap between what quality private schools charge and the voucher would be worth, an amount Texas families in dire economic straits cannot afford to pay.

Additionally, private schools are not obligated to provide special programs such as special education for students attending their schools. It is unfair to allow them tax dollars and not serve students who need those important services.

This bill would cost Texas taxpayers and under-funded public schools untold billions of dollars a year in revenue to enrich private schools and for profit opportunists. The Senate version of SB 8 would cost \$1 billion a year within a few years.

As an educator, I believe it is important that you do not advocate or vote to divert state tax dollars from public to private schools. I oppose SB 8 and all other vouchers and related schemes — including education savings accounts, tax-credit scholarships and for-profit charter and virtual schools — that use tax dollars to pay private school tuition for selected students while undermining public schools where the vast majority of Texas students are educated.

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

Vouchers will do nothing to address the teacher shortage and may very well worsen it, if districts losing tax dollars to private schools are forced to lay off teachers and other employees.

The school district I work for considered closing three schools in order to find a way to make a budget. The decision was made to keep them open but at a steep cost to current employees. Some schools will now share or lose important staff members. Some elementary schools now have to share an assistant principal and counselor. Those roles are rigorous jobs, and it is unrealistic to think those two jobs can adequately support two campuses with more than 1000 students. Also on the chopping block: instructional coaches.

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

Your “NO” vote on SB 8 — and all vouchers and education savings accounts — is a vote in support of Texas students, educators and public education.

John White, Mr.
Self
Rockwall, TX

Whereas the majority of Texas voters are Republican voters, and;
Whereas the Texas State Republican Party Platform was constructed from planks proposed by Republican voters from the Precinct Conventions, through the County and Senate District Conventions and at the Texas State GOP Convention, the platform represents the legislative desires and priorities of the majority of Texas;
Whereas Plank No. 101: School Choice represents the will of the majority of Texas voters,
Therefore, SB-8 should be approved.

Deborah Barrick
None
Harker Heights, TX

I am a proponent of public schools. That doesn't mean I don't like private schools or homeschool. I have many friends who have chosen both for their children. However, I don't believe that public funds should be used for private schools. Private schools don't have to offer gifted/talented enrichment, free breakfast/lunch to federally qualified students, accept special needs students, offer fine arts, sports, or electives; accept students with behavioral issues, offer diagnostic services for students who are struggling academically, behaviorally, or socially. Public schools serve the public good. Keep public funds for public schools.

Megan Corns
Self - Educator
Waxahachie, TX

I do not support any form of vouchers or educational savings accounts. I believe public schools should be funded and no public funding should be sent to private schools.

James Pavone
Teacher
Round Rock, TX

I believe the Educational Savings Accounts, Vouchers, are just an attempt to continue to attack public education in order to expand the privatization of education in order for a select few to benefit and profit. Anything related to vouchers needs to be voted down and public education should be funded equitably and increased, at least, at the rate of inflation.

Aleisha Fuller Moore
Self Teacher
Lantana, TX

I do not support vouchers. The so called "education savings account program" will be a detriment to public education. You don't support public education by diverting resources to charter/private schools. Vote no!

Linda Cowles
Self
Pearland, TX

No to vouchers!
No to Education Savings Accounts!
Yes, to funding our public schools and paying our teachers a meaningful salary this year and into the future.

Heather Wright
Constituent/Voter
The Hills, TX

This bill directly opposes what taxpayers and Texans want for our children, our schools, and our communities. It increases state testing and it's value as it applies only to public schools. It increases the power of the Texas Commissioner of Education, a position requiring no actual education experience or qualifications. It allots public money for private schools without the oversight or requirements in place for public schools, creating a dual system of privilege. It defaults on our obligation to fully fund public schools by rerouting the basic allotment that should benefit all students to benefiting only a privileged few. Further, it enmeshes out-of-state corporations and political organizations into Texas education systems. We don't want or need their input as they seek to infiltrate our state. We are Texas, proud of our history and independence. As Texans, we have repeatedly said no to vouchers, ESAs, etc (whatever pseudonym you want to use). Fully fund Texas Public Schools and quit playing political games with our kids. Quit bringing in outside politics, organizations, and corporations for personal benefit. Return local power to local communities. These are the things Texans value and believe.

ITZE BERNAL
Self instructional coach
El Paso, TX

I am a parent and educator in the Texas public education system, and I am wholeheartedly against using public monies for private school vouchers.

Additionally, It is highly unjust and unethical to be attempting to sneak bills to be voted on without giving the public an opportunity to comment and have a say on this legislation.

I am highly disappointed in this state and what legislators are doing to public education. We have one of the worst systems in the country, yet you all are attempting to take more from us and our children. It's a shame and an embarrassment.

Cassandra Lafuente
Self
Cedar Creek, TX

Please keep public school fund for public schools. It's hard for public schools to provide the support needed for our students with what little funding the state gives and now you want to take it away to give to private schools, who get to pick and choose who they want in their schools. You can't compare testing scores from public and private schools to each other, when as a private school you can deny anyone who seems to need more assistance or understanding in learning the materials. If you're really trying to help schools then you need to remove mandatory state testing and quit causing unnecessary stress and test anxiety on students. Let teachers teach with our so many restrictions. All the limitations put in a teacher doesn't allow them to do what they love, teach. Public schools need every penny they can get since they can't turn anyone away and have to help students with different accommodations. Those funds are needed if your going to allow the other schools to turn those students away. If those schools receive public school funds then they should follow public school rules and not be allowed to turn students away who may need special accommodations.

Morgan Kirkpatrick

Self/former teacher, currently project assistant and marketing coordinator

LUBBOCK, TX

Although I left the classroom last May after 14 years as a middle school English and reading teacher, I still care very much about my former students and friends in education. I am vehemently opposed to any legislation that would cause our local schools to lose funding and weaken public schools across the South Plains.

With the funding allotment as it is, school employees already wear multiple hats and I was no different. While I taught seventh grade English and Reading, I was also a curriculum specialist, test writer, data analyst, mediator, librarian, nurse, counselor, diagnostician; the list is unending and overwhelming. Can you imagine fewer teachers doing more tasks? That will happen if vouchers pass.

Furthermore, The Texas Tribune reported that “an independent analysis of national insurance claims...in Texas, Lubbock has the highest rate of youth suicide attempts for children between 6-17 years old, followed by San Antonio and Dallas.” Teachers are leaving in droves, and still, the legislature continues to double down on policies and legislation that are largely responsible for such issues.

I taught in a large district at a school whose principal did their best to protect teachers and students from policies and minutiae that did not directly impact students. Yet, there are those in the legislature who want to make educating the children an impossible task. Cut funding? Good luck keeping teachers in the classroom or improving student success.

Please vote against senate bill 8.

Karen Duffy

Myself

Houston, TX

SB8 is an insult to public educators. The state continues to add more mandates to public schooling and then tells them it is not enough! Legislators have sung praises during Covid and now comments are hurtful and degrading! I am a public educator and I do my best to teach all students not just a few chosen. Some children have no experience and public schools are their safe zone while learning. Do what's best for ALL children in state and vote no to vouchers. Focus on how we can do better not create more mandates.

Marianne Arnold

Self

Kurten, TX

Please vote against SB8. SB8 weakens public schools.

Many Texans live in rural areas where they don't have any choice of schools their kids can go to. Vouchers siphon off both money and the easiest students to educate, leaving the public schools to educate those with learning disabilities and behavior problems with less money.

Traci Dunlap
Self
Austin, TX

My name is Traci Dunlap and I'm a teacher in Austin ISD. I am registering my opposition to SB 8, or any "voucher" bill. I am opposed to tax dollars being used to pay for Texas students to attend private and religious schools.

This bill would take funding away from our already underfunded public schools, which are attended by the vast majority of Texas students. These schools lack accountability measures, have no democratically elected school board, and are not required to serve ALL students as our public schools are. Families already have a choice of where to send their children to school, as there many options within the public school system. Furthermore, this bill would erode the separation of church and state, a founding principal of our democracy.

Students from low-income families will likely not be able to use these vouchers to choose expensive private schools, as the voucher would not pay the entire tuition. In other states where voucher bills have passed, low-quality so-called private schools have popped up in order to grab state tax dollars, providing a sub-par education for students whose families have been tricked into thinking these schools will do a better job of educating their children. The data from other states with voucher programs shows these schools have actually put students at risk academically.

I urge you to do what's best for students, families, our public schools, and Texas, and vote NO on SB 8.

Kim Christy-Anderson
Self
Belton, TX

As a citizen, grandmother and educator I am not in favor of public money being used for education savings account for parents to use at private or parochial schools. Those schools are NOT under the same guidelines as public schools. Most private schools do NOT offer, or even entertain offering, courses for special needs students. This is not a fair and equal system and I do NOT feel public money in the way of an education savings account should be used as a way to fund those programs.

Rachel Bihenick
Self
Houston, TX

The establishment of state funding for private school vouchers will damage the public school system and our cities and state as a whole. When money that follows a student is stolen from the public school, that school struggles to educate other students in the community. The voucher funds are not enough to ensure that ALL students could afford, or even be accepted into a private school, so you are really offering parents the choice to DEFUND public schools by not paying their fair share to the public institutions we ALL benefit from. Low-income families will not be able to use vouchers to attend another school of "choice." Special needs students will frequently be turned away by schools not required by law to meet their needs. But families who can already afford to send their children to private school will get a break, while stealing funds from those other students. This system has not worked in Arizona and has created a huge funding problem. This bill is not about giving more families a choice for a great education; it's about stealing education from students at neighborhood public schools by stealing their funding. Texas school funding is already low, we can't afford to lose more.

ALL of us benefit from a strong, supported, and FUNDED public school system. It is the bulwark of the American Dream. All children will go on to use what they learn in our cities and state— we must work to create strong, well-funded schools staffed with great teachers NOT undermine public schools in the name of "parental choice." The true choice parents have is to support their children, their community, through the school; to support public schools even if their children do not attend them, or if they did not attend them as a children themselves. We all pay for the things our society relies on, from roads and bridges to subsidizing farmers for our food. We should ALL continue to pay our share for public schools and not have a choice to direct public funds away from public schools.

Robert Dennison
Self
Houston, TX

Chairman Brad Buckley is allowing only invited testimony to speak at the hearing. This is a boldly undemocratic move to silence the voices of the majority of Texans and that should never happen! As a citizen of Texas who spent more than 42 years in the public classrooms of Texas, I'm outraged that this committee would attempt to ram this piece of legislation through without true public comment it deserves. I urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 8 for the reasons given below.

Public schools in Texas have been underfunded for years. I point out that it is your Texas constitutional duty - one of the few you have as a legislator - to properly fund education. SB 8 will strip nearly a billion dollars (more than \$800 million) of state funding for public education leaving underfunded schools with even less of the resources they require to perform at a level we all expect. The \$800+ will flow from public school education to private schools. There is a huge problem with such a move.

Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely. They do not have to follow all of the rules that public schools do. In addition, there is an increasing mountain of evidence showing that private schools do not educate students at the level of public schools. The bill goes a step further by making state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination.

I urge you to take a look at the Texas Education Agency's own statistics comparing achievement by students in public schools verses those in private schools. The data are neither Republican data nor Democratic data. They are simply the numbers that are easy to understand. One would think that such data would lead you to vote NO on Senate Bill 8.

Because I am deeply concerned about (1) public education in the State of Texas, (2) our students - who are our future, and (3) the democratic process which Chairman Buckley is trying valiantly to undermine, I ask for your vote of NO on Senate Bill 8.

Helena Dobay
TDW
SAN ANTONIO, TX

I am a native Texan and a former educator. I feel strongly that Texas stands to lose billions of dollars in economic growth if it continues to underfund and undermine public education. Public schools for Texans is required in the Texas Constitution. Private schools do not educate all students, but can cherry pick them. 90% of all Texas children attend public schools. Private schools do not all offer the resources like sports, choir, vocational training, and the arts that public schools do. Private schools do not have the same kind of accountability or requirements as public schools. Vouchers of \$8000 per student per year would not pay all of the tuition for private schools. Public schools cost less, and do more. Public schools are the backbone of an informed, well trained, and prosperous society. Texas must go forward, not backwards to the conditions of the 1800s. Please do the right thing for our state and increase the funding for public schools, teachers, and retired teachers. Don't harm our people.

Candi Tenbush

Self

Hutto, TX

As a Texas public school teacher for over 20 years, I am pleading with you to stay away from vouchers or educational savings accounts or anything like it. We need fully funded public schools that will meet the needs of all Texas children.

Please keep CSSB 8 from leaving the committee for the following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Doris Kottwitz

self

Plano, TX

I am a teacher and I feel that vouchers are a disservice to the majority of our students. Private schools do not have to abide by the same rules nor are the private schools required to accept all in a given area as public school are. Vouchers do not, as many tout, provide a choice for all. They do not insure accountability and could be a violation of separation of church and state. Public funding/dollars should NOT go to private companies.

Thank you for your time.

Jennifer Taylor

Self

San antonio, TX

Your response to a surprise vote on an unheard voucher bill being denied by the Texas House cannot be to call a pro-forma hearing that still bars the public from speaking.

Our communities deserve a voice in this process. The brand-new, 80-page bill you are hearing would radically transform our public education system and cause serious harm to our public schools.

I am horrified that the committee is keeping Texans from making their voices heard on it.

Rushing a vote on this bill is a gross and underhanded move, and I consider it a slap in the face to our public schools, the 5.5 million children they educate, and the 650,000 Texans they employ.

I urge you to vote NO on SB 8 and this attempt to divert taxpayer dollars away from our neighborhood public schools.

Kendy Johnston
Self
Wichita Falls, TX

As a public school educator for 24 years I strongly oppose any proposed bills that divert public funds to private schools via traditional school vouchers, Education Savings Accounts, business tax credits, special population vouchers, virtual vouchers, bracketed vouchers, etc. Instead, our elected leaders need to be held accountable for properly funding public education in an equitable way, so that students from every district in Texas are taught by highly qualified teachers and have the resources they need to learn and grow, no matter their location or their local property tax value. The legislature needs to focus on ensuring that we invest in every child in public schools with our tax dollars. PUBLIC tax dollars should be used to fund PUBLIC schools, as required by the Texas Constitution. With an estimated \$32.7 billion surplus the Texas legislature needs to make Texas public education a top priority. Please vote NO on education savings accounts, vouchers, etc.

Keely Vanacker
self, school counselor
Kerrville, TX

The sole purpose of the money given to the state of Texas by us taxpayers is to fully fund and support a public education system. A public education system that began with the purchase of land in 1840, when Texas was still a Republic. When Texas joined the union and became a state, our own constitution included specific provisions regarding your jobs as Texas legislators in designating 10% of the tax revenues to public schools. In a time when we so desperately want to "go back" and take an originalist view, then this is it. From Texas' very inception, funding a public school system, NOT JUST A CHILD, has been enshrined in the values of this beloved state.

I've worked in public education for over 20 years, and as a child, I attended both private and public schools. I've seen children and parents come and go, back and forth, between them all; charters, home school, public and private. But no matter their reasoning, it is the public school system that has been steady, and always ready to accept any child and provide them an education. Private schools, and home-schooling parents, do not have the same mission as a public school system. So often we have received the student who has been removed from their private school for minor infractions to major ones. Yet, we are the ones who are there for them, who believe that EVERY child should have access to an education so they in turn have CHOICES as adults. The public school system's mission is to ensure ALL children receive a high-quality education so their futures are full of opportunities and CHOICES. We help children find their passions, fulfill our community needs, and be proud members of this state.

As this committee listens to witnesses and debates the merits and proposals of this bill, I hope they talk about the future of all our children. Quality education is not a commodity. The choice of an individual's wants is not the same as the choice of a future. I urge this committee to remember the ideals of this great state and focus on providing our children with futures full of promise, opportunities, and CHOICES. Please vote against all voucher and savings account programs. Please support our public schools. Please take these last few weeks of the legislative session to focus on how best you can support the future choices of our children.

Chris Killion
Self, public school parent, graphic artist
Plano, TX

Dear Committee Members,

Public schools are a bedrock of a well educated society. Vouchers do not support that concept as they take from the much needed resources to the majority of hardworking Texans. Those who choose private schools do so because they have the means to do so. Please vote against funding vouchers with our tax dollars.

Chris Killion
Plano, TX

Carol Saucedo
self
Austin, TX

Urge you to vote “No” on SB 1. The private schools dont need state funds - public schools do.

Sarah Yeoman-Lomangino
Self
SANGER, TX

Public money should stay in public schools. Don't defund public education. Wealthy families don't need a subsidy for private schools. Vote no on SB 8.

Jennifer Vincent
Self
Round Rock, TX

I am opposed to educational savings accounts. Fully fund public education!

Rory Doherty
self
Garland, TX

OPPOSE SB 8

Patricia Garris
Self
Spring, TX

Texans have invested billions, if not trillions, of dollars in educational infrastructure. There are fixed costs regardless of school occupancy. Period.

It's interesting that we think that private education is so much better than public education, like we thought charter schools would be so much better. The data doesn't necessarily bear that out.

Some believe private schools can shield our children from drugs, gangs and violence. They don't. Some think that schools focused on religious beliefs prevent harm to our children. They don't. Most school gun violence happens in smaller communities where everyone is more likely to look and think alike.

Or maybe we think that in a private school our children won't be exposed to the things we think they are not old enough to understand or shouldn't have to know. I went to a private school. I can assure that is not the case, and social media has made it almost impossible.

Our world is filled with differences that cause fear when demonized, with ideas that need to be thoughtfully analyzed and with a future that must be democratized. Public schools, of which I am also a product, are the best way to learn to live and learn together.

James Bourque
N/A
Cedar Park, TX

SB8 - I ask that you please do not subsidize religion by sending public monies to private religious nonprofit schools. SB8 and its amended version in the HOUSE will create a 'new segregation.' The money you allocated is insufficient to care for the needs of all people. Public schools will become schools for the problem child, whether behavioral or disability. Religious nonprofits are not required to accept all students, nor will their teachers and staff be as qualified educationally. They will simply be educated in their religion. This will evolve into allowing partisan citizens to teach their children their religion, which will evolve into discrimination in the name of freedom. This will create a separate but equal education system. Will Catholic, Protestant, Southern Baptist schools teach about each other's religion or about Hindu, Muslim etc...? Second, the real motivation comes from a group of Christian's who are very straight forward in their desire to Christianize Texas and the United States. This is a new form of Christian Nationalism and feeds the idea I spoke of before - A New Segregation." How can legislation meant to "Christinize American" be in the interest of all Texans? Please don't do this? It will eventually add to the existing extreme behavior we are seeing in Conservativism. Thank you

Julia Sanders
Self
Highland Village, TX

Public education is critical to my family and supports both of my children. A high level of public education supports us and our community, without our public schools my community would suffer greatly and property values will plummet.

Mara Betancourt Coker
Self
Fort Worth, TX

As a mother of a Texan student, I implore you to not include any type of voucher or savings system that would deviate public school funding into private or parochial schools. This would be of great detriment to our already underfunded public schools. Our children deserve better than "country club schools" funded by the state. Please retract this proposal.

Carol Ortiz, Ms.
self/retired
Montgomery, TX

Vote NO on SB 8, the voucher bill. No public money for private and religious education! Vouchers divert funds from public schools to unregulated and unaccountable private schools. The people of Texas do not want vouchers.

Clint Schnell
Self - Coppell ISD - TABC - THSCA
Flower Mound, TX

As a 20+ year public educator and coach I am incredibly disappointed by the idea conceived by this bill and the illogical consequences it would have on public education's future as well as the funding of our public education and lack of accountability to the tax payers of our state. Vouchers and school choice do not even guarantee a student acceptance into a private school as those schools have the freedom to pick and choose who they accept. To waste taxpayers money without providing any accountability is crimmnal. Better solutions to our educational system can be explored and implemented. I implore you to vote NO on SB8.

Lauren McManus
Self — homemaker
Georgetown, TX

Vote NO for SB 8!

Brian Zimmerman, Rabbi
self
Fort Worth, TX

I am deeply concerned about this well intentioned but deeply misguided and flawed bill. While the goal may be to help parents find a school that better fits their own religious beliefs, who will determine an appropriate school? Will all private schools be eligible? Who will decide? Can you guarantee that vouchers will be equally available for a Muslim school, a Scientology backed school and a school that professes atheism? Will these vouchers be equally available to a private school created by Messianic Jewish Christians who call themselves Jews but are not accepted by the Jewish community and have an agenda of converting Jews? Who shall make these decisions on behalf of the state and on what religious authority? Shall a commission be created to determine legitimate private schools that receive state funding? How will this help our deeply divided and distrustful state in which public schools are the only way our children meet other faiths and communities to build bridges in our deeply divided and increasingly segregated society? How will this allow us to provide the funds that are a part of our sacred trust in providing much needed financial assistance for our students unable to get a decent public school education, if less is made available in poorer or more remote areas barely able to support a school in the current environment?

Whatever the author's original intentions, this bill will not lead to those results. It will further divide our state, and our give government power to endorse or some faith systems over others and undermine our public school structure. As the leader of the largest Jewish congregation representing many Jewish public school students in Tarrant County, I wish to voice my very deep concerns. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Leslie McKenzie, Mrs.
Self
Highland Village, TX

As a parent of three kids attending public school and also a teacher working for a public school I ask you to consider the future of our education system. The culture of the Public school system it's so important for our communities. As it is they are suffering for lack of fundings. It's imperative that we continue to invest in public education to give every student and future generations of this nation the opportunity of those who don't have the means or the resources like private school communities. Please consider that fact that private school is an option that people with the means can take advantage off but should not be found it with government money. Taking money from the public education will impact tremendously the future of our education system and damage the opportunity for many students to become better citizens and help our nation to improve.

Randy Ohaver, Mr
Golden Rule General Contracting
Fort Worth, TX

I pray to God we give parents school choice the right to have the money follow the student.

Aurora Porras
Self Educator
El Paso, TX

I strongly urge you to vote NO on SB 8! Public schools need to be funded at 100%! Funds should not be diverted towards vouchers for homeschooling, charter or private schools! Public schools need more funding and not less funding!

Respectfully,
Aurora Porras

Karen Horgan
Self - Retired
Fort Worth, TX

I completely oppose SB8. This bill will decimate public schools statewide. Public schools are the foundation of a well-educated society, which benefits everyone. The voucher portion of this bill will rob public schools of necessary funds to continue to educate the majority of students in Texas. Consider these statics: for the 2023 school year, there are 9,057 public schools serving 5,372,224 students. However, there are only 1,819 private schools serving only 308,567 students in Texas. Why would you shortchange the majority of Texas students by taking money from public schools and creating a voucher program?

The testing portion of the sub is also disastrous. The suggested testing protocol is worse than the STARR. There are much better options for testing than either of these programs.

I am asking you to oppose SB8 and the 80-page sub bill and any type of private school voucher program, including education savings accounts, in Texas. Build up public schools instead of tearing them down.

Lorie Crowder
Self/retired teacher/intern teacher field supervisor
Waco, TX

Do not allow this to pass. Parents have a choice- they can educate their children in public, private, parochial m, charter or homeschool. But the tax dollars of the people of this state are for public schools- not u regulated private schools and homeschools, where there is NO accountability. This action will damage public schools and hurt our ability as a state to attract businesses and industry and hurt the children and teachers of this state. Put the money into our schools and to salaries for teachers and COLA for those that spent their careers in public education. Thank you.

Sylvester Perez, Retired school Superintendent, San Antonio ISD
Myself
Boerne, TX

Texas is ranked 9th in the world in economy, AND 39th in pubic education spending. For profit Charters do not have the same accountability as PUBLIC Charter Schools & “select” students— We all hear the Republican narrative of “mental health” when it comes to mass shooters yet Special Needs students are being further and further “Left Behind.”

KEEP PUBLIC DOLLARS for PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Arleen Torres, Ms
Myself
San Antonio, TX

This bill harms public education and does not fix the problems.

Mary Branson
self/ retired
Spring, TX

No to vouchers! instead of diverting state educating funds away from public schools to private and charter schools (who don't have to accept all students!) let's adequately fund all aspects of public education. I say vote NO to SB 8 and vouchers.

Rachel Roberts
Self
Spring, TX

I am against vouchers for students.

Dottie Carmichael, Dr.
Self, Research Scientist at Texas A&M University
College Station, TX

My tax dollars currently support College Station ISD, and I am disappointed that Texas legislators would consider defunding our public school system. SB8 takes my tax dollars out of public schools that benefit for ALL children and instead underwrites primarily religious-based private schools. Not only is this a failure to separate church and state, but in SB8, Texas is abandoning the children who need education and investment the most. Please vote against this bill.

Matt Maudlin
Self/Teacher & Coach
Spring, TX

Texas families already have educational rights, parental choice, and the right to be involved in their children's education. Students that attend Texas Public schools, are taught curriculum that is required by the state of Texas TEKS. These TEKS are guided by Texas legislation and the TEA. If state leaders, who are pushing the voucher narrative, truly believed that families do not have parental choice then they would be promoting this legislation at public school forums/town hall meetings. Instead, they have selectively held meetings at private schools, where educational standards, and regulations, are not the same as public schools. As a tax payer, my tax dollars should not subsidize families who choose to pay for a private education. The proposed bill will not begin to cover the cost of most private school costs. There has been no clarification on how the voucher money would be handled, should a student be removed, or choose to leave, a private school. As an active voting constituent, in Texas, I do not support SB 8 legislation.

Carter Heath
Self, Student at Texas A&M University
College Station, TX

I graduated from College Station ISD in 2015 and am writing to ask you to vote AGAINST SB8. College Station ISD is a great school district, but it needs all the investment taxpayers can provide to serve all kinds of students. Texas cannot afford to operate two separate school systems -- one public and one private. Our public schools will suffer and the separation between church and state becomes meaningless. Please do NOT pass this legislation.

Melissa Haun
self
Copper Canyon, TX

VOTE NO- This is abandoning the current and future generations of Texans by diluting the education funding process and creating more government and bureaucracy.

Heidi Cook
Self
Plano, TX

I urge you to vote against vouchers in Texas. Public school education is a constitutional right and is the foundation of our Texas and US society. Vouchers will only serve as a subsidy for rich families to send their children to private schools, leaving the rest behind with fewer resources. Texas public schools deserve to be fully funded and thrive. Vote no to vouchers!!!

Tania Tasneem
Self
Austin, TX

Hi Everybody! I am Tania Tasneem. Texan born, Pakistani raised, with a little twist of El Paso. I am a proud product of EPISD, UTeach alumna, 8th grade science teacher, and volleyball & track coach at Kealing Middle School in AISD (Go Hornets)! This is my 16th year serving as a classroom teacher and mentor for pre-service and novice teachers.

My parents left their country and family to come to this state because they believed in Free Access to High Quality Public Education. I was fortunate to receive one and continue to work in a system that provides that opportunity to many students like me.

Saying yes to this bill would create a situation like the one my Parents left, affording only those who can the right to FAPE.

Public Education in Texas has been underfunded and under-supported for years. 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.

A voucher program that diverts hundreds of millions from public schools is tone-deaf and negligent. I oppose this bill and implore you to do the same.

Christina Masick
Self
Houston, TX

This bill creates bureaucracy (ie bigger government). I am for less, not more government which is a principle of conservatism. As a taxpayer and parent of multiple school age children, I do not support this bill.

Cody Knott
Self, Teacher
Eastland, TX

Dear Honorable Members of the Texas House,

As a proud Texas educator, I am asking you to please consider the facts of education before a voucher bill is passed in this state. Teachers have been in the crosshairs of politics for far too long. Teachers are public servants. Much like police, firefighters, and EMTs, teachers give everything they have to the betterment of their students. We cannot take away from the public schools because public school teaches ALL students. Private and charter schools take selected kids, not everyone.

We need to keep public funds in public schools. Stop the rhetoric of parents not being involved in the education of their students. Parents have always been involved in the process. Parents CHOOSE not to be a part of the process. Teachers call, write emails and letters and some parents do not care. Look at parent-teacher conference data from across the state. You will see a mixture. Do not use teachers a political poly to jockey for positions in this state. "School choice" is a political slogan that is used and needs to go away. Parents can always come and speak to their teachers about their child's education.

We wonder why there is a shortage of teachers. We see the news and how many teachers are put down by people in Austin. If you want to change then ask a teacher. Change only happens when we all are on board with what we need to do. Putting students first is what we all need to look for in our growth together.

Please consider what teachers want for students. Parents and teachers can and will work together for what is best for all students. Using pollical slogans and cheap shots does not help anyone. Please have more meetings with teachers and parents at PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Thank you for your time in reading this comment.

Sincerely,

Cody Knott
Teacher
Eastland, TX

Nancy Puckett
SELF/ PUBLIC SCHOOL COUNSELOR
Hobson, TX

Please uphold Public Education and vote against School Vouchers. Tax dollars should not be used for private schools with no accountability. If Private Schools don't need STAAR, Public Schools should NOT be subjected to this useless test either!!

Beverly Nevins
Self, retired teacher
San Angelo, TX

Please for the sake of public education, vote no on this bill. As a retired teacher it saddens me what this bill does to public education.

Lisa Stone
self/educator
Houston, TX

I join all those Texans and Texas educators asking you to reject SB 8.

It will cause so much harm without providing any benefit for average Texas citizens, because:

1. Reduction of state funding for public education will leave already underfunded schools with even less of the resources they need.
2. Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely
3. This bill makes state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination
4. This program is projected to cost Texans over \$800 million dollars

Please protect and promote our public schools, as directed by our Constitution.

Shirley Cash
TRTA
San Angelo, TX

Please Do Not support school vouchers. I am a retired teacher and watch closely how some legislators are ignoring what is best for public education in our great state. Why would you circumvent public testimony on this subject? The eyes of public school teachers who genuinely care about the education of ALL Texas children are watching!

Sincerely,
Shirley Cash

Becky Landry, Mrs
Self-retired
Knippa, TX

I am opposed to SB 8 because it is government expansion with consequences for private education choices, as well as for tax payers. Please be aware of the impact your decision will have on the lives of all tax-payers who will be funding this "education savings account"! I respectfully ask that you vote "NO" to SB 8.

John Tedor
Self - retired
San Antonio, TX

We support SB 8

Brian Bloss, Mr.
Self / all public school teachers
Grapevine, TX

Dear representatives,

My name is Brian Bloss. I am a public school teacher and a proud product of Texas Public Schools. Like Governor Abbott, I wouldn't have that part of my life any other way. But representatives, SB8 is an attack on our schools and does nothing to address the real problems facing education in Texas.

Advocates want SB8 in part to “protect our children from a whole curriculum and empower parents. The great news is you the members of this committee can safeguard our economic future and let this bill die here today.

Remember, advocates like Governor Abbott claim this is to help students escape work curriculum. But there has never been evidence that exists because public schools teach the TEKS, curriculum approved by the State Board of Education which has been controlled by Republicans for 25 years.

Instead of rhetoric that doesn't match reality let's look at the facts as to why SB8 is bad policy pragmatically.

1) Vouchers are an inherently a vehicle for the redistribution of wealth. The method of funding allocation in this bill uses a weighted average daily attendance meaning some children inherently will get more or less money. Also elite private schools will just raise tuition and continue to exclude many from their ranks through admissions tests that if a child is coming from a school where they are behind, they won't qualify for acceptance anyway.

The TEA has no requirements for private schools and that remains after SB8 passes. So public money that could be used to ensure our public schools are the envy of the rest of the country will instead go to schools that have no accountability.

2) According to the legislation, students who accept vouchers must take state standardized assessments to show they can master the TEKS. In Louisiana this method was tried and students on vouchers performed worse on state assessments than their public school counterparts because they were not taught the same curriculum.

The bill's text implies there is no consequence for private schools if voucher recipients don't perform properly on these assessments unlike public schools.

3) The voucher provision is a dereliction of duty and does not to solve the root cause of the education crisis in Texas, funding. State funding has not kept up with inflation and the legislature is not addressing recapture or compression of tax rates. This leads to larger class sizes, fewer teachers and will make Texas less economically competitive long term.

4) The testing methods of this bill are flawed. Instead of reducing testing it expands it to at least 6 tests per year in grades 3,4, 6, and 7 and raises that number to 9 state tests per year in 5th and 8th grade. (3 times a year per test as stated in the bill).

Also, TSIA2 (an assessment that will become required under SB8) is not a proven test metric. As a computer adaptive test the test bank has to be kept private for test so the parental empowerment piece fails here too.

Angela Valenzuela
Texas Center for Education Policy at UT
Austin, TX

Dear House Rep. hearing SB 8 (Vouchers & ESAs) It's clear that vouchers amount to a reckless, irresponsible agenda to divert hard-earned taxpayer dollars to private schools that—despite what proponents say—will still not be economically viable for low income families, especially since private schools are expensive, ranging in costs from \$25-40K annually. Plus, as my colleague, Dr. Huriya Jabbar indicates, research overwhelmingly points in the direction of school choice exacerbating the very economic and racial/ethnic segregation that proponents falsely claim is mitigated by vouchers, ESAs, and charter schools.

An apt sociological dictum applies quite well here: That which is good for the individual is not necessarily that which is good for the collective. And school vouchers and education savings accounts (ESAs) are terrible news for public education that the rights, including Gov. Abbott, have worked tirelessly to demonize, despite clear evidence to the contrary that Texas families with children in public schools strongly support public education. Accordingly, read "Connected Through Our Schools" [Report] on Strong Public Support for Public Education in Texas."

There is no independent funding source for either vouchers, charter schools, or educational savings accounts. All of it comes from the same bucket of money that we all, with our taxes, pay into.

Without question, Abbott's agenda is a fool's errand backed up by a large body of evidence. Accordingly, also read Puente's "Vouchers: The 'Lost Cause' Fight of our Generation," by Jaime Puente, as well as a recent, up-to-date piece authored by Dr. Huriya Jabbar et al. titled, "Will School Vouchers Benefit Low-Income Families? Assessing the Evidence" that formed the basis of earlier testimony delivered by the Texas Center for Education Policy against school vouchers this session.

In short, vouchers and ESAs are a rip off for the vast majority of Texans that support public schools. -Dr. Angela Valenzuela

Alicia Olivieri, President GMS PTO
Goodwater Montessori
Georgetown, TX

Please vote no! We do not need more testing. As a teacher and mother, I see the horrible affects of children and teachers alike! Everyone is stressed and it leads to burn out on the student and staff. Please vote no!

Alex Moore
Self, teacher
Leander, TX

As a parent, a teacher, and a Texan, our tax dollars have no business going to private schools who aren't held to the same levels of access and accountability as our public schools. Please be a good steward of our tax dollars and fully fund public education, not privatizing our tax money.

Rebecca Koop
CFISD & Family
Spring, TX

Vote "NO" to CSSB 8.
Thank you,
Rebecca Koop
Parent

Kim Whitaker, Board Member
Self/Retired Teacher/ School Board member
Fairfield, TX

SB 8 and it's substitutes are not good for Texas. I have been in public education for 45 years (35 as a teacher and the last 10 as a school board member)

I once watched a documentary called "Backpacks Full of Cash" that was narrated by Matt Damon. This documented the fall of Philadelphia public schools as charters and vouchers took over. Most of the public schools in Philadelphia did not have extracurricular activities, a cafeteria, and not even a library in the schools. I watched that and said to myself "surely that will never happen in Texas". But here we are and I cannot wrap my mind around it. I cannot believe that some of our legislators want to do the same to our state that has happened in other states. Texas will become a state for the rich and the poor children will go to the public schools. I also read in this bill that STAAR would go away and more tests will replace it. Why? I think so the Commissioner can say that public schools are bad and they are not. Please don't side with Tim Dunn's and the Wilks brothers in Texas and TRUST our public schools.

Thank you for reading this and I am praying you will do the right thing and vote no for vouchers.

Leigh Powers
Self/Teacher
Conroe, TX

I am writing to ask you to oppose SB8. Please do not vote this bill out of committee.

Vouchers are not in the best interest of Texas students. Voucher programs inevitably funnel funds away from public schools, weakening public education. It is interesting to me that this bill allows the state comptroller and so-called "education assistance" organizations to take up to 8% of voucher funds for administrative costs. Who is really profiting from this program?

The legislature so far this season has failed to meaningfully raise the student allotment for public schools, yet this bill promises more money to students attending private schools than is currently allotted for students attending public schools. Why are private school students deserving of more dollars than students attending public school? Furthermore, the bill attempts to prioritize students in special education, but private schools are not required to serve special education students and often fail to supply even basic special education services for their students. Parents who move students to a private school actually lose the rights they are guaranteed through IDEA. How does this provision support "parent rights?"

Additionally, SB 8 attempts to balance the accountability system by stating that voucher students will have to take state tests. However, the bill also provides that private schools will not be required to give these assessments. Does this mean that public schools will have to administer assessments to students who are not enrolled in their schools and for whom they do not receive funding? While the bill requires students to take state assessments, it also specifies that private schools will not be rated based on their students' performance. This does not create an equal playing field. If your philosophy is that competition improves education, make the competition fair by holding all schools to the same standard.

Moreover, the House version of the bill has added an unvetted attempt to overhaul our state assessment system. I am in favor of reducing the focus on STAAR testing, but this unvetted bill is not the way to do it. In addition to giving too much power to the state education commissioner to design a new testing system, this bill actually increases the number of tests students take. ATPE estimates that high school students would take one more test under the proposed testing system than they currently take.

However, elementary and middle school students could take as many as 42 tests under this bill—a dramatic increase from the 15 STAAR tests currently required. This increase in testing is not in the best interest of students, schools, or teachers.

As an educator and parent, I oppose SB 8. Texas students deserve better. Please do not vote this bill out of committee.

Jacqueline JENVEY
Myself and my children
Houston, TX

I oppose SB 8. Any form of vouchers is detrimental to public education.

Heidi Rothschild
Self/retired educator
Houston, TX

I am opposed to the passage of SB 8. Diverting desperately needed funds from Texas public schools for ESAs, better known as vouchers, will do nothing to help and much to hurt our neediest students. Public schools which produce educated citizens are the backbone of our democracy. Funding for our public schools desperately needs increasing if Texas is to remain competitive and attractive to business leaders in the 21st century. I strongly urge the committee to reject SB 8 in the best interests of ALL Texans. My future votes will go to elected representatives who protect the future of our public schools. Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts.

Michael Otto
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Texas public education is already the laughingstock of the nation, but our legislators drumming up mythical issues in order to divert further funds from it -while also, coincidentally- lining the pockets of donors- is disgusting and irresponsible.

Claudia Hernandez
Self
Temple, TX

I am completely against school vouchers. I believe that parents that choose to send their kids to private schools should then pay for that education. I do not want my school taxes to be used to provide a private education.

Julie Pusey
Self. Occupational Therapy Assistant
Belton, TX

This bill seems to cover 2 issues and although I do support parental rights regarding knowledge of instructional materials, I do not support the establishment of an education savings plan account program. This is not a solution for the problems in the Texas public schools. It is only a means for some to flee at the expense of others, profits to be made by yet another group, and finally, Texas to manage another system when it is struggling to manage the existing public education system. I would prefer to see the Texas Legislature do other things to improve our public school system and a good start might be to address the reasons we have a teacher shortage. No, I do not support SB8.

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

I oppose this bill. Please support our public schools instead of trying to find ways to break them. It is your duty under the Texas constitution. All efforts and funds must go towards the betterment of our public schools for the benefit of ALL Texas students. If the state would fully fund our schools and support our educators, our 5.4 million Texas public school students could ALL be uplifted. Stop trying to divert attention from the fact that the Texas legislature has put our schools in the difficult position they are in, by withholding funding and attacking out educators. **FIX THE PROBLEM THAT YOU CREATED, INSTEAD OF DEFLECTING BLAME AND ABANDONING TEXAS STUDENTS!**

Wade Stanford
Self Educator
Palestine, TX

I am urging you to keep CSSB 8 from leaving the committee for the following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools!

Wade Stanford

Albert Canchola
Self/ Special Education Teacher
San Antonio, TX

Invest in Public Education

Kathy Ramirez
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Keep money in public schools

Alanna Park
Self - teacher
Tomball, TX

I oppose any voucher/ESA account. I want to increase the basic allotment to public schools. Teacher raises need to be more than \$2,000. I am very concerned that the lack of respect towards Texas teachers. More teachers are resigning and not going into the profession. I have noticed that there are more job fairs throughout the school year. 20 years ago when I was looking for a job there were at least 15 candidates interviewing. These days we are lucky to get a few candidates.

If we didn't have my husband's health insurance, it would cost me almost a whole paycheck just for the premium. This is unacceptable. We need to do better.

This year, at least 4 teachers I know are leaving the profession. This is extremely concerning. There are many joys to teaching but the extras are becoming too much.

Politicians know this but simply don't care. When Greg Abbott went to only private schools, he showed us that he simply doesn't care. The state of Texas doesn't care. I love my job and love teaching. I wonder how I can do it or if I want to stay until my retirement. I need to know that my job matters!!!!

Stephen Duncan, Dr.
Self, educator
Galveston, TX

Public money should not be used for private schools. Vouchers and savings accounts which divert money to private schools should not be allowed. Private schools are not required to provide the same rigor as public schools and are not required to be reviewed in the same manner. No public funds for private schools.

Debbie McCoy
Self
Burleson, TX

Support public schools. Vote NO on SB 8!

Debbie Lozano
Self/Teacher
HELOTES, TX

We do not need to extend or add more testing in Texas. We spend too much money on tests that are not written for the appropriate cognitive levels of the students tested. We also do not need to give public funds for private schools.

Shannon Duncan, Ms.
Self - Registered Nurse
Houston, TX

Stop trying to steal money from already underfunded public schools. Private schools are just that - private- and should not be receiving state funds. If I send my child to a private school I have zero expectation that taxpayer money should pay the bill.

Coy Gray, Teacher
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Vote no on school vouchers. Give teachers a substantial salary increase. You get what you pay for.

Jessica Harper, Mrs
Teacher
Cypress, TX

This is using tax money to fund private education but uses public school funds. Private schools getting public school funds aren't even having to follow the same laws that public schools follow. Such as state testing, having to accept any and all students(even those individuals special education or with learning disabilities. All of these funds for vouchers are stealing from schools that need them for so many more students of various backgrounds. What is to stop the private schools from raising the pricing of their school and the vouchers hardly cover anything. This is a waste of time and money when the money could be spent on actually helping public schools with safety and infrastructure.

Melinda Northcutt
Self
Porter, TX

Please cast a vote against school vouchers. Public money should go to public schools, not private.

Lavell Lathan
Self - Educator
Houston, TX

Do not allow vouchers! Reject Senate Bill 8

Michael Greer Greer, Supervisor
Disd
DESOTO, TX

No to bill 8

Julie Armistead
TRTA
Round Rock, TX

Vote no to SB8. This bill will rob public schools of much needed tax dollars. Our schools are already suffering from insufficient funding and this bill will only make things worse. Stop pandering to extreme right wing groups and the wealthy.

Esteban Nasukowicz, Mr.
AFT
Houston, TX

HB 8 is detrimental to the Texas public school system. As an educator, I am seeing teachers leave the profession left and right with no clear end in sight due to a lack in funding, cuts, non support, violence, etc. Allowing vouchers will only destroy what's left and put students further behind. Instead of allowing parents to choose their education, why not put more money into the system so that we can teach children without having to have 2 jobs, pay out of pocket for expenses for these students, be mental health professionals bc of a lack of counseling, stop state testing on paper to waste resources, not use third party curriculum that charges millions and only has the views of lobbyists and put an end to the violence in our schools once and for all. Every campus should be secure and safe for our children. Do vouchers guarantee all of that? No.

Yvonne McMahon
Self
Houston, TX

VOTE NO ON SCHOOL VOUCHERS

Analisa Roche, Mrs
Self - Math Tutor
Fort Worth, TX

I am writing in support of SB8. Parents should have the support of the government in choosing the best education for their children. In particular, the poor and disadvantaged should have priority access to school choice.

Paige Vetter
Self
San Antonio, TX

Reject this bill and any bill that allows my tax dollars to go to a voucher system. Vouchers continue to funnel money away from an already underfunded public school system, providing money to private schools who are not held accountable by the taxpayers. Additionally, they harm students who need proper special education services as a private institution is not required by law to render all the services needed for a student with special needs.

Instead of taking taxpayer money and funneling it to other schools, PLEASE invest in the already underfunded Texas public schools. Allow schools who accept all students the ability to flourish.

Stephanie Garza
Self, LMSW
Mission, TX

As a taxpayer in this state, I am deeply concerned that this bill that is being pushed through will greatly undermine public school system and our public school teachers. We should be more concerned about funding our public school and increasing public school teacher salary. Instead, you are trying to push this bill through without a public hearing. This is a democracy, not a dictatorship. I, and my fellow Texans, will guarantee that every sitting member of our state house, and our governor will be held accountable if you continue to push bills like this through. We will not let this stand. Listen to the will of the people or be ready to find another job.

Kathy Bolla
Promo lab
Richardson, TX

Can we not, as a state, agree and find a middle ground to save the education system in the state of Texas? There needs to be a way to come together peacefully and settle all of the problems. If you could listen to teachers that are in the trenches every day we could probably make headway. People that never taught, volunteered or served in a school are making the rules. Go with experience and let them lead!

Carie Hunter
Self
Cypress, TX

Vote no on this bill. This is not about parent choice. This is not opportunity for all. This does not benefit all Texas children.

Amanda Dorner
Self-teacher
Austin, TX

Decisions on public education shouldn't be rushed through shady back room hearings. Teachers' livelihoods are at stake. I am a single teacher in Austin, who cannot afford to support myself and have to work two side hustles to try to make ends meet. You owe us a thoughtful bill that includes a substantial raise and isn't being pushed through behind closed doors. We are educating the children that will become the future of tomorrow. They deserve more too.

Mary Shaw
TFPE
Midlothian, TX

Parents already have the right to choose where their children go to school. But taking funds away from public schools and putting them into a private/charter school where they don't have to follow laws that protect students and teacher rights is not showing your integrity. It is showing that you want the down fall of the public education system and disrespects all past, present and future work low paid educators have and will perform. If the decisions you make puts money in someone or companies pocket then it is not for the good of the student and you need to reevaluate. Stop making more systems that takes funding from the students and gives it to a third entity that has no direct benefit for the students and teachers.

Mary Jane Hetrick, Dr.
Self, consultant and school board trustee
Austin, TX

As a sitting school board trustee, I have seen our expenses escalate due to the same inflation we all experience in the grocery store 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. 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. SB8 further gives even more power to the education commissioner, taking away local control while, ironically, not similarly creating new oversight for private schools. Please vote "no." Thank you.

Dixie Ross
Texas public schools
AUSTIN, TX

I have recently retired after 37 years of service as a public school teacher. While I do support school choice, I do not believe such choices should be publicly funded. It is important that we direct all public funding to PUBLIC open enrollment schools-- not to magnets, not to charters, not to private schools. Public dollars should go only to public schools that have to serve all students and have to meet state accountability requirements. I loved my schools and my students and I want the very best education possible for ALL students. Well-funded public schools are the very best avenue for making that happen.

Alberta Reyes
Austin ISD
Luling, TX

I am opposed to SB 8

Kirby Gilbert
Tx AFT
Greenville, TX

Vote NO on SB 8 to show respect to for teachers

Anne Simpson, Ph.D.
Citizen, Taxpayer, Parent, Grandparent, Educator, Elected Official
Roanoke, TX

May 14, 2023
Thank you for Supporting Public Education

Honorable Members of the House Committee on Public Education:

Thank you for your important work and service to our state. It is my understanding that the Senate will position SB 8 for a vote on Monday, May 15th. You have stood strong in the House to support funding for our public schools. I encourage you to continue this courageous work and stand up for Public Education as you have always done.

My husband and I are proud graduates of Northwest ISD, a district that is in the DFW area. Our two grown children are graduates of Northwest ISD and now our five grandchildren ages 3-12 are either attending or will attend this exceptional district. Our district is a Fast Growth District because of our excellent public schools and funding for public schools continues to challenge us daily.

To keep our public education systems across Texas strong, we need your support to ensure that tax payer dollars go directly to our public schools. Any kind of Educational Savings Account would be a gift of public dollars to a privileged few and fail to uphold the Constitution of this great state. There simply is no way to ensure that ESAs will contribute to improving students' academic success.

Further, I encourage you to support shared leadership among our local Boards of Trustees and the Commissioner of Education. Together with the Legislature and Commissioner, districts work to achieve standards and expectations that ensure every student in our state is future ready. Each district in our state is unique and can be far more productive when educational decisions about how best to achieve these goals can be made at the local level.

Please use your leadership to uphold our Texas Public Education system across this state.
Happy Mother's Day to each of your families and thank you for supporting our children.

Respectfully,

Anne Davis Simpson
Citizen & Taxpayer
Parent & Grandparent
Educator and Elected Official

Jane Jatinen
Myself
Austin, TX

As a citizen of Texas I do not believe that vouchers are in the best interest of students or their parents. Public schools need more funding and children need exposure to people of all cultures and backgrounds. Then perhaps we will all be able to get along.

Luis Tovar
Self
Austin, TX, TX

I am against vouchers. I do not see how choice is something that rural districts will have. Take for example Marathon School district that has two campuses or Jim Hogg County where there is one elementary school, one middle school, and one High school. What good do vouchers do? There is no choice there. Most of Texas has rural communities and they will not be benefiting from vouchers. Vouchers are an attack on Urban school districts. I say vote NO on SB8. I do not want public education money funding the pockets of for-profit schools.

Peter Noonan
self/ Teacher-Coach
Pflugerville, TX

The rush to include vouchers into a bill without hearing those who may oppose calls into question the integrity and charge to serve the state and represented areas. Texas public educators are consistently under attack because they are underfunded and underrepresented with a place to genuinely speak at the table to defend what actually happens in the classroom. Policymakers continue to impose their personal viewpoints and the agendas of those who would profit from the downfall of public education rather than bolster it and do all that is possible to make Texas number 1 in education period as well as be a leading state for the whole country by creating opportunities for current teachers to express their needs and actually feel supported so they can do the job that many think they can do but would never actually sign up to do. I urge each of you to truly examine your motives and ask yourself are you doing this truly for the benefit of students or yourself? Improving education is actually rather simple- empower teachers and support them and they will enhance the learning experience of their students. No teacher enters into the profession to fail students and actually make the day-to-day learning environment a negative and unsafe one.

Chris Arias
Texas AFT
San Antonio, TX

We see your blatant disregard for what Texans actually support with your shady backroom hearings on SB 8. The people of Texas will not stand for this blatant disregard of popular sovereignty

Susan Stewart
self
Pflugerville, TX

Texans love their public schools. We are a diverse state and our public schools help us learn about each other outside of the hateful rhetoric emanating from our Texas legislators. **THERE ARE NO SCHOOL CHILDREN TRAPPED.** Parents have plenty of choices. This money grab by powerful corporate interests is not in the best interests of our students and the divisive rhetoric from the legislature and Dan Patrick's bully tactics to hold up special education funding are hurting our kids most of all. **JUST STOP.** Texas legislators have been defunding education, issuing unfunded mandates, degrading, disrespecting, and diminishing public education and public school teachers for years, if not decades. I urge you to oppose the creation of any private school voucher program, including education savings accounts, in Texas. The legislature has a Constitutional responsibility to 'make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools'--not divert public tax dollars to private institutions with no transparency and no accountability. Our public schools are the foundation of our communities and are tasked with meeting the needs of all students regardless of race, income, or ability. This session, please focus your efforts on investing in the children, families, educators, and staff who are building the future of Texas in our public schools.

John Reed
Self
El Paso, TX

Why is a voucher program being rushed through without comment? This will take money from public schools. Why no comment????? There is no public accountability with private schools and they pick and choose their students unlike public schools who can not. Why are you scared of comments???

Linda Evans, Ms
Self
Conroe, TX

Vote NO on SB 8, the voucher bill. Vouchers divert funds from public schools to unregulated and unaccountable private schools. The people of Texas do not want vouchers. Support good public schools...no to vouchers!

Sheila Davidson
Self
Keller, TX

I support passage of SB 8.

PETE MORRIS
Self (Retired)
Austin, TX

Dear House Public Education Committee Members:

The short-notice vote on SB 8—without public hearing—is not the way to conduct the people’s business. My own home-schooling family pays too-much money in school taxes, over more than 33 years, to give some of our money for other people’s private schools. ##

Texas’s public schools belong to the school children of Texas. Let private schools pay their own way, as our family of four EISD kids did. But all Texans should support our public education. ##

We either stand together or we tear ourselves apart by using tax-payer dollars for private schools. This must not happen in Texas. ##

A premature vote on this voucher bill means our communities have not been given a voice in this process. This is a slap in the face to our public schools, the 5.5 million children they educate, and the 650,000 Texans they employ. ##

I urge you to vote NO on SB 8 and on this attempt to divert taxpayer dollars away from our neighborhood public schools. Texans pay for our kids’ education. Either we pay on our own, as my family did, or we pay together, through Texas’s fine public school systems. ##

Sincerely,
Pete Morris
EISD, TX

Colin Shillinglaw
Self
Flint, TX

I am against this bill. There is no reason for this bill to pass. This bill is not what the taxpayers of Texas want, but for a few wanting this handout. The state needs to do all they can for public education. Please fund public education to they can succeed. Teachers need resources and state that will have their back. This session has undermined Texas teachers and may have generational consequences

Jordan Lee
Self / mechanic
New Boston, TX

VOTE NO to any form of vouchers or ESAs for unaccountable schools, including CSSB8. I don't want my tax money going to these private schools and we sure don't need more testing in Texas schools.

Thank you!

Brittany Thomas
Self- educator
Lewisville, TX

Vote NO on vouchers and ESA. Support public schools and fully fund them.

Maria ElliottFernandez
Texas public school teacher
Rio hondo, TX

Fully fund public education. Vouchers are not necessary. Raises for Texas public school employees are necessary to retain experienced teachers and support staff in the classrooms. Our students deserve to be taught by teachers who have experience and certifications.

Jennifer Segovia, M.Ed.
Self
El Paso, TX

SB 8 is bad for communities. We also need to listen to the professionals and not to try to pass it without public input.

Homer Croyle
Self
Horizon City, TX

Vote No. leave our public schools alone. Public education takes care of all kids not a select few.

Linda Erback
Self retired
Dallas, TX

No vouchers. Public money for public education.

Jerry Pritchard
self
Austin, TX

the Committee Substitute for SB 8 INCREASES testing (does not decrease it) AND I oppose vouchers because they will hurt public education across the State by draining badly needed funds.

Jennifer Pederson
self
Sulphur Springs, TX

Parents already have the choice to send their child to private school or homeschool. Do not use public funds in any way to support private education, such as through vouchers. Our public schools are already under funded and teachers are past due for a significant raise. Children are our future and if Texas continues to lose teachers due to pay and schools continue to struggle due to lack of funding to implement mandates we are hurting our future. The governor put a committee together to find out how to improve our schools and is now choosing to ignore the recommendations. I wouldn't ask my doctor how to do my taxes nor would I ask a waiter to repair my car so stop asking those outside of the profession how to improve our education system. The majority of teachers get into the profession to make a difference but it's a struggle to stay in the profession without good pay, funding for needed resources, and support and respect from parents and the public. Support our students by supporting our teachers.

Andrew Daub
Self
Aubrey, TX

SB 8 is an assault on education equity within the states of Texas. It not only will drain money from already cash-strapped public schools, but it will exacerbate the teacher shortage within the state. It will also create a system where well-off parents will enjoy public funds to support already cloistered schools that will not have to meet the same requirements of public schools. Public schools must accept ALL students whose le private schools can reject anyone. This creates a competitive disadvantage for public schools. Fully fund public schools and help pay staff enough to stop the revolving door that profession has become.

Justin Loop
Loop Media Group, Inc
Conroe, TX

E????????????? ?????????????? to let our children know what freedom really means. The public education system is being influenced by money. This money is being used to influence our children in a negative manner. We must find better alternatives! We must have the option to provide better opportunities for all children.

Danielle Mitchell
Self
Frisco, TX

What a blessing our local public school has been to my family. We have met lifelong friends, been blessed with outstanding teachers and watched as our kids have been challenged and encouraged to grow. I have also had the honor of serving at our school in different volunteer capacities and as a substitute teacher the past few years. I see teachers that teach TEAKs, not indoctrination as they are accused of. I see teachers support the student that struggles and challenge the student that needs more. My kids were lucky to have a teacher like Melissa Grubbs that recognized that my oldest struggled with reading leading to a learning disability diagnosis. The next year we were lucky that she caught our youngest struggling with focus leading us to get testing and an ADHD diagnosis.

These diagnoses cause extreme test anxiety for my children. My least favorite time of the year is STAAR testing time when I have to remind my kids they are more than a test. I watch my straight A students shrink back when they don't receive Presidential Academic awards because of STAAR testing results. This bill forces more standardized testing, and more turmoil with our children. I am baffled each year as we point out that parents, students, teachers and administrators don't want to take or give this test. In fact the only people that want our kids to take the test are sitting in the conference room and House that you sit in. That seems strange since you represent us.

Let me get to vouchers... if I thought they would work I would be all in. Guess what the people they will benefit do not attend D-F rated schools. The money spent trying to lobby for vouchers could have been used to set up scholarships in inner cities, but it was spent on some of you campaigns instead. They will not work. If a student cannot afford school lunch they cannot make up the difference in paying for private school.

Parents have always had a choice in their children's education. They are more than welcome to send them to private school, just not with taxpayer money.

Do the right thing and vote no for this bill.

John Bengson, Dr.
Self
Austin, TX

Respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Jace Hall, Coach
San Angelo ISD
San Angelo, TX

SB 8 is an outrage.

Tina Burge, Teacher
Self
Montgomery, TX

No use of state funding for vouchers. 6,000.00 raises for teachers and 15% paraprofessionals. 15% COLA for retired educators in 2023 and 5% each year the legislature meets.

Adam Dyer
Self-teacher/parent
Plano, TX

Under no circumstances should a bill be considered that uses vouchers to defund public education. In addition, state funding of public education should increase and all teachers deserve a meaningful raise. This politicization of school materials is limiting educational opportunities and is negatively impacting student outcomes.

April Wright
Self- on behalf of all public school employees
Tomball, TX

Please rethink this Bill. As a public school educator, we accept ALL children, no matter their academic, social, emotional or behavioral level. Providing funding for private schools without mandating the same rigorous testing and expectations does NOT benefit ALL children. Furthermore, increasing testing requirements to graduate from public schools and increasing the accountability requirements further separates and divides opportunities for ALL children. All systems should have accountability. By removing that accountability from the Commissioner, how can it be ensured that all decisions are best for ALL children? Thank you for hearing my voice.

Dollucy Grainger
Teachers
Odessa, TX

I vote no to vouchers. No to robbing the public education system. This is a clear situation of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. You will create a society of uneducated people who can pick the answers from A, B, C, or D.

Felipe Salinas
Self
McAllen, TX

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to SB 8, which call for the creation of vouchers (the so-called "education savings accounts") which would divert funding that is badly needed by our public schools to private schools that have little or no accountability to the State or Texas taxpayers. I strongly urge the members of the Public Education Committee to vote "No" on SB 8. It is not good for our public schools (especially hurting school districts in rural areas of Texas) and would fund private schools that are not accountable.

Al Brien
Certified Personal Trainer
Houston, TX

The voters, the public clearly does not want to see Texas get involved in school vouchers. We love our public schools, and that is what needs expanding, nurturing and caring. I, we are going to look very carefully at those politicians who support vouchers and their campaign donors that are pushing this from behind. Texas Public Schools already provides choices for parents, if they don't like it, then they can pay for private schools themselves. This is the way it is in capitalism, that is what a true republican would be supporting. Not to become a welfare state for those who feel themselves privileged. Please vote no on the vouchers, and consider dropping all State testing programs beginning with STAAR, and put that money into public school safety. Already to many Texas children have been killed while attending their local schools and the State is doing nothing about it.

Best regards
Al Brien

Betty Journey, Retired educator
Self
Montgomery, TX

No state funding for vouchers. Significant teacher raises for present and retired educators.

Christina Cole
Self
Houston, TX

I vehemently oppose SB 8. Private schools are not required to accept all students nor are they held to the same standards as public schools. Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers. It may eliminate STAAR, but it increases testing in a different way. The commissioner does not need more control to test Texas children. State funds do not need to be diverted to private schools. This bill harms Texas children.

Jared Price
Self
Austin, TX

This is unacceptable to rush such a critical bill as SB 8 through in a hearing without public testimony tomorrow.

Don't defund our public schools. They are critical to our state and nation. We need free, quality, public education to make sure we have educated citizens, opportunity for all, and clear commitment to the principles of democracy - including civic education and community engagement

Sue Marshall
Self/ teacher
Corpus Christi, TX

Vouchers are bad for education in the state. They benefit the privileged financially while leaving out large segments of the population and they further increase the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots". They also foster inequity because private institutions are not held to the same strict standards that the public school system is accountable to on both the state and federal levels. We should be investing in our public schools, the teachers who are front line providers in the public system, and programs that foster growth and interest in learning for our students. Vote No to school vouchers.

Elizabeth Moran, Ms.
Self
San Antonio, TX

Vote no to SB8

Sharon Nichols
Self, retired school paraprofessional
Baytown, TX

Vote no

Shannon Beeler, Public School Teacher
self - Public School Teacher
Tomball, TX

Respect public schools and teachers, vote NO on SB 8. Reject school vouchers!!!

Jose Lozano
Self
Eden, TX

I am writing to voice my concern and opposition on the education savings account (vouchers). I currently live in a small community that consist of approximately 210 students in our school district. Vouchers would take funding from our small school district. Public education plays a vital role in our students being successful and prepared for their next step in life. Our school has students that are in special need and by having a voucher program it would take away from their ability to grow and receive a well deserved education. Please vote against the voucher program. Let everyone's voice be heard and allow public education to grow in a positive direction.

Rennah Dunavant
Self/ public school teacher
Dallas, TX

Please respect our public schools and vote against school vouchers. Please find a way to improve our public education instead of trying to put a band-aid on a gushing river, which is what this bill will do. It will make things worse for the majority of the population. Please do not try to passify a select few, and consider the needs of the many instead!

Beth Fox
Self
Austin, TX

I am stunned at the Texas legislature's willingness to deystroy public education for millions of Texas students. First, the legislature has not adequately, funded our public schools and now you were figuring out multiple ways to divert funding to private, charter, and parochial schools. Your arrogance is shocking.

Carl Atnip
BestFindsOnline
San Antonio, TX

Don't you do it

Melissa Akin
Self, teacher
League City, TX

No

Diana Villagrana
Self teacher
El Paso, TX

Please respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Debra Vaello
Self Retired Texas teacher
Cypress, TX

I'm a retired Texas public school teacher who devoted 36 years to a job I loved. Both of my daughters are public school teachers and I have a granddaughter in 7th grade who attends a wonderful public school in Klein ISD. CSSB 8 offers billions in taxpayer-funded handouts to entirely unregulated private and parochial schools. At the same time, public schools will lose funding. Students will take more tests than before, which will play an even larger role in school accountability ratings. CSSB 8 cedes massive power to the unelected commissioner of education to overhaul the state's testing and accountability system—something that normally would not happen without years of study and debate.

Apart from the new ESA voucher money and a very minor tweak to existing laws on parents' access to state assessments, there is also nothing in CSSB 8 that would give parents new rights. I urge you to vote "no" on this bill.

Thomas Clegg
Teachers
Spring, TX

Voucher programs take money away from the public schools which need them. Please, for the sake of public education, vote, "No" on SB 8

Inez Burge, Retired
Self
Anderson, TX

No vouchers. Raises for current and retired teachers each legislative session.

Julie Jackson
Self/School Based SLP
Newark, TX

This is a bad bill for Texas in general, and especially our most vulnerable—our children. Sneaking this bill through without public knowledge or comment is shady and underhanded. Our kids deserve better! Please vote NO to this bill.

Karen Parker
Self, High School Counselor
San Antonio, TX

Vote NO on SB 8

Respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers.

David Johnson
Self, retired
Rowlett, TX

NO taxpayer dollars should be diverted from a free, public education system as specified in the Texas Constitution. This tax diversion would primarily be a discount for wealthy families with children already enrolled in private schools.

Under this bill, private schools still choose which children are worthy of admission - NOT parents. And private schools are NOT required to admit students with disabilities.

There is NO accountability in this bill for the public funds that would be diverted to private schools, charter schools, or individual parents themselves. Public schools are held to a strict, detailed accountability for the public funds they receive.

Public funds deserve public accountability.

ALL Texas children deserve a fully funded, free public education ... not just wealthy children or children without disabilities. This bill will cause poor and disabled children to suffer.

Please help ALL our Texas children. receive a great education. Please vote Nay on SB 8.

Stanley Lopez
Self teacher
Richmond, TX

Greetings,

As a Texan, as a public school teacher, and as a parent of a student in a private school I do not support vouchers. I am concerned that the very reasons I send my student to a private religious school would be affect by the flow of government dollars. I also do not support my tax dollars funding private institutions that have no oversight. I have seen poor quality private schools (one attended by my son) due to lack of transparency and accountability.

I am also concerned asThe voucher bill, SB 8 by Sen. Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe), was sent to the committee more than one month ago by the Senate, but the version passed by the Senate is significantly different from the 80-page version Chairman Buckley has introduced to his House committee.

Essentially, Buckley replaced the language of SB 8 with an entirely different bill, committee substitute for SB 8 (CSSB 8). This new 80-page version has still not been posted online for all Texans to see

Why hide things?

D'Anne Thompson, Mom
Self
Buchanan Dam, TX

SB 8 is just more corporate control of our children. Data mining, technology contracts, etc. . No actual money for TEACHERS. We raised 2 children: 1 public and 1 private. We used school choice AS INTENDED. Intentionally breaking public schools by unfunded mandates and starving them of their funding, then promising to fix it is just too crazy. But the voters know why. They know that Governor Abbott gets his orders from the World Economic Forum in Davos. He's a favorite there. Please vote NO representative Murr. This will destroy our rural schools that you represent. Llano county doesn't want globalization Thank you.

Shannon Range
Self
San Antonio, TX

This bill is an outrage! I am a public school teacher and absolutely do NOT support this bill. The lie that you are telling the public is that it will help lower socioeconomic students, but it will not. Lower socioeconomic students will not have the money to make up the tuition costs. Additionally, I'm disgusted that my tax dollars would go to religious schools. We are supposed to have a separation of church and state, but the right-wing Christian faction in our government has seemed to have forgotten that. This is really just a give away to the rich that you are packaging as "freedom of choice" for parents, but it is just a way to segregate schools and defund public schools. Shame on you!

Melissa Skinner, Dr.
Educator
New Caney, TX

Say No to vouchers! Private schools have no accountability thus not taking staar. This makes real public schools look bad because some have to take a very rigorous assessment while others don't. Public schools must take all students- sped, Ed, behavioral etc while private gets to pick and choose- whoever thought this was a fair and just system? I thought it was our duty to provide a free and public education to all! Please do the right thing and say NO to savings accounts (vouchers)!!!

Amby Clinkscale
Self
Cypress, TX

I oppose this bill! Money should be put into public education to raise the basic allotment by at least a \$1000 to account for inflationary costs.

Cameron Brown

Self. Parent and mental health professional.

Lubbock, TX

Thank you for all that you do for our beautiful state of Texas, including our neck of the woods in West Texas. I am writing you about my strong concerns related to Gov Abbott's and Lt Gov Patrick's school voucher plans that have been making their way through our state legislator. Specifically, SB 8 which is currently being considered by your committee. As someone who has children in our incredible public school setting here in Lubbock I worry about the financial effects it will have on their education.

Having read significant amounts of literature and studies related to school vouchers and public funded ESAs, I have three primary concerns related to them:

1. It would financially ruin already strained rural public schools like we have in our West Texas community. State leaders proposing these plans have already assured that it would financially hurt public schools, but especially so rural areas (like ours!).
2. SB 8 being proposed, has minimal accountability built into vouchers. That is, will there be standards to ensure that private schools that receive tax dollars (vouchers) don't discriminate (race, gender, beliefs, etc), that their campus is accessible to various abilities/skills, that they provide accommodations to students with unique needs and special circumstances, or that they meet specific learning benchmarks/standards? Presently, this bill, does not have these accountability measures and yet still would funnel public money towards these private institutions. Why hold public schools to very strict standards and expectations but not private when they are also using public funds?
3. Data from other states that have implemented similar systems have illustrated, at best, no improvement in education other than a LOT more public dollars are needed to make it work. In most cases, the outcomes are not great for students and their education. Why overall a system that will cost our state more money and at best give us the same educational outcomes and most likely worse? It does not make sense.
4. Making k-12 education into a for profit business is troubling. We already see what has happened to higher education when institutions have embraced this same model of profit (sky high tuition). Additionally, I am exceptionally concerned at the amount of dollars organizations and individuals are pouring in to get vouchers put into place here in Texas. Based upon where I am sitting, it sure doesn't seem like that money is to simply offer better educational opportunities to our upcoming generation.

Thus, I implore you to NOT support school vouchers including what is found in SB 8. It will decimate our fantastic schools that we have here in West Texas. Rather, I would invite you to explore innovative ways to build on the already great system that we have through appropriately funding teachers, appropriately staffing schools, ensuring that schools have the supplies and resources they need, etc.

Your fellow Texan, Cam Brown

Mackenzie Klima
Self - Public School Teacher
Houston, TX

As a public school teacher in the city of Houston, I urge you to reallocate the funds currently routed toward the education savings account program (private school vouchers) into public school funding to ensure that the separation of church and state is upheld in the state of Texas. Churches are tax exempt. Public taxpayer money should never be allocated to vocational schools.

Furthermore, students who are not approved to receive a voucher account will still suffer the consequences of under-funded public schools due to the diversion of funds.

Private school does not equal a better education. There are over 320,000 public school teachers in the state of Texas who work tirelessly to provide an equitable education to all the students of Texas. We work every single day to help improve the literacy rates in Texas, which in turn, aids the economy in the long run and ensures that Texas is a competitor in the national and global economy.

Texas has shown massive improvement in its public school literacy rates. According to TEA, “Texas’s rank improved in both fourth and eighth grade reading, and in eighth grade math. In fourth grade math, Texas students performed better (239) than the national average (235) and exceptionally well when compared to their peers, with African American, Hispanic, White, and Economically Disadvantaged students ranking 1st, 4th, 2nd, and 6th in the U.S. African American students also rank 1st in math in eighth grade. Improvements in Texas’s rank in reading for its students was also notable. In particular, the performance of students with disabilities jumped from 34th to 17th in fourth grade reading and from 48th to 14th in eighth grade reading.” Source: <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/news-and-multimedia/news-releases/news-2022/nations-report-card-shows-texas-is-recovering-from-the-pandemic-in-reading-much-work-remains-in-math>

Campuses that receive a D accountability rating need better support which comes from more funding. More funding for public school enables more training for administrators and teachers. Accountability ratings are heavily based off of STAAR standardized testing.

It doesn’t make sense to use an accountability rating as the basis for an ‘opt out’ of the public school system when private schools aren’t even required to take standardized tests and therefore have zero accountability.

According to the TEA website; “TEA does not have oversight of private schools or vocational schools in Texas.” Source: <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/accr/accr-status>

So, where is the accountability for private schools?

The solution to these low accountability ratings is investing - not divesting - funds into public schools.

Pat Stevens, Ms
AFT
Forr Worth, TX

I call upon our elected leaders to vote NO on SB 8. The surreptitious methods used to try to get it passed are shameful and its passage will be VERY detrimental to our struggling public education system. Let Texas instead be a leader in providing public education the funds and resources it needs to once again become exemplary and show our dedication to the future of all our students-not the select few to the harm of all the others. Thank you for your attention and service to your constituents.

Karen Burnell
Texas PTA
Dallas, TX

I can not stress enough how much not only Texas PTA members but parents and teachers in my neighborhood of Richardson, Texas oppose the idea vouchers over simply just putting more funds into public education. Texas is woefully behind the national average for student funding by \$4,000!! And with the rise in inflation, many of our teachers can not pay their bills without working a second job. It just seems to make more sense to dedicate more funding to public educators vs. allowing funding to be taken away and put into private education (of which many could not afford to pay for what the voucher wouldn't cover). Please consider a more comprehensive plan to help public education! Vouchers are simply not the answer!

Heather Clarke
Greenville ISD
Greenville, TX

Stop before you destroy education in Texas.

Andrea Gore
Self
Austin, TX

I am writing to oppose SB 8. Public schools are a fundamental right of all Texans, and taking money away from public education penalizes those who need it most. Please vote against SB 8.

Jennifer Beck
Self- Assistant Principal and Mother of public school students
Frisco, TX

Taxpayer money should only fund public schools for all children. If a parent would like to send their child to a private school, that is their right, but there is a cost to that family and should be that family only. Invest the money in public schools. Lower class sizes and support public Ed students with public funds.

Karen Wyatt
Booker ISD
Booker, TX

I am not in favor of this bill and voucher programs. I bet it would work in bigger metropolises, but it will destroy small town school systems. You need to think about the whole, not just a part.
Keep rural schools going!

Teresa Razo
Self-Elementary Bilingual Educator
San Antonio, TX

Dear House,Public Education Committee Members:

My name is Teresa Razo. I am a PK Dual Language educator at Elma A Neal ES in San Antonio, TX. I have more than 15 years of teaching experience and I am against SB8.

I urge you to listen to Rep. Ernest Bailes and vote in opposition on SB8. More testing is not a solution to the problem. Do you think more testing will help these students? Not at all! Some of these students must work to help their parents with the upkeep of their house. Not every student has a two-parent mom-and-dad home, or a \$50K dollar yearly income. Some of these students will be lost in the system if we keep on testing excessively. These students need more resources not more testing.

In addition, I urge you to reject school vouchers! Rushing a vote on this bill is a gross and underhanded move, and I consider it a slap in the face to our public schools, the 5.5 million children they educate, and the 650,000 Texans they employ. I urge you to vote NO on SB 8 and this attempt to divert taxpayer dollars away from our neighborhood public schools. The Committee should respect public schools and reject school vouchers.

Michelle Stephenson
Self- Public School Teacher
Lockhart, TX

Please respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Tricia Wahl
Self retired
Schertz, TX

As a life-long Republican, I would hope that our party that fights against big government should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers.

Shantay Carter
AFTA
Houston, TX

Vote no

Marina Quilantan-Rivera, school board member (Vice-President)
LYFORD CISD
Lyford, TX

We are urging that you do not allow SB 8 to pass!!!!

Debra Malone, Mrs
Self
Mount Pleasant, TX

As a voter and supporter of your current elected position, I respectfully request you vote against SB 8 and any bill proposing my tax dollars being used to pay for private tuition or any type of instruction other than Texas Public Schools. It is insulting to think some elected officials think it is okay to use public funds for private gain. If funding was increased to a reasonable level, our public school students would flourish. As it is presented, not only would SB 8 use my taxes for private tuition, it would also be more than what is provided per student for public school. That is a travesty!

Thank you for representing your constituents and voting no to vouchers, or any name they put on this type of funding.

Jo Bryant
Self
Rockwall, TX

As a public school employee, parent and taxpayer I oppose Senate Bill 8. Vouchers, ESAs and the like will hurt public education. School choice already exists with unregulated free charter, home school and tuition based private schools all over the state. Charters, originally meant to help families in underperforming school districts, now pop up in great communities with great schools. They pick and choose church kids to accept.

Instead, please increase public school funding. Help us fight the teacher shortage. The masses of Texas children need fully funded public schools. Many people consider leaving public schools because of STAAR. I hope your legislative actions will focus on the things that matter in our homes.

We need your help!

Patricia Parson, Mrs.
Self
The Colony, TX

Please vote NO for school vouchers. Money for public schools should NOT be diverted to private schools. If parents want to send their children to private schools, they should pay for that out of their own finances, not public finances. Public schools are required to educate ALL children, not just the brightest students, not just the well behaved students, and not just the students without any special needs. By diverting funds from public education you are jeopardizing the welfare of every student that is not classified as "normal". And by law, public schools must provide for the needs of all students regardless of their needs and status. Why should private schools that are not subjected to public school policies and procedure receive an unfair proportion of funds? That's ridiculous. Additionally, think about what vouchers would do to rural school district funding. Let's be fair and do our best to keep the funds where they belong in the public school system so that most students can obtain the education they deserve. Do not start catering to the few wealthy to advance their wants at the expense of every other child.

Laura Marder
Myself, Public Education Teacher
Alba, TX

Good Morning Honorable Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Laura Marder and I am a high school teacher from Mineola, Texas as well as a parent of two small children in the Texas public school system. I am writing today AGAINST SB8 which proposes the allocation of funds out of the classrooms of deserving children in our public education institutions, and into the hands of those who are unregulated in the appropriation of those funds to students in need. This bill also does not eliminate high stakes testing and in most cases actually increases them for our students, which the majority of teachers and parents polled are strongly against. It should come as no surprise that our public schools are in a unique position to need more support now than ever before. By allowing this bill to go forward, you are directly exacerbating existing funding deficiencies that directly impact student achievement and ultimately the future of Texas. Texas currently ranks in the bottom 10 states of the entire country in public school funding and this bill will only further eliminate funds so desperately needed by deserving youth in this state. Throughout my nine years of teaching, I have seen time and again students returning to our public schools who had once been enrolled in private education. The main reason being is the lack of opportunities available to students and parents realizing the quality of education simply is not the same in a private setting. When these students return to my classroom they are often behind their peers academically and other needs have not been met in an unregulated private school environment. As a teacher, my number one priority and concern is always for my students. In the public schools of Texas we feed them, we counsel them, we provide transportation, extracurricular opportunities and more. In essence we surround and support the entire child throughout their educational years in our public school. Whereas in a private school they simply do not have the oversight in place to guarantee our children will receive these essential services. I am asking you to please consider other solutions to this bill, and focus your efforts on properly addressing funding deficiencies in our public school systems. The future of Texas is riding on the decisions you take today. Vote NO to SB8 and instead invest funds into raising teacher salaries and additional funding for public school students.

Respectfully signed as a concerned teacher, parent and taxpayer of Texas,

Laura Marder

Rose Parker
None
Frisco, TX

I do not support vouchers Under any circumstances.

Virginia Garcia
Self - retired Educator
Hondo, TX

This bill, along with any other bill to defund public education, is an insult to to the public school teachers of Texas and to the populations that they serve. It is reasonable to suggest that the Tx congress has forgotten who they are elected to serve. Here's a hint , not themselves. Tax payer money is for the benefit of taxpayers, not corporations or individuals who will profit monetarily from defunding our schools. Let's show some respect for public schools and gain some respect for yourselves.

Shanita Dotson, Mrs.
Self
Rowlett, TX

Respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers, refuse and more testing for our children. My husband and I send I children to school to receive a quality education not learn how to test. We pay taxes to the State of Texas and we want no vouchers and less testing.

Jeana Actkinson
Self
Runaway Bay, TX

NO VOUCHERS

Annie Compton
Self
Austin, TX

Please to do not pass this bill. Public education funds need to be used to fund Public Education
We desperately need to support our public schools
In addition the modification to SB 8 in regard to testing INCREASE rather than decrease the amount of testing required

Kevin Morgan
Self Educator
Rowlett, TX

Public funds for public schools. This bill is not for all students in Texas, this has limited scope and range and would need a lot more oversight, which I'm for less government, not more. Please fund public schools properly. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration when voting against SB 8.

Jenna Hainlen
self; teacher
ARLINGTON, TX

Your response to a surprise vote on an unheard voucher bill being denied by the Texas House cannot be to call a pro-forma hearing that still bars the public from speaking.

Our communities deserve a voice in this process. The brand-new, 80-page bill you are hearing would radically transform our public education system and cause serious harm to our public schools.

I am horrified that the committee is keeping Texans from making their voices heard on it.

Rushing a vote on this bill is a gross and underhanded move, and I consider it a slap in the face to our public schools, the 5.5 million children they educate, and the 650,000 Texans they employ.

I urge you to vote NO on SB 8 and this attempt to divert taxpayer dollars away from our neighborhood public schools.

Cameron Markeloff, Mrs.
Self-Tutor/Educator
Houston, TX

I am vehemently opposed to this bad bill. It takes more funding away from public schools and promises parents they can use state money for private schools. It also states that it abolishes the STAAR test but then creates more state testing under the guise of a new name. Elementary and middle school students would go from 15 tests to 42 tests. That is almost three times as many tests, with no promise they will be shorter, necessary, or even appropriate. Students need fewer tests and less emphasis on testing while they are in elementary school. Public schools need more support, not less. They also need our state leaders to stop politicizing the needs of our students, teachers, and other staff members. Do not be fooled, educators and parents are watching what you choose to do with public education. Gutting our public schools only serves to create a less educated populace more dependent on government services. Choose to do the right thing and VOTE NO on SB 8. Your children and grandchildren will thank you.

Elizabeth Fehlbaum
Self- Public School Teacher
Mabank, TX

Your proposal does not eliminate the STAAR. In fact, it adds standardized tests that students must take. Your proposal will rob billions of dollars from public schools. Your proposal treats those with learning disabilities on vouchers to private schools differently than their peers. Your proposal seeks approval via an invitation-only meeting, NO public comment, which says it all. Your proposal is shameful. Shame on you.

Sandy Conklin, Dr.
self
humble, TX

Absolutely NO to vouchers!

Jamie Morton, Teacher
Brazosport ISD
Clute, TX

You should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Maria Saucedo
AFT
Allen, TX

VOTE NO- school vouchers

Rene De Los Santos
Self
San Antonio, TX

Proven facts: charter schools do not provide adequate services for students but instead are low cost, uncertified, corporate daycare which act as diploma mills under the false pretenses of being quality education.

Bryan Houston
Self
Tyler, TX

This is a terrible bill designed to destroy public education. I do not want my tax dollars paying for students to go to private school instead of finding public schools adequately. Do your job!!! VOTE NO to SB 8, or I will be working my hardest to see that all supporters of this bill will be voted out of office.

Theresa Williams, Superintendent
Plano ISD
Plano, TX

May 15, 2023

House Public Education Committee
Texas State Capitol
E2.036
1100 Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Chairman Buckley and Committee Members:

Plano ISD joins with school districts around the state in asking you to oppose SB 8 and the voucher system it would create.

Our public schools are dealing with more than ever before following the significant learning loss our students experienced following the COVID 19 pandemic and yet inflation and rising costs consistently reduce our budgets. Public education needs more support from our State Legislature and leaders – not less. We implore you to prioritize supporting our schools to ensure we can provide every single student that walks into our schools with the high-quality education that they deserve.

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) will only further deplete available funding for our schools, which, unlike private schools, accept and work to support every student that enrolls regardless of their circumstances. Furthermore, as we are a public institution funded by public dollars, we are held to strict accountability standards for both our student outcomes and our financial management. Taxpayers have a right to know how their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent. ESAs strip them of this right while they fund private schools that lack the same accountability and transparency standards.

The State cannot simultaneously withhold essential funding for public schools and then claim at the same time that it is our schools that are failing children. Provide us with the resources we need to deliver on our promise of a great education to our students and then hold us accountable for the results. Public education has always been the cornerstone of our great democracy and investing in our schools is imperative for its successful future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Theresa Williams
Plano ISD Superintendent

Darby Alexander
HISD - 7th grade teacher
HOUSTON, TX

This bill redirects funding away from areas that need it! Among other problems with this bill, private curriculum companies will overcharge districts for materials, that teachers are already paid to make! Texas' teacher certification INCLUDES curriculum and lesson creation, so is this bill a statement on the efficiency of that training? I know I'm capable (and do) create curriculum that is better for my students than the private company MY school paid thousands of dollars to in order to get this curriculum. What is taught to the students and more importantly how it is taught must be tailored to the students class by class, so although beneficial providing curriculum does not erase that workload from a teacher. Additionally, support your local industries and educators by paying them to create this curriculum instead of Pearson or Lowman. This bill and other like it that seek to adjust our education system miss the real issues and solutions that teachers put forward. Like SB1515 where the Ten Commandments are supposed to improve classroom management (which is delusional! By the way...) the issues with our system is lack of staff and lack of support, my student need more individualised attention I cannot afford to give them because I have too many students, which I only have because my school doesn't receive enough funding to hire teachers to drop below the maximum class size. The legal requirements for maximum class size are ignored because of lack of funding. Classroom management is directly tied to the number of students in the classroom, if legislators really wanted to improve the academic outcomes of students AND the longevity of their teachers they need smaller class sizes. Every studio and scrape of data will tell you class size is EVERYTHING. What Texas needs isn't to pay private organizations to do a worse job than our current state employees, it's to invest in our own resources. Your current teachers know they're students and their material better than anyone or any company the TEA or ISDs could find. I urge Texas to invest in its teachers in order to invest in its students, higher pay and more teachers. Teachers are the bridge students cross to education, stop taking bricks away from the foundation to pave the road! Any legislator who does not advocate for raises for teachers and increasing the number of teachers is showing their hand, they dont support public education! More teachers and better paid teachers are the only way to improve student outcomes.

Ms. Darby Alexander
7th Grade History

PS by attributing state funding to private education institutions the Texas state legislature will deny my students access to the facilities their more wealthy counterparts have. The school voucher program and the idea that it gives parents more choice ignores the fact that parent already have that choice, and ignores the reality of people who already don't have a choice will have their ONLY choice harmed for the sake of the rich, it disgusts me

Christina Gonzalez, Ms.
Self
Corpus Christi, TX

Vote NO

Suzanne self Atcheson
Self/ High School Teacher
Lubbock, TX

The voucher system is NOT want the majority of Texans want. It hurts public education and shows ZERO SUPPORT for public ed. teachers. We need real raises and less big business (testing and curriculum companies) pushing education. SUPPORT EDUCATORS. SUPPORT PUBLIC EDUCATION. SUPPORT WHAT THE VOTERS WANT, NOT THE CORPORATIONS.

Christina Gonzalez, Ms.
Self
Corpus Christi, TX

Vote No

Dax Gonzalez
Texas Association of School Boards
Austin, TX

Parents are the primary and most important educators of children, and we appreciate your efforts to empower them to better engage in their children's education and increase their involvement in public schools. Unfortunately, the inclusion of education savings account vouchers in Senate Bill 8 weakens parental empowerment, undermines our public schools, and stands in direct opposition to our member-developed and member-adopted Advocacy Agenda. The assessment portion of the bill also increases state tests and grants the commissioner of education more control over public education. Therefore, we oppose SB 8 as long as it contains ESAs.

Vouchers give schools the power to choose, not parents. Private schools would not be required to accept students with ESAs, and the funding proposed under SB 8 is not enough for parents to get into high-quality private schools. What parents will see – as has been the case in other states – is an influx of fly-by-night private schools. In fact, more than 40% of schools receiving vouchers in states with voucher programs opened and have since failed and closed. The increased transparency of curriculum and instructional materials proposed in SB 8 as it was filed would not be required and is absent in private schools. In Texas public schools, parents have the right to view the curriculum and instructional materials used in their children's classrooms, unlike private schools. Parents also have a direct say in the governance of their local schools through the election of trustees and the protected right to speak at open meetings of the board. Private schools do not have locally elected boards and do not follow the same open meetings laws as public schools. Parents and students have several protections and rights in Texas public schools, such as rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, state open meetings laws, as well as state financial and academic accountability laws. Private schools do not offer these protections for parents and students. Private schools are also not required to administer the STAAR test, are not subject to the state's A-F accountability system, do not have to accept all children, and are not required to disclose their finances. The diversion of public tax dollars for public education to private entities would weaken all public schools, infringing upon the vast majority of Texas parents' right to a free and adequate public education for their children.

The proposed changes to the state's testing system may seem to alleviate the testing burden felt by many teachers and students, but they actually increase the number of tests and days spent administering them – further exacerbating educator and student testing fatigue.

TASB and Texas public school leaders want parents engaged in the classroom and in their children's education. Children do better and our schools do better when parents are active and present. SB 8 weakens the rights of families and accountability to taxpayers.

Mendi Tackett
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Please do not move forward with SB8. Please be true to the Texas Constitution. Vouchers hurt public schools. Texans are not in favor of vouchers in our state.

Megan Passwater
Self- teacher
Leander, TX

Please support public schools by rejecting voucher bills in any form. Vouchers use public money for private businesses and take away from the most foundational aspect of democracy— a free education. Vote no on SB 8.

Patricia Butler, Ms.
Self/ teacher
Houston, TX

NO to this bill. NO to vouchers. NO to giving public dollars to private education. NO to defunding our public schools.

Jeanette Rosin
Self, teacher
Leander, TX

Please vote NO

Allison Garson, Mrs.
Self: teacher
Houston, TX

Dear Committee Members:

I am a public school teacher and the mother of a public school student. I urge you to VOTE NO on SB8 because it prioritizes out of state corporations over your own citizens, public servants, and future voters. Private and charter schools have not shown improved outcomes over public school. If you are serious about accountability, then fully fund public schools! Vote no on SB8. Thank you.

Allison Garson

Eileen Parvin
Self
Garland, TX

BACKROOM SHADY DEALINGS

I am so sick and tired of house public education committees trying to push thru bills without hearings or testimony..
VOTE NO TO VOUCHERS!

I taught in public education for 30 years and this is going to do nothing to help public education and teachers.

REJECT SCHOOL VOUCHERS NOW

Dan Patrick Greg Abbott and ken Paxton are the worst representatives of public schools and if you back their policies and objectives I will do my best to vote you out of office.

Vote no to vouchers and give some of that money for teacher raises.

Dave England
Dallas ISD
Dallas, TX

SB 8.

Marc Grace
self/teacher
Leander, TX

Establishing vouchers is antithetical to creating a just society for the good of all. I am a former private school teacher who now teaches in a public school so I have seen both sides of this education system. Private schools have their place as a choice based on parental preference. BUT, a voucher system would take away public funds from families who do not have a preference for private schools or do not have a private school in their area. In addition, most private schools in Texas are founded based on religious belief. Article 1, Section 7 of the Texas Constitution forbids using public funds to benefit religious sects or societies.

The purpose of laws is to provide for the common good. This measure privileges affluent families with access to savings, transportation, and private care for special needs, over the vast majority of families in the state. This is a bad law and should be voted down.

Rene Ibarra
Self / Teacher
Brownsville, TX

Respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers.

Rene Ibarra
Self/Parents
Brownsville, TX

Eespect public schools by rejecting school vouchers.

Melissa Martin, Mrs.
Self/Principal
Cypress, TX

I am opposed to any bill that establishes education savings accounts in any form. The focus of this legislative session should be FULLY FUNDING public schools. This bill is not fiscally conservative nor is it in the best interests of Texas children.

Angela Garza-Viator, Ms.
Self / Public School Educator
Pasadena, TX

Members of the House Public Education Committee:

I sincerely urge you to mobilize and vote against CSSB 8. This bill is extremely detrimental to public schools and to public educators.

CSSB 8 doesn't prioritize parental choice over the right of the private school to pick and choose their students. School choice should and already exists without vouchers; the most vulnerable students (including students identified with disabilities, emotional/behavioral challenges or attendance concerns) will not benefit from CSSB 8 because they will not be accepted by private schools.

CSSB 8 won't help with teacher retention, doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address the individual needs of students. CSSB does not address the three key areas of need identified by the TEA Teacher Vacancy Task Force: Compensation, Training/Support and Working Conditions.

CSSB 8 doesn't abolish the STAAR; instead it just replaces it with STAAR 2.0 with even more Commissioner authority. Furthermore, CSSB 8 incorporates more testing instead of less. Under the current system and with CSSB 8, private schools which stand to receive tax payer funds diverted from community public schools are not subject to state accountability.

CSSB 8 does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs.

CSSB 8 does not include a hold harmless for public schools that lose kids to a voucher.

I strongly urge you to vote against CSSB, as it does not meet the needs of families, parents, students, educators or tax payers of Texas. I am a parent and a 25 year educator in Texas. I choose to serve my community and the students of Texas because I believe in the work of public schools. As a parent and as an educator, I believe the priority of our State should be to fully fund our public schools. It is embarrassing that we rank 42nd in the nation for state spending on education, trailing by over \$4,000 per student. Our great State earns an F-rating in per-student spending, and yet, our teachers are constantly berated by State leadership for the gaps in student achievement. The impact of under-funding our public schools has really come into the spotlight, particularly with the challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Blaming educators and public schools for the State government's lack of prioritization of funding and supporting schools is unacceptable and unconscionable. Rather than considering diverting funds from public schools who educate ALL students, the conversation that should be taking place should be how to address the key areas identified by the TEA Teacher Vacancy Task Force, initiated and led by Commissioner Morath. Improving and supporting the work of 320,000 + public educators is vital to the work that impacts 5.5 million students who are the future of our State.

I strongly implore you to vote against CSSB 8.

Tina Delaney
Self
Dallas, TX

Vote no on this bill!

Kelley Book, Library
CFISD
Cypress, TX

VOTE NO on CSSB 8.

Greta McFarling
Self
San Antonio, TX

I urge a No vote on SB 8. Public vouchers will take funding from our public schools and cause irreparable damage to our educational system and democracy.

Geraldine King
Retired Teacher
Dorchester, TX

Please vote NO to SB8.

Carol Floyd, Mrs
Self
College Station, TX

I strongly believe that you should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Daniel MacFarlane, Mr.
None
Deer Park, TX

I am asking you to vote NO on SB8.

Carmen Martinez
Self veteran
MANCHACA, TX

I have two SpEd students enrolled in public school. School vouchers for students with disabilities are a FALSE PROMISE. SB 8 is repackaging of discriminatory policy that will fail kids like mine.
Please Vote No on SB 8.

Stephanie Meshell
self /Cypress Fairbanks ISD
Houston, TX

Please vote NO to CSSB 8!!! I do not support this bill as it takes money away from public education. We need funding to help the many students who are still catching up on their academics, social and emotional issues. We have a dedicated staff of teachers and administrators in the state of Texas taking on the challenge and seeing great success. We need funding to continue to bring our great state even farther than we are now!

William Sells
SELF
Kingwood, TX

VOTE NO!!!!!! If parents want a choice then they should fund the choice. Public education requires certification by educators. Private schools do not. Why should it be funded with tax dollars.
VOTE NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO!!! Support Texas Education. 13 plus years in Texas Education.

Kathleen Jones, Mrs.
Self Retired public education teacher
Sweeny, TX

Please respect our public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Please vote NO on SB 8. Thank you. Kathleen Jones

Melissa Ait Belaid
Self, Teacher
Princeton, TX

Do not enact this bill. Respect and uphold the integrity of public schools.

David Mason, Mr.
self
Lexington, TX

Vote NO on SB 8... NO VOUCHERS!!!!!!!!!!!!

catherine bremer, Ms
Forest Horse
Blanco, TX

Vote No on SB8. Public schools are the fabric of our society. They deserve funding and not to be dismantled

dianna biskan
Self retired
Plano, TX

You know that parents across Texas overwhelmingly support school choice. The Educrats -- including woke unions and bureaucrats -- are desperate to cling to power and control. We want this to STOP!! Listen to the will of the Parents.....we don't want to co-parent with the Government

So we need your help NOW to make our voices heard! Urge your fellow Legislators to give our kids the freedom to ESCAPE woke indoctrination!

Paul McManus
Self - Business Analyst
Lantana, TX

Please do not support SB 8, as having robust public education funding and other support for all Texans is absolutely critical towards improving equal educational opportunities for everyone, economic growth, diversity and inclusion efforts, and the overall quality of life for all Texans!

Casey Pederson
Self
Emory, TX

Hello, my name is Casey Pederson and I am a teacher in the state of Texas. I work at Sulphur Springs HS teaching CTE exercise science classes and Anatomy and Physiology. To allow this bill to pass is to place a blow to education. Vouchers would create inequality in public education as private schools are not held accountable to IDEA nor does the voucher money cover the full cost of attendance. You would in up only providing opportunities to already wealth families who do not have any educational disabilities. This would create a segregation of our students as minorities tend to be those who live in lower income communities. Another issue with this bill is the changing of standardized testing. STAAR is complicated enough for our students already. I remember my transition from taking the TAKS test to taking the STAAR test and was so stressed with how complicated it got. She should not be adding more to students and teachers plates. If anything standardized testing needs to be something our teachers create together so there is no longer a need to teach to a test. Students are less stressed and more likely to learn in subjects they are not tested in. Non-tested subjects are more engaging as the teacher has more freedom to reach all learners rather than teach to a test that is a poor reflection on teacher and students already. Not all students are good test takers. Standardized testing should NOT be increased and made more stressful, you will only see a decrease in scores. And stop outsourcing the test to a company not in the US. Standardized tests should be at the HS level in Algebra 1, English 1&2, U.S. History, and Biology. A paid committee of at least 18 teachers (1A-6A and from low, middle, high income areas) should come together in the summer to create standardized tests over all the subjects but U.S. History. This would allow the test to be an actual reflection of what student are/should be learning. It would also allow for the millions sent to an overseas company to be reallocated to give all teacher the much needed raise. U.S. history does not need a committee because we already have a test for that subject, the citizenship test. If we expect people to pass to become citizens, it isn't too much to ask that natural born citizens take the test too. It's less stressful even cause they don't have citizenship riding on it. In short, vouchers would undermine the public education systems and increasing standardized testing would add more stress to students and families.

melanie justice
ISD teacher
Livingston, TX

PLEASE VOTE NO.

Carolyn Dower
self, retired nurse
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote no on SB 8. This takes away from funding public schools and is grossly unconstitutional. Please oppose SB 8.

Susan Stafford
Self
Amarillo, TX

Please vote against school vouches in any way, shape, or form. Once again, someone is trying to rush this through and sneak it through without a public hearing. How dare all of you! Do what's best for education in this state and not what the particular party in charge wants to do (destroy public education and take away funding from public schools, rerouting these funds to private & charter schools). I do NOT wish my public tax dollars going to support private/charter schools, nor is it fair to give wealthy people who are already sending their children to private schools a "financial break." It is their choice to spend that money, and it shouldn't be my dollars supporting that choice. If anything, you all should be INCREASING funding to public schools and to teacher and staff salaries.

Christopher Roberts
Self- High School Teacher
Hurst, TX

Distinguished members of the Public Education Committee, I write to you to express frustration at the insistence of its members to ram-rod through a bill so unpopular with the citizens it represents. This bill does not do simple, common sense measures such as adjusting the student allotment to match cost increases due to inflation, follow the recommendations of the Teacher Retention report, or alleviate the burden of standardized testing on elementary school students. These are just a few of the many issues that our elected leaders refuse to address, even though the Texas Supreme Court has loudly and clearly stated that the current system of funding education needs to be changed. Now this body chooses to bring forward a bill that keeps the current funding system with the added burden of removing dollars to be spent on schools without the accountability requirements that we as public educators face. This defies logic of good governance! In addition, many of your members and their lobbying partners choose to demonize our public education system with lies and half-truths. Texas is an at-will state, so there are no unions that opposition to this bill is trying to protect. We are required by law to teach the TEKS and tested over them, so there is no woke indoctrination unless it is mandated by the TEA. Public school employees have seen real incomes decline as inflation and rising health insurance costs outpace any raises school districts provide. The people of Texas deserve better from its elected leaders. The students of Texas deserve a free, public school system that is fully funded as required by the State Constitution. Hard working school employees deserve the respect earned by their dedication to serving all students. I urge the members of the Public Education Committee to listen to the people of Texas and say no to Senate Bill 8.

Katharine Combs
Self, educator
Cypress, TX

As the 88th Legislation is winding down, I implore you to vote to significantly increase funding for public education. Texas is known for our high quality education, unlike other areas of the country that uses voucher systems. Taking money away from public schools to fund vouchers will in no way improve academic achievement. Many of these vouchers will go to private or homeschool, which have no accountability system. Voucher systems also encourage the "warm body" epidemic, where people who are not highly qualified are teaching content to our already struggling students because of the pandemic learning gap.

I urge you to:

- Increase the basic allotment by at least \$1,000 AND add an inflationary index.
 - Modify the property value assignment for the homestead exemption.
 - Provide reimbursement for safety expenditures and increase the school safety allotment to \$100.
 - Oppose any legislation that diverts funding from public to private or home schools.
-

Vickie Pine
Self retired teacher
Savannah, TX

Please do not approve any bill that contains vouchers of any kind. Defunding public education will hurt everyone and weaken our economy in Texas. We must increase support for education especially teachers. We must make sure our students are properly educated to one day take over our state. Getting rid of Staar is a great start but adding more test is not the answer. Thank you

Cynthia Thomas
None
Plano, TX

I am opposed to diverting any public funds to private education. Giving parents more options for selecting different public school campuses is an acceptable option.

Sylvester Gallardo
Self
San Antonio, TX

We need to invest in our public school system, not vouchers!

Charlie Troncale
my wife and myself
Bellville, TX

My wife and I both vote and we do not approve of the proposed school voucher legislation. How about addressing grid concerns?

Ken Damron
Self
Austin, TX

I urge on NO vote on SB 8. Any form of voucher legislation is bad policy and unacceptable. Vouchers would drain already underfunded public schools. Vouchers would also send public funds to private entities that would have no accountability, transparency or oversight to taxpayers. Instead, fully fund public schools!

Rebecca Shuffield
Self - Public school educator
Midlothian, TX

Please respect and financially support the hundreds of thousands of students, their parents, and educators connected to Texas public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Anne Vallette
Self
Montgomery, TX

The children of the State of Texas are our most precious asset. Sadly, the state does not prioritize the value of public education as called for in the Texas Constitution. Vouchers will create a new type of Segregation! They do not help students. They do not help teachers. They do not help to educate the masses of children. Public Schools welcome EVERY student regardless of ability, language, medical conditions, etc. - EVERY STUDENT. Vouchers by any name do not do that! Special need children are ignored by voucher/private schools. They are just wrong.
The Public Education Committee would be better off standing up for public schools rather than submitting to the pressure of others. Properly fund public schools!
Please.

RONALD KOTTS
Self
Houston, TX

It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools
It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws
It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve
It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system
It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority

Sarah Williams
Self
Houston, TX

Vote no to this bill.

Katrina Gray
Self - Compliance Officer
Richardson, TX

I respectfully request that you do NOT support any measure or amendment or bill that includes the funding of vouchers for private education.

Vouchers should not be a part of our public education system. The idea that Texas' taxpayer funds could be pulled from Texas public education (which is used by over 90% of our students in Texas) so that an elite few could have some extra money to put towards their private school educations - with no accountability or oversight on those private schools for how they educate, discipline or even allow those students to be at their schools is absurd.

The whole idea is more of a smoke & mirrors that conveniently supports one party's theory that our students are somehow being victimized by simply attending a public school and that their parents have no voice in what their child learns or how the schools are managed. Our state has been under leadership by this same party for decades now and these same leaders have had the responsibility to provide laws for, fund and set up the structures in our public school system. But now we are to believe that this voucher idea is going to make things better? How does this help with teacher retention - to take funds away from schools? How does this protect a student with learning challenges, who has been at a low-performing school - to go to a private school where they are subject to whatever the rules of the school are and must waive their federally protected rights to a supportive education? How is this a good use of our tax dollars when you aren't able to have any oversight or accountability that the money is benefitting the student?

This is not a good idea. It is a distraction from the real problems we have in public education. Please do not vote for any form of vouchers and instead turn your time and energy towards the measures that the Texas PTAs are asking you to support if you want to better public education, teachers and our students.

God bless you,
Katrina Gray

Yohanna Marshall, Educator
Self
Houston, TX

Committee Members;

Thank you for your public service.

Regarding SB 8, it is a positive development that diplomas for students succeeding in coursework but not having received a diploma due to challenges with state testing are being considered. It is a compassionate gesture rooted in logic that will facilitate the pursuit of happiness for Texans.

As you review and listen to testimony on SB 8, please consider what appears to be an omission. While Article 2 purports to be grounded in a concern for the "general diffusion of knowledge," it neither recognizes a pre-existing constitutional provision for just such a desire nor does it explore the reasons analogous investment in improving public education would not suffice to achieve this goal.

I am sure that one of your invited witnesses will be able to testify to the benefits of and documented improvements in the area of mastery-based grading practices as an example. I was bewildered in a recent professional development conference to learn that there are several school districts around the country who have not implemented its structures. While SB 8 outlines a 5 year rollout for a new testing program--I was not clear on why given the recent implementation of a new STAAR test--those same 5 years might be used to support the enacting of mastery-based grading protocols that promise to reap dividends for students in academic achievement as well as produce the "parental participation to improve parent and teacher cooperation" sought in an earlier version of this bill.

As you review SB 8, please seriously question the efforts that have been made to public education. Investments would mean our being able to climb the rungs of the NAEP data ladder as opposed to eroding all possibilities of our being able to do so for lack of care for or attention to a public education system established by the great state of Texas intended to keep it that way.

Thank you for your time and for your efforts on behalf of all Texas children here today. Thank you for protecting the legacy and reputation of Texas as you think through--on behalf of all of us--what initiatives best serve the long-term interests of its citizenry.

Jason Mauss
SELF
Houston, TX

Vote NO for SB 8 since it includes school vouchers. We need the state to support public education by increasing the funding to \$1000 per student instead of \$90 increase. We need the state to include an inflation increase for the schools and teachers pay.
#fullfundschoools

Ana Tijerina
Self
San Antonio, TX

Say NO to SB8. Public schools need more resources to comply with the ever growing requirements set forth only for public schools. Charters and other private school should fund themselves if they are not expected to meet the same standards as public schools. Provide our children with the opportunities that are offered at public schools by directing more funds to public schools. Help every school employee have a livable wage and pay teachers as the professionals that they are. Provide stipends for the extra duties, for the higher class sizes and / or additional preps that many incur to provide an education to all students, without the restrictions that charter schools place on their enrollees.

Dustin Loyd

Self: Christian, Husband, Father, Coach, Teacher, Republican

Willow Park, TX

As a Christian and Republican, I am against HB 8. Public funds need to stay in public institutions. There are countless Christian educators and Christian students in public education worthy of receiving the best possible support our Texas law makers can give, so they can be a light in a dark world. HB8 removes that by creating a deficit through ESA's. Vote no for HB8.

Cherie Moeller, Mrs

Keller ISD Council of PTAs

Keller, TX

SB8 only increases testing for every grade level. Using through testing is good idea if it could actually be used as a diagnostic tool for teachers but that is not what this bill does. We need less time spent doing assessment testing not three times more as this bill promises.

On the funding side of SB8, diverting money intended for public schools to private schools only worsens the school funding situation. At a time when the Legislature is seemingly unwilling to cover the cost of inflation since 2019, diverting money away from public education is insulting to the work of educating children in this state. Texas is ranked 48th in the country in investing per student in public education. This is no bragging point. Texas's future work force is educated in these schools. Texas children deserve better and we all know it.

Deserae Caraballo

Self, public school teacher

Fort Worth, TX

The committee should respect public schools and public education by rejecting school vouchers. If you care about the education of all students across Texas, then you should vote NO on the Senate Bill 8.

Melanie Jackson

Self and TX PTA

Richardson, TX

I am a parent of three public school children and president of a local TX PTA in Richardson ISD. I very much oppose SB 8. I specifically do not want any type of ESA, voucher, or anything like it offered in the state of Texas. As it is, our schools have not been funded appropriately by the state of Texas for years. I would much rather see appropriate and full funding instead of trying to divert resources to private schools. Private schools may decide who they admit nor do they have to serve special Ed students and honor their IEPs. In addition, private schools are not accountable to anything like public schools are. I feel allowing students to use state funds in a private school setting is creating even more a system of "haves and have nots." The kids who would truly need this would be left unaffected and only families who can still afford the remaining balance on a private school would take it up. And it would be at the expense of local, public schools. This bill would dismantle the only system Texas has to educate every single child in this state. I feel this would be a huge mistake to allow SB 8 to move forward. I would love to see the educational system in Texas supported by its politicians instead of dismantled. Our communities, kids, and families deserve more than what is being offered in this bill.

Thank you,

Melanie Jackson

Amanda Erickson

Self

Austin, TX

This is a bullshit bill created to funnel tax payer dollars to billionaires. Vote no! No one wants this bill.

Helen Rockenbaugh
teachers
Austin, TX

Listen to the public school teachers.
My son was in AISD. National Merit scholar. Went to Rice. Graduated with less than 10k in debt.
Not sure what more anyone could want in education.

Patrick Burkart, Dr
self
Bryan, TX

We strongly oppose vouchers, believing them to be unconstitutional and unfair to various constituency including rural populations. Please oppose sb8.

Terri Wilson
self - Retired Public School Teacher after 38 years in Education
North Richland Hills, TX

I oppose vouchers in any form. They will divert money from public schools to private schools without accountability for how the money will be used.

Kim Coleman, Mrs
Self
Magnolia, TX

I oppose this bill

Juan Marshall
Self - teacher
Killeen, TX

Supporters of this bill and agenda know it is not favored by a majority of Texans on both sides of the aisle. The fact that you have to use nefarious means to get the bill before the house, and the senate shows that you know it is not popular. Please listen to the voice of teachers throughout the state, parents, and students who aren't allowed to speak for themselves. Vote no against this bill.

Anne Warner
Self
Houston, TX

As a public educator and parent who moved to Texas from another state, I can honestly say that I have been amazed at the lack of respect and value Texas holds for its public educators and education in general. And it is bills - bills that are pushed through in secret and then, when you were caught, pretended to make it a public forum but only with selected speakers, not professional educators and parents - like this that continue to prove that. It is obvious to all that this bill is not about parents' rights (they are actually reduced) and especially not about student success, but clearly about pandering to your donors and putting money in the pockets of the standardized test companies. It is disgusting. And, for a party who claims to hate "handouts" and champions fiscal responsibility, this is hypocrisy at its finest. RESPECT TEACHERS AND PARENTS AND VOTE NO ON SB8.

Angela Haynes
Self
Spring, TX

Relating to public education, including parental rights and public school responsibilities regarding instructional materials and the establishment of an education savings account program.

Kathleen Skehan
Self
Cypress, TX

I am writing to express my opposition to Senate Bill 8 and urge you to oppose this legislation. As a Texas resident, I believe this bill is harmful to Texas students, parents, and our communities.

Private schools aren't required to accept all students, including those with disabilities or special needs. In fact, private schools are more likely to reject these students. Tax dollars should not be going to private institutions that don't have to play by the same rules as public schools and are not accountable to taxpayers.

SB 8 also increases the number of state assessment administrations given to students from third to twelfth grade. It may eliminate STAAR, but it ramps up testing under a different name and gives more control to the commissioner of education to over-test our children.

Thank you for listening. I trust that you will carefully consider the concerns raised and make the right decision for the future of public education in our great state by voting no on SB 8.

Martha Jennings
Myself
Texarkana, TX

I oppose this bill. It is bad for Texas and bad for our public schools, students, and teachers. I don't not want any public tax dollars spent on finding private education. Public tax dollars are meant to fund services for all, not for a few.

Phyllis Waddle
self
Austin, TX

The Committee Substitute for SB 8 INCREASES testing , it does NOT decrease it. I oppose vouchers because they will hurt public education across the State by draining badly needed funds.
The Committee should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers.
Vote NO on SB 8.

Jose Vasquez
Self mechanic
El Paso, TX

Vote no on SB 8. Stop funding charter schools.

Patrick Hammes

None

BROWNSVILLE, TX

Hello my name is Patrick Hammes and I'm a retired teacher in Brownsville, Texas. I am writing on SB 8.

Any bill that is tried to be snuck in without a public hearing or a public comment is not a good bill. When the goal of that bill is to defund public education and provide vouchers to parochial schools then the bill is heinous. My two grand daughters attend parochial school. Their parents do not need tuition assistance for their children. They do not need to have money taken away from the public school system in Brownsville. I am asking the members of the House Public Education Committee to vote no on this bill.

Leslie Cunningham

Self; retired state government public servant (Texas Workforce Commission)

McKinney, TX

SB 8 ("the voucher bill") deserves resounding defeat in the Public Education Committee. Last Wednesday, May 10, you (the Public Education Committee) were prevented by a vote of the House from voting on a suddenly appearing 80-page bill without a hearing. So now you will hear SB 8 on May 15, 2023, but you will accept INVITED testimony only; members of the public will have no opportunity to make their information and their feelings heard. This is a travesty on a bill of such monumental importance for our children, our teachers, our education support staff, and all the people of Texas.

You and most people who have been paying attention know what's going on here. This is the latest in a long string of attempts to undermine (or gut?) public education in Texas, causing serious harm--financial and otherwise--to our public schools. It's a common tactic, when a bill does not have legislative and public support, to write a back-room bill and spring it on the Legislature late in the session. It's clear to me that undue pressure is being put on some legislators to vote for such a bill against their consciences and against their campaign promises. Don't let this happen!

So I call on you to do what you know is right and vote against school vouchers, vote against the privatization of public education--no matter what names these attacks go by in any bill. Also, remain vigilant and don't vote for any amendment that tries to stick the language of this bill into another bill. We don't want to hear about something like this slipping by in the rush at the end of the session.

Thank you ahead of time for doing what's right.

Katie Braden

Self, educator

Fate, TX

Dear Committee Members,

Public schools are crucial for the continuation of a well educated society. Vouchers do not support that concept as they take needed resources from the majority of hardworking Texans and redistribute it to individuals that already have the means to choose private schools. Public education guarantees access for all students. Special education students, economically disadvantaged students, students with significant behavioral difficulties are all served and supported fully in public schools. The proposed amounts that would be leaving districts for students to select private schools are greater than what the state contributes for individual students originally. To add, holding a voucher still does not guarantee access either. Finally, in my role, I regularly have students that start in private school and return to public school. How will those dollars follow? Please vote against funding vouchers with our tax dollars. It is not in the best interests of communities, schools, or students.

Vera Billingsley, Mrs.
Self/ tutor BSEducation
San Antonio, TX

Restore the Love for God (the 10 self discipline commandments)and fellow human beings and respect for country. Innocence of youth protected curriculum. Chaplains to pray for grieving students. Bible history, not occult books, in library. Work ethic taught. Fire safety CPR programs. Practical common sense, develop conservative conscience.

Sharyn Reynolds
self (retired teacher)
Austin, TX

The fact that SB 8 increases testing is a big "NO" for me as a parent and former teacher. By sinking to the "teach to the tests" format we have reduced the opportunities for REAL learning in the classroom and replaced them with stressful memorization and redundant topics to make the systems look good at the expense of the kids experience of creativity and growth. The voucher issue is AWFUL as it removes resources from our public schools which are the heart of most Texas communities and too often supports religious schools over public and one or another religions over another. Bad practices in a Democracy where we are supposed to have separation of church and state.

Amber Goggans
Self
Greenville, TX

Please don't tax payers money away from our public schools that already struggle with education savings accounts. Stop tying public schools hand behind their backs and tripping them up at every opportunity with more restrictions instructional materials. Parents are not the experts here. Let our highly qualified and educated teachers do what they are trained to do! Teach!

Daniel Dodson
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Education savings accounts will drain resources from our public schools. I am against this voucher program. If this bill becomes law it will be the downfall of the education system in Texas.

Molly Totty
Self
Beeville, TX

Public vouchers put public schools at risk and widen the social-economic gap ALL communities. Additionally it creates a vacuum in public schools, that are forced to educate ALL children lowering the quality of education that all children receive. We should be focused on creating a required standard for home school. As well as a minimum in teacher pay and insuring that public schools are funded and supported. Teachers and administrators should be released of Texas Student Tests that are not helpful or practical. Public schools are the heart of rural Texas communities if we want strong community's and citizens it starts with strong public schools.

Dawn Simonton
None
Galveston, TX

I oppose SB 8- this bill will destroy public schools, especially rural public schools and the funding could be used to support religious schools of any denomination - my tax dollars should not go to any religious school. I don't want my tax dollars for this purpose. Public schools need our support and funding.

Elizabeth Roberts
Self - Public School Employee
Katy, TX

No! Vouchers are wrong for Texas! Keep the public school money on public schools!

Nora Tellez, Mrs.
Self/Texas AFT
Katy, TX

Please vote NO. Please do not support this bill.
Thank you!

Francisco Javier Oaxaca, School Board Trustee
McKinney ISD Board of Trustees
McKinney, TX

Please please vote NO on SB 8.
Vouchers take away much needed money from public schools and really do not assist a large number of new voucher seekers

Ales Soudek, Mr.
Self
Brookshire, TX

I urge to support this bill and vote yes

Cyral Miller, Mrs.
self special ed consultant
Austin, TX

Please vote AGAINST this bill!!! The Committee Substitute for SB 8 INCREASES testing (does not decrease it) AND oppose vouchers will hurt public education across the State by draining badly needed funds. This is madness - in a year with a record surplus of funds, we choose to deplete the stability of our public education system instead of increase teacher salaries, increase curriculum support, decrease the constant testing which takes away from real learning - VOTE NO!!!

Charles Motley
Self
Houston, TX

Firmly against. No. No funds removed from extracurricular programs or classroom.

Andrew Rohrs
Myself
Floresville, TX

I am against any voucher system until there is a detailed accounting of how the system would address:

1. Holding private institutions who receive voucher monies from the state accountable to the same testing requirements public schools have.
2. How the state will protect taxpayers from fraud.

I am proud of our education system in Texas. Why not invest in our students and fund public schools so they can ensure our students are prepared to meet the exacting demands and changes of today's work environment. And how will giving state money to non-state regulated schools best help our students?

Theresa Stubblefield
Self
Grand Prairie, TX

Please give parents and students an opportunity to select the best education they can receive by allowing them to choose their school of choice

Vera Borg
Self
Spring Branch, TX

Please do not allow public funds to be stripped away from public schools and given to vouchers or ESAs. Public schools are the soul of our state. Public schools open their doors to EVERY student regardless of background and ability. Public school educators face increasing standards and expectations yet continue to show up. Public schools do not stop, turn away, or give up on any student and family who walk through their doors. Public educators never ask why they simply dig dip into their own pockets and make it happen day in and day out.

Please do not strip their funding and give it to schools who do not have to accept ALL, do not have to meet the same standards/expectations, and do not have to accommodate every unique need of each individual student and family. Vouchers and ESAs will rob and bankrupt public schools. The impact will of vouchers and ESAs will destroy and will not help improve public education. Please protect our public schools that have always been for EVERY Texan, everyday, every year.

Anita Semien Semien
Self
Spring, TX

Do the right thing and vote against this bill. It is not wanted and not fair for the people of Texas

Mimi Rivers

Self - public education teacher

Buda, TX

Public education is essential to a productive society. It is a constitutional right for all children in the state of Texas! This is wrong!!! Please vote against funding vouchers with our tax dollars.

This bill claims to support parent choice. There are significant issues with this claim!

Texas parents currently have multiple opportunities to make choices with the education of their children. They can choose to homeschool, go to public school, transfer between districts, attend a charter school, or attend a private school.

The suggestion that a voucher will help parents who want to send their children to a private school but cannot afford to is a fallacy. The voucher will not cover the cost of tuition. This bill does not even require private schools to accept these students. The program doesn't provide transportation for these students. This is basically just taking money away from public education and providing a tax kickback.

This money would be better spent on improving public education!

Melissa Cenicerros

Self

Cypress, TX

Please vote "NO" to school vouchers

Donna Friend

Self / public school teacher

Lewisville, TX

Our public schools are amazing places of learning and creativity. In my high school English class, we work to grow as readers, writers, and thinkers everyday, and I serve as a mentor and coach to my sophomores. Guided by the TEKS, we have come so far in our learning this year, and I cannot imagine better students to work with! I also cannot imagine more STAAR testing to increase student anxiety and decrease the time we spend on real world writing and analysis. My own daughter said the idea of more testing just makes her want to quit school, and I'm certain she's not alone - and she loves school!

I can also only assume that those telling the narratives of the evils of public schools just haven't been there in a while. Our students are truly incredible, and they don't learn the way we did - thankfully! Education has evolved with the world and new jobs and careers, but the stories being told are wrong.

Knowing the talented students we serve and the dedicated professionals I work with, it's appalling to think of approving vouchers so that only some kids can afford to go to schools with no requirements or accountability. Imagine what could be taught in those classrooms who don't follow TEKS! Now that could be a story!

Please know that, in my 26 years of teaching, I have loved my work. I'm an a proud product of public schools and public school educators, and I don't want to do anything else but teach! I'm now working to teach future teachers to keep this noble profession alive and thriving. But taking money away won't do it. It won't help. It's harmful and cruel to the students we serve, and I beg you to consider every last one of them.

Let's say no to SB8 and yes to Texas students - our future.

Elva Torres
Self -Director of State
Hutto, TX

As a Federal Programs Director, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Louis Bradly
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I am a former Public School Teacher in Texas. I retired after 52 years of service. I am a certified Master Teacher with a Master's degree in Education, Principal Certification and Social Studies Composite certification. In my Government classes we often talked about situations where government officials would attempt and sometimes do things like what you are trying to do with SB 8. My students would, many times say, " Do they (you) not understand that a lie can not withstand the test of time"? That is my question to you now.

Ann Heuberger
Self
Austin, TX

There is so much wrong with SB 8, so please just vote no! That the committee will have only invited testimony on this bill tells me the chair does not want to hear why this bill will not help Texas public schools and the 5 million students they educate.

Sara Newton
Self Public Ed Teacher 22 yrs
Madisonville, TX

Please fully fund public education as our state constitution outlines. ESAs are the clearest way our 54 million students will lose. Parents have the right to view the TEKS online. Parents have the right to choose public, private, or home schooling. Please say NO to ESAs AKA vouchers. Thank you.

Kristine Bruening, Mrs
Self
Ausy, TX

We don't want dystopian coffee mugs and chocolate, we want a professional living wage. We are the original first responders. $19+2=21$ in Uvalde, Texas. That doesn't add up. 2,000 raise will only be about \$80 a month, that doesn't add up either.

Lucynda Nicholson, Mrs.
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I am against this bill. Stop with the defunding of public education. Parents have rights, this is a sham. I've got a daughter and have always been able to talk to her teachers and see lessons, books, and instructional material. Stop with the scare tactics. Educatio savings accounts and vouchers are wrong. Tax money should not be used to fund private schools or charters, which don't follow the same rules.

Jessica Adams
Self
Lubbock, TX

I want control of the content of student education restored back to parents. An education savings account will be a great benefit for all parents.

Adriana Florencia
ATSTA
Richmond, TX

My tax dollars are for public schools only. Private schools should not be funded with public funds. And mandates placed on public schools should not be placed on private ones.

Susan Skipp
Myself
Houston, TX

To enact a bill without public testimony is enough to file a stay, injunctive and declaratory relief. You cannot “eminent domain” our public schools- and make them private. You cannot defraud taxpayers of county tax who fund the Houston Pubic schools. Moreover, what happens to the special Ed kids who are NEVER accepted to charter schools?

Take the voucher system off of the bill. Don’t let the rich get richer without regard to kids. You want to change HiSD- talk to the educators
Thank you
Susan Skipp

Jacob Mankovsky
Self, Public School Teacher
ROUND ROCK, TX

Please support public education & stop trying to divert public funds away from public schools. Please substantially increase the Basic Allotment and provide educators & support staff with raises.

Laurie Hawley Stelljes
N/A
Fort Worth, TX, TX

You plan to take use our tax dollars to support private schools and I do NOT support this effort. It is wrong! If someone wants to send their kids to private or parochial schools, they should pay for it, not me. Most kids who attend private schools already come from wealthier parents. Why should my tax dollars support them? Why give them a hand-out? I want my tax dollars used for public schools. Taking dollars away from public schools hurts both rural schools and local schools where parents cannot afford to pay for private education. Texas needs those tax dollars to support and improve public schools, not fund private schools. VOTE NO TO SB 8!

SERGIO JASSO, Teacher
Self
Socorro, TX

STOP trying to ram vouchers down our throats. We don't want them. Give teachers and educational staff a raise instead!

Michelle Jones
Self - Teacher
Cypress, TX

Vote No!

Michael Cram
Myself
Carrollton, TX

This bill has not been public, and is too important of an issue to pass without public support. Teachers and schools need more funding, not a voucher scheme and more testing mandates. This bill should not move any further until a normal process with debate and public comment plays out.

Erin McClendon
Self teacher
Humble, TX

Do not use public school funds for private education.....

Doris Dillon
sef
Garlsnd, TX

The great state of Texas must remain dedicated to the instruction of all students. Vote against vouchers! We will only succeed if we cherish the educational rights of all children in our state.

Peggy Debatto-Rudison
Texas AFT
Houston, TX

I Vote NO on SB 8. The House Public Education School Committee should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers.

Lacey Gilmore
Myself
Carrollton, TX

This bill has not been public, and is too important of an issue to pass without public support. Teachers and schools need more funding, not a voucher scheme and more testing mandates. This bill should not move any further until a normal process with debate and public comment plays out.

David Minshew
Self-Teacher(High School Math)
Fredericksburg, TX

Vote no on vouchers. Public money should not go to private schools. Parents can choose to send their children to private school if they want, but don't give them my tax dollars to do so.

Stephen Luce
Self
Southlake, TX

Vote NO on vouchers, esa's whatever called. Public tax money for public schools, not private unregulated and homeschoolers.

Sidney Cook, Lt col
Self. Retired air force
Savannah, TX

I oppose school vouchers or an education savings account. I do not want my tax dollars to go even more so to private schools. This only benefits the rich who can afford it anyway.

Elizabeth Batten
Self
Houston, TX

Vote NO on SB8. No school vouchers!

Shawn Troxell, Ms.
Self/retired teacher
New Braunfels, TX

The majority of Texans (like the majority of Americans) do NOT want vouchers. My family doesn't want vouchers. My friends don't want vouchers. Every single teacher I know, retired or still active, doesn't want vouchers. None of my former students, who now have families of their own, want vouchers. Maybe the majority of your donors want vouchers, but they are the minority of Texans.

Linnci Angle, Director of Finance
Floresville ISD
Floresville, TX

Voucher hurt Texas children and hurt public education. Please vote FOR OUR CHILDREN AND FOR OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS! Vote against vouchers!

Elaine Baxter
Texas taxpayers
Chandler, TX

Texas public school money should not be transferred to schools who do not have to follow the same rules under the umbrella of TEA. 1. Not all private school teachers are certified. 2. STARR testing is not required by private schools. 3. Not all students wanting to use a voucher will be able to cover the difference in the voucher and the actual tuition. 4. Not all students wanting to use a voucher will be accepted by the private schools. 5. If a student uses a voucher and then gets kicked out of the private school, does the State plan to reinstate funding to the public schools? The devil is in the details and there are no contingencies to address the above issues. If parents choose to send their children to private schools, it's entirely at their discretion. However, that choice should not be subsidized by the Texas taxpayers.

Rebecca Moone
Self/Teacher
Ft Worth, TX

This bill will cause further confusion and stress to public school students. The amount of testing done in public schools is extreme. As it stands right now, 5 year olds are being tested as many as 5 times in a school year. These tests have questions that are gauged to find current levels of students and include things that are far beyond the average knowledge of a student at the academic age at which they are being tested. Many students feeling defeated when they are still very young and are giving up. This contributes to the high drop out rate and low graduation rates throughout the state. Teachers are pushed to keep teaching topics, even if some students need a review, and students are left behind.

On the topic of School Vouchers. These vouchers will not benefit the working class in Texas. Most households have 2 working parents and have no means to transport students to private schools. These households have no choice but to rely on public schools to educate their children. School vouchers will take money from public schools. This loss of funding will only further widen the education gap that exists in this state.

Lynne Luburger, Mrs
Self
Houston, TX

Vote NO to vouchers! You need to fund public schools and ensure COLA raises for retired school district employees!

Elmo Lawson
Self / Agriscience Teacher
Lufkin, TX

Dear Sors and Madams representing the Great State of Texas.

If you are considering SB 8 please read below. This bill should not be run thru without proper representation from the public. You should put the monies into our Public Schools System, to make sure our children from Pre K to High School get the best possible Education. Say No to vouchers and support public schools where the majority of our children in Texas attend and have the need for more monies invested in them to be our Leaders and Builders of Tomorrow. Help our Public Schools stand out as the best investment in our Great State of Texas and give all students in the Public School System the highest and best education that we can give them. After all, the future belongs to each and everyone of our children and we need to give them every opportunity to become our Leaders and Builders of the Future.

Again Say No to Vouchers. Vote No on SB 8.

Jana Fite
self, retired
Boerne, TX

SB 8 VOTE NO!!!

Carl Palmore, Mr.
Self
Wichita Falls, TX

Please vote "NO" to Senate Bill 8!!! This will destroy Public Education!! Athletics will be non-existent and let the recruiting begin! Just look at the East and West Coast for how well this works. The public school students become the have nots!

Diane Hudson, Voter and teacher
Self and parents all over Texas
SPRING, TX

Sneaking through a bill on vouchers goes against the rights of every Texan to debate and be heard. If this is the only way you can get vouchers, that alone should tell you that this action is wrong. Until you appropriately police and monitor private schools at the same level you police and monitor public schools, you have no right using tax dollars to hand them a blank check.

Barbara Carlson, former county commissioner
Self, Former County Commissioner and Community Volunteer
Austin, TX

SB 8 and it's substitute INCREASES testing! And vouchers will HURT our public education, especially in small rural areas across Texas. They are already struggling to keep their public schools going and this could badly drain what little funds they have. And they are not likely to have any private schools near by where they could use a voucher. Please consider the needs of ALL our students, rural or urban, rich or poor.

Aaron Shock
Texas Educators
Spring, TX

Vote down SB8

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority

Texas public schools are under attack, and we need to stand up against out-of-state school vendors looking to defund our local public schools!

Charla Rudd
La Vega ISD
Clifton, TX

Educational Savings Account - really? There are so many warning bells ringing. Why push it through at the last minute? Why such an important bill without any public testimony - only testimony from those that you select? Why, because you KNOW this is not a good idea. You KNOW there are communities in high poverty areas that depend on the public school to provide their child with an education so they have the opportunity to provide for a better future for themselves. As an employee of a high poverty public school, we feed our children for FREE - breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack. We have children who go hungry during the weekend and count on the pack of hope to make it to Monday breakfast. If parents can afford private school, they are already sending their child. Education is no longer the great equalizer - YOU will be the cause of the gulf between the haves and have-nots. We see, we watch, and we vote.

Andrea Nesbit
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I strongly oppose SB8 and believe it will be harmful for our schools, children and communities.

Susan Parker

Self, mother, citizen of Texas, grandparent of 7

San Antonio, TX

I fully and enthusiastically support this bill! Texas needs to lead the way in making more choices for our children and future leaders!

Herb Cox, Dr.

Self

Waco, TX

This bill is absolutely atrocious, and I would classify it as even sinful. This would represent the larger voucher bill in the nation. Stealing money from already woefully underfunded public schools to pay for tuition to private schools is immoral. Texas public schools serve all of God's children. Private schools serve only a only a select few. Stand up to Abbott and Patrick who's only interests are to serve their big money donors. You, however, do not work for them. You work for the citizens of Texas and the 5.5 million students who attend Texas public schools. Do the right thing! Fully fund Texas public schools. We are currently at 47th in the nation in per pupil funding. This is an embarrassment to the entire state of Texas. And adding additional testing on the premise of "reducing STAAR tests is also noticed in this bill. Do the right thing.

Fully fund our schools; the vast majority of Texans support this.

Kill vouchers now and forever; they are immoral.

Support our most margin listed students; vouchers would not allow for:

504 kids

Special needs kids

Homeless kids

Medically fragile kids

Bilingual kids

Trans kids

Kids with medical behavior disorders

Private schools will absolutely NOT admit those students whereas Texas public schools serve ALL of God's children; children you have been elected to support. I am praying for Almighty God to give you the strength to do what is right over the cajoling of professional politicians.

Beymar Mendoza, Mr.

Self

Tomball, TX

Teachers have not seen a raise since 2019 and school funding is dependent upon student attendance. Allowing school vouchers takes away funding from local schools and there's no attendance requirement.

Do not under fund local schools while giving a blank check to private schools and parents.

Luis Maldonado
self, teacher
Kingwood, TX

As a teacher, I strongly oppose bill SB 8 in Texas, particularly its provisions related to public vouchers. This bill seeks to divert public funds towards private schools, which undermines the quality and accessibility of public education. Public schools are essential institutions that serve diverse communities and provide equitable education opportunities to all students. By diverting taxpayer dollars to private schools through vouchers, we risk exacerbating inequalities, as private schools often have admission criteria and can exclude certain students. It is crucial to prioritize investing in and strengthening our public education system, ensuring that every child has equal access to quality education. Let's reject bill SB 8 and focus on supporting and improving public schools for the benefit of all students. As a technology teacher, I see first hand that Chromebook were provided to students but there is a lack of actual business technology (windows, mac, etc.) that would benefit students learning in the real world, money is being spend on curriculum that private companies provide that does not directly benefit our students for their future. I am deeply concerned with the way private interests are influencing our public education system. The is a lack of funding to our public school systems to compete with other countries in technology and with items that directly impact our classrooms.

Gloria Alvarez
Self
El Paso, TX

Please respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Roman Lanzas
Self, Teacher
Houston, TX

Teachers and educators have been screaming from the mountain tops FOR YEARS that public education needs more funding. The solution will never be to divert those funds towards vouchers! The concept of vouchers has become a highly political it would seem. Do not do what's best for your job! Do what's best for the people of Texas, and educators alike! If you want to support education, you will vote NO to SB8.

Kelley Thomas
self
Richardson, TX

My previous written comments were surrounding the anticipated Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 8 earlier last week. I have since learned that there is another version that will be discussed at the committee hearing. I want to be clear that I OPPOSE any VOUCHER or VOUCHER-LIKE program.

Thank you.

Karen Freeman, School Board Trustee
Self,
Helotes, TX

Say NO to vouchers or anything like a voucher including ESAs. The majority of voters in Texas do not support vouchers. No public funds should go to institutions that do not accept ALL children leaving "choice" to private schools and not to parents. There is no accountability in private schools. No transparency with private schools to taxpayer. Vouchers only subsidize people that already send their kids there or those wishing to send children there.

Kemee Allen
Self/teacher
Crockett, TX

Having vouchers would make the education system worse than it already is. We should be investigating all this time and money into IMPROVING education for our children, not trying to make it worse.

Sharon Lovelady
Self
Sugar Land, TX

Vote no on SB 8. No to public school vouchers.

Debbie Roberts, Ms.
self
Memphis, TX

Please do not defund Public School with vouchers for private schools. Vouchers will create havoc in the Public School System.

Gina Mayfield
Self - elementary school principal
Bedford, TX

Please vote no on this bill. Vouchers in any form are bad for education in Texas. Students do not benefit.

Mary Pugh
Educator
Dallas, TX

Please vote no on SB8. As a public school educator, I am disappointed that rather than take the recommendations of the Governor's Teacher Vacancy Task Force which recommended greater compensation for educators, this bill focuses on diverting funding from public schools to unaccountable private schools. We need these funds to properly compensate educators and to meet the many needs of our learners. Public schools are an option for every child in Texas, while private schools pick and choose who they will serve. I have personal experience as an relative of a child who has been denied entrance into several private schools based on his abilities/grades. Additionally, I do not want my tax payer dollars going to a school that is not required to protect children (ex. David's law) or teach children the same material (ex. TEKS) that public schools are required to teacher. Where is the accountability in this bill? Further more, the bill replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system and gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools. Vote No on SB8.

STEVEN TURNER
Superintendent, Meadow ISD
MEADOW, TX

The state of Texas does not need or want a voucher program. Yes, Texans are for school choice in that we want the ability to move between districts or take our children to a private school if we desire. We are in favor of the current system which allows for this. Texans have spoken loudly and clearly about their support of public schools and this committee needs to take that voice to heart. 100% fund the schools we have now and you won't have the issues that seem to worry this committee. Thank you.
BT

Susie Dorman
Self/High School Counselor
Canton, TX

As a Texan, an educator, a parent, a grandparent, and a voter, I am urging you to vote against SB 8 in any format, whether revised or with substituted language. As you are aware, the primary purpose of this bill is to push forth education vouchers which will inherently damage public education. Private schools serve only six percent of Texas students while three percent of Texas students are enrolled in homeschool. The other 90 percent are public school students. To propose taking funding from the public school system to provide tuition assistance to private schools is a disservice to the citizens, voters, and children of Texas. Public school systems are the foundation of education in our state and country. Public schools must meet rigorous accountability measures, strict federal and state mandates regarding Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), while providing all students with the necessary support to be successful. Public school students must take STAAR/EOC assessments which determine promotion and/or graduation. Private schools do not have to meet any accountability requirements, require high-stakes testing, nor are they required to accept all students, especially those who are special education with specific needs.

This bill proposes to replace the STAAR/EOC tests, but they propose to do so with even more high-stakes testing, including the use of the TSIA, a test not intended as an end of course exam. Additionally, to suggest that the Commissioner of the TEA should be the sole creator of any new testing system and new accountability tool is asinine. For a state that consistently ranks in the bottom ten of the nation, the politicians who are creating and enacting legislation for education should be doing everything possible to bring this state back into at least the top 25 percent in all areas. Creating any ESA, voucher, parent choice funding will do the exact opposite of improving the education in this state. Vouchers will only serve to provide financial assistance to those who don't need it and will put public funding/tax revenue in the hands of these private entities. All to appease a handful of wealthy campaign donors while shortchanging the 5.4 million students and the educators who serve them.

Once again, I urge you to consider voting any and legislation proposing vouchers. Instead, support all education, especially public education and the educators who have dedicated their lives to our children. These children are our future and will someday be our doctors, lawyers, bankers, governors, policer officers, firemen, educators, plumbers, electricians, engineers, state senators, and maybe even our presidents.

Dovie Carrell
Myself
Nacogdoches, TX

Vote no th SB8! Texas does not need vouchers or ESA's. Our schools DO NOT need more testing. Fully fund Texas schools and there would not be a need for vouchers. The STAAR test and EOC's are nothing more than an attempt to make Texas public schools appear to be failing. Numerous independent studies have proven them to be age inappropriate and poorly written. Support Texas public schools!!!!

Melissa Almendarez, Ms.
Self, nurse
Houston, TX

I strongly oppose vouchers in every form. As a taxpayer, I object to the \$500M the bill is estimated to cost, and would like to see that money funding public schools and not private profits.

Theresa Garcia, Dr
Lampasas ISD
Lampasas, TX

By passing this bill, money will be taken away from rural districts. We also don't need more testing. Get rid of the STAAR all together. Stop playing into the hands of large publishers. We need to seperate private schools from public, there already is school choice, parents can choose send their children to public schools where we educators are teaching a well rounded curriculum passed by the SBOE. Our special needs students will not have the same opportunity as their non disabled peers if this passed. It will go against IDEA.

Whitney Gibson
Self
San Angelo, TX

Parents have a right to be part of the decision in what instructional materials are used. If a parent wants to forgo the STAAR test. Their child should not have to take a standardized test. These tests while intention was good have been significantly part of our ability to teach depth in subjects. For instance, 8th Grade Science test students are tested on 3 years of science. No other test they take requires that range of knowledge. If the parent forgoes the STAAR they also have the right to forgo the mandatory 30 hours of summer school. There is too much "state" control in private lives.

Andrea Dietz
Self
Richardson, TX

No vouchers!!

April Duvall
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please vote against SB 8. It will create a tier of lower-quality private schools that will accept some students. Private schools currently cost much more than the amount allotted by SB 8. Private schools have the right to select the students they allow to attend. They do not have to accept all students. SB 8 takes funding from public education, where all students are accepted, and gives it to unregulated private schools that will only have to accept some students. This creates choices for those profiting off of private education. This is not real choice for parents.

Gloria Hines
self
Houston, TX

Please vote in favor of education savings account program to give all parents an equal opportunity to educate their children consistent with parents' values. Also, administrators of schools who bypass parental authority should be subject to disciplinary action..

Deanna Ivy
self
Belton, TX

I am against any and all legislation that would allow vouchers or education savings accounts for students. Parents have a right to choose to send their student to any school that they wish but they should do so by paying the tuition bills/fees themselves so that money is NOT taken away from public schools. Public schools rely on tax money to be able to educate students properly, provide safe buildings and buses, hire qualified faculty and staff and prepare students to be contributing members of society. Not all families can afford private education (even if there were vouchers) and by taking funds away from public schools you are creating a situation where mass amounts of students will have a limited educational experience. This will predominantly effect students from low income families which will in turn continue the cycle of poverty instead of providing an opportunity for a student to break the cycle. In short, the "haves" will continue to increase their status and the "have nots" will continue to live without. The low SES percentage of the population will increase causing more of a strain on the economy and the welfare system. Education savings accounts/vouchers are not what is best for kids or for the future of Texas and I respectfully ask you to vote NO for all legislation that will allow them.

Cesar Diaz, Principal
CFISD
Houston, TX

As a public educator I oppose this bill as it is contrary to the real needs of our students.

John Snelson, Director of Athletics/Head Football Coach
Dickinson ISD
Dickinson, TX

Public tax dollars to Private Schools, what in the world are we doing? You guys ran under the guise of helping/funding public education and now you guys trash it and take needed funding away to improve/help private school... what in the world are we doing???

Vote Nay

Barbara Epperson
self
Belton, TX

I am against vouchers. Vouchers give a false narrative of school choice. Vouchers would not be available for every student and every family. Charter and private schools get to choose the students they serve. This bill takes resources from the most marginalized groups, and only pays for partial tuition of students, many already students in private school. These bills appear to gain traction from the notion presented by Governor Abbot that that public schools teach students a woke agenda. This is incorrect. Texas teachers must teach the standards (known as TEKS) created by TEA, which is under Governor Abbott.

Lou Ann Montana
Self/Retired
The Woodlands, TX

I urge the Committee to OPPOSE SB 8.

Three of my most significant concerns (there are more!!):

- 1) Vouchers divert funds from public schools to private and charter schools, which do not have to accept every student including those with disabilities.
- 2) Public schools must have elected school boards who represent the local community; private and charter schools are not accountable to the local community and do not have elected boards, but have boards consisting of family members, cronies, and business associates of their owners.
- 3) Public schools are required to meet financial standards for transparency and accountability; private and charter schools are not.

Thank you,
Lou Ann Montana

Chantell Edmond
Self- Teacher
Friendswood, TX

As a 26 year public school teacher I urge you to protect public schools and not fund vouchers. Public school teachers deserve your promises and your support. We are the backbone of our country. Many educators have supported you and you should show them that you care about them. Fully fund public schools and vote no for vouchers.

James Ellis
Self; semi-retired educator
Humble, TX

The state already does not fully fund its own mandates to local school districts. Diverting any of that money to private schools makes a bad situation worse.

While private schools and their advocates make spectacular claims about their academic standards, they do not readily demonstrate the truth of them by any objective measure. In fact, my elementary teacher wife noted students transferring from such schools during her career were consistently behind her public school students; she had to help them catch up.

I foresee both legal and political issues with funding religiously based schools when funds are sought for an Osama bin Laden madrassa, a Dalai Lama academy, or a Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Cinde Thomas-Jimenez, Trustee, Seguin ISD
Seguin ISD
Seguin, TX

Vouchers are an unfair waste of public money. Schools and students across the state, both rural and urban, would suffer. I encourage the committee to kill the bill.

Kira Satterfield
Self
Amarillo, TX

I am against school vouchers especially without a public hearing.

Heather Ross
Self - Teacher
Royse City, TX

This bill is dishonest since private schools are not required to take students with disabilities and the amount of money offered isn't close to enough needed to educate these students. The amount offered to families is no where close to covering tuition, eliminating the possibility of low income families taking advantage of it. Rich students will benefit. Those students left behind will be disproportionately disabled and low income, and there will be less money for the local public schools to meet the needs of the high needs population. Sending taxpayer funds to private and charter schools will defund public schools and break the education system in Texas. It is important that we make fully funding of Texas public schools the top priority. We have been underfunded my entire 20 year career. It is time for the state to step up and take care of our children. Let's love our local public schools again!

Kristi Samaniego
Self/Teacher
El Paso, TX

Vote "NO" on SB8. This is not good for public educations.

Danny Rudd
Self
Clifton, TX

I'm writing to express my concerns to SB8. There are several portions of the bill that are troublesome but the primary concern is the "Education Savings Account". I have 40 years experience in education and currently work in a high poverty district in a nearby county. Why, because I can give back. Because I BELIEVE in the idea of 'education as the great equalizer'. The district serves a community that is 93% poverty. Since working in the district I have helped move the district from a 'D' to last year a 'B (87)'. It didn't happen overnight nor did I move it by myself. It took team work, professional development of ALL staff - regular educators as well as special educators. My point, Texas Accountability changes, moving a district from a high poverty community takes longer and is harder than the district in a middle-class or upper-class community. The children in our district come to school at 4, two years behind in vocabulary. No whine, just fact.

The savings account idea allows parents to move their child to a private school. Do we really believe that a community in the lowest economic rung will be able to drive their child to a private school? The private institutions near us don't have a population of poverty or of color or have a primary language that isn't English. Our parents partner with us and trust us to provide their child with what they need. We are in their community. This graduating class of 2023 (216) included 15 who graduated from the community college with an associates, 7 who graduated from TSTC with a Level 1 certificate, 9 who have enlisted - 2 of which will be going on to nuclear engineers, 28 who were 5th year seniors on the verge of dropping out, 89 who graduated with some college hours and 3 cognitively disabled who will enter the local workforce. That represents 12 years of work. This is also representation of belt tightening and budgeting on the district part.

Parents who can afford private school don't live in communities with districts that have a 'D' or 'F' rating. This is a ploy to move funds into private and charter schools.

Wanda Anderson
Self - Retired teacher
Spring, TX

Please vote no on SB 8. Public schools are underfunded now and if tax money goes to private schools, it will be worse.

Sandy Monahan, Ms
Myself
Temple, TX

Please oppose SB 8!!

Hillary Hickland
self
Belton, TX

I am FOR the passage of this bill. Schools are for educating students. Families must have every opportunity to choose the best education for their children without financial barriers. Please vote yes on SB8. Thank you.

Kelsey Halfen
Self teacher
Richmond, TX

No. Absolutely not. Please vote no.

Paul Uttley
Self
Stratford, TX

Vouchers will pull much needed resources away from public schools. To even think about vouchers, without requiring the same accountability as public schools have, is absolutely absurd.

Wende Bach, Ms.
Self - Elementary Teacher
Pasadena, TX

This bill would divert necessary funding from public schools to voucher schools. This would hurt the public education of our students immeasurably. Governor Abbot touted the Texas workforce as one of the best in the nation and as such, a huge reason for companies to relocate here. This bill would undermine Texas' ability to attract new companies.

Further, Texas schools educate every student who comes to them. Why aren't voucher schools held to the same standards as public schools? Why doesn't Texas have an accountability system in place for voucher schools?

This bill seeks to fund private education in Texas with more funding than any other state in the union. At a time when districts are having trouble keeping certified teachers, this bill sends a draconian message to all teachers by reducing the funding allocation per every student in Texas' public schools. Imagine what the majority of parents that send their children to public schools will think.

Shouldn't Texas be proud of its excellent public school system and laud its accomplishments to perspective businesses that want to relocate here? This bill sends the wrong message to parents, teachers, and businesses. Please defeat this bill. It has no merit.

Wesley Grisham
Self / Planning Manager
Taylor, TX

This bill will be detrimental to public education. It will allow charter schools to go unchecked with no accountability to the community. Public education has to stay at the local level to support the communities wishes.

Lynda Farabee
Self
Littlefield, TX

I want the choice to educate my child in any school I choose.

GERALD YOUNG
Self
KATY, TX

I am against this Bill. The Texas Legislature is charged in the Constitution, to properly fund Public Education. This bill does not do that, it is funding private education. I have always been told you do not use public money for private education. At this time there are no checks and balances for this money, if it goes to Private Schools. In my opinion SB 8 is bad policy.

Diana Freeman
Self-consultant
Hamilton, TX

While this voucher bill is targeted at special education students, it ironically takes away federal protections that these students have in the public schools. Very few special ed students have access to a school that is dedicated to special needs. If parents feel like the district is not/cannot meet their child's needs, they can ask that the district send them to private school or to get outside tutoring already. It is part of the protections afforded by IDEA. Though IDEA was never fully funded, it still has the protections in place. As it stands it requires the Comptroller's office to get involved and collect up to 5% of the money, and then requires a 3rd party auditor. It adds a level of bureaucracy that will take more from our public school children. With a record amount in the Rainy Day Fund, the considerations for public schools have been laughable, and downright embarrassing.

The second concern about the bill is what it does to the accountability system, while touting itself as a bill that makes the accountability system less onerous, it in fact increases the number of tests and gives almost exclusive power to the Commissioner of Education, a political position not held by an educator. It is completely dishonest and bad for children. Billing itself as some accountability relief is the dishonesty, but adding tests that were removed not that many years ago is the difficulty for students. There was a time when Texas had +/- 20 EOC exams. Cooler heads prevailed and that was lowered to be in keeping with the other 50 states, now you are looking to creep it up again.

Respectfully I would like to point out that pushing through this substitute at the 11th hour with no public testimony is an indication of its lack of goodness. I want to close this testimony with a challenge: You are the Public Education Committee. You should be the group fighting for the best for our students; fighting for the dollars they deserve. Instead, you have set yourself up as the back room group where big money and paid lobbyists get more play than the children hanging in the balance. As a school board member in a small rural school, voucher bills will be the death knell of many small communities where students (my special ed student got) get the best education surrounded by a community that loves and supports them. Please reconsider who you serve. Stand yourselves as the shield between true education and big money interests. Protest the most vulnerable of our population.

Thank your for your service to our state and thank you for allowing me to voice my concerns,
Diana B Freeman
Hamilton ISD School Board member
3rd Generation educator
Proud product of Texas public education
Proud parent of a product of Texas public education

Marlene Kelley, Ms
Self
Dripping Springs, TX

I do not want MY taxes to be used toward unregulated and often religious PRIVATE school education. Public dollars are for PUBLIC schools, period!

Carol Harle, Dr.
Northside OSD Trustee
Shavano Patk, TX

My name is Dr. Carol Harle. As a long time public school educator,, school board trustee, grandparent of public school grandchildren and graduate of public schools (& University of Texas), I oppose SB 8 for the following crucial reasons that would hinder the providing of a high quality education for 5 million Texas children. I oppose the diversion of taxpayer dollars to private entities and thus oppose SB 8.

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools have so many wise children, incredible initiatives and wonderful educator yet continue to be underfunded, under valued and under attack, and I am asking for you to PLEASE stand up against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Albert Clayton
Saisd
San Antonio, TX

Please stop HB 8 this will not lead to better educational outcomes for Texans. But it will be a great tax break for the wealthy.

Deborah Mosley
Fort Bend ISD / Self
Missouri City, TX

I am wanting to cast my vote to "NO" on SB 8.

Eric Hartman, Mr.
self; attorney
Austin, TX

The latest version of SB 8 may be reduced in scope, but it still would constitute a private school voucher program to the detriment of our public schools and the millions of students they serve. SB 8 would serve the interests of privatizers, not students. As this issue comes to a head, which side are you on? Please vote no on this voucher vehicle, SB 8, and refocus on the job assigned to you by the Texas Constitution: providing equitably and adequately for our system of free public schools.

Sally Mooter, Mrs.
self - parent
Murphy, TX

You should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. You MUST vote NO on SB 8. This would destroy public education and create huge inequalities in our educational system. This would only benefit wealthy, rich families. This unfair bill MUST NOT pass.

Caryn Calhoun
AFT
Lufkin, TX

Vote against SB 8

Deborah Mosley
AFT / Self
Missouri City, TX

I am casting my vote to "NO" for SB 8.

Kathleen Brennen
Self, mother of two school-age children
Katy, TX

The damage done from the arbitrary cap TEA had on special education hasn't been undone , and it's unfair to say public schools are failing special education kiddos when we haven't fully funded public schools.

Fully fund public school, and only then can we consider sending public money to private schools.

Cheri Froehling
Self, teacher
Fate, TX

Please do NOT pass this bill. Vouchers benefit no one in the long run. Every penny that goes out of a public school's funds impacts ALL students in a negative effect rather than giving private Ed even more ability to reject kids with issues which they REFUSE to serve. Vote No!

Jerri McCord, Dr.
Frenship ISD, TASA, Fast Growth School Coalition
Lubbock, TX

CSSB 8
Please do not pass any version of a voucher, called by any name. Vouchers or Education Savings Accounts do not improve educational outcomes for any learner.

Sarah Tuthill
Self
Austin, TX

I have two daughters in public schools in the Lake Travis school district. Please vote NO on SB 8. This bill will deplete funds for public schools and weaken public education.

Audra Miller, Mrs.
Self
Holliday, TX

Vote no on SB 8. Public education is an important part of educating all children in the state of Texas. Do not take money from public education to fund private schools.

Wayne Stalsworth, Mr.
Self
Seguin, TX

Vote no on sb 8. No more charter schools. Public money for public education! Private money for private education. Fully fund public education!!!!

Cindy Fountain, Ms
Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry (TXUUJM)
Cleburne, TX

I Oppose SB 8 and its Committee Substitute. \$800 million dollars funneled out of public schools into non-accountable private schools that are not required to accept all students is unconscionable and there is much evidence from other states that shows the students in these programs do not receive a better education. Education should be one of the biggest priorities for any state and the continuous drain over the years to defund public education is harmful to the whole state of Texas, and it is showing - not because the public schools are doing a bad job, but because the legislature has whittled away resources, doesn't compensate teachers or staff well, spends millions of \$\$\$ on for-profit non-helpful tests, mandates policies and programs without funding them, and overall has shown disrespect for an institution that is Constitutionally provided for every single Texan, probably the ONLY institution that accepts every Texan. I urge you to end this bill and start being the Texans we are meant to be, united to make great public schools! Thank you.

Cobacha Quauhtlatoa
self, ESL teacher
El Paso, TX

I really don't think you will give my comments any of your time, so why am I doing this? As a teacher, I spend most of my Sundays assembling materials, copying them, posting them on our lesson delivery program, grading assignments, and sending emails to the failing students in my classes. So why spend time hitting my head against the wall of silent, uninterested legislators? It's because this is important to me and other teachers, and by extension, to my students and the parents of those students. Taking money out of our public school system, and giving over to privately-owned schools that answer to no one is not only wrong, it's robbing me and every other teacher and giving it to a nameless, faceless corporation that exists only to make money.

You put my future and the viability of the public school system at risk. If you do this, I know you don't really care about schools, or education, or the teaching of the poor and disenfranchised, and you think only of the rich that will only get richer.

Vote no on SB 8, give us and all the other people that bring education to the children of Texas. Use that money that you swore you would use for the benefit of education in Texas.

Cordially,

Mr. C. Quauhtlatoa
El Paso, TX

Kerry Chambliss
self
Salado, TX

I voted Republican and am a Texas teacher. I do not support school vouchers and I am saddened by the fact that many of our elective officials would support a bill that weakens our public schools. The public school educate the majority of the youth in the state of Texas. These youth are our futures. Any vote that supports vouchers makes a statement to our students and parents that there is something wrong with our public schools. Please support a bill that will increase funding for our schools and raises for our teachers in order to make a statement that you support the teachers and the public schools in this great state. We need your support.

Carolyn J Roberson
Self
Georgetown, TX

I am a former public elementary school teacher, a Christian and educated in both public and private schools. I am 100% against vouchers. Unlike what is being advertised, vouchers would not give parents anymore choice in their child's education than they do now because private schools have the power to accept or reject students' admissions just like they do now. (And, what is going to stop private schools from raising tuition to match what the state voucher amount is?) Public schools have the infrastructure to support students with many various learning needs from simple needs to very complex needs where private schools simply don't have the infrastructure. I am only one year out of being in the public school classroom and I can confidently say that unlike what is being claimed in the media, the vast majority of educators focus on the academic learning of their students (not another personal agenda), they are required and do teach to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills that are set by the The State Board of Education. (not the unfounded claims of those that are pushing vouchers) There are pledges to the US and TX flags everyday with a moment of silence that follows (and, yes, that is an opportunity to quietly reflect or pray - however the students and teachers want to use that time). Public school teachers are some of the hardest working people that you will find and they pour into teaching and equipping young people to have the academic skills to be successful hard working members of society. Please encourage and support public education, the students and the educators. Vouchers will take away from all three and over time break down the public educational system. I truly believe that a strong public educational system is the secret weapon to strong and vital communities!

John Snelson, AD/HFC
Dickinson ISD
Dickinson, TX

Vote Nay
What the heck are we doing????
Vote Nay

Ashley de Jong
Self and family, property manager
Austin, TX

Absolutely NO on this scam. Please do not support this bill or any other vouchers or "educational savings accounts". It's incredibly disingenuous to prevent public testimony on this bill and the lack of transparency is really disappointing.

Thank you.

Jena McGuire
TRTA
Pflugerville, TX

We need the legislators to step up and do the right thing!! Fully fund public education and not the voucher program. We need to increase our student allotment by a lot more than you're set to do right now. Texas' stats are really quite embarrassing. We are 49th in teacher retirement and the lower 25% of what is spent per student. I'm about to start looking for a 2nd job meanwhile the state has record amounts of money in the budget to help me and other fellow teachers out. Stop trying to push through shady voucher bills and do what you were elected to do. Support our Texas children and those who are still willing to work in our classrooms. I never used to be embarrassed to say I was a Texas teacher. That's not the case anymore. People laugh at me for still staying in my job.

Dean Doba, Mr.
Self Teacher
Spring, TX

Hello,

I am writing to urge you to vote no on SB 8. Please respect public schools by voting no on school vouchers.

Greg McCaig
Self, Educator
Cypress, TX

Please do not vote yes to this bill. It undermines communities and creates inequities amongst our children. Public Schools are the foundation upon which our communities are built. Children will suffer, families will suffer and the state will suffer. Parents have always had the option to put their children in private schools. It is not the role of legislators to subsidize that choice. If they want to go then they should go but not with the monies that should go to the one body, public education, that is trying to elevate all kids. This legislation has nothing to do with parental choice but rather with subsidizing private entities.

Victoria Y
Self
AUSTIN, TX

Vote NO on SB 8.
Please respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers

Melisa Williams
Teacher
Buda, TX

SB 8 deserves to be open to public testimony.

ANA LUISA SALAS-PORRAS
self/retired
Austin, TX

Public Education has been a bedrock of our country. My grandparents, parents, 5 siblings and my grandchildren are all products of public education. I oppose an Education Savings account program because it would further hurt public schools who accept ALL children including those with physical or intellectual disabilities. Private schools handpick their students. We should continue to have separation between public and private schools including religious schools. The House Committee Substitute for SB 8 also INCREASES testing (does not decrease it). We do not need more testing. We need more time for teachers to Teach. I oppose vouchers because they will hurt public education across the State, especially in rural areas, by draining badly needed funds away from public schools. Please vote AGAINST SB8.

Michael Mooter
Self IT director and parent
Murphy, TX

I am very concerned that the senate is trying to shove this bill down our throat that will disproportionately provide tax payer dollars to a very loud minority of citizens. The potential impact to small school districts is scary and the impact on teacher retirement even scarier. Right now the distance between our elected officials and the officials they are appointing to create these mandates exemplifies what happens when you have leaders making decisions while ignoring the experience and wisdom of the people that are responsible for doing the work.

Standardized tests are not necessarily the best tool for determining the progress a student is making and should not be used as the only measurement of success.

When you are attempting to make sweeping changes to accommodate a vocal minority you are no longer supporting the public good.

Jennifer Penton
Rockwall ISD
Rockwall, TX

Vote no on SB 8

Laura Trevino
Crownover Middle School
Corinth, TX

NO to school vouchers!!!
Fund our public schools!!!

Theresa Parsons
Self - association executive
Austin, TX

I urge you to vote NO on any voucher proposal that makes it way to the Texas House this session. I work in special education, which means I know all of the ways students with disabilities are protected in public schools and all that they are entitled to. No matter what funding we receive (which is never enough), Texas public schools provide every needed special education service to students AT NO COST. A voucher will only provide a discounted amount to families, disenfranchising them while opening up the opportunity for them to be discriminated against at private schools. I am also concerned that, because private schools are often ill-equipped to serve all students, especially those with behavioral needs, these students will return to public schools while their voucher money stays at the private school. I know precisely how vulnerable students will be in a private school and it should not be the position of our state to put children at risk. Please VOTE NO on vouchers.

David Teran
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am in favor of school choice and the educations savings account program.

Please advance this cause for Texas children and their families.

Thank you.

Rebecca Teran, Mrs.
Self
San Antonio, TX

I urge you to support the Education Savings Account Program. Thank you!

Linda Parker, Ms.
Myself
Palacios, TX

Please reject SB8 as Public Education needs more funding not less! The children are our future! We must work towards a better future for ALL our children to make a better Texas.

Helen Dennis, Mrs
Self/retired educator
Brenham, TX

Vote NO on voucher

Amber Epps
Self teacher
Sugar Land, TX

As a public school teacher, I do not support Senate Bill 8 because it will hurt public schools which are already underfunded in Texas.

Justin Maenner
Self, teacher
Eustace, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. This will not help our state's education system and preparing Texas for a better tomorrow with a well-rounded workforce for our economy.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Laura Guerrero
self/teacher
Seabrook, TX

Texans have, despite our severely gerrymander districts, managed to kill any bill that would undermine our public schools. While parents and teachers have been waiting for our concerns about underfunding and over-testing to be taken seriously, Greg Abbott and his allies have tried to undercut the democratic process and jam through a wealth transfer of public tax dollars to wealthy private citizens through this latest voucher scheme. It should be dead on arrival. It obviously doesn't cover the cost of private school tuition for the average student, and offers nothing to a rural student without access to private schools in their vicinity. Of course, none of these private and charter institutions would be subject to STAAR testing or federal laws regarding special education. The Abbott allies who proposed this bill aren't even trying to hide their intentions. They don't believe every child in Texas deserves equal access to an excellent education. This stance should be disqualifying for ever serving another term in any legislative body. Vote no.

Amanda McCue

Self

Eustace, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account (ESA) or voucher. From a household of Texas educators, I implore you to please support public education and not support ESAs and vouchers.

Teachers are already leaving the profession in mass numbers and one of the reasons is we do not feel like we have a voice, especially to those that represent us. We feel changes are made without thinking of teachers DOING the job every day, we don't think you care, or that you listen to us as the REAL professional educators when we advocate for students and what our education system needs to thrive.

Educators are expected to flex and adapt to anything the state pushes towards us because it is the best interests of students; while those with the actual ability to impact large scale change that would help Texas now (and future generations) aren't willing to act in the best interests of students. SB 8 and any future ESA or voucher would further cripple Texas education and students. Public schools are a bedrock of a well educated society, as well as a thriving economy with a strong workforce ready to tackle tomorrow's jobs. Vouchers do not support that concept as they take from the much needed resources to the majority of hardworking Texans. Those who choose private schools do so because they have the means to do so.

Support funding public education and say no to SB 8!

Jana Reid, Mrs.

Self

Granbury, TX

Vote NO to any voucher scheme which would take money away from the public's c schools for f Texas and the students they serve so well. Schools change lives. They make a difference and work with low resources as it is. Don't take money from kids in Texas Vote NO to any and all voucher schemes.

Patricia Dicoste, Ms

Retired educator

Bellaire, TX

Please stand up to the powerful and deep-pocketed groups pushing our state to fund private schools over public schools that are open to all students. As a taxpayer, I oppose spending \$500M+ in just the initial years on vouchers to private corporations. This will either raise my taxes, or drain funding for public schools.

Please vote to oppose SB8 on Monday. Don't let defunding public education move to the House floor!"

This will only break our public education!

God Bless

Victor Juarez, Assistant principal
Hutto isd
Austin, TX

As a Texas Public School Assistant Principal, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Wendy Bratteli
Bratteli Benefit Cons., LLC
Tyler, TX

Please support this Bill. Texans (parents and families - ie: the taxpayer) need access to choice for schools and curriculum - for their own children. Not federal or state beaurocrats. We need to have control - with our tax dollars - how and where they are spent, on our children's education.

Ruthie Long
self
Waco, TX

No to school vouchers! Fully fund our public schools!

April Stine
Self- Mother
North Richland Hills, TX

I oppose vouchers, public schools are a necessity for an educated population.

Carol Doersom
self - retired
Brenham, TX

Vote NO on Senate Bill 8.

Tax money should NOT be used to finance private schools.

April Geruso
Self, Urban Planner
Austin, TX

As a parent of a school aged child I oppose SB 8. The House Committee Substitute for SB 8 increases testing and I oppose vouchers because they will hurt public education across the State by draining needed funds.

We need to focus efforts on making sure public schools are strong and an asset to our children. The extra burden SB 8 puts on school teachers and schools would limit their ability to teach meaningfully and not simply to standardized tests. And it would put money that should be dedicated to public amenities into private institutions.

Resia Lawrence
Self
Corinth, TX

Opposed to vouchers. Education should be the right of every child and public education is the backbone to our society

Resia Lawrence
Self
Corinth, TX

Opposed to vouchers. Education should be the right of every child and public education is the backbone to our society

Pamela Jae Boveland, Dr
CVPE
Houston, TX

As a Texas resident and public school graduate, I am appalled at the underhanded way SB8 wants the siphon public funds from our already underfunded public school system to fatten the pockets of corporate charter schools.

Our governor seems to believe a child cannot receive a quality education from a public school. For four decades, there has been a consistent push for vouchers and increasing charter schools in Texas. It is frankly embarrassing to live in a State that is hell bent on destroying a public good that serves all children in Texas including children with special needs. It is a myth that charter school provide better education. It is not a myth that when schools are provided the necessary resources and support, student outcomes improve. Teachers need consistent funding and schools need funding based on needs and opportunity, not enrollment.

Stop trying to gaslight parents into thinking education is better at charter schools. Stop using public funds to finance private greed.

Nicholas Callais
Self
Austin, TX

I am writing to express my opposition to SB 8. I'm a parent in AISD. We support our public schools and don't want to see money funneled away from them for private (often religious) instruction. Instead, Texas should fully support and fund public schools instead of a handout for private entities. We already know exactly what will happen if a voucher is provided -- tuition will simply rise by the same amount.

Vote against SB 8 and focus on public schools.

Elva Robledo
Self/ Teacher
North Richland Hills, TX

You should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Susan Anderson
Texas UU Justice Ministry
Benbrook, TX

I oppose this bill because: (1) it diverts much-needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools; (2) it replaces STAAR test with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system; (3) it fails to maintain protections for students with disabilities under IDEA, and (4) it gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority. Furthermore, research from the Brookings Insitute indicates that on average, students who use vouchers to attend private schools do less well on tests than similar students who do not attend private schools. Finally, in states like Arizona , vouchers tend to primarily be used by wealthy parents, while families with fewer resources have difficulty using voucher programs. As a middle-income parent whose children attended public schools, I know that the amount of the voucher would not be enough to allow me to send my daughters to private schools. It seems that this bill will mainly benefit families who can already afford to send their children to private schools. Meanwhile, it will harm the majority of Texas youth whose families can only afford public schools. Texas already spends less money per student than most other states. We are at the bottom of the barrel and this bill will not help us to improve.

-

Mary Brandt, MD, MDiv
Self
Houston, TX

We must not hurt the hundreds and hundreds of small towns in Texas by moving public funding to non-public education. I am certain the majority of legislators are the product of public education. Don't waver on this one - public schools are the bedrock of our state and this bill will hurt them.

Clayton Conine, Mr.
Self
Corinth, TX

I oppose this bill, and I oppose vouchers and/or education savings account programs.

Frances Romero
Taxpayer in CFISD a community
Houston, TX

Members of the House Public Education Committee:
Please vote NO on SB 8, the vouchers bill. Vouchers, ESAs and all other euphemisms for subsidizing private school tuition are bad policy for our Texas education system as a whole. As it is, our public school systems needed a substantial increase in the basic allotment - which is not likely to happen. Taking that much needed money to pay for private school tuition makes absolutely no sense and is a great injustice to the over 60% economically disadvantaged students in Texas public schools. Please vote NO on SB 8.

Respectfully,
Frances Romero

Greg Stine
Self
Saginaw, TX

I oppose vouchers

Cynthia Bishop
Texas Association of Rural Schools
Heath, TX

I vote no to anything that hints of a voucher or ESA Account.

Matt Smith, Dr.
Belton Independent School District
Belton, TX

Chair Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members,
I am writing to you in strong opposition to SB 8. I serve as the Superintendent of Belton ISD in House District 54. The proposed bill you are discussing today, the committee substitute for SB 8, is a full-blown voucher program that will have negative implications on students throughout the state. We oppose the plan as presented for assessment changes because of the lack of educator input and increased involvement of TEA (instead of the SBOE). The plan as presented in the committee substitute raises the stakes of accountability for public schools but does nothing to address accountability for private schools. We oppose all plans for vouchers because taxpayer funds should not be used for private entities without equal accountability standards applied to the private entities. Fully fund special education and increase the basic allotment instead of chasing the governor's voucher agenda. We have shared our concerns with Chair Buckley and we ask the committee to oppose SB 8.

Rakhi Dimino
Self
Houston, TX

School vouchers are a horrible idea. Use the money to fix public school education instead. The voucher system will drain money out of the educational system that so desperately need it. Make schools safe. Pay teachers better, and fund public schools appropriately.

Rhonda Dillard
Public School employee
Lubbock, TX

Please vote against SB 8 to ensure that public schools can continue to provide education to all students. If you can't vote NO ... then please make it a fair playing field where we all play by the same rules including standardized testing, admission requirements, attendance, teacher certification, minimum salary schedule etc. if they are going to take funding away from public education then they must be required to follow the same rules.

Kelly Mears
Self; Homemaker
Corinth, TX

I oppose this bill because it would divert funding away from our public schools. Private schools would not be subject to the same accountability that public schools are. In addition, middle and lower income families still would not be able to afford private school, and students in rural areas don't have access to private schools. Texas needs to support it's public schools, teachers, and administrators.

Pamela Webb Elliott
Self
Austin, TX

FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Keep your donor and lobbyist interests away from our children's future!

Brandyne Finney, Mrs.
Tomball ISD
Tomball, TX

Increasing the number of assessments students take with inappropriate leveled content only continues to drive educators out. In addition, having an accountability systems that only holds public schools accountable does not provide equality. Private schools will not be open to educating students with severe cognitive and/or behavioral deficits due to them being able to elect their attendees. It's time the people writing these bills spend time in the classrooms serving the leaders of tomorrow.

Kimberly Bloemer
Self
Allen, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. It will hurt our public schools.

Cherryl Gilmore
Self, retired teacher
Brenham, TX

Vote NO on this bill and keep tax money in public schools only.

Pamela Webb Elliott
Self
Austin, TX

Texans oppose any form of vouchers, also called education savings accounts, that use taxpayer dollars to subsidize private schools and vendors. Keep our tax dollars in our public schools. Period.

Mica Baize
Hamilton ISD
Hamilton, TX

Please do not undermine public schools or underestimate their value. Vote against.

Barbara Ponder
Barbers Hill ISD
Baytown, TX

Brandon I have voted for you since you came to Barbers Hill in your first bid to be our Senator and have continued to support you. However, this assault on public education must stop. You will lose my support and many Republicans in this area if you continue to push vouchers and undermine local control.

Mica Baize
Hamilton ISD
Hamilton, TX

No

Mark Paxton
self
Allen, TX

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is time to put the brakes on the passage of Senate Bill 8 before chaos takes over our public school system. This legislation is being hailed as what most Texans want, but do they really want what is coming? The Governor and Lt. Governor are advocating for this Bill, but apparently are not worried about the consequences. Are we ready to close the underperforming schools, and bus the students to others? Is it prudent to create education savings accounts, and take money away from public schools to fund private schools?

The numbers don't add up.

Many school districts that have newer facilities and have passed bonds to build more schools are budgeted to provide quality education for the students they have. The funds provided by the State only make a portion of the actual costs and are paid basically on a daily rate for student attendance. Adding more students to districts costs more money. There is no data that says adding more kids to a district is good. As long as ad-valorem taxes are the primary source funding public schools, the property owners paying the taxes should have a say how their tax dollars are spent. The Governor and Lt. Governor are strangely ignoring our property values.

I live in Collin County. I've tried to work through the pros and cons of this bill and determine how anyone in the County would benefit by having unabated transfers. I don't think allowing transfers into our districts without raising taxes works. Anyone that says there is no added costs over the state funded formula is just misinformed.

Everyone agrees that a child's education starts with the pa is followed by the teachers. SB 8 is going to add to teacher workload. Let's raise teacher pay at underperforming schools, and get better teachers to increase performance rather than letting the kids leave and schools close. Districts are strapped to hire and retain quality teachers. Most districts allow a teacher to enroll their children for their education and convenience. SB 8 reduces an accompanying child to be seventh on the order of state mandated hierarchy behind handicapped, disadvantaged, military, police, and firefighters. How can we recruit good teachers if they can't bring their own children?

According to SB 8, the elite, private schools will be major beneficiaries. Not only will the State be funding most of the tuition, but the private schools will also retain the ability to discriminate who will be allowed to enroll, and not be required to accept like numbers of handicapped and disadvantaged. Shouldn't anyone with passing grades and no behavioral issues be welcomed at the private schools if the State is paying their tuition?

Lastly, does any lawmaker believe that making transfers easy will not negatively affect our athletic programs? Texas has always maintained strict rules for high school transfers for athletics. Are we now ready to have unabated recruiting and team building?

SB 8 is NOT what Texans want.

Natalie Weston, Dr.
Self, Medical Doctor
Austin, TX

Dear House Public Education Committee Members:

I urge you to vote NO on SB 8. As a doctor providing healthcare to children in the state of Texas, I see firsthand the impact the education system has on the health and well-being of the youth of our state. I also benefited from attending Texas public schools for my entire educational career, and know first-hand the good they do for our communities. The repeated attempts to remove any input from Texas citizens makes it clear that you realize that your constituents do not want this bill to pass. This bill would increase standardized testing, lays no framework for accountability of holding private education institutions to the same educational standards, and sets many public schools up to lose students and funding, thus putting them on a path towards potential closure. Our public schools are unfortunately often the only safe place many of my patients have access to, and this bill would put that one haven in danger. Again, I urge you to vote NO on SB 8.

Thank you for your time,

Natalie Weston, MD, MSE

Mica Baize
Hamilton ISD
Hamilton, TX

No. Stop trying to undermine public schools. Vote against this legislation please.

Andrew Hung
Self, programmer
Houston, TX

Vouchers are an underhanded way of cutting public education. I am deeply opposed to and am incredibly disappointed in those who support this bill.

Maria Monsalve
Texas AFT
Heartland, TX

The committee should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers.

Darrell Pittillo, Mr.
self / Texans
Dallas, TX

I graduated valedictorian of a public school in Texas. I went to Texas A&M and got a degree in Computer Science and minor in Chemical Engineering.

I feel that this bill will take funds away from public education in Texas. Many Texans do and every teacher that I know oppose this bill.

I strongly urge that you oppose it.

I also feel that it is asinine Chairman Brad Buckley is allowing only invited testimony to speak at the hearing. Please do better.

I vote.

Echo White
Self- School Nurse
Weatherford, TX

Oppose

Frederick Moore, Mr.
Self/ Public school teachers
Arlington, TX

Please support and fund public schools. Vote NO to SB 8 and school vouchers. Thank you.

Paul Dunk
Self
Katy, TX

Using public funds to subsidize a private school system that is exclusive in nature and not open to or responsible to the public in the same way that our public schools are does not meet the mandate set in the Texas Constitution to fund public schools. Not allowing public testimony on what is basically a new bill (80 page supplemental) is both disrespectful of the public and evidence of a process that is not open to the public. Vouchers/ESA are not right for Texas. We are not Florida or Arizona, we are TEXAS. Please do not vote to send SB 8 out of committee.

Raymond Zepeda
Self
Cypress, TX

I am totally opposed to SB 8 at the present time. I am opposed to the use of vouchers or educational savings accounts to pay for and subsidize the private school education of students in Texas. Public money should not be used for private purposes. Private schools are not subject to the same type of regulations or elected oversight that public school districts are. SB 8 also INCREASES the total amount of tests that students will have to take as a part of their education. There should be less testing, not more. Further, the entire way that this incredibly important bill has been handled is disgraceful. Trying to pass it through at the last minute without a public hearing and then having a "public" hearing without full public participation is shameful.

Lisa Jeter
Self
Hickory Creek, TX

There is already a law on the books about parents' rights. See: 2005 Texas Education Code CHAPTER 26. PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES. We are wasting time while being redundant with consideration of another parental rights bill. Please stop wasting time grandstanding on something that already works.

Donna Curtis
Self
Hewitt, TX

For the love of public education! Please do not push this bill through. Public funds should go to PUBLIC schools, not taken away from them to subsidize tuition for kids in private schools! Vote NO!

Tasha Yarbrough
Parents
Channing, TX

School choice has always been an options for Texas Parents. The Texas constitution entitles free and fair PUBLIC education; however, SB 8/CSSB 8 offers billions in taxpayer-funded handouts to entirely unregulated private and parochial schools. At the same time, public schools will lose funding. Students will take more tests than before, which will play an even larger role in school accountability ratings. CSSB 8 cedes massive power to the unelected commissioner of education to overhaul the state's testing and accountability system— this is a BAD bill. As a parent of Texas students, my tax payer money should NOT be funding private schools for other students. If true education change is desired, start with funding public schools properly, paying teachers for the highly educated professionals they are, and spend the billions on the biased and unfair STAAR testing on students and schools. Stop with "parent choice" propaganda when parents have always had choices. Do better ELECTED representatives and stand up and say NO to SB8.

Anna Brown
Self, mother
Lubbock, TX

Thank you for all that you do for our beautiful state of Texas, including our neck of the woods in West Texas. I am writing you about my strong concerns related to Gov Abbott's and Lt Gov Patrick's school voucher plans that have been making their way through our state legislator. Specifically, SB 8 which is currently being considered by your committee. As someone who has children in our incredible public school setting here in Lubbock I worry about the financial effects it will have on their education.

Having read significant amounts of literature and studies related to school vouchers and public funded ESAs, I have three primary concerns related to them:

1. It would financially ruin already strained rural public schools like we have in our West Texas community. State leaders proposing these plans have already assured that it would financially hurt public schools, but especially so rural areas (like ours!).
2. SB 8 being proposed, has minimal accountability built into vouchers. That is, will there be standards to ensure that private schools that receive tax dollars (vouchers) don't discriminate (race, gender, beliefs, etc), that their campus is accessible to various abilities/skills, that they provide accommodations to students with unique needs and special circumstances, or that they meet specific learning benchmarks/standards? Presently, this bill, does not have these accountability measures and yet still would funnel public money towards these private institutions. Why hold public schools to very strict standards and expectations but not private when they are also using public funds?
3. Data from other states that have implemented similar systems have illustrated, at best, no improvement in education other than a LOT more public dollars are needed to make it work. In most cases, the outcomes are not great for students and their education. Why overall a system that will cost our state more money and at best give us the same educational outcomes and most likely worse? It does not make sense.
4. Making k-12 education into a for profit business is troubling. We already see what has happened to higher education when institutions have embraced this same model of profit (sky high tuition). Additionally, I am exceptionally concerned at the amount of dollars organizations and individuals are pouring in to get vouchers put into place here in Texas. Based upon where I am sitting, it sure doesn't seem like that money is to simply offer better educational opportunities to our upcoming generation.

Thus, I implore you to NOT support school vouchers including what is found in SB 8. It will decimate our fantastic schools that we have here in West Texas. Rather, I would invite you to explore innovative ways to build on the already great system that we have through appropriately funding teachers, appropriately staffing schools, ensuring that schools have the supplies and resources they need, etc.

Your fellow Texan, Anna Brown

Monique Presas
ECISD VP Board of Trustees
San Antonio, TX

To Whom it May Concern: I respectfully ask that you vote Nay to SB 8 .Vouchers do not in any way support public education and cause disruption within school districts. Also the testing system has not been serving our students nor providing an opportunity to teach students basic subject matter only what the test contains. Educators have voiced their desire time and time again to administer small benchmark testing through the school year to assess students.

Increasing the amount tests only places more burden on teachers and students. Using results from an 11th grade test for college placement is absolutely not a way to gauge a student's abilities or what they have or haven't learned. The manner in which TEA rates school districts is already set up for failure and makes them appear as if they are not performing well. This will make it worse. School districts are charged with educating students to the highest degree possible but scores and data driven research needed to strengthen weak areas is received from TEA one to two years behind. Not to mention the biggest travesty is that TEXAS is one of the only states that funds school districts based on attendance and not enrollment.

Yet school districts pay their bills everyday based on how many students are enrolled whether they are in school or not. Not being funded by enrollment causes a shortfall for districts forcing them to either drain their budgets and fund balance or go without.

Please stand with Texas Public Schools Students & Educators. Again I humbly request that you Vote to support public schools by a vote of nay for SB 8. Thank you,

Monique Presas

Shana Bunch-Fancher
Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education
MEADOWLAKES, TX

There is absolutely no evidence that vouchers improve student outcomes. Please do not support a bill that gives money to private schools and not require the schools to follow federal laws that protect students with disabilities. Tax payers deserve transparency...this bill provides none. Students with disabilities deserve to have highly qualified teachers, currently private schools have no oversight as to qualifications of teachers. In public schools we are required under federal law to provide all that a student needs including related services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, counseling, social skills, etc. Private schools have no such obligation, which will result in students needs not being met. Please place the needs of children above political agendas and vote no to SB8. Fully fund public education and provide schools what they need to supports students with disabilities as required by federal law.

Staci Freeman
Self
Corinth, TX

Against

Sandra Garcia
Self teacher
San Antonio, TX

I am a teacher in a public school with a grade of a B. As teachers we work very hard to connect with our families and students to assist their understanding of the importance of their education. Unfortunately their community has a different belief of the importance of education. Instead of providing vouchers to private schools. Why not provide the district with the additional money to assist the "students," you feel would gain a better education in a private setting with non certified teachers. You make all these standards and changes on teacher certification and hold us to maintain all certification requirements yet as a state you continue to provide additional resources to private school that do not have to maintain the certification requirements from the state. As a state we should observe and analyze why these students aren't receiving what they need at their school. As a state we need to do MORE for ALL our students.... THEY ARE OUR FUTURE...and our future looks depressing at this point.

Do not pass TxSB 8.

Susana Carranza, Dr.
self, retired engineer
Austin, TX

I oppose SB 8, in its current version and previous versions contemplated in this session. As a taxpayer, I oppose using public money to fund private schools as it will remove funds from an already underfunded public school system. Texas public schools receive funds based on student attendance, therefore when a student uses an education savings account to leave a public school, funding for the public school is reduced. However, schools have substantial fixed costs that do not get reduced when a student leaves. The end result will be to underfund public schools. Please oppose SB 8!

Sharmila Sittther
Self
Eules, TX

As a resident of Texas I am your constituent, and I'm writing to ask you to please ensure that the house version of SB 8 does not leave the committee for the following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
 - It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
 - It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system. More testing should not be added without proof that such testing is indeed beneficial to students and does not add to student stress.
 - It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.
 - It will ultimately be disastrous for our public school system in which teachers and parents are already routinely funding unfunded classroom needs.
-

Lanet Greenhaw, Former Richardson ISD Board of Trustees member
Self, retired. Former elected Richardson ISD Board of Trustees member
Richardson, TX

I oppose SB 8 and especially any vouchers and/or Education Savings Accounts. Texas public education is not fully funded and it's unconscionable that you are considering allocating substantial funding outside of the system. And it's also unthinkable that the proposed per student allocation for the voucher/ESA you are considering is higher than the current per student Basic Allotment for all students. Stop the shenanigans of holding hearings without public comment and trying to sneak in this unfavorable and politically partisan legislation only because they are Gov and Lt Gov priorities. Your constituents do not want this legislation. Vote NO and let this legislation die in committee.

Michael Troncale
self / teacher
Houston, TX

The process by which this bill is attempting to be passed is anything but democratic. If this bill has so much public support, then trying to rush it through would not be necessary. But the majority of Texans don't want to see public schools defunded, which is why this process has and continues to be shady and undemocratic. Vote "no" against SB 8.

Dianna Simons
Self
Austin, TX

No school vouchers.

Ashleigh Priddy
Self, diagnostician
Houston, TX

I oppose SB 8. Vouchers were not initially a part of this bill and it is shady back room dealings to add it at the last moment. Vouchers in any form should be rejected. The money made in the school districts should remain in the school districts, not subsidize wealthy family's private school tuition. The only way to improve our public schools is to fully fund our public schools. I have been an educator for almost a decade. I support my students with every resource I have to ensure their growth. Will you do the same? Will you do your job to keep money in our public schools so that I can do my job? If you believe in my students like I do, you will reject vouchers to ensure the quality of their education.

Benjamin Peters
Self
Houston, TX

I oppose SB 8, specifically the education savings account program (school voucher program). Implementation of a voucher program will defund our public school system, and will significantly harm those who do not have the means to attend private school, even after the creation of savings accounts. Private schools are not required to enroll children with disabilities or special needs, and aren't held to the same reporting standards that public schools are in many ways. Quality of education and student outcomes will worsen statewide, and those who will most benefit will be parents who already have their children in private schooling. Our teachers and administrators work extremely hard to provide quality education for our school children, please do not make their job more difficult by defunding our schools. Please oppose SB 8 and vote no.

Laura Adams
Self, Behavior Intervention Teacher
Fort Worth, TX

It is imperative that all procedures regarding the passing of a bill be followed. The hearing scheduled for SB 8 on 5-15-23 is a rush job, neglecting to allow for public testimony. This is a back-handed attempt to keep the people of Texas ignorant to the facts. As a behavior intervention teacher, I see it ALL THE TIME. Families with a student with social, emotional, or mental health disabilities are quietly told their child is not a "good fit" for the charter school, so they come to us, the public school, in order to have their rights to a free, appropriate public education. It's bad enough that these violations occur all the time, but to not allow for public testimony to reveal the inherent problems with charter schools and the numerous violations of civil rights is reprehensible. Educators on BOTH sides of the political spectrum have strong beliefs about voucher bills and their debilitating impact on public education. I know with special interest money at the helm, I'm asking as a person with no power or money beyond the ballot box. Something that should be happening as a matter of course, public testimony, is being pushed aside in order to appease those without an on-the-ground stake in public education. I've served in public education as a special education teacher for 21 years. I have watched year after year as unfunded or underfunded legal requirements stack up, leaving schools unable to pay for these initiatives and requirements. Then politicians point at gaps and problems in public schools, crowing about how badly vouchers are needed. The systematic de-funding of public education to "prove" the incompetence of the system then push through vouchers is a nefarious scheme. Slow down, get public testimony, vote at the opportune time. For once, just do the right thing.

Andrea Gust
Self
Corinth, TX

Support

Janet Easley, Mrs.
self and dyslexia teacher
Moody, TX

I am against SB8 because public schools provide education for all Texas students, follow both state and federal guidelines, and provide services that private schools do not. I believe it will penalize students in public education if parents are encouraged to take their kids to private schools. The private schools in our areas rely on the local ISD to test students that need testing at our ISD's expense. Often parents end up bringing their students to our local public school. If private schools take public education money, they should be required to have the same expectations and standards including TEKS, state testing, and educating all types of kids.

Kimberly Correa
Self - Teacher
Austin, TX

I am AGAINST any money from the state being taken away from public education and being used to fund private schools. As nice as it would be to end the STAAR test, these amendments are just being used to try to sweeten this bill and to distract from its purpose - to destroy public schools. We are already unable to pay teachers a living wage. Removing even more funding will futher cripple a districts ability to pay its staff.

Thelma Collinsworth
Self-Texas Public School Teacher
Hewitt, TX

Please support public schools in Texas and our teachers. Vote NO on SB 8. Please support a pay raise for teachers with some of our budget surplus money. Thank you.

Kelly Knight
Self
Winnsboro, TX

Vote no on SB 8. Tax dollars should not go to private schools. Public schools allow parents all of the oppourtunities listed including monitoring instructional materials. Education savings accounts are NOT the answer. Homeschooled children and private schools should not receive any tax dollars. I support fully funding public education. Stop trying to politicize public education. Schools follow the curriculum required by the state, parents already have the right to see curriculum. This bill would take away much needed resources public schools need. ESA would be disastrous for public education. Stop the madness. Texans do not want vouchers.

Tim Dowling
Self, retired lawyer
Corpus Christi, TX, TX

Texas public schools are already poorly funded. SB 8 would be a giveaway that would make the situation worse. Public schools are the drivers of upward mobility. SB 8 will mainly help families already at the upper end of the income scale. Vote "No!" on SB 8.

Jay Taylor
Self / retired
Houston, TX

Vouchers would undermine & ultimately destroy public education in our state. The separation of Church and State is fundamental to our way of life and must be preserved. Vouchers would steal tax dollars from the public school system and fund religious schooling. It would bankrupt our public schools and render our state an uncompetitive educational backwater.

Kelly Johnson
Self - licensed mental health therapist
Lubbock, TX

Passing this bill takes away from the interests of the state to shape its children's opportunities. Public education has helped equalize opportunities for children and taking away funding will only help the already-advantaged.

Joseph Stapleton
self, student
Austin, TX

I am a high school freshman, and I oppose this bill. I don't want to take another big test at 11th grade. I just took three STAAR tests in the past few weeks and will take English II and U.S. History in the next few years. The 11th grade test shouldn't be required, because at that point we will be working on college applications, and a bad score could negatively affect our futures in college. Having to take remedial coursework in college that doesn't count for credit could put students further behind, and that could harm future jobs and career.

David Aguilar
Self
Bulverde, TX

NO TO SCHOOL
VOUCHERS. NO TO TAX \$\$ going to church-run schools or private schools.

Deana Hastings, Mrs.
Self
Gilmer, TX

Vote No on SB 8. Our tax dollars are to fund public education. Private schools and parents who choose to homeschool should not get our tax dollars. Public Ed already has a parent's bill of rights and public schools follow state mandated curriculum. Therefore, vouchers are not needed in Texas. Vote no on this bill.

Brian Reed, Dr
Self
Pearland, TX

This legislation appears to undermine the public school system. The proposed education savings account program will not provide sufficient funds for annual tuition at private K-12 schools. There are not enough positions within desirable private schools for students. The loss of revenue from public schools by this legislation will be more detrimental than the benefits from the education savings account program. I don't support this.

Betty Daugherty
retired
The Woodlands, TX

Please vote no for SB 8. Vouchers are antithetical to public education. This bill subsidizes private schools with no oversight.
Thank you,
Betty Daugherty

Genevieve Sugalski
Myself
San Antonio, TX

Public Education Committee, thank you for taking a minute to read the public comments. I am a mom of 2 kids in NEISD. SB8 would do so much hard to my children by taking funding out of their schools. My 9th grader is receiving a fabulous education at Churchill HS in San Antonio and a voucher would threaten the many programs he takes part in like band, tennis and Model UN. I would actually prefer to see more money put into the system, not less. Also, adding more testing to the already test happy system is not what we want. Education is a common good and we need to strengthen that good instead of putting it in danger. Thank you for your time.

Lori Kirkpatrick
Self
Dallas, TX

No Education Savings Accounts. No 11th grade state exam that would affect students college placement. No to incentivizing children to leave the public education system. NO to this bill.

Pamela Hill Walden
Self/Retired
Sulphur Springs, TX

Chairman Brad Buckley is allowing only invited testimony to speak at the hearing. This is a boldly undemocratic move to silence the voices of the majority of Texans, but that should never happen! As a citizen of Texas who spent more than 37 years in the public classrooms of Texas, I'm outraged that this committee would attempt to ram this piece of legislation through without true public comment it deserves. I urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 8 for the reasons given below.

Public schools in Texas have been underfunded for years. I point out that it is your Texas constitutional duty - one of the few you have as a legislator - to properly fund education. SB 8 will strip nearly a billion dollars (more than \$800 million) of state funding for public education leaving underfunded schools with even less of the resources they require to perform at a level we all expect. The \$800+ will flow from public school education to private schools. There is a huge problem with such a move.

Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely. They do not have to follow all of the rules that public schools do. In addition, there is an increasing mountain of evidence showing that private schools do not education students at the level of public schools. The bill goes a step further by making state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination.

I urge you to take a look at the Texas Education Agency's own statistics comparing achievement by students in public schools verses those in private schools. The data are neither Republican data nor Democratic data. They are simply the numbers that are easy to understand. One would think that such data would lead you to vote NO on Senate Bill 8.

Because I am deeply concerned about (1) public education in the State of Texas, (2) our students - who are our future, and (3) the democratic process which Chairman Buckley is trying valiantly to undermine, I ask for your vote of NO on Senate Bill 8.

Pamela Ferworn, Mrs.
Self
Houston, TX

Dear Senator Huffman & Senator Creighton,

My name is Pam Ferworn and I'm a parent living in Spring Branch ISD. We're Republicans and we believe in public education. All of our boys have attended SBISD public schools since PreK; our second son will graduate from Stratford High School in 10 days.

As immigrants, we have seen how public schools have operated in different countries. We have school choice here - in the ability to choose where we live and which school district our children attend. That is not a choice where we come from where it is one public school system for a city of over a million people. Not only that, but our students have amazing opportunities through our local public schools. From career and technical education (CTE) on campus to specialized programs like Future Farmers of America (FFA) to culinary skills at a specific learning center to charter schools. We are blown away by what a public school system can do.

Add to that the level of parent and community involvement in district decisions (from choosing the school year calendar to being involved in the bond) as well as the transparency of their finances has been nothing short of amazing. In fact, those are the reasons why we chose to STAY in SBISD and not select to send out children to a private school. We were not provided with that level of transparency in a private school as we have been afforded in SBISD.

Vouchers/"Educational Saving Plan" sound good on paper but the practicality doesn't fit. I have mentored three (3) students in SBISD and the voucher system you propose wouldn't help any of them. The private schools around here all have criteria for students being accepted. One girl would not have been admitted due to religious reasons. One would not have been admitted due to her ADHD and the codes that follow her. And one would not have met the criteria for grades. None of these three students - all amazing kids - would have been able to pay for the balance of the \$20K for the private schools tuition. Not to mention the uniform and transportation costs.

We believe in public schools. Public schools serve EVERY STUDENT. They don't pick or choose who comes there; they are required to take all students. Our schools represent the real world and all the diversity that is in it.

We believe it is a parents right to send their students to private school if they'd like to. On their own dime.

We believe our schools need to be funded properly. That the basic allotment MUST increase by at least \$1000 to have students succeed.

We believe that the recapture formula needs to account for inflation as well as the low SES of a school district.

We believe that public ed tax dollars need to remain in public ed funds and not be funneled off to the general revenue fund.

We believe you should fix the system we have instead of cratering it.

WE DO NOT support vouchers of any kind. And we ask that you listen to us.

Sincerely,

Pam Ferworn

Linda Carr
Self substitute teacher
Plano, TX

I do not support education savings account program. Texas public schools are required to provide an education to every student regardless of their ability. Let's fully fund public education and not divert funds that could be used to make public school great for everyone, to a voucher system that takes public dollars and puts those funds into private schools.

Masooma Razzak, Teacher
Self - Teacher
Houston, TX

respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Matt Clay
Parents/self
Austin, TX

Keep our schools Texas strong! Vote NO on vouchers.

Kasondra Aguilar
Self
Bulverde, TX

No

Cindy Maroquio
Self- public school teacher
Pflugerville, TX

Please protect TRUTH and JUSTICE in our public education system!!

TRUTH- we are a democracy committed to/required to provide a Free and appropriate education for ALL students.

TRUTH- our current system of education is not functioning as well as it could be due to insufficient funding.

TRUTH- YOU are elected by the public to do exactly that- ensure that a quality public education is available for EVERYONE- which is the hallmark of a productive, successful and JUST society.

NOT TRUE- vouchers/education savings accounts provide "parent freedom of choice." Parents have ALWAYS had the freedom to choose how to educate their children.

TRUTH- Providing PUBLIC tax payer dollars to allow a relatively few parents to fund their childrens' PRIVATE education supports segregation of our education system and perpetuates educational inequity. Our country has already fought and resolved that battle. SB8 resurrect that institutionalized INJUSTICE in the name of "educational savings accounts." Enhancements for some=Inequity for ALL.

TRUTH- ESAs are the choice of law makers to value the voices of a few people in the minority over the needs of the public majority which includes our non-voting children.

A vote in favor of SB8 is a vote to promote segregation and injustice in our public education system.

A vote against SB8 is a vote for truth, justice and equity!

Thank you!
Cindy Maroquio
6th grade math teacher
Dessau Middle School, Pflugerville

Kevin Wooten
School Board Members
Livingston, TX

I am a school board member of a 4A district. You know we are trying hard, every day, to provide Texas's kid with an education that can change their life. Vouchers incrementally take away that opportunity. Please vote against vouchers. It helps nobody except those who don't need help.

Bev Gavenda, RN
Self, retired RN
Austin, TX

You should respect Texas public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Katherine Bennett
Self as parent
Southlake, TX

Vouchers will hurt children with special needs and they are a violation of rules against spending public funds on religious activities. It will also ruin property values in areas like mine where people buy knowing the public schools are good. Vote against vouchers.

Kevin Wooten
self
Livingston, TX

A large majority of Texans are opposed to vouchers. Supporting vouchers goes against our state's constitutional mandate to insure all students, no matter what their socioeconomic or mental health status, receive a quality education. Fund public school by raising the basic allotment to reflect inflation. And reject the fraudulent voucher scheme.

Betty Tyslan, Ms.
Self retired
AUSTIN, TX

We must reject school vouchers. Vote NO on SB8

vote NO on SB8

Kristen Cooley, Mrs
Parent of students in Klein ISD
Klein, TX

Stop trying to destroy Public Education.
Return the taxes back to Public Education.
Increase per pupil spending so TX is not #48 across the country.
Give Current Teachers and Retired Teachers raises.
Stop banning books; School Librarians are more qualified to select appropriate books for students than politicians.
Do NOT arm teachers! Stop making schools feel like prison.
Do NOT do school vouchers!
Listen to the teachers and administrators.

Farley Reeves
Frenship ISD
Wolfforth, TX

Public schools have been the cornerstone of the American Society for over 200 years. Continuous pressure has been placed on our schools to take on roles once held by the parent, the family, and perhaps their church families. Our schools have been a staple through depressions, wars, pandemics, only to mention a few. We have been asked to teach more and do more each year with the same limitations on time that we have had since the beginning. Yet, we continue to meet the increasing demands while others continue to escape responsibility. The school has become increasingly accountable while all other parties have stepped aside. Social media has evolved into public enemy #1 with the negative impact it has had on our students, and the school has had to bear the responsibility, while the parent continues to escape the burden of right from wrong. Parents are not held accountable for their children, their children's attendance, behavior, discipline or simply basic elements of respect, but the schools are. Teachers, who have been promised more support, have experienced greater levels of responsibilities, with little support in return. After a yearlong study of why we are losing teachers, the answer appears to be blame them and let parents go elsewhere. The Savings accounts are only another way of holding public school accountable for the ills of society without addressing the true problems. Diffusing the revenues necessary to provide a quality education to all students regardless of family, finances or faith, will only weaken the education of our youth. Sharing the revenues is a tolerable idea if the same expectations are shared with the private organizations that are placed on our public schools. Hold them accountable to the same standards in attendance, assessment and finances and let's see how good they are. As a taxpayer I should continue to have the right to see how my tax dollars are being spent in those institutions. If a student qualifying for special education goes to one of the institutions, does that eliminate the burden of the public school, or will the public school continue to be required to provide support to the student even the private school will receive the funding? Transparency is mandatory for public schools but will private organizations receiving these funds be required to produce the same level of transparency. The public school produces all the taxing information and validate how rates are established and posted. Will private schools have to provide any data supporting how many revenues they receive and how these funds are distributed, or provide a viable budget for expenditures the way a public school does? So much time and effort has been placed on accountability for the public school, but what has been done for parent accountability? Have we address social media accountability? Is our focus on the origin of most impactful influences? Let's address the real problem first, then focus on public schools.

Stanley Harris
self
Axtell, TX

I urge the committee to vote "no" on this bill or any subsequent bill that allows state funds to be used for private school expenses as does this SB 8 in that it establishes an education savings account program which in turn will decrease the funding to public schools by decreasing public school ADA.

Wendy Campbell
self - Communications & Marketing consultant
Dallas, TX

NO! Studies show there is not a benefit for our school children and no accountability for performance, and no protections for taxpayers. I've paid for private school and know that \$8,000 is not going to magically give a student a private education. Let's improve Texas public schools for ALL Texas children and that will benefit ALL OF US!

Cassie Webb
Lovejoy ISD parent and educator
Allen, TX

The families who absolutely love their local public school districts are woefully underrepresented by this bill. For example, Lovejoy ISD is my choice for my child and will remain so regardless of this bill's passage. I substitute teach, serve on PTO boards, and parent two students in this exemplary district. I know the names and faces of the administration and the school board members from whom I would receive an honest and transparent answer and the spreadsheet to back it up at any point in time. Therefore, I would like to propose a compromise here. It seems a good education is worth \$8,000 to the Texas Legislature so far. Why not reward exemplary districts like Lovejoy ISD that have been faithful with a little (ask Superintendent Kordel about how lean her budget is and ask the community how many years we have faced painful cuts including closing down a whole school) and set them over much? Would you consider rewarding smaller, transparent, parent-driven districts like Lovejoy with excellent educational output with an \$8000 allotment per student in addition to funding ESAs? Please let the same dollar amount follow children to the public schools of their choosing just as it would to the private schools of their choosing. I hope the legislature can find a solution that is palatable for everyone that loves their school, be it public or private. I am proud to make Lovejoy ISD my choice.

Veronica Diaz
self
Katy, TX

Please Vote NO

Barbara Williams, Mrs.
self, retired educator
Sulphur Springs, TX

Dear Honorable Chair Creighton and fellow committee chairs,

As a retired educator, I oppose any and all forms of school vouchers, educational savings accounts, or whatever name you want to give them. Our State Constitution requires a public education for ALL students. You are underfunding public education, currently \$9.871 per student per year, while the national average is \$13,185 per student. Texas ranks 39th in funding according to the Education Data Initiative. Perhaps you should be adding to the funding of public schools as opposed to taking money away from them.

Many of you would argue that you are not taking money from public schools. But anyone with any common sense knows that many of the students whose parents use a voucher will end up back in the public school less than a year after leaving. Parents will get tired of having their children at home all the time, or will discover that teaching is harder than they thought. Or the child will be asked to leave the private school because s/he is a discipline issue, is not keeping up with his/her peers/ or doesn't have the resources to meet the child's special needs. The student will require extra tutoring because they are academically behind, which will stretch that public school funding even more.

You market ESA's as parental choice. But, parents have ALWAYS had the choice to homeschool their child or send him/her to a private school. That is the parent choice and up to the parent to fund! Do NOT use public funds to fund private education!!

When these families don't like the public parks near them and want to use the country club instead, will you decide to give them public tax money to join a country club? You may think that is a ridiculous analogy. Well, five or ten or twenty years ago, I would have thought that legislators would NEVER consider using taxpayer funds for private education. That was a ridiculous idea, because legislators believed in the separation of church and state. But look at you now!

Do the right thing and use taxes to fund public education, NOT private education!

Respectfully,
Barbara Williams

Darlene Breaux, Dr.
Alief ISD Board President
Houston, TX

SB 8 CREATES THE LARGEST VOUCHER PROGRAM IN THE NATION! I NEED YOU TO KEEP PUBLIC FUNDS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools
 - It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws
 - It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve
 - It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system
 - It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority
-

Tammie Hartgroves
Self/Disabled
McGregor, TX

Dear Chairman Buckley and Members of the House Education Committee,

I am respectfully writing to ask that you vote No on SB 8. This bill would be detrimental to our Texas public schools and not provide our children with free, fair, and equal educational opportunities.

Many of the schools in my county and SD22 are rural schools which are the lifeblood of these rural towns. This bill would make it even more difficult for these schools to attract and retain faculty. Also, families with children would move to a location where they could find educational opportunities for their children. SB 8 would also be detrimental financially to small towns.

Children with disabilities would encounter a myriad of difficulties trying to obtain an education at a private school. Lastly, I have objections to my tax dollars paying for children (that I don't even know) to attend a private school.

In closing, I ask you to vot against or NO to SB 8.

Respectfully yours,
Tammie Hartgroves

Janette Cross
Self
Garland, TX

If you need some text, feel free to use what I wrote:

NO taxpayer dollars should be diverted from a free, public education system as specified in the Texas Constitution. This tax diversion would primarily be a discount for wealthy families with children already enrolled in private schools.

Under this bill, private schools still choose which children are worthy of admission - NOT parents, and private schools are NOT required to admit students with disabilities.

There is NO accountability in this bill for the public funds that would be diverted to private schools, charter schools, or individual parents themselves. Public schools are held to a strict, detailed accountability for the public funds they receive.

Public funds deserve public accountability.

ALL Texas children deserve a fully funded, free public education ... not just wealthy children or children without disabilities. This bill will cause poor and disabled children to suffer.

Please help ALL our Texas children. receive a great education. Please vote Nay on SB 8.

William Jones
Pastors for Texas Children (trustee)
Allen, TX

I am a resident of Collin County; my state representative is Jeff Leach, and my senator is Angela Paxton. I have three grandchildren in Frisco ISD and one in Allen ISD. My daughter is a schoolteacher in Frisco ISD and formerly taught for many years in Plano ISD. Both of my children grew up in Plano ISD schools. I am a trustee of Pastors for Texas Children, where I have served since 2013.

I testify to oppose SB 8. It is a voucher bill that would transfer public taxpayer funds to private entities. Public taxpayer funds should go ONLY to public schools that benefit all, not to private schools that benefit only a privileged few. This bill would drain funds from our children's and grandchildren's neighborhood public schools, which are already gravely underfunded.

Any claim by voucher proponents that vouchers benefit the underprivileged is an outright lie. The vast majority of parents who would take advantage of vouchers - as has been the case in other states - are those whose children are already in private schools. They go to parents who are able to afford the private school tuition, and the voucher is merely a supplement to reduce their expense. Voucher amounts are never even close to sufficient for those who cannot afford private schools in the first place. They benefit the well-to-do.

Above all, I do not want my tax money to go to support someone else's religious indoctrination any more than I want the tax money of those of other faiths to support mine.

In addition, private schools are not accountable to the state - their teachers do not have to be certified; their curriculum is not subject to oversight; and they are free to refuse applications from, for example, special needs children, which they almost always do. Public schools, on the other hand, are required to meet state standards, and they must take ALL children, including those with special needs. We should not be further draining them of the resources needed to serve children of every type of need, every faith, every color, every ethnic background.

Voucher plans, no matter what name or euphemism is attached to them, are bad policy, hurting our children and grandchildren, and the dedicated public servants - schoolteachers, principals, superintendents, and other staff - who serve them.

Please vote against SB 8.

Beverly Linebarger, Mrs.
Self
Mansfield, TX

This bill is totally irresponsible and definitely an attempt to manipulate procedures for voting on a bill. Mr. Creighton is a pawn for the far right Republicans trying to push through school vouchers. He wants to gain the favor of governor Abbott and other people who want to privatize education in Texas. This is wrong!

Christina Sellers
Self
Westworth Village, TX

I have 2 children in public school and am a speech therapist serving special education students in public schools. Please oppose HB 8 or any substitute voucher bills. Public schools are the bedrock of our democracy and every day amazing things happen there for all kinds of learners. Public schools turn no one away yet are being strangled out of existence by way too much testing, funding shortfalls and mistrust and micromanaging of educators. Please do not support any bill that diverts money away from public schools to unaccountable private schools who get to refuse admission to anyone. This bill erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA. It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve. It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system and it gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority. I urge you to let this bill die in committee.

Sharron Allen

Self

Tyler, TX

- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws
 - It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools
-

Kavey Wallace

Rosebud-Lott ISD

Rosebud, TX

I am against SB8.

Zoe Sanchez

SAISD

San Antonio, TX

Vote no

Gretchen Pierce

self / stay-at-home mom

Austin, TX

I am a mother with a kindergartener in Austin ISD. I am strongly against ALL attempts to drain tax dollars from neighborhood public schools to subsidize tuition at private and religious schools that are unaccountable to taxpayers and don't have to meet the same fiscal and educational standards as public schools do. I urge you to respect public schools and vote against this legislation.

Deborah Ables, Mrs.

Self ; educator

Universal City, TX

Vote no on SB 8! Don't defund public schools! I've been an educator for 32 years, and public schools and teachers need your support!

Kellie Leehy
Self
Plano, TX

Senate Bill 8, also known as the "heartbeat bill," is a highly controversial piece of legislation that has drawn significant criticism from many individuals and organizations, including those in the world of education. While the bill is primarily focused on restricting abortion access, it also contains provisions that could negatively impact public education in Texas.

One of the most concerning aspects of Senate Bill 8 is the fact that it was rushed through a hearing without public testimony, which raises serious questions about the transparency and fairness of the legislative process. This lack of transparency could have serious consequences for public education in Texas, as it denies educators, parents, and other stakeholders the opportunity to voice their concerns and provide feedback on how the bill could impact their schools and communities.

Additionally, the potential impact of the bill on public education is cause for concern. If passed, Senate Bill 8 could divert funding and resources away from public schools and towards private institutions, which could have serious consequences for the quality and accessibility of education in Texas. Furthermore, the bill's restrictions on abortion access could have serious implications for the health and well-being of students and their families, which could in turn impact their ability to succeed in school.

Overall, it is clear that Senate Bill 8 is a highly controversial piece of legislation that could have serious negative consequences for public education in Texas. It is important that all stakeholders have the opportunity to provide feedback and voice their concerns before any bill is rushed through the legislative process.

Edward Kandler
self retired
Jarrell, TX

I, Ed Kandler, approve of the Senate version of SB 8, & want House to pass it with no changes or amendments.

Reed Bilz, Ms
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Don't cave in to Gov. Abbott's threats. SB 8 is a bad bill. It will divert much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.

- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.

I urge you to speak the people of Texas and vote NO on S B 8.

Karla Duran, Dr.
Self
San Antonio, TX

My name is Dr. Karla Duran and I have been a public school teacher, school administrator and will now serve on the school board for the 4th largest district in Texas. I oppose the diversion of taxpayer dollars to private entities and thus oppose SB 8.

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Sarah Medford
self
Jarrell, TX

I am in support of SB 8 that provides meaningful, substantive, school choice for all Texas families. I oppose any 'watering down' of this freedom that limits this choice to only a specialized few in the population.

Lizdelia Pinon, Dr.
Mom of 4 special needs students Texas schools
Crowley, TX

Dear Texas Representative,
This mom of four special needs students in Texas public schools opposes SB 8. My children have been rejected countless times from several private schools and even turned away from a charter school. Do better, Texas! Oppose SB 8 #draLizy
See my story: <https://bit.ly/SAYnoSB8>

Linda Feank, Farm Her
Republican Women's Group Tomball TEXAS
Tomball, TX

Please do what's right for the kids to not have them traumatized with drag queens and woke agendas
Let them BE

Rudolph Matheny
Self and educator
Austin, TX

Vouchers are a bad idea for Texas. They primarily benefit only very wealthy Texans and are robbing public school students of funds. The illusion of choice for the average Texan is a lie. Most private schools cost far beyond the voucher amount. In addition, private schools can choose which students to accept leaving the students with the highest needs behind in further underfunded public schools. The primary beneficiaries of a voucher system are parents of students already choosing private schools.

Jan Meares
Rural west Texas schools
Roscoe, TX

This is not in support of public education in the rural schools in our State of Texas. Vote NO to Vouchers. Support Public Education. Support our Texas Public School Teachers. Gov. Abbott does not live in your hometown and does not vote for you.

Jeff Jordan
TCU
Dallas, TX

This is a bad idea for Texas-Vote NO!

Jeri Ross, Teacher
N/A
WIMBERLEY, TX

This blatant attempt to destroy public education in Texas must be abandoned. The state cannot afford to fund multiple education systems across the state. Why not put our tax dollars into public education and make it the best it can possibly be? Texas has a professional education system, with top notch teachers who need your support. Stop pulling the rug out from under us. The voucher scheme is unconstitutional in that it funds religious education. It's not viable in that private education, corporate schools, religious schools, and home schools will not be held to the same standard as public schools. Clearly you are trying to destroy our public education system. The bait and switch tactics in SB 8 are an underhanded power grab. Please vote against SB 8 and any voucher scheme that funds religious education, fly-by-night operations, and home schools that will simply gut funding for good quality, public education.

Devon Skinner
Self
Fort Worth, TX

School vouchers and ESAs, as currently written, reroute funding from necessary public programs and districts to private (and largely unregulated) schools. The state has constitutional and statutory obligations to "establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools." (Texas Constitution, Art. 7, Sec. 1) Nearly every study conducted of the Texas public education system concurs that Texas lacks significantly. Additionally, while our teacher pay appears on its face to be higher than other states, it fails to compete with a growing inflationary market and astronomical property valuations throughout the state.

We have enough problems to address with our public education system without diverting additional funds to private and unregulated schools. Our constitutional obligation is to maintain an "efficient" public education system, not a mediocre or failing public education system. We're the State of Texas, we should be above reaching for the bare minimum and failing to obtain it.

Public education is expensive, now more than ever. However, it is an investment in the future of this great state and our country. It is a societal obligation our founders recognized at our state's inception. It is the industry that sustains all other industries. Our state must prioritize public education funding and, as a citizen of this state, I look to you for this effort.

Joseph Garavito, Mr.
Self, Architectural designer
College Station, TX

I believe that this type of program only benefits private schools, and will lead to greater division within our communities. It will take resources from public schools and give it to unregulated institutions. It also reduces the quality control for education and the democratic input of our communities.

Jared Grosek
Self Process Engineer
Austin, TX

I am opposed to any school voucher program or anything similar. Public education must be funded with public money and that money should not be transferred to private schools. Public schools must meet educational standards and are necessary for a good education, whereas private schools have no minimum education standards. Public schools are for all youth of all religions and backgrounds, and therefore should be a welcoming place for all with no preferences for religion, no education of religion, and no banning of books based on the morals of a few. A good public education raises informed and educated citizens and they become job makers, inventors, high wage earners, etc., who will in turn lift up their communities, raise good families, and make the U.S., and Texas, a stronger nation and state. All public schools deserve to be well funded with the educational tools, expert teachers, and the best resources that we can provide to our youth so that we continue to be a nation that others around the world look up to. Please reject and vote down any bills that jeopardize or weaken our public school system or that would make them an institution of any form of religion, and, instead, fund and strengthen our public schools by investing in them and in our youth.

Sincerely, a concerned citizen and parent of kids in public schools,
Jared Grosek
Austin, TX

Mona Mehdy
Self, professor
Austin, TX

Public education is a core foundation of our society and democracy. It is publicly funded to provide a fair, consistent curriculum transparency, breadth and accessibility. I strongly urge a NO vote on SB 8 as this bill sets up public paid vouchers to private schools and is careless and damaging to our public schools

Linda Maldonado
Retired/Self
San Antonio, TX

Oppose SB 8. Public education needs more money, not less. Public money should not be sent to unaccountable private sources!!!

Vouchers, like the proposed educational savings accounts, divert money from public schools and do not provide a way out of poverty for students of lesser means. In states that have adopted vouchers, the overwhelming majority of parents using vouchers already have their children in private school.

The Texas Constitution requires the legislature to provide for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools. SB 8 would have a devastating impact on public schools in Texas. A thriving economy requires an educated workforce and public schools are the most efficient and accountable means of educating tomorrow's workforce.

K Proctor
Self, Retail
Plano, TX

This Texas voter is AGAINST this bill that creates an education savings account program or any bill that transfers public education funds to any private education programs.

Caroline Stansky
Self
Conroe, TX

It is not fair to students and their families if SB8 is passed. Private schools with not admit students with severe special needs. The money needed for students with special needs will be jeopardized. Private school teachers also might not have the skills to teach students with special needs. I was a special education teacher for 28 years. My degree and experience made me qualified to teach special needs students. I know for a fact that most private schools do not have the resources needed to meet this population's needs and services. Please do not allow them to take way funding from public schools.

Duane Peterson
none
Conroe, TX

1. School vouchers voting to take away money from public schools is a stupid idea. I know you really want those mega private school donor dollars. But screwing over the majority of Texans is a really slimeball idea.
 2. I hear all sorts of parents rights stuff. But all you are doing is taking away rights from others by enacting these bills to bow to special interests.. Large changes like this should be put to the voters.
-

Jan Forney, Ms
SELF REAL ESTATE
Houston, TX

STOP! You have no right to sabotage
our public education system,
You are PRIVATIZING & inserting THEOCRACY

Vouchers are EXPENSIVE -UNPAID for & illegitimate. And would go mostly to wealthy

Undermines our PUBLIC system by making a duplicate parallel & just as expensive system
then continuing to drain resources from ISD's

Sara Stevenson

Self

Austin, TX

Preserving the Public Good in Public Schools

Every two years, Texas legislators file bills to push for private school vouchers, rebranded as Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) this session. Their purpose is to funnel taxpayer dollars from public schools to private and religious schools. Thanks to a coalition of urban Democrats and rural Republicans, who cherish their community public schools, these initiatives continue to fail each session, but Governor Abbott and Lt. Governor Dan Patrick are now prioritizing the issue. Will this session be different?

ESAs are indeed repurposed vouchers. The only difference is that with ESAs our taxpayer dollars will go directly to the parents to use toward a private school, private tutoring, or other education services.

Voucher bills usually begin by being offered to Special Education students and/or low-income students. Adherents argue that these kids are unfairly “trapped” in low-performing schools and need to be rescued.

Most voucher bills state that children who qualify for Special Education services must actively waive their rights to accommodations and supplemental services, rights which are guaranteed under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) passed in 1975. How does this benefit Special Education students?

The CEC (Council for Exceptional Children) opposes voucher-type programs for all youth because if children with disabilities are “off the books,” they will return to the shadows and not receive the support that is their right in order to succeed.

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?

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.”

Janis Reinken
Self / Attorney
Austin, TX

Vote NO on SB 8 / CSSB, which introduces the most costly and expansive voucher program in the United States. CSSB 8 defunds our rural schools and abandons protections for our most vulnerable students. It lacks accountability provisions for auditing the use of tax-paid voucher dollars within private schools. Private schools do not have to accept all students; they can discriminate. Private schools are not required to report student achievement data to the state. Vouchers will divert taxpayer dollars from our public schools to pay for private school tuition and private vendors.

I earned my high school diploma in the Texas public school system, and I am proud of it. My public school education served me well in college, graduate school, and beyond. I have no children, grandchildren or other relatives of school age. Yet, I'm required to pay a large amount of tax money for the education of Texas students. Currently, I face the payment of \$5,556.17 in ISD taxes to support our public schools. I object to the State deciding to use my tax dollars to fund for-profit charter and virtual schools to pay private school tuition for selected students. For far too long, the Texas Legislature has followed a lengthy and relentless path of defunding public schools and underpaying our public school educators and staff. This undermines the future of our students and their ability to contribute their time, intelligence and skills for the good of their families, our state and our country. Looking at the big picture, this regressive political strategy to weaken our public school system has all the earmarks of a not-so-subtle attempt to revert to the pre-Brown v. Board of Education days of a "separate but equal" education system.

Frankly, it is just WRONG to use our tax dollars to pay private school tuition for selected students, and undercut the public schools where the great majority of our Texas students are educated. It doesn't matter whether the public relations spin for the term is "education savings accounts (ESA's)" or "tax-credit scholarships." It is a misapplication of tax dollars to fund for-profit charter and virtual schools through payment of private school tuition for selected students. This plan, as devised by the state, will be detrimental to our ISD's and our Texas students.

Texas has tens of billions of public dollars available this Session, giving the Texas Legislature an unprecedented opportunity to take meaningful steps to improve school safety and raise teacher pay. This is not the time to focus on promoting vouchers and related vendor schemes, regardless of the alternative nomenclature used. The Legislature should get serious about reducing the property tax burden on Texans, and use some of those state funds to boost our public schools instead of diverting local tax dollars away from ISD's at the expense of property tax payers. I urge you to vote NO on SB 8 / CSSB 8. Respectfully, Janis Reinken

Juan Aguirre
Self
San Antonio, TX

Hello as a fellow teacher who teaches at a title 1 rated A campus and parent of two sons who attend a public school I write opposing SB8. I see first hand how underfunded our public school system is and implementing this bill will only harm it further. Teachers at my school have been on edge about paper and printing and other supplies that is costly. Imagine reducing our funding even more what stress this would cause Teachers and students who simply want to print copies for students or have basic supplies for a federally mandated educational system. Simply put school vouchers hurt Texas public schools because they direct funding away from an already critically underfunded system. This bill will leave out accountability and take away public school money that would now go to private schools. Public education allows for every child even students with disabilities to have a great education where private schools are not held to the same standards and accountability. I again write opposing this and bill on behalf of a teacher and proud parent of our public schools. Please do the right thing and fully fund our public education system let's not take away resources that serve the majority of Texas school children.

Tammy Conrad
Self
Round Rock, TX

As a public school educator, I oppose SB8 and ask that all committee members vote NO on this bill. I am a member of Education Round Rock, which is a merged local union, making me a member of Texas AFT and TSTA. We believe that state money should be spent on public education where the majority of our Texas children go to school.

It is our constitutional duty to educate all Texas children. We are fostering the future workforce of our state. It is the state's duty to provide funding to make that happen. We know that the per student funding is way below the national average. We know that the comptroller has suggested it be raised at least \$1000 to keep up with inflation since the last time it was raised. But yet, so far, the only suggested allotment increase is \$90 per pupil! Instead of focusing on properly funding public education, this bill wants to give state funding to families to give to private schools in much higher amounts than the \$6,160 schools currently receive. Increasing the amounts from \$7,500 to \$10,500 further reduces state monies available for public education. I don't understand why the state would want to do this.

We all know most private schools will not accept our students with challenging educational needs. In public schools we teach everyone who comes to us.

We need adequate funding to hire enough employees from bus drivers to teachers to cafeteria workers. It takes a village to support our children and all staff need a livable, sustainable wage. To recruit and retain employees they need to know they will be able to afford to live in the communities they work in and they will have an adequate retirement when that time comes. We demand the respect we deserve in our salaries and in our retirement that we all deserve.

I personally know people who have left the profession because they couldn't afford to stay. They could get employment in other professions making more money with much less stress. But this adds to the stress of those of us who stay. I myself will be going from class sizes of 18-19 to 27-28 next year because my district cannot hire enough educators due to budget constraints. RRISD gives so much money to the state in recapture, but has to make difficult choices each year on how to spend their reduced funds to appropriately educate children and pay staff at the same time.

I fear that the continued degradation of funding for public education in our state will discourage companies from wanting to relocate to Texas, reducing our tax base.

As a Texan, I want to be proud of my state. Please do the right thing and keep public money for public education.

Carol Matthews, MEd
Texas AFT
Houston, TX

Absolutely No!!! For this bill. I've worked in both capacities (charter, public) education. The students in the charter school, due to less oversight, books & curriculum were old, that's wrong.

Home school, currently have a student who just returned back to school. Their reading and math levels are well below grade level. Based on these experiences, no parental involvement, lack of oversight will leave our children not ready for the future.

Say "No" to school vouchers!!!!

Brian Gaylor
Self
Elgin, TX

Fund Public education and stop with the voucher nonsense!!!!!!!!!!!!

Melodye Brooks
Self
Burleson, TX

Please do not vote for SB 8. Veto SB 8

Melisa Lee
Self
Humble, TX

As a resident of Texas, I disagree with vouchers. I do not want religion in the classrooms. I do not want to fund religious education for any child through vouchers. This is a way for wealth to take from the poor. Stop wasting money on tests and find public education for all students.

Melisa Lee

D.S. Zamora, Mrs.
Self - Retired
Houston, TX

I am ****OPPOSED**** to SB 8 in ****ANY**** form.

I have seen ****nothing**** to convince me that vouchers (or whatever you want to call them, but that's what they are) are a fiscally sound idea.

I don't see enough protections for special education students. (Are you ****trying**** to make another Uvalde??)

Misguided residents of this state have been trying this scheme since shortly before I was born (Abbott was a senior the year I entered high school). I doubt that anyone in state government (that includes the Legislature) has read as much about previous attempts to implement vouchers as me save for members of the Texas Black Caucus and MALC.

I certainly do NOT want another STAAR boondoggle, which is what we'll get if this bill passes. It's no good to replace STAAR if we're going to end up with something even worse. There should have been a bill to ditch STAAR that didn't include anything else; it's a giant dumpster fire which has burned millions of dollars and damaged educations so legislators bought off by a certain batch of lobbyists could "grade" schools.

I am fed up with people running after nutcases such as Corey DeAngelis and Christopher Rufo thinking people like that can "fix" education. What malarkey. Lock either one of those 2 in certain kindergarten classes for more than 90 minutes and they'll be done. Seriously.

Delete this bill number from the system and work on something that benefits Texans instead of bullying kids, their parents, and teachers for no good reason at all.

Sarah Gaventa, The Rev.
Self
Austin, TX

Vouchers are a terrible idea for Texas schools. They will strip money from an already underfunded school system and create an unregulated mess where private schools aren't held to the same standards as public schools. This will be a disaster for poor, minority, rural, and disabled students. Vote no.

Casey McCreary, Associate Executive Director
Texas Association of School Administrators
Austin, TX

My name is Keith Bryant, & I am the superintendent of Lubbock-Cooper ISD (LCISD) testifying in opposition to CSSB 8 on behalf of LCISD & as legislative chair of the Texas Association of School Administrators. I don't support the ESA component of the bill in any form or fashion, nor do I support the notion of taking taxpayer money to fund education in a private setting. I also have grave concerns that crucial changes to our state assessment system have been introduced the last 2 weeks of session w/out opportunity for all stakeholders to provide public testimony & urge you to practice due diligence in vetting changes to prevent substantial unintended consequences.

Thank you for removing the requirement to tie graduation to student performance on 5 EOC exams & the move toward only testing what is required by federal law with elimination of the 8th SS test. This bill does not do away with the tests in our STAAR system required by federal law. Reading & math must still be assessed every year, & science assessed 2X during grades 3-8. The call for through-year-testing, 3X p/yr, on top of federal reqs, vastly increases the number of tests. The number of tests for high school also increases from 5 to 6 with development of new TSIA tests. In addition to administering currently required tests, the Commissioner can mandate district participation in field testing new exams, increasing testing at all grades.

There are 3 groups that could be negatively affected by a move to the TSIA exams that are college-bound measures – CTE, military-bound, & special ed. How would the TSIA affect special ed students who may not be college-bound, but are still deserving of a supportive, encouraging educational experience? And students who are not college-bound, but are intent on career & tech fields (critical to our state's workforce & economy)? And students who choose to serve our country in the armed forces before or instead of pursuing higher ed? Also, the TSIA exams should be available for administration on a flexible schedule when the student and district believe the student is prepared to take it.

The proposed multiple exams p/yr in grades 3-8 are cause for concern. ISDs already administer nationally normed & local tests multiple times p/yr, that are designed to inform instruction. This bill indicates that results of state-mandated assessments throughout a school year could be used for rating purposes resulting in devastating effects reflected in the A-F system by punishing schools that are trying to grow students. I urge you to allow ISDs the discretion to use exams already in place that are intended for meaningful assessment. Finally, retakes are only permitted on exams after a student has graduated high school, which conflicts with the need for students to make decisions about future education and career plans before graduation. Please reconsider this provision & allow our students the time & resources necessary to plan futures.

-Keith Bryant

Lynda Miller
Self
Hutto, TX

Establishing an education savings account program is not how public funds should be used. Respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers!

J Alison Chapin, Mrs.
Self/Teacher
Houston, TX

As a public school educator, I am strongly opposed to SB 8. I am appalled that you would hear this bill with no public comment. You have chosen to vote on this measure without hearing from the people who will have to pay for it and live with it and suffer the long-term consequences. Instead of fully funding public education, which serves every child, you have decided to give voice only to those that will profit from the dismantling of public education. Many of the educators with whom I work spend their own money on supplies, including food, for their students. We show up every day to get our scholars ready to become a member of society. Our dedication to making sure our children have the skills necessary to succeed is unparalleled, and yet, you are willing to give funding to for-profit entities and undercut spending public schools. Please vote no for SB 8.

Melissa Rowell
self
Houston, TX

While I do support school choice and parental rights and believe competition will only help the public schools make improvements, and while it seems the bill no longer has the part about the state continuing to reward the failing public school with thousands of dollars, for 5 years, for a child that is no longer there (which I was opposed to), the bill still has a lot of strings attached it seems, incl funding for schools in districts with 20k or less, so I don't think I can get behind this extremely long bill. What I can get behind is the schools breaking away from TASB and adding discipline back and educating the students on reading, writing and arithmetic, and removing students from the classroom that behave poorly. And replace laptops with textbooks and ditch use of the cell phone by the students. Oh - I went off on a tangent there!

Nayibe Castillo
Self - Bilingual Instructional Coach
Temple, TX

I am against SB 8 because it does not support all students and teachers.

Susan Burek

SELF: I am the parent of an adult child with disabilities and a volunteer advocate for people with disabilities
Austin, TX

Thank you, Chair Buckley and members of the House Public Education Committee for allowing me to testify today AGAINST Senate Bill 8, regarding the establishment of an Education Savings Account program.

My name is Susan Burek. I live in Austin, Texas. I'm here as the parent of an adult child with disabilities, a volunteer advocate for people with disabilities, and a member of Texas Parent to Parent, a non-profit organization that serves more than 14,000 families with children with disabilities in Texas. I'm providing testimony to you today as a private citizen.

I am testifying AGAINST SB 8. This bill would create an Education Savings Account (ESA) program to allow public school students to attend private schools, including private religious schools, and it would give families up to \$8,000 per student per year from state General Revenue (GR) funds to pay for private school tuition, fees, and other educational expenses. The ESA program is funded 100% by GR funds, with no matching federal funds. The fiscal impact of SB 8 would be more than \$1.4 billion in GR funds by SFY 2028.

Although the bill provides some protections for smaller school districts with fewer than 20,000 students by providing full funding for the first two years to these districts, it's clear that larger districts in urban areas with more private schools would lose state funding based on a reduction in average student daily attendance.

Public education leaders have strongly criticized this bill. Michelle Smith, the executive director of Raise Your Hand Texas, said, "School vouchers, no matter what they are called, divert scarce public education funds to private schools and vendors which are not required to comply with federal protections for students with disabilities or report and track spending and student performance."

The legislation also creates new provisions to censor lessons on gender identity and sexual orientation, similar to Florida's highly controversial "Don't Say Gay" bill, and allows schools to prohibit lessons about gender identity and sexual orientation to any grade level based on claims that they are not "age-appropriate" or "developmentally appropriate".

Schools would have to create "parent portals" that allow families to review instructional material, and parents would be able to exempt their students from lessons about gender and sexual orientation. In addition, schools may establish reviews of these lessons based on state guidelines to ensure that teachers are following the law. Instead of promoting free speech in public schools, SB 8 obstructs it.

The bottom line is that this legislation transfers valuable general revenue funds from public schools to private schools and creates new restrictions at a time when public school funding is already in crisis.

PLEASE VOTE AGAINST SB 8. Thank you very much for your time and attention to my testimony.

Erin Fry
Self/Marketing Director
Houston, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Tom Nobis
Self - retired
Houston, TX

I am for school choice and parental rights but Neutral on this bill. This bill has reduced parental grievance process from the Senate version. It has also reduced the students eligible for the program it has provided money in the program rather than paying schools that have students leave for not teaching adequately.

Leland Simmons
Self and Aldine Child Nutrition
Houston, TX

"I want you to vote against HB 000 because, Support Staff works hard for our kids to have a education. We deserve more pay to support our families. Voucher's shouldn't go to private schools. Thank you.

Alan Martinson
Self
Round Rock, TX

I am in favor of school choice. Please vote for it. Thank you.

Emily Doramus
Self - public education administrator
Providence Village, TX

SB 8 is detrimental to public schools in Texas. It has no regulation or oversight for public funds going to private entities.

I have served as a special educator for over 15 years and this creates barriers to the students that need us to advocate and protect the most.

Creating new testing system doesn't fix accountability, it. Only makes The standards set by the state less effective. It is with alignment and increased qualitative measures progress can be measured.

Local funds and power should remain local. We can agree that parents, families, communities are essential stakeholders in education. I believe in our school boards and their ability to regulate, support, and lead public schools; not more oversight by TEA.

I believe in evolution of a system, I don't believe in this bill creating real and lasting change.

I urge you to vote no. Then in the off year of this legislature, come sub. Join me at my school, visit a classroom or two. What you will see will inspire you! It will create a foundation for real conversation off of experience, truth, professional feedback.

Read the TEA teacher task force, it will guide you to hear real educator voices. Vote no and create a bill that empowers and supports.

Heather Olsen
Self - parent and teacher
Fort Worth, TX

Hello! I am a proud parent of two kids in Texas public schools. Public schools are equitable education for all children. Public schools cannot turn students away for disabilities and behavior. Public schools bring neighborhoods and communities together. Education savings accounts, or vouchers, will hurt public schools that are already underfunded. They will not help the students they claim to help. Most private schools in my area are \$10,000 or more in tuition per year. This bill gives that amount to a small group of students but these students will also need transportation, help with food and clothing, and help navigating private school culture. The families that will benefit the most from this bill, can already afford private school or have chosen to home school. This bill will help affluent families while hurting low income families by defunding their public schools. Private schools do not follow STAAR testing, accountability ratings, or rules that all students must be served. What will happen to our Texas students that are turned away from private schools? Will their ESA come back to the public school they will go to, or will the public school be expected to serve them while the private school keeps the money?

Parents already have choice. Parents can choose public, private, charter, or homeschooling. Our public schools provide amazing educational opportunities, support for all students, and build communities. Please protect public schools for all Texas students!

Letty Roman, Dr.
Tomball ISD
Magnolia, TX

If you believe in the future of Texas, DO NOT approve anything supporting vouchers. As a veteran educational leader, I oppose vouchers.

Terri Gallamore
Self - teacher
Corinth, TX

I strongly oppose vouchers. Vouchers will pull money out of our public schools which are already underfunded and give it to charter schools which do not have to perform to the same state standards. This will increase the burden on public schools as they are expected to uphold the same student academic results with less resources.

Cassandra Jordan, Teacher
Self
Denton, TX

Do not support SB 8. This is bad for teachers and students, especially students that have IEPs and special needs. Please support teachers, do not support this terrible bill.

Lisa Libre
Self
Lubbock, TX

I am opposed to this bill. Texas needs to invest in public schools, not charter schools. Do not increase high stakes testing days. Would rather we eliminate STAAR completely! There are better ways to hold schools accountable! No to SB 8!

Jeanette Rooks
self/teacher
Carrollton, TX

SB 8, the education bill that establishes vouchers for private schools and asserts parents' rights, is unnecessary and harmful to education throughout the state.

The first part of the bill, stating that parents have the right to direct moral and religious training, falsely implies that schools undermine that right. Our schools have an open-door policy and online curriculum, both of which invite parents to visit our classrooms, to voice their concerns, and to help teachers in guiding their children toward classroom success. We want and need parent involvement in our schools, and we do not choose materials for our classrooms without their input. We communicate regularly with parents to make sure that parents have an active role in our schools. That element of the bill is simply unnecessary and stirs concerns that are unfounded.

Article 2 of the bill, which establishes education savings account and includes a fund that would include money diverted from the general fund, creates financial burdens on public school districts. In a state that ranks 42nd in per pupil expenditures, moving money away from public schools will intensify already existing problems. For example, with pay increasing at a snail's pace and teacher responsibilities mounting, recruiting and retaining teachers has become a huge challenge. Diverting money to fund private schools will exacerbate that problem. Furthermore, as the state calls for more testing and changes to existing testing, teachers have to pivot and develop new materials, appropriate learning activities, and effective tutoring programs; those needs require funding.

Beyond the burden placed on districts, these savings accounts are unlikely to help many students. If private schools operate without the same requirements public schools have, there is no way to guarantee that students will receive the services and guidance they need. And in some areas, the lack of private schools leaves students in public schools that would become more disadvantaged by further stress to district budgets. Those students with access to private schools are also at risk of paying tuition and not succeeding at the private institution, which amounts to money and time wasted. The research on similar voucher programs is far from glowing, offering mixed results, with successes decreasing as the size of the programs increase. Using the term "choice" for such voucher programs is misleading since the schools get to choose students, not the other way around. Therefore, the money allotted to voucher programs only helps a small segment of students, leaving others with the same challenges that already put a strain on our public schools.

Teachers are begging for parent involvement and state assistance. We devote our lives to helping students become their best selves. Please help our public schools be the best they can be.

Mary Beach, Dr.
self
Beaumont, TX

In reference to Senate Bill 8. I am AGAINST vouchers, charter schools or an education savings account program or however it is worded. Public Schools were the cornerstone of this country and brought all children together from a community and gave them a level playing field to gain an education with which they could go forward and participate in our democracy. Public Schools instead of being supported and funded have been under attack for quite some time and are now staggering under the weight of high stakes testing and underfunding. Children are now completely unsupported as people wander around trying to find a fully functioning school system anywhere. Keep the funds in public schools, let educators who are trained in pedagogy and child psychology decide what is needed in their classrooms not politicians. Further diluting public schools with all of this only serves to weaken it. Stand up for public education.

Louis Malfaro, Mr.
Austin Voices for Education and Youth
AUSTIN, TX

I oppose this legislation and encourage every member of the House Public Education Committee to do likewise. CSSB 8 contains a private school voucher which would deliver public tax dollars to non-accountable, private schools. It also masquerades as a bill to support Special Education-eligible students when, in fact, it does just the opposite. The legislation does nothing to support Special Education services in Texas public schools, an area where the state has historically failed to provide for our neediest children. The US Department of Education has cited Texas for failure to identify and serve Special Education-eligible students, and this bill only makes things worse by creating an incentive for parents of Special Education-eligible students to leave the public schools and to give up their rights and the rights of their children under the United States Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). The Texas Legislature, per our state constitution and in light of federal requirements to serve all students, including disabled students, has an unambiguous obligation to provide a quality public education to every Texas child. This legislation is an abdication of that responsibility and a cheap attempt to avoid the expense of fully education our population. It should be defeated by the House Public Education Committee.

Debra Sheffield
Self Public School Teacher
Southlake, TX

PLEASE do not allow the voucher system to come to Texas. It will harm public education. Parents already have a choice. Parents can choose private school or public school. I grew up going to parochial school. That was my parents' choice. They sacrificed to do so. Parents DO have a choice! I do not want my tax dollars to be spent at a private school. If our state has so much extra money then give teachers a raise, give money to make improvements in our public schools, purchase books for school libraries and classrooms. Do not send money to private schools; send money to public schools to fund Pre K programs for all children of Texas. I am a Kindergarten teacher and have taught Kindergarten in public schools for almost 30 years. PLEASE, PLEASE do not pass a voucher system. It will hurt our kids!!! Thank you for your consideration.

Jaime Dimmick-Frame
N/a
HALTOM CITY, TX

Oppose

Sandra Houston
Parent and educator
Houston, TX

I OPPOSE SB 8. As a member of our state legislature, I urge you to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, let's focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student achievement. We should invest in quality public school choice and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Furthermore, private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Moreover, voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Lauren Muskiet
Self
Spring, TX

As a public school teacher for 24 years, I urge all representatives to vote against this bill. Private schools and charter schools should not receive taxpayer money in the form of a voucher because they are not held to the same standards as public schools. Private schools and charter schools do not have to accept all students, do not provide the same services that public schools offer, and do not have to be transparent with the way their money is spent.

Furthermore, as a parent, I am against the through year testing requirement. Students are tested too much as is, so any bill requiring more testing should not be considered.

Finally, the state needs to step up and increase per pupil funding by \$1000 to help districts cover the cost of inflation. Shame on Texas for being stingy with the rainy day surplus when our state ranks the lowest in how much we invest in our students.

Toni Hicks, Dr.
Self - Jarrell ISD Superintendent
Jarrell, TX

CSSB 8 won't help with teacher retention, doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address the individual needs of students.

CSSB 8 doesn't abolish the STAAR, it just replaces it with STAAR 2.0 with even more Commissioner authority.

CSSB 8 does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs.

Carolyn Booker, Dr
Westwood Independent School District
PALESTINE, TX

We do not support Voucher Approval for several reasons. Firstly, CSSB 8 explicitly acknowledges that private schools and vendors will not be bound by the federal and state protections for students with disabilities. These protections are essential and mandated for public schools, ensuring that students with disabilities receive the necessary support and accommodations.

Secondly, there is a pressing need to restructure our state's STAAR and A-F accountability system. Instead of diverting resources towards a voucher program, it is crucial to focus on improving the existing accountability system to ensure better educational outcomes for all students.

Moreover, implementing SB 8, as passed by the Senate, would come at a substantial cost to Texas. It is estimated that it would require over \$1 billion annually to support the proposed voucher program. This would make it one of the largest voucher programs in the country, while Texas public schools continue to be funded at levels that rank among the lowest in the nation.

The committee substitute being offered by Rep. Buckley would be even more expensive due to the introduction of new student eligibility provisions. Additionally, unlike the Senate version of SB 8, the committee substitute does not provide any funding protection to public schools. The absence of a \$10,000 five-year "hold harmless" provision for districts with fewer than 20,000 students leaves public schools vulnerable to potential budget cuts and further financial strain.

Considering these factors, we believe it is not in the best interest of Texas public schools and their students to support the Voucher Approval proposed in CSSB 8. Instead, we should prioritize strengthening public education by investing in our existing schools and improving accountability measures to ensure quality education for all students.

Jodie Keith
Self and elementary teacher
Denver City, TX

To whom it concerns: As a rural West Texas town, Title One public school teacher with students that come from all backgrounds, school "choice" is not what is being presented. The voucher system is elitism and segregation at its finest, covered in a big red gift bow to the public who doesn't know better. There is a demographic of clientele that private schools cater to. The students I teach daily in my classroom do not fit it. With public education, my special education students, my bilingual students, and my sociology-economic underprivileged students would not be protected in any capacity for their education—that's if they were even admitted into the private school they applied to as a student.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics and Educationdata.org, the average cost of one year of private elementary school is \$12,350 (in 2020). 1 ?? One year of private high school is \$16,040 (in 2020). 2 ?? And that amount doesn't take into account boarding schools, which can easily cost \$37,590 or more per year. How is \$8,000 going to cover the costs that I'm sure have gone up since 2020?

Also, will those private school teachers provide federally protected special education services? They're definitely not required to. They'll just deny the admission of those students into their school to skirt around the subject entirely. How is it "school choice" with these parameters?

This bill is a travesty of education for our future generations. Our society needs to make sure our children are taken care of: educationally, emotionally, physically, and financially when it comes to becoming productive adults in society. Please consider the statistics, the financial cost, and what's best for our kids and their public school teachers when discussing the future of this bill. Thank you.

Charles Booker
Westwood Independant School District
Palestine, TX

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Aquanetta Booker
Westwood Independent School District
Palestine, TX

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Charles Booker
Westwood Independent School District
Palestine, TX

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Lindsey Henson
Self/homeschoolers
Call, TX

Do what you need to do but leave homeschoolers out of it! We don't want government in our children's schooling AT ALL. Use the money to pay the teachers better. I know my child's educational needs and I don't need government handouts or monitoring to accomplish that.

Alex Casias Jr
College Student
Amarillo, TX

Dear members of the Public Education Committee of the Texas House,

My name is Alex Casias Jr., and I am a concerned citizen of North Texas writing to encourage you to support Senate Bill 8. This bill will help the students who need it most - including kids with special needs, those who are from low income families, and who currently attend a failing public school.

We have seen Education Savings Accounts passed all across the nation including Florida, West Virginia, Arizona, Iowa, and Utah and now, it's time we do it in Texas. We urge you to please support SB 8 and expand educational opportunities for Texas families. It's time we empower parents and give them the freedom to choose the school that is right for their child.

Vote YES on SB 8!

Sincerely,

Alex Casias Jr.

Vickie Goodell Goodell
Myself - a public school teacher
Eustace, TX

I'm a public school teacher. I will NEVER vote again for anyone who supports vouchers or additional state testing. I will do my best to convince anyone and everyone I know to do the same.

Brian Henson
Self/homeschoolers
Call, TX

No!! Keep the government out of our children's education.

Sharon Thompson
Self retired teacher
Katy, TX

Please vote no to vouchers. As a retired teacher of both public schools (TRS) and the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, I am against taking funds from public schools to fund private education.

Walter Berringer
Self
Ft. Worth, TX

These last few weeks of session are vitally important for the future of our public schools. The House Public Education Committee is hearing the committee substitute for Senate Bill 8, which includes the largest voucher program in the nation.

I'm writing to ask you to please contact your colleagues on the House Public Education Committee and ask them to keep CSSB 8 from leaving the committee for the following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Patricia Ybarra
Self/ speech language pathologist in profit organization
San Antonio, TX

I am against this bill. I'd rather see Texas appropriately fund public education, including adequate teacher salaries. Invest in public education—free and appropriate public education for all Texas students.

Alice Booker
Westwood Independent School District
Palestine, TX

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Mendi Nelson
Self, high school teacher
Cat Spring, TX

We need to do away with HB 4545 and go back to a true intervention class period. We also do not need to higher the standards.

Meenal McNary
Self
Round rock, TX

So y'all just gonna slip this bill in this am with invited testimony only? Knowing full well more oppose this than support it. Your efforts Creighton to defund public schools are not Texan at all.

Marilyn Wiles
Self
Horseshoe Bay, TX

Please vote NO on this bill!

Robert Clifford
Self, retired
San Antonio, TX

Please reject SB 8, as vouchers will remove important funding from public schools, especially in rural Texas, where there are not educational opportunities available.

Marie E Bruton
Self
San Antonio, TX

Oppose vouchers

Jason Davis
Alvarado ISD
Midlothian, TX

If public schools in Texas are a problem is it not the congress and the governor that has the power to fix it? If congress supports vouches are they not basically giving themselves a no confidence vote in their ability to put the right people in place to manage public education in Texas? Texas government is in charge of Texas Public Education!!!

Colette Sweeney
Self, teacher
Corinth, TX

Not in support for vouchers

Ashlea Allsup
self
new braunfels, TX

I oppose SB 8. I have been a homeschool parent for many years and have used many forms of education for my children. While I appreciate having choice, I know that a strong public education system is vital to our community. Even though I have explored many options for education, I have depended on the public school system as my children have gotten older and for any educational challenges. I have watched private schools and homeschool groups reject challenging students. Public schools always take those children and commit the resources to educating everyone. Everything we want to accomplish for the future of Texas children can best be accomplished by fully funding public schools and teacher salaries. Please don't give up on our children!!

Jo McKibben
Self
Bonham, TX

Please vote NO to SB8.

As a retired Texas teacher I beg you to vote NO on this piece of legislation regarding vouchers and additional curriculum and student testing which is not needed.

This bill is such an obvious attempt at ruining public education. The underhanded schemes of trying to vote on this bill without a proper hearing and now refusing public comments shows just how bad this bill is for all.

Again please vote NO.

Thank you.

Richard Dean
Frenship ISD
Wolfforth, TX

Good Morning,

Obviously, I work for public education and I am against education savings accounts. If you allow anything like this to pass, the private schools accepting the money should also have to accept Special Education/Special population students such as 504 and homeless. These private schools should provide, at their expense, the needed accommodations required by state and federal laws for these populations of students. I would say if this were not addressed you are setting up a segregated education system where students with special needs will be remanded to public schools and not provided the opportunity to attend private schools. In my experience, private schools currently do not accept or limit students with special needs. If the needs become too great the private schools ask them to leave.

The other issue is that private schools can dismiss a student at their own discretion. Texas Education Code sec. 25.036 requires public schools that accepts inter-district transfers to maintain that student for one school year no matter what educational accommodations/discipline issues the student may have. Private schools that accept this funding should have to maintain that student for the full school year and provide accommodations as well as discipline consequences. This provides stability for the students and helps avoid learning loss by multiple moves between schools.

Hollis Stringer
Self
Hutto, TX

As a Public School Teacher and Coach, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Lisa Jackson
We Go Public
New Braunfels, TX

For the sake of an economically stronger Texas that supports the rapid growth and development we see along the I35 corridor from Austin to San Antonio, we must invest in our public schools. From small businesses to manufacturing to health sciences and cybersecurity, our workforce is contingent upon an educated population. If we don't invest in our schools, business suffers. How are we going to sustain being pro-business if the businesses have no one to hire? Vouchers/ESAs drain funds from our public schools. Period. We must work to fund public schools, invest in students, connect more to business through Career and Technical Education, and Independent school districts will be drained even further from funding if vouchers/ESAs pass. Teachers are leaving in the droves not from public schools, but from education entirely.

Do not pass CSSB 8. Take a moment and think about what it means when we drain our public school system. Think about an uneducated workforce. What does that mean for the business or corporation? Not only in finding skilled workers, but also innovators, thinkers, and problem solvers. The potential that we have for our public education system is contingent upon the support from lawmakers. The ability to see how if we find every possible way to invest in public education, the more of a chance we have at excelling in other areas like science, technology, manufacturing, health, and so on.

Please take the time to think about the future. ESAs/vouchers are not a sustainable, intelligent mechanism to ensure we, as Texans, are excelling in the future. Let's move away from this topic as there's so little support for it. There's little success we'll see as Texans. Rural and urban public schools will be affected. And 93% of our students and parents will as well.

Thank you,
Lisa Jackson

Nina Brodsky
self
Austin, TX

I oppose the Committee Substitute for SB 8 . It INCREASES testing AND I oppose vouchers because they will hurt public education across the State by draining badly needed funds. Please vote against this bill.

Tammy Kelly
All Public Schools in Texas
Killeen, TX

School vouchers are not wanted by the majority of Texans. Private schools should not receive public funds! If you are affluent and can afford tuition for your child to go to a private school., you should pay for that yourself.

Sandy Garrett
self
Belton, TX

This bill appears to be about blowing tax payer dollars without just return . These funds should be imported into public education instead of trying to put public education out of existence. Most of the Texas population was educated by public educators and we haven't done to badly, in fact many have done very well. I believe in parental rights, but much of the bill sounds like you are trying to establish ways for public schools to be caught up in litigation. As a parent and now grandmother, teacher and now an administrator, I believe in public education and wonder why people who have little to no knowledge of what happens in public schools make LAWS that hinder education. Please reject this bill. Public educators do not get paid enough as it is, use the funds from this proposal to pay teachers more. There is no other profession that is more important and impactful as teachers... Pay teachers what they deserve to be paid...Texas teachers make an average of \$7,600 less than the national average. Pay teachers more and you will gain more professionals who are willing to impact our future.

MAry Elizabeth Jester
self/unemployed
Austin, TX

Public money should not be taken from our Texas Public School Sysytem to provide for private education. Students in Texas deserve to have Public Schools which are fully funded, including teachers who receive salaries that are fair and livable. Special Ed students are best served in the Public School system and deserve fully supported and functioning schools. Not all private schools will take all students and their curriculum may not meet standards. Please vote no on SB.

Charles Whitley
self
Austin, TX

I oppose the Committee Substitute for SB 8. It INCREASES testing AND I oppose vouchers because they will hurt public education across the State by draining badly needed funds. Please vote against this bill. Our public educations system deserves better.

Joe Craig
Rogers ISD
Temple, TX

Taxpayer money should not go to fund or supplement students in private schools unless ALL systems used to hold public schools accountable are also required of these Private schools that accept the students including the amount of the voucher pays the complete amount of the tuition required to attend. It is simply not fair that public schools would have a different set of accountability standards than private schools would for their students.

Cassandra Nodine
Self, teacher
San Antonio, TX

Education savings accounts are not equitable. Parent choice already exists. If a parent chooses to put their student in a private school, they should not be allowed to take money from already underfunded public schools to do so. They can choose from the myriad other options available to them. Public schools need more than what they are already given, not less. Parents can choose where to school their child, but not at the expense of other kids.

Amy Clark
Self
Blanco, TX

I do NOT support this bill. Stop playing politics with our kid's future. At least have the decency to have public testimony on this! Scared to? You know you don't have the support, so you're trying to fabricate it.
Vote NO to Vouchers and NO to ESA!

Olivia Thomas
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc
Navasota, TX

This bill diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools
It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws.

Stephanie Holderfield
Consultant for Business and Political Solutions
Montgomery, TX

I support parents rights to decide how their property tax dollars are spent for their children's education. Our public schools are failing. I do not agree with the Robin Hood styled tax dollars disbursements. If you're taxed in your district your dollars should be spent in your district. Enough of government decisions on property tax disbursements.

stephen english
Hemphill ISD
Hemphill, TX

The State of Texas does not need vouchers! This bill needs to fail in the committee if you are for public education.

Amy Hyden
self- public school teacher
Tomball, TX

Please get rid of SB8- We don't need more testing. We need financial support to teach. Schools should fully funded and money spent on more tests is ridiculous.

Amanda Afifi
Texas Association of School Psychologists
Austin, TX

School choice can lead to segregation and discrimination, particularly in areas where schools are already heavily divided along racial or socioeconomic lines. This can harm the social and emotional development of students by limiting their exposure to diversity and by fostering an environment of exclusion and stigma.

Not all schools participating in school choice programs are held to the same standards or accountability measures as public schools. Additionally, the diversion of public funds to support school choice programs also leaves public schools unable to meet the needs of all students, which can lead to a decline in public education quality. This can create a two-tier system that favors certain students at the expense of others. This perpetuates inequality and exacerbates the achievement gap between rich and poor students.

School choice can cause significant harm to students who have special educational needs. In a traditional public school system, these students are protected by federal laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which provides individualized education plans and other accommodations that meet their unique learning requirements. Unfortunately, in school choice programs, students with special educational needs may not get the targeted resources they require.

Private schools under the voucher program often do not accept students with special needs, and if they do, they frequently do not have programs to meet their requirements. This leads to a less integrated and less fair education system, where students with disabilities are at risk of being ignored because they do not fit into the school's educational norms.

When publicly funded charter schools are granted lax rules regarding accepting and accommodating students with disabilities, they may not even provide services equitably or turn away these students. This often leads to a concentration and segregation of disabled students at public schools that are already serving districts with high numbers of low-income students.

Providing choice options can ultimately result in lower quality education for students who require specialized learning environments, which extends to other students who may not be receiving appropriate academic support. Until school choice can guarantee nationwide federal protections for special education, it will continue to weaken the authority of special education legislation, diminishing educational equality for disabled children.

School choice may sound like a fair option for all students, but in reality, it could result in further marginalization and exclusion of students with special educational needs. It is our responsibility to provide all students with equal access to high-quality educational opportunities, including students with disabilities.

Courtney Perry, Ms.
Self, former public school teacher
Austin, TX

Please oppose this bill. Schools need more resources, not less.

Deanna Hicks
self and educator
Cypress, TX

I am writing to express my opposition to Senate Bill 8 and urge you to oppose this legislation. As a Texas resident and special educator, I believe this bill is harmful to Texas students, parents, and our communities.

Private schools aren't required to accept all students, including those with disabilities or special needs. In fact, private schools are more likely to reject these students. Tax dollars should not be going to private institutions that don't have to play by the same rules as public schools and are not accountable to taxpayers.

SB 8 also increases the number of state assessment administrations given to students from third to twelfth grade. It may eliminate STAAR, but it ramps up testing under a different name and gives more control to the commissioner of education to over-test our children.

Thank you for listening. I trust that you will carefully consider the concerns raised and make the right decision for the future of public education in our great state by voting no on SB 8.

Michelle Francis, Superintendent
Silverton ISD
Silverton, TX

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Thank you for listening. I trust that you will carefully consider the concerns raised and make the right decision for the future of public education in our great state by voting no on SB 8.

Linda Shaffer
Choice
Bowie, TX

I support choice

Jay Wade Johnson
self
Happy, TX

I appreciate the committees willingness to accept public comments in regards to SB 8.

Public education and the growth of all students is vital to the future economic viability of Texas. Assessing the needs of students is a vital part of that education process. For a teacher, knowing the needs of each individual student is key in building the education process for that student. Teachers need to know where to begin, how the student is progressing, and how the student ends the year. The STAAR test does not meet these needs and does need to be eliminated.

However, coupling the elimination of the STAAR test with a voucher program is not the path the House needs to seek. A voucher program does not meet the educational needs of all Texas public education students. Additionally, it moves funding that is badly needed by the public school system to private schools with limited oversight.

SB 8 dangles several incentives to the committee for passage. But it clearly does not inspire confidence when it comes to the education of all Texas children. I urge the committee to NOT approve this bill and craft better legislation that meets the needs of all Texas children.

Darin Cote, MR
self - public servant
Weatherford, TX

I oppose this bill because:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
 - It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
 - It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
 - It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
 - It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.
-

Joseph Reynolds
Self - Retired Applied Scientist
Austin, TX

Legislators,

Holding this meeting as you are seems a clumsy attempt at a private hearing. The citizens and taxpayers deserve better. After all the social righteousness about 'wokeness', is this an attempt to fund schools for those reasons, not for producing future citizens and creators? The attempt at control is telling. Hold this bill until you have the courage to hear from the parents and students in the state.

Joe Reynolds
A former student who's 5th grade teacher turned him into a scientist

MONTIE SHELTON
none
Huntsville, TX

I oppose SB8 because I do not want the Federal Government meddling in Texas Education. Ever since Jimmy Carter established the Federal Education Bureaucracy, education has taken a downhill turn. SB8 ties Texas to the Feds and so it is a non starter. The Feds mess up everything they touch!

Kate Peaslee
self, Lecturer at Texas Tech
Lubbock, TX

I am writing to compel Texas legislators to vote AGAINST SB 8. This bill poses a devastating threat to public education across our state. Tax dollars should SUPPORT not compromise the integrity of public schools in Texas. Please do the right thing by voting against this bill to represent the best interests of ALL Texans.

Pamela Wells
Self
Cypress, TX

I encourage the House Committee to vote NO on SB8 for many reasons. First, it is the opposite of a conservative piece of legislation as it will provide direct tax dollars to individuals and ultimately private schools with little to no accountability, regulation, or controls. It will also reduce the amount of money available for public education which is the cornerstone of our state economy and a primary responsibility of the Texas Legislature as identified in the Texas Constitution. I strongly encourage the Committee to vote against SB8.

Elizabeth Priebe
Self as a wife and homeschooling mom
Mansfield, TX

We're free to choose the education of our children in Texas and have been since 1994. There's no reason to trouble the government with more things to do when ya'll already have too many messes to clean up from previous stupid legislation. This family AND A MAJORITY of our friends and colleagues are against all "school choice" legislation.

We understand there's a need, but we're working to care for our own as Americans have been doing since the 1600s. Homeschoolers do and will continue to enable our fellow Texans to abandon our failing school systems while empowering Texas families to make their own educational choices. In doing so, Texas will become an international leader in all aspects of business and development, politics and innovation. Leave us alone and watch us make Texas proud!

Morgan Young
Self
Lucas, TX

I am in support of INCREASING public funding for schools. Our school district Lovejoy ISD will not survive as is without additional funding.

Mario Munoz Jr
Self
San Antonio, TX

Fellow constituent here speaking on behalf of fellow Catholics and other Christian organizations parents and guardians. As elected officials you're speaking on behalf of myself and fellow parents! Please support the passing of SB8 bill and let our voices be heard. We have elected to have the lord our savior in schools and along side our children. Prayer is welcomed and worshiped in class on a daily basis. The assistance of this bill will go a long way of providing a choice of where we choose to have our children receive schooling and the choice have having religion present in class.

Joel Davenport, Dr
Ennis ISD/Teacher
Ennis, TX

Vote NO to vouchers and support public education.

Amber Williams
Self
Pearland, TX

This bill is a travesty. Public taxpayer dollars should never be used to fund private schools that get to choose their students and are often religious institutions. Separation of church and state! Private schools have no government oversight and no accountability. Special needs students and many others will be rejected. Vote NOOOOOO!

Charles Woods
self
Fulshear, TX

Vouchers are a money grab that promotes developer interests in building communities with elite private schools. Dismantling public schools using the property tax dollars that have soared out of control means we will have a de-facto statewide property tax that benefits the developers, private interests and the wealthiest more than the average. Unconstitutional policy that would have to be repealed. The property taxpayers (owners, businesses, renters) have been hit extremely hard in the pocketbook with values skyrocketing and to take that 'windfall' and give it to private interests reverses fairness for education that started in the formation of the Texas Constitution.

Suzi Kennon
Texas PTA, President
Sachse, TX

Texas PTA, the largest child advocacy association in Texas with nearly 450,000 members, is opposed to SB 8 because it diverts precious funding away from the 5.4 million children being educated in critically underfunded and stiffly regulated Texas public schools, it leaves children behind, increases testing and expands TEA.

Instead of diverting funds to a select group with no state accountability,, we should be continuing to support and empower the families and children who depend on Texas public schools. Our public school system is facing unprecedented challenges, where teachers and students feel overburdened and under-supported. While the intent behind ESAs is to increase school choice for all, the sad reality is that too many kids, including our most vulnerable, may get left behind including: children with disabilities who aren't guaranteed access to or afforded the same protections in private schools, middle and lower-income students who, even with the ESA, still won't be able to afford private school tuition and hidden costs like transportation, books, and participation fees, and rural students who have limited or no access to private schools. Leaving children behind is simply not something Texas PTA can agree to. ESAs drain critical funding from an already underfunded overburdened system.

Furthermore, Texas PTA has long fought for a reduction in testing to only those required by the federal government. CSSB 8's increase in the number of tests negates years of work by families, our association and this body. CSSB 8 also gives the TEA Commissioner nearly unilateral power over the testing system by removing that authority from the SBOE. Neither are acceptable.

We believe the state's focus and energy should be on strengthening and supporting our constitutionally required system of public schools so that together we can provide suitable and equitable resources to meet the needs of all Texas students.

Stacie Davis
Self - special educator
HOCKLEY, TX

Please oppose this bill, it is not beneficial to most students or schools.

Victoria Frayser
Self/Teacher
Houston, TX

SB8 - Billions in extra budget. You are spending it on “for profit” voucher education instead of giving Teacher pay raises. That says it all.

If you think “for profit” voucher schools will pay for quality educators you are accepting “fools gold”. They will pay for low quality and keep the rest for “admin” ie profit.

Just like “fools gold” was sold to help electricity prices.ERCOT. What did that do? Middlemen making money, confusing “contracts”, all designed to make more off the public while not investing in the grid for the good of the public. Vouchers will do the same for education. Vote NO on SB8. Don’t accept “fools gold”!

Deanna Perkins
Self
Cedar Park, TX

Good morning,

I am writing in OPPOSITION to SB 8.

As a public school teacher, I am saddened by how this bill is being wrongly handled by our elected officials. You tried to sneak this in behind closed doors (which thankfully failed), but now you are only allowing invited testimony. You are afraid of how many teachers, parents, and students would speak up against vouchers.

Vouchers take away funds from the already minuscule amount the state of Texas legislature gives public schools. This voucher money would NOT mean that all students get choice, as private and charter schools can pick and choose who attends. Also, there is no way that we could even measure the success due to private schools not having to follow the same standards as public schools. They do not have to accommodate for special needs of any kind.

Not only do I oppose all of the above, but now, you have decided to add state testing to the bill, when in turn, it should be its own separate bill. These two subjects are MAJOR and should not be combined. Not only that, you are advertising that it would eliminate STAAR, but you have conveniently NOT advertised that it would ADD almost 3 times more state testing. Our kids do not NEED more testing.

I know many of you have family members who are public school teachers or have been teachers yourself. This bill does NOT promote choice and is NOT what’s best for ALL kids, just some. Please oppose SB 8 for our future.

Linda Hassan, School Nurse
HISD
Houston, TX

Vote NO to SB 8.

Barbara BEAUBIEN
Self unemployed
Grapevine, TX

We do not want vouchers!!!!

Niloufar Hafizi
Self/nonprofit employee
KATY, TX

Dear committee members,

SB 8 as written does not improve educational opportunities for students across Texas. It also further stokes existing culture war debates based on misrepresentations concerning what students are taught in public schools (for starters, SB 8 outlines parental rights when existing state and federal law already grant parents sufficient rights over their children and their children's education). Please vote no on SB 8 as currently written.

James Wells
Self
Cypress, TX

I am OPPOSED to SB 8. As a retired educator I know the importance of public education to individuals, families, and our economy. Past experiences in other states have shown the cost of private and home school voucher programs is tremendously high and reduces funding available to public education which is the cornerstone of our democracy and our communities. Additionally, private school and home school vouchers give taxpayer dollars to individuals with no accountability or real controls. VOTE NO to SB 8!

Phillip Micocci
Self/Teacher
Spring, TX

Money should be spent on public schools, not vouchers. If people choose to send their child/children to private schools, fine-but they should pay for it. Texas is already low enough on funding for public education. Calling for expanded testing is ludicrous. We already over-test and kids feel extreme pressure to perform well. Also, political agendas have no place in education; dictating instruction and what's permissible for instructional materials does not encourage critical thinking. And what's most shameful is the effort to pass this bill with no public comment and backroom machinations to ram it through. VOTE NO ON SB8.

Jim Crosby
Self, retired school teacher
Manor, TX

I taught for 27 years at my high school alma mater, St. Stephen's Episcopal School, Austin. I was a dorm dad for 10th grade boarding boys, assisted in the chapel program as Lay Chaplain, and taught our required senior course in Theology. My three kids all went to St. Stephen's through both middle school and high school. I love private schools. Now I am a reading buddy for two fifth graders at Norman-Sims Elementary, a public school in east Austin. I love public schools and their mandate, as well. Attempts like SB 8 to divert funding from public schools have direct historic ties to white supremacy and attempts to deny education to African Americans both before and after the end of slavery. Resistance to Brown v. Board in 1955, and to the following thirteen years of Civil Rights activism, the development of what has rightly been dubbed the school-to-prison pipeline and the prison-industrial-complex, white flight and Christian academies -- it's all of a piece. Please do your part in helping us as a society turn from this toxic history. Increase the funding of public schools! Vote NO on SB 8!

Jerry Adkins
Brazosport ISD
Clute, TX

Vote NO on SB 8 Substitute - No vouchers/ESA. No public money for private institutions.

Shelia Willis-Reeves
Self/School Psychologist
Temple, TX

No

Kevin Selden
HISD
Houston, TX

Vouchers benefit no one other than the rich who do not need them anyways. Pay the teachers or get replaced by representatives who actually serve the greater good. VOTE NO ON SB8!!

Carol Peters, Ms
Myself
Fort Worth, TX

Texans support their public schools. This proposal undermines the state's obligation to educate all children in Texas by properly funding public education. Stipends can in no way support private school tuition and are a giveaway to those choosing to enroll their children in private schools. Educators and parents decide together what materials are appropriate, not politicians. Too much Big Brother.

Michelle Brodesky
self, evaluator
San Antonio, TX

Please oppose SB8. Vouchers would do great damage to our already struggling school system and would undermine and underpay teachers, who are already under significant strain. For the sake of all children in public education, including my own, please vote no on SB 8.

Amie Schultze
Self/ Public School Educator
GEORGETOWN, TX

Please, please do not let this bill pass!! It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools. Texas public schools are already massively underfunded! We need to do better for our children and the hard working educators that serve them! This funding should be directed to our public schools that have faced double-digit inflation, teacher retention issues, and other programmatic needs - not to private schools or vendors with little to no accountability.

John MacFarlane
self
Fort Worth, TX

My children attend public schools. Since the pandemic, public schools have lost thousands of students. This bill will take public monies (my tax dollars) to support private schools. This will take the dollars needed to support and improve public schools and allow them to be used to send students to private and religious schools. This is the opposite of separation of church and state. It will hurt both rural and urban school districts. Even rural, conservative residents of the state are against this. 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. Disadvantaged or marginalized families will not be able to pay the difference between the public funds provided and the actual cost of the private/religious tuition. So, these monies will primarily go to middle high and high income families who can afford to make up the difference in the public funds and the actual tuition. This is just a bad idea to use Texans' tax dollars to provide rich families additional monies to send their kids to religious schools.

Suzy Hagar, Ms.
Myself (retired)
Dallas, TX

The most important responsibility of this committee and the full Texas Legislature and Governor is to provide an adequately funded public school system for our 5 million children. The average school tax bill in Texas is about \$2k. The vouchers being proposed are about \$8K. Many people have more than one child in school. So yes the faith based theocratic system people are asking for a subsidy from other taxpayers.

Your yearly tax payments won't remotely cover the cost of the voucher you want. You are asking for other taxpayers to cover that cost, which is the literal definition of a subsidy. Welfare. Socialism. And you want it on the backs of all the Texans with absolutely no accountability. So it's not just "your tax dollars." The most important funding is to adequately fund our 5.5 million young Texans.

Danielle Clark
Self- administrator
Houston, TX

SUPPORT THE TEACHERS, NOT THE RICH!!! NO ON THIS BILL AND SHAME ON THOSE WHO ARE TRYING TO SNEAK IT THROUGH!!!!

Michael Martinez
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am urging you to vote against CSSB 8.

Please understand this SB will wreak far reaching havoc on the safety and security of our great state.

Lorin Furlow
Self-educator
Lake Jackson, TX

I am an educator and special education professional and I urge you to vote NO on any voucher proposal this session. I work in special education, which means I know all of the ways students with disabilities are protected in public schools and all that they are entitled to. Public schools are held accountable for this by the federal government, the state, and students' parents - through the admission, review, and dismissal process, the TEA complaint process, IDEA protections like due process, and more. Students with disabilities can be very vulnerable and vouchers for private schools without accountability requirements can place these students and families at risk and it should not be the position of our state to do that.

I again, urge you to consider ways to more appropriately fund public schools instead of sending funding with no accountability to private schools-please vote NO to vouchers.

Bradford Moore, Mr
Texas PTA
Houston, TX

I strongly urge House members to work to strengthen public education by not approving SB 8. Strengthening investment into public education is what is needed to invest in our state's children. Approving SB 8 will do the opposite.

VOTE NO ON SB 8.

Jennifer Wilburn
Self / Program Resource Manager HDL Research Lab
Brenham, TX

Please vote "NO" on SB 8 Voucher Bill!!!

Elaine Pangle, Dr.
Spring Branch ISD/ Memorial High School
KATY, TX

DO NOT try to rush it through in a hearing without public testimony tomorrow!

Tana Lam
self
Cypress, TX

Please vote NO to SB 8 with CSSB 8 attached. No to vouchers/ESAs/coupons for private schools that will defund our public schools.

Kathleen Rogers
Self - Public School Teacher
Orange, TX

I am against school vouchers. It is a smoke screen to say that disadvantaged students would receive a better education in a private school instead of a public school. I have worked for over 40 years in public schools with disadvantaged students. I know the cost of educating disadvantaged students and the work and commitment it takes to make a difference for them. Vouchers will not help them. Having a voucher will not pay for their full educational tuition in a private school. This bill will only provide money from public schools to private schools for those financially able to send their children to private schools. This will not help disadvantaged students. Please vote against this bill.

Amanda Crone
Self, Teacher
Grand Saline, TX

VOTE NO to more EOCs. Protect Texas Teachers and Students!

Kimmy Robinson, Dallas County Precinct 2303
Self
Farmers Branch, TX

This bill decreases high stakes testing, but increases testing overall for individual students from 20 to 48 tests. This is far too many tests. It also creates vouchers, or ed savings accounts, which means you continue defunding public education by giving families money meant for public schools to be used at unaccountable private schools. STOP defunding education, and stop propping up unaccountable, for-profit private schools. This is desegregation and it's not very well disguised.

Stephanie Carter
self
Houston, TX

I strongly urge elected officials to vote against SB 8. The lengths certain law makers have gone to push this bill through without transparency and public engagement indicates it's not in the best interest of children and parents. In fact, SB 8 works against building a strong public education system, which has been the foundation of The Great State of Texas. Who among you did not benefit from the education you received in public schools?! Why create barriers and further disadvantage children attending public schools?! Reject SB 8 and school vouchers, stand up for public education!

Ginger Meyners
self - association professional
Leander, TX

I urge you to vote NO on any voucher proposal that makes it way to the Texas House this session. I work in special education, which means I know all of the ways students with disabilities are protected in public schools and all that they are entitled to. No matter what funding we receive (which is never enough), Texas public schools provide every needed special education service to students AT NO COST. A voucher will only provide a discounted amount to families, disenfranchising them while opening up the opportunity for them to be discriminated against at private schools. I am also concerned that, because private schools are often ill-equipped to serve all students, especially those with behavioral needs, these students will return to public schools while their voucher money stays at the private school. I strive to provide an exceptional education to students with disabilities and I am held accountable for that by the federal government, the state, and my students' parents - through the admission, review, and dismissal process, the TEA complaint process, IDEA protections like due process, and more. I know precisely how vulnerable students will be in a private school and it should not be the position of our state to put children at risk. Please VOTE NO on vouchers.

Kristin Middlebrooks
Self/Assistant Superintendent of a Texas Public School
Waxahachie, TX

CSSB 8 doesn't prioritize parental choice over the right of the private school to pick and choose their students.
CSSB 8 won't help with teacher retention, doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address the individual needs of students.
CSSB 8 does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs.
CSSB 8 does not include a hold harmless for public schools that lose kids to a voucher.
I urge you to go against SB8.

Shelby Winkley
myself/teacher
Clute, TX

As a 25 year veteran in the classroom, I am appaled at what lawmakers are doing to the education system. I cannot fathom how we would take away funds the public schools desperately need and give a coupon (voucher implies its paid) to a parent to move their child to a private school. What is even more maddening as lawmakers want to funnel those funds to private schools that do not have the expectations of the STAAR, etc. If public school funds go to private schools they should have the same testing expectations that TEA puts in place for public schools.
I cannot, in good conscious, support anyone who wants to become a teacher. I used to be proud of what I did. I am still proud of my accomplishments that I make with my students, but embarrassed by lawmakers that have turned education into a circus. Education is not a business to be ran. If you treat it like is, then fund it like one.
I will vote against every person I am able to that helps to pass this bill in every upcoming election unti they no longer run or are voted out office. Students and Teachers deserve better!

Trista Bishop-Watt
Good Reason Houston
Houston, TX

Parents, students, taxpayers, and communities deserve to know if public schools are academically effective to hold systems accountable for student learning and taxpayer money. The current A-F accountability system clearly differentiates school quality for academic outcomes. Students who attend an A- or B-rated school are 1.8 times more likely to read on grade level and 2.7 times more likely to be college ready by graduation than students attending D- and F-rated schools.

High-quality assessments are a necessary component of academic accountability. STAAR assessments are rigorous, valid, and aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Any additional assessments proscribed by the legislature in lieu of STAAR for elementary and middle school must continue to meet these standards so the state and local school districts have a clear gauge of student performance to effectively allocate limited, tax-funded resources to support student learning. While we support a move to the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) for high school, especially if it allows for better progress monitoring in math, we just ask that state law maintain alignment with TEKS.

Changes proposed to the accountability system must be carefully calculated to maintain its integrity. As the committee and the legislature potentially consider additional substitutes or amendments to SB 8, it is critical that the A-F accountability system remains focused on academic student outcomes. Any attempt to conflate academic outcomes with nonacademic indicators has great potential to mask student academic preparedness. Considering only 44% of students in Houston (52% in Texas) are reading on grade level by 3rd grade, a focus on academic accountability must remain undiluted.

Texas students are capable of high levels of achievement. Current law recognizes this by providing standards for graduation, including a requirement that students pass STAAR End-of-Course (EOC) exams. This not only holds districts accountable for preparing students to graduate ready to pursue college, careers, and/or military enlistment, but also equips our state with a skilled workforce capable of meeting the needs of Texas employers.

As it stands now, Texas has seen slower growth than the national average for high-wage, skilled jobs. Migrants to our state are 1.5 times more likely to have a Bachelor's degree than native Texans. Rather than eroding standards for graduation, we need to focus on strengthening our educational pipeline. If the legislature moves away from STAAR EOC exams, we respectfully ask you consider substituting a TSIA score requirement for graduation so we know students are prepared for postsecondary success, school leaders can identify which schools need targeted resources, and parents, communities, and policy makers can hold school systems accountable for student outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to Texas students.

Sarah Bird
Self
Bruceville, TX

Public schools already are underfunded in our great state. Do not siphon off additional funds by offering my tax dollars as vouchers to private and parochial schools. Parents who choose this option rather than working with teachers and administrators to improve their public school need to pay for it from their own pocket. If we send my tax dollars to private and parochial schools, they MUST then follow every law, rule and mandate that the public schools do!! Otherwise you are creating a morass that will hurt the students throughout the state. These children and youth are the fuel for our economic engine - do not send public funds to private schools.

Claudia Ullrich
Self, Public School Parent
Austin, TX

Voucher Provisions in Committee Substitute for SB 8 Still Harm Public School. With an initial price tag of \$800 million, the voucher provisions in the committee substitute for SB 8 will balloon to billions of dollars in the coming years. This funding should not be directed to private schools or vendors with little to no accountability, but instead to our public schools that have faced double-digit inflation, teacher retention issues, and other programmatic needs.

Bonnie Hubert
Self
Conroe, TX

As a professional for 2 decades in public education, (BA, MA, Ed.D) I can affirmatively say Vouchers are NOT good for public education. This is not an initiative that true conservative republicans should be rallying for. I can offer several reasons why and would love to share those with anyone that's truly interested.

Alicia Smith, Mrs
Self
Fairfield, TX

Honorable Committee Members please vote NO on SB8 being heard today in your committee. Any monies going to private schools or charters that has no state oversight on how the money is spent is a bad precedent. Even with the fewer students it is aimed at will be bad for public rural public schools where we do not have many options at this time.

Once the small voucher door opens if it passes

you can never close it again, it will only open for more and more students. Once the state starts handing out money, questionable private and charter schools will pop up across rural Texas.

These schools will have no accountability from anyone as to how the schools spend the state taxpayers money. They do not have to hire certified teachers, curriculum, etc. Public School's students have services teaching the whole child. Pop up classrooms with corrals, computers, and monitors is not what our Texas students deserve. They will not create life long learners that will enjoy their schooling and become the community members that give back to their community and get involved with others to make the community great.

Sincerely,
Alicia Smith
A supporter of public schools
and Texas Children

Christine Mauer, Mrs.
Self
Cedar Park, TX

Say no to ESA/Vouchers. This hurts public schools. You're not fooling anyone by stating "no more STAAR" testing. This opens the door for you to control public education and take more power away from local entities. Keep the local control that you claim to care about. NO TO VOUCHERS!

Susan Francis
Self
Carrollton, TX

Say no to school vouchers. We need to support all our children, not just the ones who can afford private schools. Every child has a right to good education.

Mary Tipper
Self
Plano, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed Texas voucher bill currently under consideration. As a concerned citizen, I firmly believe that it is crucial to prioritize and protect public education, which serves as the cornerstone of our democratic society and ensures equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status.

Public schools play a vital role in our communities, fostering social integration, diversity, and inclusive learning environments. They are essential institutions that educate and empower generations of students, enabling them to become well-informed, engaged citizens. The Texas voucher bill, however, threatens the very foundation upon which our public education system stands.

While proponents of vouchers argue that they offer parents greater choice and control over their child's education, the reality is far more complex. Voucher programs divert taxpayer funds from public schools to private institutions, which often lack the same level of accountability, transparency, and inclusivity as their public counterparts. This not only jeopardizes the quality of education but also undermines the public school system's ability to adequately serve all students.

Moreover, implementing a voucher system would likely exacerbate educational inequities. Private schools, which often have higher tuition fees, may not be financially accessible to low-income families, leaving them with limited options. This would further widen the educational achievement gap, perpetuating social disparities and denying equal opportunities to those who need them the most.

Furthermore, public schools are required to accept all students, including those with special needs or disabilities, providing tailored support and services to ensure their success. Private schools, on the other hand, have the freedom to choose their students and may not have the resources or expertise to accommodate diverse learning needs adequately.

Rather than diverting resources away from public schools, we should focus on strengthening and investing in them. By increasing funding, reducing class sizes, improving infrastructure, and attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers, we can enhance the quality of education and create equitable learning environments for all students.

I urge you to consider the potential long-term consequences of implementing the Texas voucher bill. Let us work together to protect public education and ensure that every child in Texas has access to a high-quality, inclusive, and equitable education.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your commitment to the well-being and future of our students.

William Todd Robison
Hutto ISD
Hutto, TX

As a Texas Public School employee, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Those who choose an alternative to public education are welcome to do so with their own personal funds!

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Julia Grizzard
Bexar County Education Coalition
San Antonio, TX

To the Members of the House Committee on Public Education,

Thank you for all of your work during this legislative session.

On behalf of 18 Bexar County area school districts, we are writing to share our deep concern with the continued policy discussions on “school choice” that have permeated this legislative session. In a mission purported to align with parental rights, the Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 8 (CSSB 8) erodes a family’s access to vital federal protections, limits critical oversight into fiscal accountability for taxpayers, and removes any opportunity for parents to be partners in their child’s education by denying them protections under Chapter 26 of the Texas Education Code.

Any plan to divert public tax dollars to private entities with no financial accountability and limited academic accountability is detrimental to our public education system. CSSB 8 fails to create a system of actual school choice that meets the needs of all Texas students.

CSSB 8 creates an entirely new bureaucratic system to manage education savings accounts for eligible students, which, according to the latest draft of this committee substitute, are our most vulnerable Texas children - special education students. Furthermore, the bill asks parents of special education students to sign their federal protections away in order to participate and offers no system to fully evaluate the qualifications of the private schools, tutors, or service providers that may profit from this system. In fact, the only recourse offered to families in CSSB 8 is after a student has been mistreated or has shown to perform negatively on a standardized test.

Lastly, while we agree that the Texas academic accountability system does need adjustment, offering that adjustment to public schools while refusing to hold similar evaluative criteria to eligible providers under CSSB 8 creates an inequitable, opaque system that creates, at best, limited benefit and, at worst, direct harm to the families it purports to help.

Now more than ever, we have a responsibility to provide safe, quality, supportive opportunities, spaces, and classrooms for all public-school students, families, educators, and staff. We hope we can continue to partner with you on policy that positively impacts the 5.3 million students in Texas public schools.

-- Julia Grizzard on behalf of:

Alamo Heights ISD, Comal ISD, East Central ISD, Edgewood ISD, Fort Sam Houston ISD, Harlandale ISD, Judson ISD, Lackland ISD, Medina Valley ISD, Northeast ISD, Northside ISD, Randolph Field ISD, San Antonio ISD, Schertz-Cibilo Universal City ISD, Somerset ISD, South San Antonio ISD, Southside ISD, Southwest ISD

Tanya Jenkins
self
TEMPLE, TX

I am against school vouchers because it sends a clear message to the public that are schools are not good enough. I have worked as a teacher for 24 years and the students are making growth even though Covid set us back at least 2 years. Diverting money from public education towards a school voucher program will only make our situation worse. The United States educates everyone not just those gifted with the ability to learn easily and this will always skew the way data is compared between schools.

Allison Craig, Dr.
self, college professor
Fort Worth, TX

Please oppose this bill. Voucher programs do not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve. They enshrine discrimination against students with disabilities into public education law. Please do not divert my tax dollars away from accessible public education and to schools who don't have to follow the ADA and IDEA legislation that gives all students, regardless of ability, access to a quality education. That isn't parent choice, it's a diminishment of quality education choices for parents of students with disabilities.

Carolina Esparza
Self
San Antonio, TX

Please oppose SB8. Public education needs more money, not less. Vouchers, like the educational savings accounts, divert money from public schools and do not provide a way out of poverty for students of lesser means. In states that have adopted the vouchers, the overwhelming majority of parents using vouchers already have their children in private school. The Texas constitution requires the legislature to provide for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of free, public schools. SB8 would have a devastating impact on public schools in Texas. A thriving economy requires an educated workforce and public schools are the most efficient and accountable means of educating tomorrow's workforce. Please oppose SB8.

John Litzler
Texas Baptists Christian Life Commission
Dallas, TX

Texas Baptists is a convention of more than 5,300 Baptist churches across the state of Texas. While we appreciate and are in favor of much of the language contained in Articles 1 and 2 regarding parental rights, ultimately, we oppose this bill because of the Education Savings Account program that would be created by Article 3 and concerns regarding religious freedom. I write on behalf all of the Baptist churches in our convention, but simply to explain religious conscience concerns that are a distinctive of the Baptist faith and which are shared by many people of faith in Texas.

Taxpayer dollars shouldn't be used for religious learning. Article 3 would allow the taxes paid by Texans to be used to provide a religious education, even a religious education to which the taxpayer may have a conscientious objection. The tax revenue used for the ESA proposed by this bill doesn't just come from the parent of the child, but also from that family's Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Atheist, Seikh, and Buddhist, neighbors. We are grateful for the private schools which are operated by Texas Baptist churches, and we support them wholeheartedly. However, Texans who should not be compelled, through taxation, to pay for these schools to teach children about Jesus. Christians don't want to pay for a student to attend an Islamic academy and be taught that Jesus is not God. Our Muslim neighbors don't want to pay for my child to attend a Christian school to learn that Jesus is God.

Additionally, I've talked with many of our churches who say that their private schools would not accept ESA money because of these religious liberty concerns and concerns about government intrusion with their schools. I don't think this is surprising. During the pandemic when Congress offered paycheck protection program (or PPP) loans, many of our churches I spoke with rejected those funds for a similar reason. They have heard Governor Abbott say that there will be accountability for schools that receive ESAs and that the State of Texas can impose accountability on any institution that receives government funds, and they don't want any part of it. Some are describing ESA programs like this as "educational freedom" but, in reality, it's an affront to religious freedom.

Finally, it's important to note that many Texas Baptist churches are located in rural areas where public school teachers, coaches, and administrators comprise the backbone of the local church. I don't think there is a Baptist church in Texas that wouldn't be negatively affected by what an ESA program like this would do to our public school system.

Sandra Haigh
self
Forney, TX

I oppose using tax dollars to support any sort of voucher program in Texas. Public schools are needing our financial support now more than ever, and this state does not need to encourage funneling vital dollars into a private school system that does not (and realistically cannot) provide the fair and appropriate public education to all students in this state. I have served in Special Education in the past, and I have seen the way voucher programs neglect children with disabilities.

Javon Hassler
Self/Teacher
Darrouzett, TX

This bill and the way that our representatives are trying to push it through are WRONG on SO many levels. Stop the backroom shady deals and do what is right. Not only ethically, but what is right for our children, teachers, and PUBLIC education. Families with children in public education far outnumber those in private schools and should be considered first. People who can afford to send their children to private schools don't need a tax break. And why are we funding private curriculum companies? How much of a kickback are you getting? Anyone who votes to pass this bill would not and will not get my vote next election, and I plan to promote my stand on YOUR behavior.

David Laird
Self
Katy, TX

Changing the current Career and Technical Education (CTE) funding model will destroy career training for high school students. Every 8 years or so, the legislature gets the bring idea to move money away from CTE and within 4 years we see massive problems. Please stop this cycle! The CTE programs are working because they are funded! Do not reduce or change the weighted funding model for CTE. Stop allowing schools to use these funds on other programs. Hold schools accountable for pulling money away from CTE to fund bloated stadiums and admin buildings! At this point an MBA is a dime a dozen, however when the freeze hit we had a shortage of plumbers! The oil fields are hiring welders left and right! We don't have a shortage of college grads! We have a surplus of students who cant succeed in college and have not technical training or guidance. We are finally making a dent in this problem with CTE, do not change the model because it is making progress!

Melanie Dobney
self
Cypress, TX

I am highly opposed to the education savings accounts proposed in this bill. Tax payer dollars should not be used for any education funding unless the same accountability system is in place for the entities providing that education. In addition, additional testing for our children is unnecessary and frankly absurd at this point. Testing our children more will not make the education system stronger.

Sarah Gray
Self
Austin, TX

I am speaking out about Senate Bill 8. This bill is shady and a darned mess. Members and Texans have had little to no time to read this completely new bill and consider its implications. We do NOT need vouchers, and we do NOT need more standardized tests. This bill should be voted DOWN. It should NOT be voted out of committee. It is bad for our public schools and bad for children. I do not support this bill. Fund public education the right way.

Lauren Gutterman, Dr
Self/professor
Austin, TX

I have two children in the public schools in Texas. Please don't take public money out of our already underfunded schools to subsidize private school tuition for wealthy parents! This version of SB8 also expands mandatory testing. We need less mandatory testing not more. These tests are stressful and unnecessary they take up valuable class time and do not reflect true learning. Please oppose SB8 and support public schools in Texas.

Donna Gregory
Self
Dallas, TX

Please vote against this bill. Vouchers are destructive to our public schools. Rather than providing vouchers, we should strengthen our public schools and provide good pay and benefits to public school teachers.

Barry Nebhut
VLK Architects
Austin, TX

I am opposed to the use of public funds in any form aiding private schools.

Rebekah Warwick, Texas State Director
Heritage Action for America
Mansfield, TX

My name is Rebekah Warwick and I am the Texas State Director for Heritage Action for America, a national grassroots organization with two million conservative activists nationwide, including thousands of Texans.

As the House Public Education Committee considers Senate Bill 8, I wanted to communicate Heritage Action's support for education savings accounts (ESAs) and ask you to increase the positive effects of ESAs by providing as many educational opportunities to as many Texas students as possible.

SB 8 would expand opportunities for thousands of students by allowing families to use state education funds to send their children to the education institution that best fits their needs. In addition to tuition, families would be able to use the scholarship accounts for other needs like textbooks, tutoring, online instruction, and supplies.

Heritage Action asks the Committee to amend SB 8 to remove the state test mandate. Legislators have an interest in ensuring accountability, however mandating a single test can distort how schools and other educational providers operate. This can create an incentive to "teach to the test" and also reduce the number of education options available to families. In an experimental evaluation of the effects of various regulations on private school participation in choice programs, researchers found that requiring the state test reduced the likelihood that private schools would participate in the program by about 46 to 55 percent.

Legislators can achieve their desired goal of accountability by allowing education providers to choose among a menu of nationally norm-referenced (NNR) tests, like the Stanford 10 or Iowa Test of Basic Skills, which show how well a student is doing relative to his or her peers. When education providers have the flexibility to choose from a variety of NNR tests, they face no pressure to conform their curriculum or teaching practices to any particular test. That will preserve the quantity of diversity of education options available to families, while ensuring that parents have access to objective data regarding student performance.

The Texas Legislature has the opportunity to empower parents to choose whatever education option works best for their child by establishing ESAs. No two children are the same, and a parent should not be forced to accept a one-size-fits-all approach to their child's education. Education freedom provides the opportunity for children to receive an education best suited to their needs.

Toni Wing-Jenkins, Mrs.
Self
Burleson, TX

As a retired public school teacher, parent of a Texas teacher, and grandparent to two Texas students, I urge you not to vote for any repurposed voucher system in Texas. The work of the Texas legislature to "improve education" for the past three decades has only weakened the system, turned students into data points, and demoralized teachers. This is the cherry on the top of a very bad sundae. Faced by teachers leaving the profession, in one legislative session, is the legislature going to provide money for vouchers while not giving teachers a decent raise? Draw money AWAY from public schools? Fuel the insane fire against the professional educators who work in public schools every day?

Just say no. Say no to educational savings accounts. Say no to funding private schools with public money. Say no demonizing teachers and the education system of Texas. Say yes to the teachers of today and tomorrow. Defeat SB 8 and use the money to further fund Texas public education: reduce actual class sizes and give employees a raise.

Toni Wing-Jenkins
Burleson, TX

Ryan Kahlden
Self-Public School Administrator
Waxahachie, TX

Why is the legislature valuing the education of a few students above that of all students? Is the prospect of an education savings account so terrible that you need to incentivize it with a 30% premium over the standard basic allotment that goes into funding Texas public schools? Surely the legislature understands that most Texans do not pay \$8,000 in property taxes to their local ISD for purposes of educating their children. Get serious about improving public education - instead of removing and diverting funds from the equation, make an investment in the future of all students. The proposed substitute bill language presented in the House public education committee makes SB8 a much better piece of legislation, but the ESA component is still a terrible partisan idea that only benefits the wealthy and pseudo-wealthy by dangling the carrot of a private school education that will still only be obtainable by the 1% of Texans already in private school. All students deserve better!

Solange Hommel
self, retired
Killeen, TX

I oppose this new version of SB 8 because 1) it is still a bill siphoning public tax dollars into privately owned schools, 2) it doesn't address what happens when private schools decide to expel public school students after receiving those public tax dollars, and 3) it is a blatant attempt to bribe teachers into accepting vouchers in order to make necessary changes to assessment.

This is not compromise, it's manipulation.

In addition, it's clear that Gov. Abbott and the Senate Republicans aren't supportive of these "compromises" anyway, so if it passes the House, they will simply strip away what minimal positives you've managed to insert.

OPPOSED SB 8 and school vouchers in ALL their forms. FUND PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Mollie Howell, Superintendent
Follett ISD
Follett, TX

How many ways can you disguise removing public taxpayer dollars and putting them ultimately in the hands of big business?

Deborah Connor
Self
Brenham, TX

Please vote against this plan to reimburse parents for private school tuition. This will devastate the public school system and lead to raised property taxes to offset the transfer of funds which will have a devastating effect on seniors and future development.

Debra Leff, Mrs.
Self, retired teacher
Austin, TX

I worked as a teacher in Tx for 40 years, I understand that parents have rights over their own children. I understand that public schools have the integrity to choose their own teaching materials. However, I do NOT understand why we must provide families with a private school education when our public schools are not fully funded. I pay a huge tax on my property for Austin ISD to fund the schools because the state does NOT cover its fair share for our schools. With this bill, it will be an even more paltry amount that flows to our schools. As a child, I attended private school for a few years, and I know that my parents scrimped and saved to support me, but they never expected that the state would give them money to cover the expenses, they knew that in 4th grade I would return to Longfellow Elementary in Houston and they expected that school to be state supported. We have worked so hard in Texas to make this a great state that would be attractive to newcomers of all types (not just private schoolers), and our PUBLIC schools should be able to STAND PROUDLY as a testament to the integrity of our state. I urge you to defeat this bill.

Kathy Suchy
Self/ retired
Lubbock, TX

I am vehemently opposed to my tax dollars being diverted from public education to help fund private schools. Texas education is suffering already, and these types of policies only serve to undermine a decent education for the vast majority of the young population in this state.

Laurie Duke
Self, former educator and parent, organizer
FORT WORTH, TX

I am writing regarding SB 8. For well over a decade, educators have repeatedly voiced their concerns with excessive standardized testing. We have voiced for just as long, standardized testing being developmentally inappropriate. For students with learning disabilities, these standardized tests often only reinforce their learned helplessness. (which by far based on my experiences working w/children with LD is the largest obstacle to learning). I ask that you oppose SB 8 as it increases testing from 20 tests to 48 tests!

SB 8 is a waste and misuse of funds that should not pass in any way, shape or form. It removes federally protected disability rights of families/children. It places state money into hands with no accountability for its use. SB 8 is not worthy of the light of day and even Chairman Buckley knew it otherwise he would have not tried to rush it to a vote. It is a catastrophic misuse of funds & is indicative of the recurring theme by state leadership; placing the greatest investment in land grabs, corporations/vendors and ignores the will of the people.

Paul Collins
Saint Anthony Catholic School
Alleyton, TX

Parents need school choice in order to select the best education for their children. This bill would give parents that option. We are watching how you vote on this important bill.

Belia McDonald
self
Cibolo, TX

Please support parental school choice. It would be so important to me and my hard working family. Thank you!

Meghan Kelley
Self - Teacher
McAllen, TX

Trying to rush this bill through without allowing the public to speak on it first is a shady practice. Teachers, parents and the public have a right to have their voices heard. We do not agree with SB 8, this is something that is only benefiting the government and not the society in which it serves. You are creating a further teacher shortage by not supporting Texas teachers. I urge you to allow the public to speak on this bill before pushing it through.

Laurea Myers
Frisco Independent School District
Frisco, TX

Please respect public schools and educators across Texas by rejecting school vouchers. Public schools serve ALL learners without discretion.

Celina Vasquez
Self-Parent of High School Student
Bryan, TX

Good morning,
My name is Celina Vasquez, proud parent of a 15-year-old son (Diego) with special needs. He is a part of the pre-IB program that is the most academically challenging at his school. I am here to express the importance of public schools in rural communities like ours! My son has struggled due to the lack of funding for arts programs at Bryan High School in Bryan ISD, nevertheless has found his passion for playing alto sax in the Bryan Viking Band. Our familia opposes SB 8 because rural school districts like ours will lose the crucial funding needed to operate and there is no guarantee of transparency with vouchers. Also, schools like Bryan ISD proved thousands of jobs to working-class families that will be lost if our schools lose children and funding to private schools. I oppose SB 8 and urge y'all to reconsider for the future of our children.

Amy Case
Self/Foundation Coordinator for TPS
Austin, TX

I SUPPORT this bill! Thank you for considering it! My nephew, Callum has a severe case of dyslexia, one that his local, good public school was not equipped to help him with. I watched my brother and sister in law scrape by and send EVERY penny (and go a little in debt) to afford to send him to a private school for 3 years. That private school had a 5 -to-1 teacher-student ratio that was able to give him all of the tools that he needs to succeed with dyslexia. He's back in his public school now and thriving. I would have loved for his parent's tax money to follow Cal for his 3 years in a private school while he got the help he needed. I fully support the bill!

Stephanie McCugh
self
Bowie, TX

Public schools SHOULD NOT lose more money especially to fund private education aka school vouchers. For example, according to an edweek.org article from November 19, 2018 , "In all, Arizona parents fraudulently spent \$700,000 in fiscal 2018 on banned items and services." Texas cannot and should not have to police another program to ensure there isn't fraudulent spending or use.

Joshua Cowen, an education policy professor who spent nearly 2 decades studying school choice programs, has come to the conclusion that the 'evidence is too stark to justify the use of public money to fund private tuition.' He also states that 'There's also a moral case to be made against voucher programs. They promise low-income families solutions to academic inequality, but what they deliver is often little more than religious indoctrination to go alongside academic outcomes that are worse than before.' Considering how our national government on down to our state was founded with the separation of church and state, this is a veiled attempt to promote state funded religious schools.

If the idea behind this voucher program is that students deserve better education, why would taking money from public education make it better? Our state leaders want to figure out why teachers are leaving the profession and go as far to create a commission to research the whys and hows, yet these same state leaders want to PULL money from schools. **THIS IS PART OF THE REASON TEACHERS ARE LEAVING.** Teachers are hearing one thing and seeing another thing on the state level from our elected representatives.

VOTE NO on SB8

Barbara Moor
Self
San Marcos, TX

This bill takes money away from public schools. Public schools only can provide services to special needs children. Bill removes separation between church and state- please do not pass this bill. Thank you

Robert Koons, Dr.
North Texas Conservatives
Plano, TX

We Texans do not need to turn over any more power to the Federal Government. That have already shown they cannot be trusted with it! Witness our border security.

Rosemarie DeHoyos
Precinct Chair 2169
San Antonio, TX

Please oppose SB 8. Public education needs more money, not less. Vouchers, like the proposed educational savings accounts, divert money from public schools and do not provide a way out of poverty for students of lesser means. In states that have adopted vouchers, the overwhelming majority of parents using vouchers already have their children in private school.

The Texas Constitution requires the legislature to provide for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools. SB 8 would have a devastating impact on public schools in Texas. A thriving economy requires an educated workforce and public schools are the most efficient and accountable means of educating tomorrow's workforce.

I urge you to oppose SB 8.

Lisa Iorio
self
Roanoke, TX

School vouchers hurt Texas public schools because they direct funding away from an already critically underfunded system. Please do not let this bill pass for the sake of all Texas families.

Ruth Kravetz
self and Community Voices for Public Education
Houston, TX

I am a former teacher, a mother of public school graduates, and a Texan. I oppose the committee substitute for SB 8 for several reasons.

I oppose the committee substitute for SB 8. I urge you to vote against SB 8, the school vouchers bill. Privatizing public education is not what I want my tax dollars spent on. The private schools are not transparent or accountable to me as a taxpayer, yet I will be forced to fund them and provide profits for them.

While it reduces some high stakes, it expands the number of required standardized tests from 20 to 48 over the course of a child's school experience. That will narrow the curriculum even further.

School voucher proposals have come up many times in the legislature, and deservedly died when they are recognized by members of all parties as what they are -- attempts to privatize education and shift funds away from public education.

The latest iteration frames the issue as "parental choice," when in fact the real choice would lie with the private schools, which can accept or reject students at will based on which students are cheapest and easiest to educate. At-risk and Special Education students would be, as always, left to public schools with ever-tighter budgets.

Thank you.

Charlotte Smith
Self - Mom, Wife, Sales
LUCAS, TX

Please log my opposition to SB 8 - I am a mom with 3 children, 2 of which old enough to be a proud student in a Texas public school. I have become very disheartened to see politicians who are leading this great State of Texas to which I was born into try to undermine Texas students every chance they get.

My kids deserve to have the basic allotment increased to handle the actual costs of educating a child in our Texas schools. My child does not deserve to have dollars taken away from them in order to fund anything else except for education. Shame on you for taking precious earned tax payer dollars in the form of recapture and stick it in a rainy day fund and not use it for education.

As a body of legislators – I implore you to do the hard work to have a serious discussion about public education funding as a whole and stop messing around with these piecemeal bills. Significantly raise the allotment per child and base it on enrollment. Parent choice is all fine and good unless you are taking away equality from those who CHOOSE to stay where they are.

And finally - how many books did you actually check out and read from your high school library....I can't believe this topic continues to come up...

Andrew Christian
Self
Woodway, TX

See the reasons below that anyone supporting SB 8 should be voted out of office. We are either going to support public education or replace it. SB 8 makes clear the intent is to replace it. Please justify holding public schools to one standard and then giving the funding to private schools through vouchers and not upholding them to the same standards. This is a slap in the face to those educators who have committed their lives to serving students in the public sector.

CSSB 8 doesn't prioritize parental choice over the right of the private school to pick and choose their students.
CSSB 8 won't help with teacher retention, doesn't better fund our public schools, fails to address academic achievement gaps, and doesn't address the individual needs of students.
CSSB 8 doesn't abolish the STAAR, it just replaces it with STAAR 2.0 with even more Commissioner authority.
CSSB 8 does not provide state or federal protections or guarantee the same level of funding for students with special education needs.
CSSB 8 does not include a hold harmless for public schools that lose kids to a voucher.

stephanie moody, parent
parent of 2 special education students
temple, TX

Please vote NO. Vouchers are not right for Texas as they are currently being offered.

Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers; they are not required to report student achievement data to the state.
Private schools do not have to accept all students; they can (and will!) discriminate.
The superiority of private schools is a myth. Private schools are not required to hire certified teachers. No credible research exists to suggest vouchers improve academic performance.
Vouchers drain resources from public schools; other states have shown that voucher costs often grow well above projections.
Texas already ranks 40th in per-student spending and the rate of inflation since 2019 is 14.5%, per the Comptroller.
Choice already exists within the public school system: Districts have transfer policies, magnet schools, career/tech academies, etc.
Vouchers subsidize tuition for existing private school and homeschooled students, putting a huge new financial burden on the state.

Vivian Mijares, Mrs
SELF
Plano, TX

I truly do not understand the point of view of legislators. You bend over backwards for first responders and public service workers, but when it comes to the realm of education you insist on making things worse. You have underfunded us for DECADES. You have used recapture as a means of STEALING education money and boasting about a surplus. Now once again, another slap in the face by attempted to steal from public education by utilizing vouchers. Stay in your lane, protect our schools, and stop stealing from us. VOTE NO ON HB 8!

Elaine Hitch
self - teacher
Double Oak, TX

This bill is bad for Texas schools and Texas children. Taking money away from public education to fund private education? How is that a good idea? The legislature doesn't fund education adequately already and now you're going to strip some more? This is a way of killing public education to make sure that the masses stay ignorant - don't support it.

Wendy Glasscock
self
Cypress, TX

School vouchers will take away money from public schools which will increase class size and decrease the number of teachers. This bill will have a negative effect on public education.

Tracy Williams
Self - parent
Cypress, TX

I am thoroughly AGAINST the use of public funds to pay for private education. Public funds should only go to public schools that have accountability to the state. Give those funds to public schools to make them better. Don't put our state's money in the pockets of private schools.

Valerie Pettiss
Self - stay at home mom
Austin, TX

I am a parent who has had both my daughters in both public and private schools in their lifetime. Private schools do serve a purpose however for many special needs kids, kids with behavioral issues, kids with low parental support, etc., these will never be an option. That is why I am happy to pay taxes to support my local public schools. Education should be a right and we have a duty as a populace to fund public education in order to make sure all members of our society have access to a quality free education.

Kyle Gassett
self
San Angelo, TX

I do not support the creation of a voucher system, removing more money from TX Public Schools.

Kacey Thompson
Self, preschool teacher
Austin, TX

I oppose SB 8 and the creation of a voucher program as it will weaken our public school system, which badly needs more resources for teachers and student support. I am a preschool teacher and a mother of two public school students.

Felicia Jackson
na
Missouri City, Texas, TX

The state of Texas tried vouchers before which many parents did not find it financially feasible to use vouchers. This bill will not eliminate the financial strain for the state to provide high quality education for All children in the state of Texas it will lead to further educational constraints. The state has always had school choice (allowing parents to become involved in all aspects of their child's education) even before advent of charter schools. The financial education savings account will not enhance parental voice because parental voice is an individually determined. This bill will not ensure that the state will provide an equitable opportunity for all children to have high quality education. As a tax payer, I want my tax money to go fund schools which everyone can afford to attend, open admissions, and not financially strain households. I want my taxes to go to fund public schools - and those taxes used to ensure public schools have all the resources needed to adequately educate All Texas students.

Carolyn Boardman
Self
Cypress, TX

As a parent of 2 children that have attended public school, my youngest is now a senior, I oppose the use of public funds to go towards vouchers that can be used for private schools or homeschooling. As a parent who has volunteered my time through elementary, middle and high school the attacks on public schools need to end. My eldest child who has Type 1 Diabetes (autoimmune & life threatening) was afforded federal rights to keep him safe in school. That extended to qualify nursing care. The same cannot be said of private schools who do not have to follow that law. I know from a friend of a child who was in a private Christian school and she as a parent had to go to the school to do the job as public school nurse would do.

While my family are considered fairly privileged to be able to afford for me to stay home, I also know that not all families are as fortunate.

Public schools should be fully funded. If you can afford to fund private school vouchers to the tune of \$8000, then you should afford the same dollar amount per child in public education. Yet I believe that amount currently comes out at just over \$2000 per child.

Public schools provide so much more to families. Obviously there are services that most of us hope to not have to us, but they can be invaluable to others.

Parents have the right to choose where or how to teach their children. But public dollars should only go to public education. Just as some choose to go to a private gym and pay, others should not expect the community to pay for that while there is a neighborhood gym on offer.

Please do the right thing, and support all children and the education system. Stop making this political and forcing the will of a small minority when the majority do not believe vouchers should be paid to private education.

Thank you

John Shiver
Self and Education Practice Leader I Architect
Dallas, TX

I would like to voice my opposition to SB8 by Creighton. Public Education mandated by the Texas Constitution has been underfunded for decades in Texas. Education Savings Accounts and Vouchers take public tax dollars away from our public schools and transfers public tax dollars to charter schools and private organizations that are not held to the same standards as public schools, do not provide the same level of accountability as public schools and do not provide the same level of transparency as public schools.

This bill isn't about parent choice. Parents already have choice in public schools whether it be academies or open enrollment.

Education Savings Accounts or Vouchers are bad for students, bad for schools and bad for Texas.

John Shiver AIA NCARB

Kathleen Bowen
Self - retired
Waxahachie, TX

Taxpayer funds must not be used to benefit private/for profit organizations. Taxpayer funds must provide for the benefit of our PUBLIC schools.

Patricia Jang
self, writer
Austin, TX

I, as a Texas resident and a parent with two children in the Texas public schools, urge you to REJECT SB8. This bill takes money out of our already extremely underfunded public schools and subsidizes private school for parents, many of whom are wealthy. Texas already ranks a shameful 42nd in the US on spending per student. Stop the theft of the education of the students of Texas public schools!

Limary Michaelis
Self
Jarrell, TX

Vote no

Althea Roshelle,Dixon
Paris ISD
Paris, TX

Thank you for allowing us to comment. I am totally against any vouchers that take funds away from public schools.

Jennifer Espey
SBISD SCHOOL FINANCE ADVOCACY TEAM
Houston, TX

Vouchers defund public schools plain and simple. Texas ranks near rock bottom on per student funding as it is. School districts statewide have been advocating for a meaningful \$1000 bump to the bASIC allotment this session. Proposed legislation is nowhere near that. The Governor is actively defunding Texas public schools with his “school choice” voucher push. Voucher programs are notorious for ballooning in budget and, we know, that is all part of the plan to continue to take taxpayer dollars away from funding public schools and setting them up to fail. NO VOUCHER LEGISLATION! Stand it public schools and vote NO to SB 8

Susan Fletcher
Self
Lorena, TX

The use of public funds to support private and/or homeschool options for students may sound like a good alternative for students; however, the lack of accountability for private and homeschool settings is an issue. How can we hold public school districts who accept public funds to specific curriculum and testing standards but not expect the same from the private/homeschool sector if they accept public funds?

Public schools are still the best way to educate all students and diverting significant dollars from public schools for vouchers harms those students who have the fewest resources.

Thank you for taking the time to read my message.

Carol Dancey
Self retired
Austin, TX

Vote NO on SB8

Heather Foster
Self, parent
Sugar Land, TX

Vote NO on SB 8!!!

Jennifer White
Self
Leander, TX

I oppose this bill. Establishment of the education savings account will damage public schools and their ability to serve students.

Sandra Blankenship
Self
Killeen, TX

Vote No on the destruction of public schools

Luis Garza
Self
San Antonio, TX

Vouchers will allow charter schools to select only the good students and not accept the problem students. That will leave the public schools with mostly problem students. That makes it van unfair program

Amir Rana
AFT
Weslaco, TX

We have a great public school system of over 8,000 campuses. Many schools are great, and most are good, but we also have those that are failing our students because of the low pay and no respect. That is why we need school teachers to give more money for not leaving the teaching field who want to teach our kids in public schools which charter schools don't want and expel them to public schools other than we are failing our public school system badly.

CLAIRE WOOD
SELF RETIRED PC 1167 TARRANT
Fort Worth, TX

school vouchers are a direct blow at free public schools. Anyone who thinks the public schools will not suffer from the loss of funding. It is obvious that this is aimed at preventing a proper education for our already underserved children. The more money which moves to the charter school vouchers, the less money is available for the majority of our kids. Our kids deserve better.

Vouchers will not come even close to covering the balances due on tuition to private schools after they are applied. Families already struggling just to survive are not going to have that amount of money and no education savings account is going to help them make up that difference because they have no extra money to put in such an account.

I urge you to vote against this discriminatory bill.

Veronica Higareda
self
Houston, TX

This bill is concerning! As a parent, I oppose this bill! I am unsure why testing students more times per year! Students need more instruction not additional testing. Furthermore, the cost of this effort is over \$1 billion dollars. This would be better served increasing teacher pay and giving districts more money for resources they need. This bill essentially does more harm than good! It takes away money from public schools to fund private schools without any accountability to those attending private schools! Why are private schools receiving a hand out???

Beth Mohler
Self/Principal
Lago Vista, TX

I am very opposed to school vouchers. I think that school vouchers will pull much needed funding away from public schools. Sending public funds to a private school goes against everything I believe in as a Texan. Private schools select their students. Public schools take all students. Private schools select their curriculum, do not have to have public accountability standards, and don't even have to meet teacher certification standards. Further, I am deeply concerned that this attempt to send public money to private institutions will cause some companies to open schools because they think they can make a profit off of our children. There is not enough money in public education any way. Privatizing our prison system has not worked out well. Moving toward privatizing our education system is not going to work out well either. Let's fully fund public schools.

Sylvia Wood
Self
Houston, TX

Please oppose the establishment of any programs that create education savings accounts or vouchers. Using public tax dollars to subsidize private schools is wrong, especially when those private schools are not subject to any of the mandates, accountability or other requirements followed by private schools. Parents in Texas already have the choice to send their children to private schools if they wish. But my tax dollars should not support this choice since there is absolutely no transparency on how this money will be spent. In addition, a voucher program will create a huge government bureaucracy requiring taxpayer support. This money would be better spent strengthening our public schools, not creating an education savings account program that will fail both parents and students. Say no to education savings accounts. Period.

allen wells
self
Splendora, TX

I write to express my strong opposition to vouchers and education savings accounts as the President of the Splendora Independent School District (ISD) Board of Trustees. These measures pose significant challenges to our public education system, including Splendora ISD, and hinder our ability to provide high-quality education to all students.

Vouchers divert taxpayer funds from public schools, undermining equal opportunity and exacerbating funding disparities. Public education is vital for our society, and we must invest in and support it adequately. By redirecting funds through vouchers and education savings accounts, we disadvantage underprivileged students and communities, contradicting the principle of equitable education.

Furthermore, vouchers lack proper accountability mechanisms, unlike public schools. Private schools receiving voucher funds may not adhere to the same standards, raising concerns about education quality, student rights, and financial management. The lack of accountability compromises the integrity of the education system.

Vouchers and education savings accounts also worsen existing inequalities. Public schools must serve all students, regardless of background or needs, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities. Private schools, however, often have the freedom to select students based on criteria such as academic performance or religious affiliation, leading to segregation and exclusion.

As a representative of the Splendora ISD Board of Trustees, I strongly urge you to reconsider support for vouchers and education savings accounts. Instead, let us work together to strengthen our public education system, provide adequate resources to all schools, and ensure equal access to high-quality education for every student.

Thank you for your consideration. I remain dedicated to advancing public education and the well-being of our students.

Sincerely,

Allen Wells
Splendora ISD Board of Trustees
President

Jasmine Cluck
self
Keller, TX

I urge you to oppose the creation of any private school voucher program, including education savings accounts, in Texas. The legislature has a Constitutional responsibility to 'make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools'--not divert public tax dollars to private institutions with no transparency and no accountability. Our public schools are the foundation of our communities and are tasked with meeting the needs of all students regardless of race, income, or ability. With SB8, over 70% of public school students would be eligible for a voucher. Voucher programs drain money from our already defunded public schools at a time when the Legislature has been unwilling to fund schools to reflect the impact of inflation. This session, please focus your efforts on investing in the children, families, educators, and staff who are building the future of Texas in our public schools. Increase the basic allotment for students and and fully fund our public schools!

Jodi Duron, Dr.

Texas Association of Midsize Schools (TAMS)

Elgin, TX

On behalf of the Texas Association of Midsize Schools, we respectfully oppose SB 8 for the following reasons:

1. Vouchers divert public tax dollars that would otherwise fund our public schools. The impact of the loss of state revenue would disproportionately affect our small, rural, and midsize schools due to the diseconomies of scale and the fact that schools are forced to spread the same costs for facilities, transportation, personnel, and instruction over a smaller revenue stream. For most rural communities, the school is the center of the community. Any diversion of funding can have catastrophic consequences for the whole community, not just the school and its children.
2. This bill attempts to reform the STAAR test in exchange for a voucher program. While we appreciate the bill's intent to address the well-known deficiencies of the STAAR test, we do not believe it should be part of a voucher negotiation. The STAAR test deserves and requires reform without any need to also pass a voucher bill. We stand ready to work with this Legislative body to discuss meaningful reform to our state's assessment and accountability systems.
3. This bill favors unregulation of private schools, allowing private schools to accept taxpayer-funded vouchers without the same transparency or accountability that public schools must comply with. This is a double standard that is reckless and ultimately reduces funding to an already underfunded system.
4. This bill limits access to all families by funding a system that empowers private schools the choice to choose their students with no accountability. It does not guarantee families that the private school **THEY** choose for their children will **CHOOSE THEM**. Furthermore, access to private schools is generally, limited in rural areas, which forces our families to fund a program they cannot access.

While we oppose this bill, we fully support the rights of parents, which are clearly defined in Chapter 26 of the Texas Education Code. Under current law, parents are empowered to make decisions about their child's academic program. They have full access to instructional materials, assessments, information and records regarding their child, and more. Also, under the PEG criteria, parents have the choice to transfer their child to another public school or school district if their child's campus receives an "F" rating from the state.

Finally, it would be a travesty if the Legislature forgoes the billions of dollars available to Texas and this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to invest in our public school children at the expense of a voucher program steeped in politics. Therefore, we implore this Legislative body to oppose SB 8 and make public education and the 5.5 million Texas public school children we serve your priority this legislative session.

Thank you for your service and consideration of our position.

James Matlock, Mr
Self
Hutto, TX

I strongly oppose the implementation of vouchers for several reasons.

Firstly, vouchers would divert public funds away from public schools, which serve the vast majority of students in our community. This would have a detrimental impact on not only the quality of education that we can provide to our students, but the opportunities our students have to succeed. It would also undermine our ability provide a nurturing learning environment for our students. Moreover, the safety of our students is every districts priority, this would hinder districts ability to maintain and improve our school infrastructure.

Secondly, vouchers/ESA's would undermine the principle of equal opportunity in education. Public schools are obligated to serve all students, regardless of their background, religion or ability to pay. Vouchers, on the other hand, would give some families the ability to choose better schools, while leaving others behind. Additionally many students in the state don't have physical access to a near by private school. This would create a two-tiered education system, where only the wealthiest families would have access to the schools. Rather than to segregate and create this two tiered system, I'm asking fully funding all districts in the state allows every student access to great educational outcomes.

In Hutto ISD the average First year teachers salary is \$51,000, well above the first year minimum of \$33,660 that was set by TEA. The cost deferred for just 5 students could be the difference of a new kindergarten teacher or a new CTE teacher in a time where teacher vacancies are at an all time high.

Our children, our parents, and communities deserve better, they deserve more and not less.

To conclude, vouchers would have a detrimental impact on public education in our community. They would divert public funds away from public schools and undermine the principle of equal opportunity. As a school board trustee, I believe that we must focus on improving our public schools and ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education, rather than creating a two-tiered education system that benefits only a few.

Nancy Hinojosa
Self- Buyer
Richardson, TX

I do not want vouchers. You need to fully fund public schools. Putting taxpayer's money into vouchers is taxation without representation and will do irreparable harm.

Antonio Arriaga
TSTA Memeber
Laredo, TX

I would like to express my opposition to SB 8.

It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools

It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws

It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve

It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system

It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority

Nikki Reed
self - teacher
Amarillo, TX

I am very opposed to this bill. Here are my main concerns:

1. The education savings accounts will not have any accountability to the State of Texas in funding it like public schools do.
2. This would divert public dollars that could be used to increase teacher salaries and properly fund schools with the surplus of money that is currently available.
3. The bill attempts to divert lawmakers from seeing this diversion of public money as the bill would also abolish STAAR testing. It also leads to the commissioner of education getting more authority.

For these reasons I urge you to vote against this bill

Traci Dennis-Witter
SELF
Temple, TX

I DO NOT support vouchers. TEA governs the curriculum-we and CANNOT include and exclude curriculum based on specific beliefs that diverse and distinct religious and/or ethnic backgrounds may want to contain or exclude.

Christopher Barton
Self
Carrollton, TX

Strongly opposed to this. Please vote against

Christopher Barton
Self
Carrollton, TX

I strongly oppose this bill. Please vote against it.

Ana Hernandez
teacher
San Antonio, TX

I am a product of Catholic Education. My mother was a single parent who had to work 7 days a week at 3 different jobs just to pay the tuition to send me to Catholic School. She believed in the Catholic school system and felt that I would be shaped under the faith that she so loved. I graduated and became an educator. I believe if this Bill had been in place back then it would have helped my mother so much and not have to kill herself to pay tuition.

I ask that you help future parents in giving them a choice on how to raise their children. Help give those families a choice! Maybe, just maybe this will be the change we need in the world. DO NOT PUNISH THE LESS FORTUNATE!

I thank you in advance and hope that your heart is moved to make the right choice. May God bless and guide you in your work.

Marc Smith, Dr.
Duncanville ISD - Duncanville, TX
Duncanville, TX

As Superintendent of Duncanville ISD, I am submitting written testimony on SB 8 which the House Public Education Committee is scheduled to hear. One of our School Board's legislative priorities is to ask legislators to oppose any state plan diverting public tax dollars to private entities or homeschools through vouchers or tax credits. It appears that the intent of SB 8 is to sneak through voucher legislation by hiding it in a lengthy bill focused on state testing & accountability. I am confident that the legislators that represent our community are not fooled by this attempt & will continue to be advocates for public education. However, I do not feel as confident in your support which is why I am writing to ask you directly to oppose SB 8.

Vouchers or education savings accounts are simply not good for public education. They will negatively impact public school funding, which is already inadequate, & unfairly harms high-poverty school districts like Duncanville ISD. Our students already have a choice within our district to request a transfer to another campus. We are also an open-enrollment district & welcome students from outside Duncanville ISD that choose to attend our schools. Our practices are common throughout the state, therefore, the argument to increase parental choice is unnecessary since parents already have school choice.

In addition to opposing vouchers, our Board's legislative priorities also seek a reduction in high-stakes testing. SB 8 increases the number of high-stakes tests, raises the stakes of accountability, limits retest opportunities, & removes the State Board of Education as a system of checks & balances in the state assessment program. Although on an initial read, it looks as though it resolves concerns with state accountability, in reality, it falls short in numerous ways. More specifically, the bill language we support & oppose is as follows:

We are in favor of:

- Eliminating the requirement for students to pass an assessment in order to graduate high school.
- Repealing individual graduation committees.
- Eliminating non-federally required assessments. (social studies)
- Allowing the use of TSIA as an alternative to STAAR
- Implementing through-year assessments that measure students based on growth instead of a passing standard.

We oppose:

- Adding educational savings accounts & the noted allowances of this program.
- Removal of the SBOE's authority & engagement in the state accountability system.
- Removal of THECB as the decision-making body on the developmental education standards for college entrance & TSIA.
- Increasing the number of state tests required at the high school level.
- Moving retake opportunities to post-graduation which hinders college entrance.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our priorities & recommended changes. I hope you will thoroughly consider the perspectives of public school educators & do your due diligence in understanding the negative repercussions of SB 8.

Traci Dennis-Witter
SELF public Educator Administrator
Temple, TX

I Absolute DO NOT support parental rights to influence Instructional Materials and Savings accounts. This will increase inequity based on personal family resources that can and would exclude impoverished students and their families. This would also drastically change rural schools and affluent students could travel to more urban options with parents that travel into urban areas for work.

Peter Isburgh
Self, Big Tech
Cedar Park, TX

Fully support ESA's for all, no strings. Public schools need competition to discover the best in themselves.

Byron Bryant
self - CFO for Royse City ISD
Rockwall, TX

I oppose SB 8 for the following reasons:

- Any private school that accepts public money needs to accept ALL applicants and should not be able to pick and choose who they accept.
 - Any private school that accepts public money should be required to meet all accountability standards that public schools meet academically and financially including full transparency of all that information
 - Public schools are already funded near the bottom of the United States on a per student basis. We must fund our public schools adequately before we throw more kids into the mix.
-

Eddie Earwood, Mr.
self
Brackettville, TX

Vote no on SB 8

Bryan Allen
Self (School Superintendent)
Breckenridge, TX

Good morning. My name is Bryan Allen, and I am the Superintendent of Breckenridge ISD. I stand in respectful opposition to the Committee Substitute for SB 8, based on the provision for a voucher/education savings account program.

Kelsey Kling
independent
Dripping Springs, TX

It is insulting and disingenuous to couple massive changes in the assessment program with an ESA. Advocates have been clamoring for changes for years to reduce assessments and remove graduation requirements. While the changes called for in the latest substitute bill are not unwelcome and could actually be beneficial for students, the changes have not been properly discussed and vetted in a public setting. We need to have a deeper, broader and more deliberate conversation about our assessment system in the interim, not two weeks before session is over.

Vouchers are bad for public education. Full stop. Even if voucher recipients are required to test, there are many other accountability touch points that private school do not have to abide by in the same way as Texas public schools. Either ALL of the education code applies for vouchers or there should be no voucher at all.

Sara Kitchen, Cpt.
Self. Outreach Education Specialist in Visual Impairment
Austin, TX

Please do not take my tax dollars to support private schools. This will take the dollars needed to support and improve public schools, which are much more worthy of resources (in my experience as an outreach specialist-I visit many many schools across the state) and much more in need of support. Please represent my position.

Lynn Hughes
Teachers
Jewett, TX

Reduction of funding for public schools will leave under funded schools with fewer resources.
Private schools can choose their students. Public schools cannot. State and Federal protection for students with disabilities optional for private schools will lead to discrimination for students with disabilities. This program will cost taxpayers \$800 million!
I ask you to support public schools and students

Lindsay Clavere, Dr.
self; parent engagement specialist
San Antonio, TX

I raise my voice in support of parental choice in education and for the families who have the least access, the poor and vulnerable, to be first in line. Please vote in favor of parents, who, as the first educators of their children, should have the right to designate where there education tax dollars go. Please consider this, NOT as an elitist cry from a privileged position, but, rather, a fair and reasonable request for we, as citizens and accountable caretakers of our children and their educational formation, to choose where our tax dollars go.

RAY JOHNSTON
Ray Johnston Counseling Services
NACOGDOCHES, TX

SB 8 is a terrible idea. I am a "recovering" Kindergarten teacher. I have seen first hand the damage that has been done and continues to be done by underfunding. You have heard it said - but i don't think most of us REALLY buy into the idea - that education is the most important thing we do. Those 5,6,7 year olds will be making the decisions for all of us in a very short time. Vote NO on SB 8. Private schools are great and I wish them all the success in the world, but they need to operate as PRIVATE, not subsidized by the public.

Frank Netscher
Self - state worker
Austin, TX

Trying to privatize our public schools away from the public is deceitful. Public schools should be that — controlled by the public. This attempt to give our tax dollars to boost the profits of private education systems should be rejected outright.

Mark Pantle, Dr.
self - psychologist
Woodway, TX

Having worked as a school psychologist in the Texas public schools for over 25 years, I strongly urge the House to reject SB 8. Public schools in Texas are already underfunded, and taking money from them to subsidize private schools will have deleterious long-term effects, especially for small and rural districts. Especially in the small and rural districts, the public school is a vital part of the community - don't dim the Friday Night Lights.

Sergio Plaza
Self/Planner
Austin, TX

As a former educator, I can say that the issue with our public schools is that they are not funded adequately by the Texas Legislature. The per child number isn't even based on any credible source, it's plucked out of thin air by our legislators.

I worked with low income students and am committed to them getting the best absolute education. To do so would be to take seriously issues of housing, wages, and mental health, not to mention anything opposite of what the Legislature has done for public schools in the last two sessions.

Allowing any kind of funding, even with this House substitute, to be diverted to private schools, will make any issues with our public schools worse. I oppose this legislation for this reason and for the fact that the bill violates Section 1 of Article 7 of the Texas Constitution to "establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools."

Stephen Kendrick
self - Assistant Director, Facilities & Construction
Pearland, TX

As a registered Republican voter, I am not in favor of the ESA/voucher program. This will take money away from public schools, which are already struggling. This bill will help the rich get richer at the expense of the middle class. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private, for profit and not for profit organizations where they are not subject to all the same laws, regulations and requirements that public schools are subject to. We should be investing in failing schools rather than taking money and resources away from them. That is literally setting them up for failure.

Susan Schorn
Parent of public school attendees
Austin, TX

This bill would gut special education programs at schools across Texas. It would make rural schools have to fire teachers and disband their football teams. If you don't care about the ways it would also violate students' and teachers' First Amendment rights, at least pay attention to the destruction it would cause in rural Texans' school districts.

Coretta Mallet-Fontenot, Mrs.
Self- Teacher
Houston, TX

I and everyone I know have benefitted from a neighborhood school. I ask that you vote no on SB 8. Our students need more resources, not less. Please vote to support neighborhood schools by voting no on SB 8.

Kathryn Bandas, Ms.
Self/teacher
Corpus Christi, TX

I'm writing to express my opposition to SB 8 and private school vouchers. This is a bad idea and will harm our public schools further by draining needed public funds. The majority of Texans oppose school voucher programs. Stop trying to force this issue! Instead, fully fund our schools and show our teachers and schoolchildren you care about them and the future of Texas.

Melinda Marder
Self/retired teacher
Mabank, TX

This bill is not in the best interest of public education teachers or students. The reason we are ranked so low nationally is that state government has not been supportive either financially or otherwise. Kindhearted teachers are being taken advantage of, as has been the case for a very long time. They just keep stepping up to do whatever is asked no matter how difficult. No wonder so many are leaving the profession!
It saddens me as a retired teacher to see the struggles that current teachers face every day, without your support. And now that I'm part of the retirement system, it's heartbreaking that there hasn't been a COLA in years!
Do you understand how quality education affects the future? MONEY TALKS!

Deacon Marc Mata
Self and Family
San Angelo, TX

Parental choice has been attacked from various "experts". The family is the cornerstone of society. Parents are the true judge of what is best for their children. This includes the parent's right to choose where to best educate their children. If a school is considered "sub-par" by the families, they have the need to change and improve, parents and students should not be required to suffer through inferior education for the sake of the sub-par school. My family and I, and many, many other families support parental rights and SB 8.

Joy Brandon
Myself
Bedford, TX

Parents can opt out of materials for their own children but should not be allowed to opt out for others' children. This is about THE MOST local control!!!!

Cameron Yarborough
self
San Antonio, TX

While I believe this version of the bill is better than anything that came from the Senate or, especially, the Governor or Lt. Governor's office, believing that school voucher's will aid the underprivileged is a false belief. You know as well as I that what you can allocate to individuals will do nothing to improve their position with the cost of private schools. The entire voucher program is simply an attempt to subsidize wealthy and upper middle class families, who will still remain the only families capable of affording private schools. Instead, let's focus our attention on fully funding public schools, which remain the best option to educate our expanding population. The arguments concerning "indoctrination" are completely unfounded and a scare tactic that the Governor and other lawmakers are using to bolster support among less reasoned people. In addition, the argument that school vouchers will also deter segregation in schools is also false. If my understanding and memory serves, vouchers were once used, or argued, as a way to fight integration. The voucher system will simply create a less socio-economic diverse society within our public schools. The decrease in funding to public schools will leave schools wanting in the resources needed to educate a population that is in desperate need of the opportunities to affect their lives and liberate themselves from the shackles of an economic system that leaves them with few opportunities, especially without a well-funded school to provide them with those opportunities. I feel that you know this already and because of that I feel that you are intentionally attempting to support a system that will leave our population in Texas in dire circumstances, except for the sons and daughters of those who already have the means and the opportunities. I grew up a working class kid whose parents had very little except a belief that education was the pathway for me to have a better life. Even with 8000 dollars a year in their pocket, it would not have been enough for me nor my brothers to attend a private school. We relied on public schools that were funded, but not well which has been the case in this state for a long time--you could be focused on fixing that instead of what you have been focusing on. Watching this session and now looking back at what you have accomplished should not fill you with any measure of pride. As a body of lawmakers, both in the house and the senate, you have truly wasted an opportunity focusing on the bills you focused on instead of investing in our greatest gift--education. As a body, you are supposed to serve the common people. Ask yourself if you are doing this and living up to our expectations. I'm not a Democrat nor a Republican. I believe in the welfare of all and believe that government can ensure that. You have not lived up to that. Please, take the time you have left, leave these distractions behind and fund schools.

Sara Kitchen, Cpt,
Self: Outreach Vision Impairment Education Specialist
Austin, TX

Please do not use my tax dollars to support private schools. This will take the dollars needed to support and improve public schools, which are much more worthy and needy of support. I visit many many schools across the state as part of my profession. Public schools do a much better job of providing an educational experience, especially when they resources and funding, even with the neglect of our state government to pay them a living wage. Public schools do better than private schools at educating all children. Please represent me and support public, not private schools.

Laurence Toenjes, PhD
Ret.
CLEAR LAKE SHORES, TX

Members of the House Education Committee:

I believe I just heard one member refer to a report from the Texas Conservative Coalition Research Institute that mentioned that something like half of Texas public school graduates are not qualified for college or even the military. I apologize if I misunderstood this (my hearing is not the best). If I heard correctly, I would suggest that those results are related to the fact that approximately 60 percent of Texas students come from families whose income levels qualify them for the free or reduced-price (FRPL) program. If you look at STAAR passing rates, especially those that use the "meeting grade level" criteria, you will see a pronounced, inverse, negative relationship between the percentages of students meeting those criteria and the percentages of students in each school who are eligible for the FRPL program. In my opinion, most of the discussion I have heard ignores the fact that more resources are needed to get economically disadvantaged students up to speed. All the proposals and talk about new assessments is merely a continuation of the discussion that began with the No Child Left Behind program. That, and subsequent iterations of accountability, have presumed that merely making public the names of "failing schools" would shame them into drastically improving their students' performance. My criterion for the amounts of resources that schools with very large proportions of disadvantaged students need is the same level of resources applied to students from affluent families who attend the most expensive private schools in Texas. If students who come from the best possible circumstances receive so much, why shouldn't students from the most challenging circumstances benefit from similar levels of resources?

I was amazed to hear that one of the goals of these changes is to get Texas into the top five tier of states in getting graduates college-ready, but the TEA spokesperson did not know where Texas ranks now. Maybe Texas is already in the top five?

Korinna Kirchhoff
self - communications
FRISCO, TX

Private schools are not required to take children with disabilities and can dismiss students of their choice at any point during the school year. If a child is asked to leave a private school and the child enrolls with a public school within the same year, what happens with the money? Of note, children with disabilities require more attention and services, this means they require a great deal more money to travel with, if they are accepted at all. Of note, I'm also confused about how private schools will be held accountable for their students. Without standardized testing like in public schools, how can we be sure they are meeting the needs of students with that money? How can we hold private schools more accountable? If it's not within our purview to hold private schools accountable, why are we giving them money without a checks and balances?

Patricia Muñoz
self unemployed
Flower Mound, TX

Please vote against SB 8.

Johnetta Byam
self
San Antonio, TX

I stand with public education and want my tax payer dollars to continue to fund public education.

Leslie Berry, Superintendent
Kelton ISD, Superintendent
Wheeler, TX

Please keep public dollars in public schools.

Sheryl Moore
self
Pattison, TX

I am AGAINST this bill. TEA and SBOE have spent decades crafting a mountain of requirements for public education. Public money should not flow to entities that are not constrained by the same rules. Either allow all to set their own course, which would invite competition among public schools, or hold any entity to whom public money flows to the same standard. You are DEFUNDING education.

Richard Maddern, Mr.
self. retired
Kingsland, TX

I am chair of precinct 308 in Llano County and we oppose SB 8 in any form. It is clearly just a Jim Crow policy that shouldn't see the light of day.

Cynthia Sharp
self
Irving, TX

I urge you to oppose the creation of any private school voucher program, including education savings accounts, in Texas.

Texas legislature has a Constitutional responsibility to 'make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools'--not divert public tax dollars to private institutions with no transparency and no accountability to the taxpayers and parents.

Our public schools are the foundation of our communities and are tasked with meeting the needs of all students regardless of race, income, or ability. Public schools provide a standard level of knowledge and skills to our citizens.

This session, please focus your efforts on investing in the children, families, educators, and staff who are building the future of Texas in our public schools.

Jan Olavarri
self
Dallas, TX

Please stop playing games with education and fund all schools and students equally - or better yet fund poorer performing schools with additional funds so that those children in poor neighborhoods get more help so that they do not stay in the cycle of poverty, crime and drugs

Tonya Tipton
Self - Higher Ed
Houston, TX

I grew up in the Texas Public School System and I am proud of that fact. Fix the system, do not abandon it. Respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Ioraine whitley, Dr.
Self-Public Educator
Mansfield, TX

As an educator in the public school system for 31 years, I SUPPORT the parents right to choose the best educational avenue for their children. We have always touted that competition is good for the system as it creates the challenge to be better than our competitors. If the local public system is failing to support an adequate education for the students it serves, the parents should have the right and ability to choose another avenue for educating their children. The system needs to support what is in the best educational interests of the students it serves.

Angie Ware
Kelton ISD
Wheeler, TX

NO VOUCHERS!!!!!! Leave tax money where it belongs - in public schools!!!!

RAYMUNDO GARCIA
TSTA/NEA
HOUSTON, TX

I am not for taking away from the public schools. And adding to private schools. You are already cutting from public schools. You will end up cutting Teachers, aids, custodial, and Maintenance work force. Then come school closing. This is not good for the future of our kids. Private schools is not the answer. Instead change the curriculum. So we can surpass the rest of the world in our children's education. Just to let you know we are behind the rest of the world at this very moment. I remember when Texas used to be the best schools a child could go to . If you moved in from other states to Texas . The child would have to be held back just because the other states did not hold up to our Texas curriculum standards. This is no longer the case anymore . We are not even turning out good mathematicians like we did in the years past . 61% for enrollment of students for collage in Texas . We are behind California at 63% . Kids don't even know how sign their name in cursive anymore . We are putting out kids that only know what the computer tells them. That would be teaching for the Star Test , Bench mark . This is the bare minimum . Fix that instead of taking away funding .

Breanna Martin
Self- Home Health Attendant
Odem, TX

This push for school vouchers to fund the vultures salivating over our public school money is a JOKE. There is NO positive to moving funding from public education to private institutions that have no accountability. They don't have to accept disabled students and even if they choose to, the students don't have the guarantees that IDEA provides them in public school. Public money should not go to institutions that pick and choose their students, that's public funded discrimination as these private or religious schools could choose to only enroll students of a certain race, social class, sex, religion and completely exclude children with disabilities and it's written right in the bill that they will not be held accountable for any of these transgressions. Has our great state of Texas slid so far down into the gutter that we'd sacrifice the well-being of our children to grifters? The solution we need is properly funded public school. Quality public education is a cornerstone of our great state, please do not let the money you're surely being offered by these charlatans influence you to peddle their lies to steal from our children. Do not let your soul, mind, and vote be bought. Do what is right and stand for public education.

Shivon Loya, Dr.
Quinlan Independent School District
Rockwall, TX

I have read the pages of SB 8. There is so much in this bill that would not be in the best interest of ALL students in the state of Texas. Broken up and presented separately, some of this might be good for kids. As it is written, it is not good for kids. I have served as an educator for 31 years, I am still young and have an open mind about how to best serve students. This is not it. This is a few individuals wanting something for all students in the state of Texas simply because they want it for their own children or grand children. Walk with us for one week, in our schools, you will see that law makers have no business making decisions for students when you have no idea what happens in schools. We love students, we love to serve, we NEVER give up! We want to serve ALL students. Please, please do not pass this bill.

Barel Alcantara Marte, Mr.
Self
Round Rock, TX

Senators,

My name is Barel Alcantara. I've been a resident of Round Rock, TX since 2014. I have two children that attend Round Rock ISD schools and are in the Talented and Gifted program.

It has come to my attention that the state legislature is considering another bill that would divert public education funds, allowing parents to take these funds and gift them to private institutions.

Respectfully, I believe this is a big mistake.

Public education in Texas is underfunded already as it is. School administrators and teachers are working miracles with the funds they have. Parents in districts like RRISD are often having to fund PTA organizations to help schools purchase materials and fix school infrastructure. Parents are often having to help teachers by gifting materials throughout the year. On top of this, districts like RRISD are having to part ways with funds due to re-capture. Even with all these challenges, our schools make the best of it and as parents we feel our kids are served with quality education. The great majority of parents have their kids in public schools and would never consider private institutions that could easily turn away kids they may not want to serve. Private schools are also very expensive and would still require lots of out of pocket expenses on parents that decide to put their child in those schools, so vouchers would just scratch the surface of a big ticket cost for education that is no better than what we get in our district schools. This would be weakening our public education system.

Instead, please consider funding our education system adequately, and let's pay teachers a decent living wage. While you're at it, let's also end the re-capture program.

Thank you
- Barel

Joyce L. Beck
Self, Teacher
Fort Worth, TX

I am adamantly opposed to Texas Senate Bill 8 because it would create costly voucher programs which take funding away from public schools. This bill would give up to \$10,500 in state tax money to subsidize private school tuition for some students, would replace STAAR with a different exam while still requiring more state tests, and would give the TEA Commissioner too much authority. It would also harm public schools by providing taxpayer support for religious schools. I do not believe in taxpayer funding of religion, which Texans cannot afford, or in shady backroom deals which are bad for Texas students, parents, and educators.

Kamala Platt, Dr.
self educator
San Antonio, TX

Please oppose SB 8. Vouchers and educational savings accounts, divert money from public schools. They do not provide a way out of poverty for students with families of lesser means.

The Texas Constitution requires the legislature to provide for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools. SB 8 would have a devastating impact on public schools in Texas. Thriving civic communities require educated residents, and public schools are the most effective and accountable means of educating tomorrow's workforce.

Hugh Burke
Temple ISD
Temple, TX

As a fifteen year public school educator and a fourth generation Texas public school educator - I oppose SB 8. Public schools are the backbone of our communities. They provide the educational and social foundation for children and families, while bonding us together through generations as Hornets, Rangers, Wildcats, Bulldogs, etc. - ultimately as Texans. Our public schools deserve the utmost in fiscal support and responsibility, encouragement and faith. Restructuring budgets in any way as to weaken the financial foundation for public schools is a mistake - one which will have immediate consequences for the schools and districts working within and alongside Texas communities. Private entities operate outside the scope of elected Boards of Trustees or state laws. They are unregulated, selective, and therefore ineligible for state fiscal support that is otherwise devoted to public education. I am a product of Texas public schools, and I am proud to carry a legacy of Texas public school educators that goes back four generations, more than a hundred years. As someone indebted to the institution of public education and inspired to serve within it each day - I urge you to oppose all bills and topics that would directly or indirectly undermine the fiscal stability of public schools in our state. I am both a beneficiary of and a witness to the fabric of community, connection, and the shared celebration of our students' accomplishments sustained by our public school districts year in and year out. Budgetary actions like those outlined in SB 8 would not only weaken our schools and districts, but also the very fabric of community they facilitate and that we all share.

Randall Placek
TPERN
Austin, TX

This bill addressing the unrelated topics of wholesale change to the state assessment system and vouchers should be tabled and the topics separated. My comments related to the assessment provisions alone. The revision of the state assessment system merits a stand alone bill with public testimony, not limited comments from hand selected witnesses. CSSB 8 has one positive on assessment: it ends the exit level requirements for high school diplomas, aligning Texas with the overwhelming majority of states. But everything else about this bill on assessment is bad. It triples assessment in Grades 3-8. It adds assessment in high school. And if all parts of "through year" assessment count toward accountability, despite your intentions, all you will do is have year round test prep and the same STAAR madness we see in the spring dropped over the rest of the year. The bill contains few concrete limits to address parental concerns and drops the entirety of the outline into the hands of the Commissioner, which is a shirking of your duties. Texas parents will not be fooled by this. This is not replacing STAAR with a less burdensome, less test-centric approach. This is tripling down and inviting insanity to reign through the entire year. You NEED to hear from actual parents about how the schools are implement the STAAR and know that will happen three times a year because it is the only way they know to do high stakes. **TABLE AND SPLIT THIS BILL OR VOTE NO!**

Sylvie Elmer
Myself
Richmond, TX

I am very disappointed in you. VOTE NO. You have no concern for the special education students due to private and charter schools do no have to accept them. Funding vouchers at a higher rate than the per student \$\$ for public schools.

Charter/private schools can "kick out" any student that does not meet their expectations.

Robbin Green, Mr.
"Self". Teacher
Katy, TX

Vouchers will be funded by an increase in very high property taxes. Republicans will fund this with your tax money , Texans. Small districts will not get the proper funding which will cause the ending of football, volleyball, Special Education services, and teachers. Republican Law Makers will be voted out of office in large numbers just to make Governor Abbott happy and wealthy. Think and vote against this unconstitutional bill.

Lauren Cook
Self
Austin, TX

Our public schools must do better to serve all students, especially those with learning differences. We must do better to meet each child's needs when they struggle, and also meet children's needs who excel, which is the case of my children. Public schools must serve all students, which is their greatest asset and their greatest challenge. But Texas is up for this challenge. Our state is all about taking on big challenges, taking care of our neighbors, and doing innovative and cutting-edge things.

Ninety percent (90%) of Texas children attend public schools. That is too many families to leave behind if the state tries to break up and eventually break down the system. Even if it happens gradually, many families will be left behind with no safety net for educating their children. Instead of adopting vouchers, I respectfully ask the committee to use your efforts, time, and resources on improving public schools for all Texas kids.

Stephanie Talbott
self - teacher
Graham, TX

I don't know why I am completely dumbfounded by the bills being discussed that actually take money away from public education, but I am. Unfortunately, as I teacher, I've come to expect one blow after another to belittle and degrade my life's work. You should be discussing how to and taking action to make public education better. You should be discussing raising the money our state spends per student. You should be discussing teacher salaries. You should be extremely concerned that a state who claims that everything is bigger and better is less than when it comes to education. We are not a less-than state...except when it comes to ensuring our future. What could possibly be a more important item to spend money on? I've heard the saying, "Teachers don't go into education for money," and it infuriates me. You shame us for needing to be paid competitively with others who have college educations. You shame us for wanting to be paid a more comfortable salary. You KNOW teachers who care will stay and sacrifice for the children in our classrooms and that should NOT be a punishment. You have a teacher shortage because seasoned teachers who LOVE teaching are discouraging young people from going into the field and because we are so tired of getting the short end of the stick, many are sacrificing the banked years they have in TRS to leave. It's like a marriage that you've invested in and feel so depleted about that you just can't do it anymore. I really can't explain how unappreciated you, my legislators, make me feel. That should sadden you.

You are misleading constituents in your state. Private education in small towns is not taught by certified teachers and does not prepare students for the rigorous, competitive atmosphere in major universities. Most private schools are not able to offer advanced classes or the service activities public schools offer. Stop treating gashes with bandaids. INVEST in public education and public educators.

Debbie Rash
Texas teachers
Fairfield, TX

This bill is detrimental to all involved - students, teachers, parents! It only supports the parental rights of a chosen few as opposed to those who truly support education. Please vote NO!

Christie Hardi, Mrs.
Self
Elgin, TX

As a parent who is also an educator, I am appalled at how this voucher bill is being pushed through under the guise of "parental rights." I CHOOSE public schools, despite your best efforts to defund them with bills like this. I CHOOSE public schools where certified educators with degrees, certifications, and professional experience are obligated to serve ALL children - not just the ones that they want to serve. I am sickened with the idea of Texas representatives and senators trying to legislate our state backwards instead of forward.

Vouchers didn't work in other states - and they won't work here. Invest in public education. Stop trying to steal education away from Texas children. Those founding fathers you claim to hold dear - they would be rolling in their graves if they knew the ways that legislators were trying to deprive children in the United States. Vote down this terrible voucher bill and fund public schools in Texas.

Gerrie Lockett, Ms
Chireno Texas
Chireno, TX

Please please vote against SB 8!!!

Jackie Besinger
Self
Austin, TX

I am against Senate Bill 8

To leave clear:

1. Parental Rights are NOT granted by state laws, in the original version of the bill this is the beginning language, our rights are God given and are fundamental and supreme.
2. There should be a consensus to create better language that follows the clause that acknowledge parental rights individually, no government control because the government is using our taxes. This bill will control all schools choice and what children learn and how they test, not acceptable. The government does not have that right.
3. There should be statues that clarify words such as "define" who makes the decisions that benefit the Childs well being, TEA, or the state, or the parents, and/or the districts? This bill impose government decision not parental decision.
4. The statutes in place for public education state clearly what defines the mission of public education, this bill changes these particular statues? See example of the current statues

“CHAPTER 4. PUBLIC EDUCATION MISSION, OBJECTIVES, AND GOALS

Sec. 4.001. PUBLIC EDUCATION MISSION AND OBJECTIVES. (a) The mission of the public education system of this state is to ensure that all Texas children have access to a quality education that enables them to achieve their potential and fully participate now and in the future in the social, economic, and educational opportunities of our state and nation.”

This bill is gaslighting Texas parents by putting a bandage on an issue that is beyond bleeding. We already have choice, where we send our children is already law. Public schools need to be fix before any other issue is pushed against the parents.

Jackie Besinger

April Kuper
Self - teacher
San Antonio, TX

As a parent and a teacher, I am requesting that you do NOT pass SB 8. In so doing, you will ensure a public education for ALL students, which is why the education system was set up in the first place. Oftentimes, when I hear the words "parental rights," it is only the voices of a few parents - not all. The few parents who do not wish for their students to experience a public education, have other options. Most parents do not - and they do not have the time to speak out because they are busy working and providing for their children, trusting that they are getting the education they need. If you allow vouchers, you are defunding education, which is already underfunded as it is. Please stand by ALL students and parents by saying NO to SB 8. Thank you.

Lacy Hendricks
Self- realtor and mother
San Antonio, TX

This bill will gut necessary funding for the public schools that need it the most. This is going to turn education on its head in Texas. I DO NOT appreciate my child who will be entering kindergarten in 2024 being used as an experiment, or his zoned school being bankrupt by this voucher program. Our public schools need more money, not for people to be able to take it legally. How do you think this is going to affect the schools with lower ratings? This is only going to make the burden worse on people who are working really hard already to get their kids a decent education. Equity will be non existent in public education should this bill pass. VOTE NO TO SB 8.

Tara Alt
Self/church employee
McKinney, TX

Vote NO on SB8!

In my opinion, SB8 is just a mechanism to funnel much-needed funds from public schools. Texas has an outstanding public school system that deserves our support. In my years as a parent in McKinney ISD, served as PTO president and a booster club president and had the opportunity to work alongside our outstanding education professionals. I firmly believe great schools make great communities. Instead of looking for ways to fund private schools that have a little oversight, Texas should put this money into full state funding of public schools and relieving the local tax burden.

I have been a private school parent. Prior to moving to Texas 17 years ago, our oldest child was in a private school system. I can tell you two things about private schools. One: they cannot hold a candle to the resource that is Texas public schools. We were shocked to find that our fancy private school student was not doing grade-level work when she transferred into our neighborhood elementary school. The education and expectation of success in Texas public schools is first rate and a financial bargain. Two: private schools are a never-ending money pit. They do not have economies of scale, and they are forever asking parents for additional fees, "giving the gap," and fundraiser participation.

Currently the average private school tuition runs about \$20,000 a year. Those who cannot afford private school would still not be able to afford it even with a voucher program. This proposed voucher program would not benefit the average Texas family, but it would drain much-needed funding from public schools that do rely on economies of scale to provide a top-notch education to all students at a fraction of the cost of small private schools.

You may ask why, if I am such a champion of public schools, I ever had my kids in a private school system. At the time we lived in a community that had disinvested from their public schools decades prior to our moving there. I have seen firsthand the damage that can be done in the community when the public schools are second class. Businesses leave, opportunities dry up, poverty increases, and it becomes a vicious cycle that feeds on itself. Thriving communities like we enjoy here in Texas require great public schools to continue thriving. We can't risk "the Texas miracle" to satisfy the whims, a big donors, who want public money to go to private schools.

Both of my kids were honor students and finished their high school educations at our local public schools. They were accepted to extremely competitive colleges, and the education they received in McKinney ISD has served them well to be successful honor students at their respective universities. Every student in Texas deserves this opportunity, and the best way to offer it is through a robust, fully funded public school system.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you will vote no on SB8.

Tami Pierce, Mrs.
self, CPA
Liberty, TX

Please oppose SB8 and do not divert funding from public schools. Parents already have choices when it comes to educating their children. SB8 will disproportionately harm our economically disadvantaged students and families by taking funds out of public schools. Public schools serve ALL students and do not exclude students. Our hope for our communities resides with public schools and are community members who serve in those schools. Thank you.

Mary Majumder
Self, professor
HOUSTON, TX

Thank you for taking public input! I am a believer in strong public schools as critical to community and civic well-being, but I am also a believer in evidence. If the evidence suggested that school voucher programs improve educational outcomes, I might not become a champion of legislation of this type (SB 8), but I wouldn't oppose it. I have reviewed the evidence, and it is clear: the educational outcomes are poor, AND inequities and segregation increase, children with disabilities and their families suffer, and public schools as core institutions for community and civic well-being are undermined. Therefore, I am writing to register opposition to this bill. I see the future of the state of Texas, which could be bright, becoming increasingly dim, and it breaks my heart.

Lynn Boswell
Austin ISD Board of Trustees
Austin, TX

I am writing to oppose SB8 on behalf of Austin ISD.

Last year, our Board of Trustees voted to adopt many legislative priorities that relate to this bill. Our priorities include opposition to vouchers or any other programs that divert public tax dollars to privately run schools and a reduction of the number of standardized tests to those required under federal law.

SB8 runs counter to those priorities. And any concessions offered in the bill are not worth the costs.

This bill would create education savings accounts that are a form of voucher program. The program described would drain resources from our already underfunded public schools. And it would do so at a time when we need to be investing in the public schools that serve as a foundation of our communities statewide.

Unlike public schools, private schools do not have to take all students, do not have to meet the same hiring standards of public schools, and do not have to meet the same requirements for accountability and transparency. There is no credible research suggesting that vouchers improve academic performance. And there is strong evidence that voucher programs in other states have cost far more than projected and drained much-needed resources from public schools.

The testing provisions also create serious concerns. Changes of this magnitude to our system of assessment and accountability are a priority for many in Texas, but deserve deep public input and consideration in a stand-alone bill. SB8 increases the number of standardized tests in a state that already tests well beyond what federal law requires, reducing instructional time and adding new expenses.

SB8 proposes major changes to both Texas school funding and assessment. We are glad that it is now getting a public hearing with invited testimony representing a mix of perspectives. But important voices are missing, including those of parents and advocates for the students this voucher is intended to serve. And we also have concerns that there is no opportunity for open testimony from Texas parents, educators, students, employers and taxpayers. Parents and others have spent many hours at the Capitol this session sharing testimony about bills and suggestions to improve legislation, in service of schools and students. That process is always important. And it is especially so for a bill of this magnitude.

For these reasons and more, we urge you to vote no on SB8.

Melissa Martin
Self and child
Brady, TX

Money can be spent elsewhere. I'll go back to homeschooling (along with thousands of other parents) if this nonsense and waste of money doesn't stop. Parents in Texas deserve to be heard, regarding their own child.

Rosa Ramos, MD
Self, physician
Pearland, TX

My family and my community stand with public schools. All of us, of every political affiliation, do not want to pay for private schools vouchers. My husband and I are physicians and could send our 3 kids to private schools if we wanted to, but we love our public schools and moved here to Texas specifically for their great schools. Vouchers are fiscally irresponsible and would only benefit people with kids already enrolled in private schools and that can already afford it. The bill is asking taxpayers to subsidize the tuition for these families and at the same time deprive our public schools of much needed funding. Why is this even being considered if the majority of parents don't want it? The families that can't afford private school now won't be able to afford it with the vouchers either. Why is our Texas government attacking our schools? Why not increase their funding, increase teacher salaries, improve facilities and education and protect our kids? This is crazy! It is unethical. It is unfair. It is irresponsible. And schools need testing and accountability. I can't believe that eliminating testing and the STAAR test is being considered in exchange for this vouchers. Just that tells you that the bill doesn't make sense. It is crazy! Why abandon our students? Why punish our schools? We need to protect them. NO to Vouchers. Parents do not want vouchers. Please do the right thing for our kids and our schools. Say NO to vouchers

toni manning
self, retired educational support
Corpus Christi, TX

Please DO NOT ALLOCATE public school funds away from public schools by funding charter schools. Public Education supports the public good and the economy. Improve public schools instead of splintering funds into various efforts. Our public school teachers deserve our support and LOTS MORE funding. They are our true Heroes, ground level, responsible " in advance of any situation because they are with our children. These days they face unimaginable risk every day—they lay their lives down, so why would you not FOCUS ALL PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL FUNDS ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS?? Can't you bet our money on them?

Francesca Romans
Self
Leander, TX

Good morning. I am once against asking you to please vote against the current version of SB 8 and any other variations that might come from it. The harm that this bill will cause cannot be understated. The children and educators in our public school system deserve better than this. Please stop using these incredible people as pawns. This bill does not help anything or give anyone more choice, especially not special education parents like myself. It adds more testing and takes away even more local control. It will pull even more of the desperately needed funds away from our public schools.

Our public schools need to be fully funded and supported, and this session is doing everything but that. Please lift our schools up instead of continuing to tear them down. Please vote NO on this extraordinarily harmful legislation that our communities are telling you they do not want.

Thank you very much.

Spencer Dickinson
Self/ analyst
Colleyville, TX

Please vote down this bill. I strongly believe subsidized religious teaching is bad for Texas. Our country was founded on the principle of separation of church and state. Countries like Iran have state-sponsored religion in the schools and it results in less freedom for children to learn and think.

LaRon Slay
Temple Independent School District
Temple, TX

I am against school vouchers because I have served in public education for the past 16 years, and I have seen the value of public education in a young persons life. Public education creates an environment where students from all walks of life are brought together to learn and grow socially, emotionally, as well as academically. Learning how to respect, empathize, and positively collaborate with other human beings that have different life experiences (cultural, social, economical, etc) builds resilient and culturally responsive young leaders that are better equipped to meet the current needs of our country. It is critical that our country mold young leaders that have the ability to unify people from diverse backgrounds. Division is the current threat to this nation and vouchers will only support deeper division in this state and country.

Teri Muse
Self -retired teacher
San Marcos, TX

I ask you to vote NO to vouchers in the state of Texas. We need a strong public education system and you should not do anything to weaken it. A civilization does best when we all rise together. Your job as a public servant demands you do what is right for all citizens. Have some integrity and vote no to vouchers.

Errin Lagow, Dr.
self, Medical Science Liaison
Austin, TX

I oppose SB 8. I respectfully ask that the members of the Texas House Public Education Committee oppose it, also: Representatives Buckley, Allen, Allison, Cunningham, Dutton, Harris, Harrison, Hefner, Hinojosa, King, Longoria, Schaefer, and Talarico.

SB 8 will cripple Texas Public Schools by further draining public funds to support privately-owned and -regulated charter schools, which perform worse than public schools, pay teachers less than public schools, and reject underperforming students. Sources: <https://www.tasb.org/legislative/documents/setting-the-charter-record-straight.docx>

Krystal Agbahiwe
self, certified registered nurse anesthetist
Manvel, TX

SB 8 CREATES THE LARGEST VOUCHER PROGRAM IN THE NATION! KEEP PUBLIC FUNDS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools
 - It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws
 - It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve
 - It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system
 - It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority
-

Anita Wadhwa
Community Voices for Public Education
Houston, TX

I strongly urge you to vote against S.B. 8. I have been an educator since 2001 in Houston.

This bill would expand the number of required high-stakes standardized tests from 20 to 48 a child would be required to take over the course of their K-12 experience. It will narrow the curriculum even more.

School voucher proposals have come up many times in the legislature, and deservedly died when they are recognized by members of all parties as what they are -- attempts to privatize education and shift funds away from public education.

The latest iteration frames the issue as "parental choice," when in fact the real choice would lie with the private schools, which can accept or reject students at will based on which students are cheapest and easiest to educate. At-risk and Special Education students would be, as always, left to public schools with ever-tighter budgets.

Christina Garza, Ms.
self
Laredo, TX

Tax payer money is for all TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS .It is not for students' parents requesting to go to other schools. Tax payer money should be for improving education and campuses that are for all Texans. No student at a Texas public school should be taken away from for the sake of some. If we want improved campuses for students with disabilities then all Texas schools should be able to access money for that cause. I think it is outrageous that there would even be a call for this type of stealing from public education in my state. I do not want to imagine a future where we will have to just accept that there are totally different standards for education in my state. If anything you guys should be putting your heads together and try to unite Texans and the education system not break it apart. Putting money into sports facilities and libraries and things that bring campuses together. Not splitting money reserved for our beautiful state public schools into private facilities? Let the people from other states bringing their private facilities also bring funding to our citizens! No they sure don't have the money for that. I bet they'd love to receive tax payer money for their causes. Instead Greg Abbott is threatening to push his will on Texas citizens? Greg Abbott is sure pushing Texans around these days..And we're sure getting sick of it.

Nathan Roub
self
Argyle, TX

SB 8 diverts money from public schools. Please do not vote this bill to pass, as I am afraid of how it will negatively impact public school's ability to effectively teach all students.

William Edwards
Hutto ISD Police Department
Austin, TX

As a Texas Public School Police Chief, I strongly urge you to oppose SB8. It is nothing more than a diversion of public funds to private educational systems with no financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or communities. SB8 will not benefit the children of Texas and has the potential to divide and segregate communities in a detrimental manner. In its history, Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation and should not begin to do so now.

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Sierra Crowley
Self
New Braunfels, TX

As a dedicated parent and advocate for quality education, I want to express my strong support for Texas Senate Bill 8 (SB8). This vital legislation brings forward essential reforms that enhance parental rights and responsibilities while ensuring a well-rounded education for our children. SB8 recognizes the fundamental role parents play in their children's education by affirming and protecting their rights. This bill empowers parents to be actively involved in their child's educational journey, including decisions regarding instructional materials. It acknowledges that parents know their children best and should have the ability to guide their education in accordance with their values and beliefs.

Moreover, SB8 establishes an education savings account program, further emphasizing the importance of parental choice in education. This program allows parents to allocate funds for their child's education, granting them the flexibility to choose educational resources, materials, and even alternative learning environments that align with their child's unique needs. By providing these options, SB8 promotes a more personalized approach to education, ensuring that each child receives an education tailored to their individual strengths and interests.

The establishment of an education savings account program also opens doors for families who may have previously faced limited options due to financial constraints. It allows parents to explore educational opportunities beyond traditional public schools, including private schools, online learning programs, tutoring services, and more. This empowers parents to provide the best possible education for their children, regardless of their socio-economic background.

Critics argue that SB8 may undermine public schools. However, it's important to note that this bill does not seek to defund or devalue public education. Instead, it recognizes the importance of collaboration between parents and public schools to ensure the success of every child. By fostering a partnership, SB8 encourages open communication, shared responsibility, and a commitment to providing a high-quality education that meets the needs of each student.

I urge my fellow parents, educators, and lawmakers to join me in supporting Texas SB8. Let us champion parental rights, foster educational choice, and strive for excellence in our public education system. Together, we can create an educational landscape that values parental involvement, respects diverse perspectives, and empowers our children to reach their full potential.

Shelle Cassell
Denison Independent School District
Denison, TX

Public school districts are the backbone of American education. They accept school children where they are - academically, economically, socially, and physically. Splitting the few dedicated budget dollars between this tried and true system and a selective admission and service system will further fragment the education system. DO NOT support vouchers - or whatever label is being used - in ANY FORM.

Nancy Moore
Self - paralegal
Dallas, TX

Vote No to SB 8. I want my tax dollars to fund PUBLIC schools.

Lou Anderson
self
Temple, TX

It's time for Texans to have an ESA program! Parents - not bureaucrats or other governmental agents - can best decide the educational course for their children. Please vote to move this bill forward.

Jose Larrazolo, Mr.
Self- Concern Parent
Laredo, TX

We urge you to remove table CSSB 8 until it can be revised to separate vouchers and assessment. These issues do not go together and a compete revision to the entire assessment system deserves a full public hearing with open public testimony, not just hand chosen witnesses. If not, then vote no. On assessment the bill does one good thing in removing exit level requirements for a high school diploma. But the cost is high. Tripling assessment will triple the time away from authentic learning and lead to full year test prep. When you attach high stakes you don't lessen the importance of the assessments by having three administrations. You triple the drill and kill test panic on every campus. There is no other outcome no matter what people not on the ground are telling you. The assessment provisions of CSSB 8 must be stripped and open hearings held. Give vouchers a straight up vote on its own.

Short script: Vote no or Table CSSB 8. The changes to assessment deserve a full standalone hearing with public testimony, not just invited witnesses. Texas parents won't be fooled!

Vickie Dillow
Self/retired
Waxahachie, TX

Unfortunately I do not think this bill. Since this bill lends our assessments to be controlled and administered under an agency, the "appointed" Federal Dept of Education, this bill cannot be good. We need to move as far away from this agency as possible. We created independent school districts in Texas but due to overreaching laws, regulations and mandates that is no longer the case. We certainly do not need to be giving more of our sovereignty away. We must be in the business of protecting our public education system from the overreaching hands of the feds, not surrendering more. There is no amount of money worth that. Local control, local government, especially in educating our children, ultimately results in the best education systems. Education has gone downhill with all the laws, regulations and mandates that have been issued by higher government. So much of our tax payer money is having to fund these requirements. Is it any wonder admin costs have escalated astronomically. I OPPOSE this bill and ask that we stop it now or make drastic changes of which time left in this session will not allow. Back to the drawing board.

Rebecca Cantu
SELF
Helotes, TX

We urge you to remove table CSSB 8 until it can be revised to separate vouchers and assessments. These issues do not go together and a complete revision to the entire assessment system deserves a full public hearing with open public testimony, not just hand-chosen witnesses. If not, then vote no. On assessment, the bill does one good thing in removing exit-level requirements for a high school diploma. But the cost is high. Tripling assessment will triple the time away from authentic learning and lead to full-year test prep. When you attach high stakes you don't lessen the importance of the assessments by having three administrations. You triple the drill and kill test panic on every campus. There is no other outcome no matter what people not on the ground are telling you. The assessment provisions of CSSB 8 must be stripped and open hearings held. Give vouchers a straight-up vote on their own.

Karen Leitch
Self
Bertram, TX

Vouchers for private schools hurt public education. Thus, they hurt all rural Texans who have no access to private schools. Rural Texans are your base. So, think twice before you vote for private school vouchers. We will remember your vote in November.

Reagan Vinson, Mr.
Self / Teacher
Rowlett, TX

You should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

jennifer baezner, MRS
CFISD
Cypress, TX

This is not the best for students.

Kristy Owens
CFISD - Teacher
Cypress, TX

Please REJECT this bill. This is a slap in the face to thousands, upon thousands of Texas teachers and students. We will be heard and we will get the word out about politicians who supported this bill. EVERY student in this country should be afforded the right to an EQUAL education. While you provide money to all students to go to private schools, those private schools WILL NOT ACCEPT all students. Private schools do NOT require certified educators in their teaching roles, and they cannot offer the plethora of Career and Technical Education courses that our great public schools and districts around the state offer. AGAIN, DENY this bill - it is quite literally disgusting that this is even being discussed.

Anna Rodriguez

Self

McAllen, TX

I am a public school teacher in Texas. Since 2019 and the COVID lockdown of 2020, teachers have gone from being heroes for teaching virtually to essential and required in person to indoctrinators and "groomers." Every new piece of legislation threatens to undermine education and the role teachers play in educating our future. It also threatens the physical, intellectual, and emotional well being of our students.

Regarding Texas teachers, this bill shows a lack of respect for the credentials and training teachers have. It also shows a lack of trust in our teachers to educate our students to make sure they are prepared for college, career, and life outside of the classroom where their beliefs will be challenged and they will encounter people who think and believe differently than our kids do. You are doing our kids a big disservice by promoting your divisive agenda that excludes the history and contributions of black and brown people in Texas and the United States.

As for our students' well being, this bill will limit funding and educational opportunities for our special education students. Private schools are not required to educate everyone, which is the primary purpose of our public school system. This voucher bill essentially makes a value judgement based on a family's income and determines who deserves a quality education. Our public schools are good, and the teachers who work are dedicated to helping every child succeed. Instead of using our children as pawns to further your agenda and limit educational opportunities for minority and special needs students, use our taxpayer dollars to strengthen our public schools. These schools belong to everyone, regardless of background or ability.

My husband and I raised four children and sent them to Texas public schools from which they all graduated. The schools weren't perfect, and sometimes we had to question the schools about their policies and decisions. Through their education, we supported the teachers and celebrated our kids' successes. We were grateful for the different perspectives from teachers and students that enriched our kids' lives. Every Texas student deserves an enriching experience through our public schools. Keep our tax money in the public schools and fully fund them. Give teachers a big raise in the process.

Erick Seda-Toro

self

Cypress, TX

As a parent and educator, I am extremely concerned that individuals unfamiliar with the actual state of education are making decisions that can impact children for many generations. The State is changing how schools are rated in order to give themselves an excuse to justify a voucher program instead of investing in the betterment of the current system. It is true that parents must have a say, but why do you keep ignoring teachers, who have devoted their lives to students, and who are the true experts in the matter? Would you allow a person without a medical degree to make decisions that affect your health and body for years to come? If you think that private schools are better, then change the system to reflect what you think public education should be doing instead of giving up cowardly as you are now doing. Furthermore, if private schools are not required to adhere to the STAAR requirements, and you want to give them money that is supposed to be going to public education, then be smart enough to cancel the tests for everyone. I am the product of both private and public education. I recognize there are advantages to both, but how can you guarantee that a child will be accepted once applied? The TX Legislature has left many questions unanswered and the rush to get SB8 though is chaotic, unprofessional, and very damaging.

Loretta Dillon
Mothers Against Greg Abbott PAC
El Paso, TX

Apparently our great state of Texas does not understand the concept of separation of church and state. It is incomprehensible to me that my tax dollars will go towards funding private education if SB 8 is signed into law. We have a huge surplus this year that should be funneled into public education, not taking dollars away to give to religious schools. Texas has demonstrated that they do not value public school teachers, public school counselors, nor public school librarians with so many bills aimed at taking down these valuable professionals. We should be supporting their expertise and fund them and our children appropriately. I OPPOSE SB 8 on so many levels. Passing SB 8 will only further undermine our public school professionals and we will not be able to recruit and retain these professionals. Supposedly our state wants to "protect children", how in the world is this accomplished by taking away resources that should be going to the public schools? We ban books but allow guns in anyone's hands. And now we want to abandon public education to support religious education to further indoctrinate our children. VOTE NO to SB 8!!!!!!!

Erica Hoffman
Texas AFT
Austin, TX

As a public school educator, I strongly urge you to vote against S.B. 8.

This bill would expand the number of required high-stakes standardized tests from 20 to 48 a child would be required to take over the course of their K-12 experience. It will narrow the curriculum even more, and as a result both teachers' and learners' inherently critical minds.

School voucher proposals have come up many times in the legislature, and deservedly died when they are recognized by members of all parties as what they are -- attempts to privatize education and shift funds away from public education.

The latest iteration frames the issue as "parental choice," when in fact the real choice would lie with the private schools, which can accept or reject students at will based on which students are cheapest and easiest to educate. At-risk and Special Education students would be, as always, left to public schools with ever-tighter budgets.

Mica Bull
self / music educator
Houston, TX

CSSB 8 would be detrimental to public education in Texas and teachers are not in favor of this bill. Public education teachers are already overworked and underpaid, this bill will make our jobs even more difficult and underfunded. There is already a HUGE teacher shortage and this bill will only encourage more potential teachers to choose alternate career paths. Please do not allow this bill to continue.

Devika Rao
Self
Dallas, TX

I urge my Texas representatives to vote NO on school vouchers

Elizabeth Von Flatern
Self
Horseshoe Bay, TX

I am a retired educator. Unless these elected officials have been teachers or other in-school employees I fear they do not understand the impact of this bill on many of our students. It weakens public schools and minimizes any support from my tax dollars. Is the intent to watchelimin

Karla Christman, Ms.
self
Lake Jackson, TX

Public schools are already poorly funded by the state of Texas. Our state is 48th in funding students in public schools. I live in what is considered a "rich" district, so millions of tax dollars from my district have been sent away to the state which has helped create this unprecedented surplus of funds. Please, do not create savings accounts (voucher system - new name) for parents. Put the extra money towards our public schools for programs to meet all student needs. Pay our teachers a livable wage. A perfect example of needing a livable wage... My daughter is a single mother of 2 and is a public school teacher in our district. Her husband passed away over 3 years ago. Without my financial assistance, she and her children would not survive. Work within the system that we have across our state. Improve the funding for public education and for the educators. Do what is right for the many and not placate the few. Vouchers will create a have-have not divide for our children, for our schools and sadly, for our communities. Carefully look at the states that have implemented a voucher system and see what it has done to their public schools. The schools are in disrepair and the students are relegated to a 3rd rate education due to lack of funding. Please do not do this to the children of Texas. Our children, our future Texans deserve better!

TRACY FISHER, Mrs
Self
Coppell, TX

This will destroy our public schools. The governor is intent on that. Shame on anyone that supports this bill. Please vote no! If you care about our economy, our kids, and our future, fund our public schools and ensure our special ed kids get the proper funding and protection that they can only get in a public school.

Angela Maniha, Ms.
Self Teacher
Cypress, TX

This is a bad idea for students and parents in Texas. Vote NO!

James Jirsa
Self Retired
Austin, TX

The Committee Substitute for SB 8 does not decrease testing but increases it!
I oppose vouchers because they will hurt public education across the State by draining badly needed funds for our schools. The surplus funds available should be used to increase teacher salaries to prevent wholesale departure of badly needed teachers.

Tyler Wallach
Self / Cypress Fairbanks ISD
Houston, TX

I am writing this letter to vehemently oppose the House Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 8, which pertains to vouchers and assessments, currently under consideration by the House Public Education Committee. As a concerned citizen, I urge you to carefully reconsider the implications of this bill and take into account the negative consequences it could have on our education system and students.

First and foremost, the proposed large-scale voucher program for students receiving special education services and those attending F-rated campuses raises significant concerns. While choice in education is important, diverting funds away from public schools through vouchers could severely impact the quality of education and resources available to students with disabilities and those attending struggling campuses. This bill fails to address the underlying issues these students face and instead exacerbates the disparities in educational opportunities.

Furthermore, the changes proposed in Article 1 regarding assessments and accountability are deeply problematic. Replacing STAAR tests with the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) and eliminating the requirement to pass an assessment to graduate high school weakens the standards and dilutes the significance of a high school diploma. Additionally, the proposal to increase the number of state-required tests for elementary and middle school students from 15 to 42 is excessive and places an undue burden on young learners. This increased emphasis on testing detracts from valuable instructional time and hinders a well-rounded education.

The accountability measures outlined in the bill, such as increasing performance standards every four years, may have unintended consequences. While the intention may be to raise educational standards, the abrupt changes without adequate preparation time for districts could lead to confusion and hinder effective planning and instruction. It is essential to prioritize a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of such measures on students, teachers, and the education system before implementing them.

Furthermore, the establishment of an Education Savings Account (ESA) program, as detailed in Article 3, raises concerns about the diversion of public funds to private schools. This could further strain public school resources, compromising the education of students who rely on them. The estimated cost of over \$1 billion per year raises questions about the feasibility of this program and the potential financial burden it could place on the state.

Lastly, the formation of the Texas Commission on Education Savings Accounts raises doubts about the impartiality and objectivity of the decision-making process. While it is crucial to evaluate and improve programs, the composition of the commission, with limited representation and potential conflicts of interest, may undermine the transparency and fairness of the assessment.

FRANK CARLSON
Self
Austin, TX

This bill is bad for students and nothing but a tax-payer funding tax break that will only lead to the further decline in public schools. We need to be investing in the future generations, not pulling money from them to give to the wealthy.

Paula Pinzon, Mrs
Casa de Encuentro
Houston, TX

I support school choice for parents. I have a dyslexic child who had not enough support at school even with accommodations. He is homeschooled now and the improvement in reading and writing is amazing. However, I had to stop working to teach him at home. We are also pastors of a Hispanic church and we see the pain in the parents having to send their kids to schools with high level of violence, bullying and teachings against their principles.

Please consider approving this bill for parents with kids who have special needs or are not happy with the zoned public school.

This bill will push the schools to a higher level of excellence as happens in other states where school choice was approved.

Pamela Lorenz, Administrative Secretary
Self
Cypress, TX

Vote for the voucher and the bill. Parents should have the right to put their children in the school of their choice and not have to put their money into schools that they are not attending. If schools need money they need to quit wasting tax payer dollars on brand new buildings, football & baseball fields and stadiums etc. People that work in Education can't even get a raise when you are already working at poverty level. Parents that already have children in private schools should also be allowed to have the \$8,000.00 credit for their children. Why are they being penalized ?

Thank you for hearing my voice,
Pam Lorenz

David Thompson, Dr.
Self
Buchan, TX

My name is David Thompson, and I am a lifelong Pk-12 and higher educator. I am also the parent of now-former public and private schoolchildren. I write to opposed SB 8. It is state-sponsored welfare for the rich, sets up an unnecessary bureaucracy in the comptroller's office, and gives the Commissioner of Education unprecedented authority over testing. This bill deserves to die in the House, and I'm encouraging the Public Education committee, which should have conducted a truly public hearing, to leave this bill pending in committee. Thank you.

Sarah Scott, Ms.
Self, Counselor
Houston, TX

I am strongly against this because it disproportionately benefits rich families to the detriment of the poor, strips resources away from public schools serving our highest need students, and allows shady organizations to scam educational funds by running crappy poorly regulated private schools!

Robert Rutishauser
Self
Austin, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers for private schools because that will reduce urgently need funds for public schools. I oppose SB 8 or versions thereof.

Megan Holder
Self-Teacher
Longview, TX

As a public school teacher this bill is detrimental to already under funded public schools.
As a legislature you all have no idea what actually goes on inside the walls of the school buildings. This, among a million other things, is why teachers are leaving in droves. Your fancy wording of "education savings account program" does not fool anyone.

Mirian Spencer Morrison, Ms.
Self - City Planner
Tolar, TX

I am writing in opposition to this bill. As a taxpayer for a rural school district (Tolar ISD) the state currently does not provide adequate funding support for rural school districts per student. Before moving funds from public schools, the state should first revise the STAAR test procedures to afford the students and teachers to have better access to the materials students should learn in the respective grade levels. In addition to funding the per-student fully, teacher pay should be increased at a rate of \$20,000 for first year and increasing the rate of 10% per year of classroom experience. This way the increase is reflective of the need for experienced teachers in the classrooms.

I think the bill also should not include sex ed and counselor requirements. With the adoption of SB 748 (chaplains in the classroom) it seems to be adding an undue burden on the school districts to have counselors so that they will be more likely to embrace the idea of chaplains despite the lack of training required to be a chaplain. The current state rates of sexually transmitted diseases and repeat teen pregnancies shows that we need improvements to sex ed as our current system isn't working. We definitely need to do better. Praying away pre-marital sex, date rape, and sexual predators is not working.

I am also in opposition to this bill because the bill affords parents who are choosing to send their kids to private, charter and homeschools funding that exceeds their tax participation for their children. If the intent of the bill is to give the parents the money they put in, they should only be eligible to receive the actual tax dollars they put into the school system, which is on average \$2,000 to \$4,000. I also believe that families without children should receive a school tax reduction at the same rate that is given for those taxpayers that are over 65 based on the same principal that the families without children in school can receive a tax break. Otherwise, the school districts will impose any shortfalls of the school funding for vouchers onto those taxpayers without children at a disproportionate amount. These tax savings should also be eligible for federal tax credits each year to truly provide relief at an equitable level. The reason for the federal tax credits is to provide some equity for the individuals that are contributing the most to school districts today.

I am aware that the Governor has declared that he wants a voucher bill on his desk and has already declared he will require a special session to get vouchers done. I think this bill is inadequate to fix the issues with public schools that have been created by the legislatures of the past. I think many of the individual issues (STAAR and Funding) that should have been addressed but not tied to an unpopular voucher system. The state has spent the last thirty years eroding public support for public education for the sole purpose of privatizing public schools.

Amanda Babb
Self
Houston, TX

Vote YES for including parental rights regarding instructional materials. YES, there should be a voucher option for students who want to attend private schools. School choice should be up to parents for their students.

Allen Cummings

Self

McAllen, TX

I am completely opposed to school vouchers If parents want to send their children to private schools they should pay with their money not money raised by taxes to support public education which is the basis for our democracy.

Sabrina Gonzalez

Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

Austin, TX

Chair Buckley & Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 8. My name is Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo, and I am speaking on behalf of the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD), registering on the bill.

TCDD is established by state and federal law and is governed by 27 board members, appointed by the Governor, 60% of whom are individuals with developmental disabilities or family members of individuals with disabilities. The Council's purpose in law is to encourage policy change so that people with disabilities have opportunities to be fully included in their communities and exercise control over their own lives.

TCDD has significant concerns with the establishment of an Education Savings Account (ESA) Program for students with disabilities proposed in SB 8. These apprehensions are extensive, with the main concerns being the loss of legal protections for students and their families, the lack of academic and student outcome accountability in the private sector, and the segregation of students with disabilities. The Council supports the principle that schools accepting public state or federal dollars to educate students must provide students with the same educational rights and opportunities they would be accorded in the public education system.

However, given that the issue of ESAs and school choice are a priority for some state leaders, lawmakers should prioritize protecting the rights of students with disabilities and their families. TCDD would recommend referring to the National Council on Disability's recommendations for education leaders seeking to establish an ESA program. These recommendations include:

- Ensure that ESA amounts are based on the cost of individual special education and related service needs of the individual student, including transportation.
- Require private schools receiving ESA funds to fully implement the child's individualized education plan.
- Require private schools receiving ESA funds to be subject to the administrative due process proceedings provided by the LEA.
- Provide oversight, data collection, monitoring, and reporting on participating private schools to ensure accountability for nondiscrimination, including disproportionate discipline, segregation, and academic equity.
- Collect and make publicly available data on students with disabilities.
- Require private schools that accept ESA funds to administer state assessments to students, including students with disabilities, and publish data showing comparisons among private schools and public schools.

These recommendations would aid in making an established educational savings account program a less risky option for students with disabilities. Please feel free to contact us for additional information or if we can be an additional resource.

Respectfully submitted,

Sabrina Gonzalez

Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

Carolina Fuzetti, Executive Director
Fort Bend Independent School District
Katy, TX

This bill is bad for Texas students and parents:

- It would cost Texas big time. This bill would create an education savings account program that would give between \$7,500 and \$10,500 in state tax money to subsidize private school tuition for individuals receiving special education services, who are educationally disadvantaged, or who are attending public schools and have 504s, are in D- or F-rated campuses, or have siblings in the ESA program. That could be more than 75% of students in Texas.
 - The bill requires more state tests. Proponents say that it eliminates STAAR, but in truth, it adds two tests every year for each grade in grades 3-8 and increases high school exams from five to six.
 - The bill gives the education commissioner more control and removes all State Board of Education involvement in the state assessment program.
-

Laura Stolk
Family
Dallas, TX

School vouchers (disguised as "parent choice") are a way to segregate schools and destroy public education in favor of funneling our tax dollars into the pockets of unregulated charters and private schools that can provide a bare minimum or indoctrinatioal education for untaxed profit. Do not allow this to pass. Take head from other states that have had their systems destroyed by Devos-backed "Christian" Nationalist extremists.

Jennifer Bonora
Casa de encuentro
Texas City, TX

Please pass this bill

Michelle Rice, Dr.
Self - elementary principal
Cypress, TX

Please vote no to this bill. I am opposed to it.

Kristiine Robinson
Self Educator
Burnet, TX

Vote No on the Monies taken from Public schools to private schools.

Jennifer Bonora
Casa de encuentr
Texas City, TX

Pasa this bill

Lisa Goar
self
Waller, TX

I do not support using taxpayers' money to fund private schools. Parents should pay the bill if they want their child/children to attend private school. It has been this way for many years.

Charles Rice, Mr.
Self - construction
Cypress, TX

Please vote no to this bill. I am opposed to it.

Kim Morgan
Self - Taxpayer
Cypress, TX

- NO VOTE
 - Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers; they are not required to report student achievement data to the state.
 - Private schools do not have to accept all students; they can discriminate.
 - No credible research exists to suggest vouchers improve academic performance.
 - Vouchers drain resources from public schools; other states have shown that voucher costs often grow well above projections.
 - Texas already ranks 40th in per-student spending and the rate of inflation since 2019 is 14.5%, per the Comptroller.
 - Choice already exists within the public school system: Districts have transfer policies, magnet schools, career/tech academies, etc.
 - Vouchers subsidize tuition for existing private school and homeschooled students, putting a huge new financial burden on the state.
-

Jennifer Bonora
Casa de encuentro
Texas City, TX

I support this

Cooper Gill, PE
Self - Engineer
Salado, TX

I oppose this bill on the basis of mixing accountability testing and school vouchers. I am against taking funding from public schools to fund private school students at a rate above current funding for public schools. Vouchers are a solution in search of a problem. The bill clearly identifies funding as a need and the offer for students not receiving adequate education is to send them to a school where the remaining students are not STAAR tested.

I am in favor of reforming accountability testing but the current bill leaves many critical details undefined to confirm that the three testing periods are in fact better than the current STAAR testing single test format. Further work should be done through pilot testing multiple assessment testing before fully deploying across the state.

Separate the two issues and evaluate the bills independently.

Jennifer Bonora
Casa de encuentro
Texas City, TX

I support

Jennifer Bonora
Casa de encuentro
Texas City, TX

Pass this bill

Hershel Walker
Self
Bryan, TX

I am speaking as a retired educator with 30 years of teaching experience. I just want to comment to the committee that I strongly oppose any attempt to pass vouchers to pay for private school education with public funds. My personal opinion is that if parents want to send their kids to private schools, they should take out a loan to pay for it, receive a scholarship, or pay for it with her own funds. I don't see this as helping either private schools or public schools. Politicians like yourselves seem to blame teachers and public schools for the lack of learning of Texas citizens and students. I can tell you that the American public and Texans probably in particular do not read and do not check out books from the public library as often as they should. Politicians like yourselves need to spend a little bit of time in the public schools and the classrooms. You don't know a thing about what's going on in public schools. You folks have plenty of off time and I suggest that you sign up for a substitute position occasionally and put yourselves in the trenches to see what you're talking about. As a lifelong Texas resident, I realize that you will probably will not do this. I hate to say it, but I think you probably will not even read these comments because they don't agree with your thinking. The United States has a long tradition of public schools in every single state and this tradition should be continued. Private schools are fine and if parents want to send their students there, they certainly can, but politicians like yourselves, should not be taking our tax money and devoting it to private school education. Private schools can pick and choose which students they want to enroll. Public schools cannot. We deal with all kinds of students. We deal with students who are disabled, from broken homes, who have emotional and learning disabilities, and some come from abused backgrounds. All of these factors, figure into how successful a student will be in the classroom. I might also add that some of our students come from non-English-speaking families, and are then expected to perform as if they were brought up in a home of native English speakers, which is also a ridiculous policy that you sometimes force on to public schools. The point I'm trying to make is that public schools have all kinds of problems that they have to deal with on a daily basis, which all contribute to the lack of learning of some students. The solution to the problems of public schools is not to rob them of public funds and devote those public funds to sending students to private schools, but rather to use money to help public school students try getting involved in the public schools and your districts. First-hand experience in the schools would help immensely and inform your decision making Please vote against Senate Bill 8!

Jennifer Bonora
CaSa
Texas City, TX

Pass this bill

Jennifer Bonora
Casa
Texas City, TX

Pass this bill

Jennifer Bonora
Casa
Texas City, TX

Pass this bill

Pat Diciste, Ms
Self
Bellaire, TX

Please do not destroy our public education.

Tracy Ray
Public Schools / Grand Prairie ISD
Fort Worth, TX

I do not support ESAs, which is just another term for vouchers. Past legislative sessions continue to indicate that Texas residents have consistently not supported the transfer of funds from public schools to charter schools, etc, all of which do not have testing or financial accountability. If ESAs are created, public education will be financially harmed and even more so in our current economy of inflation that is much higher than what the legislature is going to increase funding to public schools.

James Hartman, Mr
Self, Teacher
Cypress, TX

Vote NO on this bill as it doesn't even guarantee that a Parent will even be able to get their student in the school of their choice. Schools can only hold so many students, which will mean the creation of a lottery system for each school and make it harder for parents in the long run. Parents can already move their students to a private/charter school if they wish too and pay for it themselves if they do not like the school they are zoned to. The same argument could be said about any other taxpayer funded public service at that point, which will do no one any good.
Again please vote NO on CSSB 8

Patrick Haigh
self
Forney, TX

Public Education is a vital component of a well functioning society and proper funding is a critical component to ensure the system is successful. To remove funding from the existing public school systems for vouchers to be used for other programs will only weaken those systems further, and may cause those systems to fail. Some may feel that failure and closure of those systems may be necessary; however, these public school systems are often the only option for many students. If these students do not receive an adequate education in their youth, society as a whole will need to live with the consequences for years to go. These consequences could include a work force without the knowledge and skills required for the current jobs, and a cadre of young people isolated from society and likely involved in crime. We must invest in public education now, or be required to invest in the criminal justice system later.

Colleen Morgan
Self/disabled
Dallas, TX

This bill is an unnecessary waste of time disguised as a way to fund religious schools and NO. As a non-believer, my tax dollars would be better spent on funding ALL public schools, including free breakfast/lunch and after school programs as well as teacher raises. And by “parental rights,” when were they ever removed from Texas parents? This TX legislature continues to REMOVE Texans’ rights while gaslighting us with “freedom” and I’m sick of it.
Separation of church and state is a founding tenet. Christofascism is unConstitutional.
And BAN AR-15s and really protect Texas kids!

Walter Ruiz, Mr
Casa de Encuentro
Houston, TX

I support this bill since I think parents should have the right to decide what school fits better the needs of their children. No body knows better the children than their parents.

Please approve this bill for such an important thing as a high level quality in education in a secure environment. We all know that it is key for our society.

Elise Eaton
Texas for Homeschool Freedom
The Woodlands, TX

am a 10
year veteran public school bilingual teacher and a 20 year veteran homeschool parent. I also founded
a 501c3 homeschool co-op over 15 years ago that is still serving families in The Woodlands area. I
have a unique perspective on these bills, but I want to focus on the STRINGS
As a delegate to the 2022 Republican Convention, I was present when the words “NO STRINGS
ATTACHED” were added from the floor to the “school choice” legislative priority. There was
overwhelming support from the delegates for the addition of these words. Your constituents do not
want ANY strings attached to funding for parent directed education. Parents are not empowered
when strings are attached to their choices.
I have been told that ESA bills don't have strings. They have “protective language”. This is not true.
Private schools in Texas right now are NOT REQUIRED TO BE ACCREDITED. Private schools are
also not required to give standardized tests, employ only certified teachers, receive vendor
approval, or provide student data to the state. Our public schools already do these things, and
they are failing. ESA bills would include at least some or all of these regulations, and every one of
these "accountability measures" is a STRING.
STANDARDIZED TESTING is a prominent feature in SB8. It is a HUGE STRING. Private schools in
Texas are currently not required by the state to give standardized tests. Furthermore, all of the
educators I have ever known would agree that standardized testing is not the “best” way to measure
student success. There are many many different ways to assess student achievement. Standardized
testing is probably one of the least reliable. It reduces a child down to a single snapshot on a single
day with a tool designed for a specific type of learner and which contains intrinsic biases. It only
measures recall and guessing ability. It cannot assess the skills and abilities of the child in any other
way. As long as the state continues to focus on standardized testing over human interaction, our
education system will continue to fail our children.
ACCREDITATION is also an example of a STRING. Accreditation is costly and full of
REGULATION. Many small private schools and programs like our co-op are not accredited. If my
chosen private school for my child is not accredited, then requiring accreditation is a huge string.
MY CHOICE is not respected..Our parent empowered homeschool program has had students go on
to become doctors, lawyers, engineers and successful adults in all walks of life. Yet we have never
been accredited. Under an ESA scheme that requires accreditation, programs that don't become
accredited would eventually be unable to compete. The only options left would be the "government
regulated" programs. You are setting up a system that will pick winners and losers based on
state funding. THIS WILL NOT GUARANTEE THE BEST EDUCATION FOR THE CHILD..
The history of CHARTER SCHOOLS in Texas is a good example of the problems that will be created
with

Michelle Venegas-Matula
self- Congregational Organizer
Austin, TX

I STRONGLY OPPOSE SB8 in any form. This hurts our public school system, our rural communities, special education
students, students in need of bilingual services, our teachers and school staff. All our Texas students will be negatively impacted
by this bill. Private school vouchers will only use our tax dollars to further enrich private schools WITHOUT proper
accountability. VOTE NO on SB8.

William Cotham, Mr.
Self/Retired
Crowley, TX

Regardless of how many adjustments are made to a voucher system or an education savings account, the fundamental idea of providing public funds to educate students in private school is flawed. First, private schools will continue the practice of accepting only the students that fit their image of who they want in that school. Students with learning disabilities, students from low socioeconomic households, or students who don't look or act like the current enrollment may not be welcome. In effect, a voucher system is a scholarship program for the kids who already attend. Second, private schools will never be held accountable like public schools are. Public schools have been given the task of educating every student that comes through their door while private schools are selective in nature. Furthermore, public schools are held accountable for the academic growth of every student via state mandated testing. This does not and will not happen in private schools.
Please vote no to any variation of Senate Bill 8.

Diego Bonora
CaSa
Texas City, TX

pass this bill

Linda Fullhart
Self, retired teacher
Grapevine, TX

I strongly feel that the State of Texas is responsible for providing strong Public Schools. The schools that are supported by the state should not have ties to any religious groups. There should be a separation of church and state in education. I see that the Christian Nationalists have made large donations to many of our leaders to promote their religious thinking into our schools.

I also strongly feel that if the state allows for vouchers (or an educational savings account) to be used for private schools, it will be to the detriment of our Public Schools.

Public Schools are required to accept and educate all students and must meet their educational needs. Public Schools are also held accountable through state testing programs. Private schools do not need to meet any of these accountability standards. If a private school deems a student as failing for academic or behavioral issues, they can drop them and the student then returns to their public school. But with vouchers, the private school keeps the money from the state that followed the student and the public school now must educate without any additional funds. I see that this opens a pathway for fraudulent behavior of unscrupulous individuals- get the money from the state for your school and then kick the student out because you already have the money.

I repeat-it is the responsibility of the state to provide quality PUBLIC EDUCATION for all students. If a parent chooses to enroll their child in private school it is their choice, so it is their expense.

Just say NO to the vouchers section of SB8.

Sarah Crenshaw, Mrs.
self
Georgetown, TX

Tell the committee that they should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Jayne Burton
Boerne ISD
Boerne, TX

I am writing to submit my comments AGAINST SB8. Under the guise of "eliminating STAAR," this bill is an insult to public education in Texas. This version of this bill is used as a ruse to push through vouchers

Mat Bartley
self-teacher
Leander, TX

This is another way of saying vouchers, and we shouldn't be using public dollars to fund private schools. Study after study shows vouchers don't work - they only benefit the wealthy who don't need them anyway. Private schools increase their tuition to make the vouchers more of a discount, and the kids you supposedly want to get into the private school still can't afford to. It's a scam and shouldn't be voted out of committee.

Evangelista Hernandez
Casa
Texas City, TX

Pass this bill

Evelyn Chorush
self
Houston, TX

I strongly oppose the voucher bill. I consider Bill 8 contrary to the interests of the children of Texas and the education system. It serves special interests and corruption. It is not good for learning. It does not serve learning. It is wrong. It siphoned money away from the public schools system and counters all tenets of education. Please DO NOT SUPPORT the corrupt VOUCHER system.

Sandra Rolfe
Dallas Independent School District
DeSoto, TX

Vote No on SB 8

Prisilla Cope
Self
Alice, TX

Keep public money for public schools. Raise teachers salaries.

Paula Rigling
Self- Meeting Planner
Round Rock, TX

I ask that you vote against using school vouchers to fund private schools. I pay my property taxes to benefit public schools, not to subsidize private schools that don't serve all children.

Jayne Germany
self--Educator and Voter
Flower Mound, TX

Private school vouchers will only corrupt Texas Education. Instead of approving vouchers, which will take away even MORE money for public schools, I would like for you to increase the student allotment to \$10,000, which would pull Texas up from #38 in state funding. have some pride and spend money for our future--CHILDREN.

Amelia Jimenez, Ms.
My son
San Antonio, TX

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

Almighty God has the final say

Thank you
Amelia Jimenez

Yolanda Thomas
TAFT
Houston, TX

Please vote NO Respect Public School by rejecting school vouchers.

Elizabeth Vera
Self
El Paso, TX

Save our public schools and teachers! School should not be a business. It should be a fair and equitable opportunity for all students to get a quality education. We deserve funding in our schools. As it is, teachers spend hundreds of dollars of our own money for supplies and supplemental material. VOTE NO FOR SB8! Do it for the children and the future of this country!

Iris Garcia
Self
Fort Worth, TX

We should be fully funding our public schools before taking any more money away. Parents already have the "choice" to take their children to other schools. You are stripping other the choice from the parent who does want their kid to go to public school. You are stripping away opportunities from kids. Please stop defunding our public schools. Our children deserve better than this.

Donna Wright
Self/parent
Mansfield, TX

I am adamantly opposed to vouchers of any kind. The testing component of this bill puts further strain on both teachers and students. Teachers should have more input on testing content and format. Current tests are developmentally inappropriate for students.

THERESA RAMOS, VICE PRESIDENT
SAN ANTONIO AFL-CIO
SAN ANTONIO, TX

I am opposing SB 8. We need to keep Public Education to support our children and communities in having a way to provided each child a strong education with accountability.

Janelle Aten
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am a Texan. Please vote NO on this bill. We DO NOT want school vouchers. The middle class families will still not be able to afford private school tuition even with the vouchers. If this bill is passed Texas will be leaving middle class and the poor children behind. The public schools need to be fully funded. Texas needs to pay teachers more. We need to attract good teachers to Texas public schools. Vote NO on SB8.

Thank you,
Janelle Aten

Judith Faria
Self
CYPRESS, TX

Vote NO to SB8. You are hurting public schools. VOTE NO!!!

Rose Parker
Self
Frisco, TX

Only cockroaches do their business in the dark. Quit trying to scam the public on vouchers.

Samuel Karasic
Self, Teacher
Carrollton, TX

I oppose SB 8 because I am against any scheme to increase the privatization of our education system and reject the burdening of our children with even more standardized testing throughout the year. This bill would take our education system in the exact opposite of the direction it needs to be heading in.

Christi Colliver, Mrs.
self/5th grade teacher
Lindale, TX

Please put the majority of this state first~the public school children! Please give the public school teachers raises instead of funding school vouchers. I belong to an outstanding district, Lindale ISD and we work hard to fill the gaps of every child, not just those whose parents are able to "bus" them to private schools. We work so hard to counsel, teach, encourage, discipline & enjoy all the children of Texas! Thank you for listening and please help out public school teachers!

Mrs. Christi Colliver
5th grade Reading Teacher
EJ Moss Intermediate
Lindale ISD

Nancy Novak
self
Fort Worth, TX

I strongly oppose SB 8 on the grounds that it further destroys the public school system by using taxpayer funds to finance private schools, many of which are Christian Nationalist fronts, along with being totally out of reach of poor families, even with the vouchers. The purpose of this bill is to support white supremacy and a theocracy. Just stop it.

Patricia Chapela, Dr.
"self" teacher
Spring, TX

This is a poorly-planned bill designed to further defund education for the poor in Texas. For an estimated \$1 billion, this fund will provide \$8463 per student. This does not even come close to the \$20500 per year tuition of my local Catholic private school, nor the vast majority of private schools in Houston.

So on its face, it already fails.

This bill is designed to supplement the tuition of the wealthy already sending their students to private school while diverting funds away from the public schools that serve the poor and the special populations of Texas. And in the process, we will be racing to the bottom in education. Passage of this bill will recreate the education system of Texas to more closely resemble those of Louisiana and Mississippi. You have the opportunity to make great improvements in Texas education, but instead have chosen to abandon the poor and special needs students in exchange for giving the privileged yet another advantage. Why are we not using our resources to teach our students to be successful in the future economy? Why are you purposefully choosing to preferentially support the wealthy children in Texas; the ones who currently enjoy a multitude of advantages over the rest of our kids?

All Texas students deserve your support, your efforts, and your concern.

If you genuinely care for the success of school children in Texas, you will vote against this bill.

Lesly Carbajal
Self
Austin, TX

Opposed to SB 8 and all bills taking tax money from public schools.

Charlie Bryan
Spring ISD
Conroe, TX

No

Carl Jones, Mt
TDP Rural Caucus State Field Coordinator
Spicewood, TX

I strongly OPPOSE SB 8! Public tax dollars should NOT be doled out for private schools! I SUPPORT adequately funding public schools and increasing salaries for teachers and staff!

Katie Hays, Rev.
self, pastor
Fort Worth, TX

Public money should stay in public education, for the good of our whole citizenry -- rather than a voucher system that privileges the few and gives public money to private systems that don't pretend to serve all families with equity. After raising my own kids with the help of public schools, I happily pay my rising property taxes in a wealthy suburban district (House District 96, Mansfield ISD) knowing that the money will be distributed fairly through the public education system. My mom was a rural Texas ISD principal; my dad was on the school board for years before that; I was educated in a tiny West Texas ISD and went on to higher education at U.T. Austin, M.I.T., Yale, and beyond. Public schools are the backbone of towns like my hometown and of our state. Plus, educating each others' kids is one of the ways we love our neighbors like Jesus asked us to. No vouchers, no public money in private education, for Christ's actual sake.

Rainbow Di Benedetto
self, Director
Austin, TX

I oppose the creation of a voucher program that will take money away from our already struggling public schools. Please say NO to SB 8. Thank you.

Rachel Beavers
self/teacher
Corpus Christi, TX

As a proud Texas public school teacher, I respectfully request that you do NOT defund public education through the use of vouchers. We are facing a critical shortage of teachers in Texas and taking money from public schools and putting it towards a voucher program will further inhibit our districts from hiring the best and brightest as public school teachers. In addition, vouchers leave the most vulnerable and those who lack basic access to transportation out of the equation; vouchers and education savings accounts only help those who already have the ability to send their children to charter and private schools. Public schools are the foundation of learning and economic growth and development in our great nation!

Akeena McDonald
--None--
Missouri City, TX

I vote no

Andreanna Ditton
Self
Buda, TX

As a parent with a student in public school, as a former teacher and educator, and as a citizen, I strongly oppose the legislatures efforts to strip money from public schools by pretending that the voucher system is anything but a way to further dismantle public education by a conservative legislative body. Public schools are the hearts of local communities, and the voucher program, while pretending to give parents "choices" is actually just a way to take money away from a basic right of the citizenry -- strong, stable public education. That should be the defining factor of any education bill -- putting money into schools, not taking people away from them.

Karen Crawford
Self. Nurse practitioner
Houston, TX

Please support public schools in Texas and vote NO on SB 8. I am very unhappy with this attempt to take funds from public education.

Cezanne Enriquez
Teacher Taft High School Northside Independent School District
San Antonio, TX

I'm a public high school teacher in this state and I'm emphatically against this bill. How can you even think that parents want to send their children to either private or charter schools? It's easy for you to say this because you have never once stepped into a public school classroom and seen how intelligent and hard working our students are. If you push this you are taking away: THE ARTS, COMPETITIVE SPORTS, ORCHESTRA, BAND, and so many other things. As someone that did go to private schools, I did not have the same thing that my friends who went to public schools that I wish I had when I was in school. Are you really going to give families for each child \$10,000 each year when a private school alone will cost that in one semester? What are parents going to do with children that are of varying ages? With a family of 4 to 5 children all in different grades, where the hell are you going to get the \$50,000 that it would cost to give that family? I know that you are not going to take it out of your pocket, god forbid. You're not a teacher and you have no idea what it is like day after day. It doesn't matter if you work in a charter school, or private. Yes the classes are smaller, but if you pass this you are taking jobs away from teachers. **DO NOT TAKE ANYMORE JOBS AWAY FROM TEACHERS.** Put that money that you have magically made appear, to the public schools. Give that money to the programs for Special Ed, the arts and other programs in these schools. Instead of making these decisions for parents and students, why don't you all put your money where your mouth is.

Carolyn Nieland, Mrs.
Self/Retired
Alamo, TX

Please help save public schools in Texas from being defunded through a so-called voucher program. This is a scheme to siphon money away from public schools to profit private entities less interested in education than in the money to be realized!

Loren Boyd
Self, Public Educator
Austin, TX

This latest attempt to push voucher programs in the state would drain tax dollars from neighborhood public schools for every student to subsidize tuition at private and religious schools for a few. These schools are unregulated, unaccountable to taxpayers, and do not have to meet the same fiscal and educational standards required of our public schools. All while offering exclusive tax breaks for wealthy donors.

Public funds should stay with children in Texas public schools.

All Texas students deserve an education that prepares them to succeed, not just students at exclusive private schools.

Steven G. Kellman
Dr. (Mr.)
Shavano Park, TX

Public education is an essential ingredient in a free society. Public funding for private and parochial schools diverts resources from neighborhood schools to institutions that are only minimally accountable to standards of scholarship, access, and openness. I urge you to oppose any measure that would authorize vouchers to pay for tuition at non-public schools.

Elena Cataldo, Professor
Self
Spring, TX

I vote NO! This bill will destroy the public school system in Texas! It will not benefit the majority of students. It will decimate music and sports programs within this state that benefit many children of ALL economic backgrounds! It will also weaken any assistance that Special Needs students of all ages require to be successful!! I VOTE NO.

Ana Reyes-Garcia
Teachers
Brownsville, TX

Do not rush this bill in a private way!!! We have the right to have this bill discussed publicly.

Meagan Pike Dean
Self
Hutto, TX

I've been a public school teacher for seven years, and currently work as an educator and supervisor of preservice teachers. This means I've seen the results of disparate and inequitable funding throughout school districts in a shared metropolitan area. What we need to do is fully fund our existing public schools — the schools that have already been tasked with educating every child in the neighborhood, without restrictions or admission requirements. What we do NOT need is a voucher program that takes money away from those schools, making fulfillment of their responsibility even harder.

It's quite clear that bills like this are designed to undermine public education, with an eventual goal of full privatization. By taking funding from public schools, we ensure that they fail. That failure is then used to justify the need for parental choice, further reduction of public school, and so forth until the entire system is undermined. Thus, the space is being created for education to be something that profits private owners rather than public good. Vouchers are a step away from regulated systems that ensure everyone, not just a privileged few, gets a fair shot.

We need to ensure that all parents have the opportunity to send their children to a fully funded public neighborhood school. Stop pursuing vouchers and instead look to how to improve our existing systems.

Arthur Valdez
self
San Antonio, TX

cutting school funding is not the way to assure students an education. Vouchers are not the answer either. Have you people figured out if a home schooling parent is spending proposed allotted money appropriately?
If a parent chooses to send their kids to private schools, why is the state planning to provide them tuition money? This is public education funding, not private school funding. If a parent wants to send their kids to private school, sounds like they can afford the tuition. Stop useless welfare spending on those who don't need it, spend it on those who need this funding....

Keep public schooling alive and well

Christopher Encino
Self / Teacher
San Antonio, TX

It is important that you respect public schooling and reject school vouchers!

Dustin Fair
Self
Cypress, TX

I believe the committee should respect public schools and educators by rejecting school vouchers.

Laura Perna
self, communications director
Austin, TX

In my work as an advocate for Texans with disabilities, I have encountered numerous concerns about this bill from educators, parents, and other advocates. Federal law provide rights and protections for students with disabilities in public schools. But those rights and protections do not apply to private schools, and there is no guarantee of due process in the private sector for students with disabilities to receive a free appropriate public education.

In addition, under a voucher system, families could face significant barriers to access such as:

1. Reconciling education saving account (ESA) amounts with the actual cost of private services: The average private school tuition in Texas is \$10,087 for elementary schools and \$11,638 for high schools, with additional costs for application and enrollment fees, adaptive equipment, related services like therapy and resource, evaluation fees, and specialized instruction and materials.
2. Availability of private schools and providers: Private school availability varies widely in Texas and those that do exist can establish very selective program enrollment criteria, such as requiring certain performance on entry assessments, establishing IQ thresholds, and denying access based on diagnosis, discipline history, or religious adherence.
3. Specialized programs: Private schools do not necessarily serve all grade levels or genders. Others hold themselves out to be "special education" schools. which negates any opportunity for meaningful inclusion with non-disabled peers or LRE.
4. Lack of accountability: Private schools are not required to employ certified teachers or conduct criminal background checks.- Source of tuition discrimination: Private schools may perceive accepting ESAs as a risk in the event a family may be unable to pay the difference out of pocket or absorb future tuition increases.
5. Confidentiality: The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) ensures that public schools maintain educational records, which parents have a right to access, and which may not be released without written parental consent. Most elementary and secondary private schools do not receive federal funding, and therefore are not required to comply with this safeguard.
6. Wait-lists and maintaining enrollment once a student is accepted.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.

Thomas Nieland, Mr.
Self/Education
Alamo, TX

Please help save our public schools by preventing the profit seeking private entities from siphoning money away in so-called "vouchers"! They're not as interested in education as they are in the money to be acquired!

Morgan Hutto
Self
Arlington, TX

This bill will completely ruin public education in Texas specifically rural schools. This bill will allow parents to exploit the system and not educate their children which will have lasting impact on Texas.

Sydney Greenblatt, ms
self
Houston, TX

As a Texas voter/resident I am opposed to SB 8. Please support public education/schools

Mary Reder
Self, retired
Plano, TX

I am opposed to this bill. In other states that have attempted this, it has been a disaster for our public schools. Families already able to pay for private schools get a freebie gift from the state and I know we upper middle class citizens dont really need any more handouts. Substandard schools will proliferate to take the voucher payments from families who will then get a worse educational experience than if we just adequately fund public schools.. save our state dollars for things that matter and make a difference.

Christy Slocum, Ms.
Self, Teacher
El Paso, TX

Vouchers are detrimental to Public schools. While parents should advocate for the benefit of their student, taking money away from public schools only creates more of detrimental conditions. I work in a Title 1 school where many students are low income. Our students rely on funding to have free breakfast and lunch programs, many of them it's the only time they eat. Increase the spending for public schools to have better access to resources and supplies to help Texans compete. The future is our children, do we want to destroy that chance??

Janis Fiske-Genest
SELF/Retired
TOMBALL, TX

I am urging you to vote no on SB 8/ Voucher Bill. Vouchers Divert Funds from public schools to unregulated and unaccountable private schools. If this bill passes there will be hundreds of private schools popping up all over the state. Many will be run by unscrupulous people just out to make money off the backs of children in the State of Texas. Let's better fund the public schools providing all children with a good education.

Private schools should be offering scholarships to families that cannot afford to pay the expensive tuition that they charge.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Janis Fiske-Genest
17411 Elverson Oaks Dr.
Tomball, TX 77377
832-7615091

Emily Lawrence
Self/Teacher
Lufkin, TX

As a public educator of 8 years, I urge you to vote NO to HB 8. Voucher Systems are bad for the majority of Texas children, and, therefore, for our great state's future. Voucher systems only benefit the children of wealthy parents, not the millions of bright, responsible future leaders who happen to have working class parents.

Mark Ramsey, P.E.
self, engineer
Spring, TX

I support Sen. Creighton's SB8 and committee subs with and without amendments. This is so long overdue it is truly hard to believe it has not yet been accomplished in Texas after over two decades of R leadership. It is past time to get this done. Freedom works. Competition works. -- Mark

Shelby O'Brien
Self/Lawyer
Austin, TX

On behalf of myself and my children, I am strongly opposed to this voucher bill. There are so many issues with this bill. The bill will take away funding for public schools when this state already underfunds public education. The bill incorrectly school is around \$8,000 a year. No quality private school costs \$8,000 a year. Only those with means will be able to afford private school even with a voucher. Additionally, as a mom to a child who receives special education services, there are definitely no private schools catering to kids with special needs who also need behavioral support. Private schools don't have to implement IEPs and aren't beholden to IDEA like public schools are. This bill will sow divisions between the haves and have nots, is discriminatory, and is obviously intended to eviscerate public education.

Sade Hogue Tate, Mrs.
CVPE
Houston, TX

Please don't take our voice away as a parent and an advocate for access to great public education

Garett Trietsch
self - Systems Engineer
Allen, TX

This bill is just going to take money out of public schools and put it into the pockets of big business. Please vote NO, and instead invest in our public schools and teachers.

Laura Almon
Self
Georgetown, TX

Creighton stated that the majority of Texans want "school choice", which is false. In April the majority of the House voted against using tax dollars toward voucher programs. This only leaves public schools with fewer students, and fewer dollars. This will ruin the public education system for rural districts. The students in low grade schools even with a voucher will never be able to pay tuition of private schools so this will leave only the rich receiving these benefits and further the segregation of the rich and poor and people of color. And this is all because Republicans don't want students learning history?? As a tax payer I want that \$8-10k/child you want to give out in vouchers instead given to each struggling public education teacher that the state is refusing to provide to them. Teachers are leaving because they can't afford to teach and can't handle the fears of school shootings. As elected representatives of the state of Texas you should be focused on protecting our children and teachers with sensible gun laws and adequate pay. But instead you are focusing on furthering the divide, furthering segregation and totally destroying the public education system that so many rely on. This is a horrible bill and I 100% do NOT support it.

Zulema Chavez
Self
Dallas, TX

Hello my name is Zulema Chavez, I am a parent and an educator: As your constituent, I urge you to vote NO on SB 8, a voucher bill that as amended will actually expand the number of students that could qualify and potentially cost the state billions of dollars. Further, private schools cannot be compelled to admit these students, as many of them don't already, which will result in untested and unproven fly-by-night operations to pop up around the state acting like private schools and failing our students for profit.

Even if an existing private school will accept students covered, the bill does not address the tuition gap between what quality private schools charge and the voucher would be worth, an amount Texas families in dire economic straits cannot afford to pay.

This bill would cost Texas taxpayers and under-funded public schools untold billions of dollars a year in revenue to enrich private schools and for profit opportunists. The Senate version of SB 8 would cost \$1 billion a year within a few years.

As an educator as well as a parent whose children attend public schools, I believe it is important that you do not advocate or vote to divert state tax dollars from public to private schools. I oppose SB 8 and all other vouchers and related schemes — including education savings accounts, tax-credit scholarships and for-profit charter and virtual schools — that use tax dollars to pay private school tuition for selected students while undermining public schools where the vast majority of Texas students are educated.

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

Vouchers will do nothing to address the teacher shortage and may very well worsen it, if districts losing tax dollars to private schools are forced to lay off teachers and other employees.

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

Your “NO” vote on SB 8 — and all vouchers and education savings accounts — is a vote in support of Texas students, educators and public education.

jannet gomez santin
myself
spring, TX

we want funds for our children's ar homeschooling

kathleen madera
self
Aledo, TX

As a parent and as a VOTER, I do not support CCSB8. The most important function in society is education, and sadly, year after year, Texas misses the mark. Year after year, children, who will one day sit in your seats, attend school only to learn how to pass an assessment. Not only is this damaging to their futures, our futures, it's ruining the public school system in Texas. This bill moves from once a year assessment in grades 3-8, to 3 times a year, with no time limits. From 15 tests to 42. This is not education. This is not a measure of learning. These assessments cannot and have never measured a student's growth. To measure growth, you must use a GRADE LEVEL ASSESSMENT, you must NOT try to measure college readiness. While I do support the elimination of graduation requirements, based on testing, this has never been required by federal law and our students should never be subjected to such. They deserve an education. Additionally, the use of the TSIA2, hasn't been validated: that study hasn't even been started. The TSIA2 wasn't created to have set scores for pass/fail, only to give an approximation of a student's college readiness. In addition, the College Board doesn't release any questions for TSIA2 because adaptive testing requires a huge bank of questions. The state cannot use the TSIA2 and require access of the test to parents.

Our collective goal must be;

1. Reduce standardized testing to no more than is required by FEDERAL LAW.
2. Eliminate high stakes on students. Drill it and Kill it, high stakes testing does nothing to support education. Evidence of this is easily found, just look at where Texas ranks nationally in education.

You must do better. My students attend an A-rated district. Students in this district are great test takers, unfortunately, that means absolutely nothing.

Jovanna David
Self, Educator
HOUSTON, TX

I am asking you to protect neighborhood schools and oppose private school vouchers in Texas. Private voucher schemes pose a significant threat to public education in Texas and must be stopped.

All Texas students deserve an education that prepares them to succeed, not just students at exclusive private schools or for-profit charter networks. The Texas state constitution says our Legislature is responsible for funding our neighborhood public schools for students, not subsidizing tuition for wealthy families at exclusive private and religious schools that pick and choose who will enroll.

As a concerned Texan, I ask you to vote down any voucher scheme that diverts tax dollars from neighborhood public schools. Public dollars should stay in public schools, and YOUR job should be to ensure that ALL Texans have access to good, neighborhood schools so that we are better prepared for the future. Every student should have good schools in their neighborhood, and until our legislators work for us, we will continue to fail our students and our state. Do your job, say no to sending public money to private schools, and support our existing public schools.

Preston Sabom
Self, Estimator
Houston, TX

I urge you, for the good of all Texans, to reconsider this voucher program. These private schools do not serve the best interests of children or their parents, and only exist to pad their bottom line. And now to do so, they want our hard-earned tax dollars? Can these businesses not stand on their own? Public funding should stay public and not used to make private businesses wealthier. Please, keep our schools funded and strong so that all Texans can have the education that they need in order to succeed. Texas children deserve better than this. My nephew deserves better than this. Do not let these wasteful, irresponsible vouchers come to pass.

Grace Paschal
self, public school clinic assistant
Garland, TX

VOTE NO ON SB 8. This is a direct attack on Texas public schools. To distribute taxpayer dollars for private school education is absolutely unacceptable and completely in violation of church/state separation. We have never and **SHOULD NEVER** pay taxes for private education - that is begging for the complete death of our public schools, which are already hanging in a fragile balance after Republican attacks on books, history education, separation of church and state, etc. Republicans in Texas want to see public schools GONE, because they know education is the way to freedom for oppressed people. All freedom of thought comes from education: knowledge is power. If they can destroy quality education and replace it with more religious indoctrination, they absolutely will. Our public schools are necessary to ensuring education for all, and they must be funded fully. Those who cannot afford private school even with vouchers or those who believe in the integrity of public education will be dramatically underserved if taxpayer dollars are given out for private schools instead. A party that consistently tries to undermine government assistance programs is suddenly changing its position and saying the government and tax dollars should fund absolutely unnecessary private school education. Republicans seem to believe that if you cannot afford food, you should starve quietly, so why should those who can't afford private school have a "government handout" (to speak GOP language) to access it? Public schools could be fantastic if Republicans would stop their violent attacks on it, if they were properly funded, if staff was fairly compensated. We have a solution to educational issues already -- it lies in our neglected, violated, embattled public schools. **VOTE NO ON SB 8. Do your job. Represent your people. WE WANT FUNDS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION, NOT MORE CHRISTIAN INDOCTRINATION.**

Michelle Vasquez
self
Houston, TX

Dear Committee,

Please respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Michelle Vasquez

Ellen Leyrer, Mrs
Texas Eagle Forum and self
Plano, TX

This bill may have good intentions, but it falls short in the areas of no government strings and calling our home schooling. I stand in opposition to this bill. Please oppose this bill that would do more harm than good. Thank you!

Jairia Diggs, Mrs.
Self - Parent
Northlake, TX

I'm listening to a supporter of Senate Bill 8 sharing testimony in favor of SB8. She just said, "What if you were the parent of one of these children who is need of choice." I AM THAT PARENT. My husband and I have fostered and adopted our autistic, intellectually disabled, bipolar student who does not have access to outside supports as there are NONE. We have researched facilities to help us meet the challenging behavioral needs of my son. No facility can take him as they are not staffed or equipped to meet his behavioral or educational needs. My family is NOT in poverty. As an educator in central office (a director of a decent-sized district), my family could never pay for a facility to meet his needs even with a "voucher" of \$8,000. I am offended that this testimony shared student behavior and mental health needs would be met should we receive funds to take him to a private school. Our family has partnered with MHMR, with law enforcement, with Residential Facilities, with the local school district, etc. At one point, our local school district paid for my son's 24-hour residential facility care for 2 years. Our son was dismissed as he met IEP goals but still had behavioral challenges. We have been in multiple psychiatric facilities, 4 residential treatment facilities and have had a co-conservatorship with the State of Texas. None of this worked. Our only option that we have had was having our son attend school online through our local public school under a medical designation. He receives 1:1 teaching for nearly 4 hours 3 days/week. This is the most education that he has received in over 4 years. I'm disgusted to hear that an ESSA Savings account will meet his needs. In addition, I have 2 other children who qualified for ESSA resources through their Special Education IEPs. However, this funding ran out quickly as I'm constantly reminded by the monthly emails that I receive that they are on a waitlist and have been for well over a year. Private school funding is NOT THE ANSWER! Fund public schools and special education within these schools!

Juan Flores
Juan H Flores -Self - Retired
San Antonio, TX

With my four children and their children parental rights relating to their public education have never been an issue. Public school voucher program are demonstrately bad on adequate funding for public education and on reducing the quality and equality of opportunity to access a quality education for all children. Please oppose SB 8, or any public school voucher program.

Leslie Ashton
self
AUSTIN, TX

I urge a NO vote on SB8. The amount of funding for public education needs to increase--not decrease.

Rodney Brown
SELF-
Austin, TX

Stop! Do not play the sneaky game of hiding and doing dirty work without commentary from the public. The public has made intentions clear and we do not want to see you destroy our funding for public schools by using OUR tax money to benefit private schools answerable to no one except the chosen few. This is wrong on its face! Vote against SB8!!!!

Gary Grisaffe
self
Austin, TX

In general, its always a bad idea to take money from our public school. But this one is especially bad idea. Don't make this law.

Courtney Gore
School board trustee and parent/Self
Granbury, TX

Please support students and teachers in TX and vote NO on SB8.

Nicole Shelley
Self
El Paso, TX

This bill should not move forward. A voucher program in Texas is not in the best interest of our students and families. It will hurt rural schools and support families that already have the funds to send their children to public schools. When vouchers passed in Arizona, 75% of students whose families used the program were already enrolled in private schools. I have been a teacher in several states over the last 10 years. For two years my public school was even forced to share a campus with a charter school. The teachers in the charter school were not properly trained to work with our student population and many parents were dismayed by the education their children received there. I don't want the children and parents in Texas to deal with this type of problem. Public schools are held accountable to for testing and meeting academic standards, which private schools are not. Please say no to SB 8!

Margaret Creamer
Self
League City, TX

I am opposed to SB8 which would be a drain on the funding of public schools. Regarding giving students the option of leaving a failing school, there is already a public school program in place for this. And private schools do not have to accept students that they choose to exclude. I would point out that this could mean excluding students with disabilities. Finally, I graduated from a Catholic High School and I am a firm believer in the separation of church and state. I am opposed to any tax dollars subsidizing a religiously affiliated school.

Claudia Ellis
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am asking my representative to vite no to this bill because it will hurt public education

James Finley
self
San Antonio, TX

I am writing in opposition to SB 8. As a teacher and as a parent of a kid with disabilities who attends public school, I strongly urge you to increase funding for public schools and for special education and not to promote vouchers, which defund public schools. I am especially upset by plans to tie special education funding to the voucher proposals. It's disingenuous and damaging to suggest that kids with disabilities will be served by such a plan when public schools are legally able to discriminate against kids such as my son. The place for him and other Texas kids is public schools, and I implore you to fund them adequately. Thank you.

Roy Marchant
Texas American Federation of Teachers
Richardson, TX

Respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8.

Petra Medina
None
Pflugerville, TX

Please Vote no on this bill. It diverts taxpayer money to pay for a service public schools already do an outstanding job offering. I teach emergent bilingual students who are excelling at school. Help me support their learning by finding public schools properly.

James Fleetwood, Mr.
Self/retired teacher
San Antonio, TX

All in favor of this bill putting the parents' own tax monies back into their hands to use at their discretion for their own children?

Craig Campbell
ARTA
Austin, TX

No welfare for the rich. No vouchers.

Michele Bock, Ms.
Self, Retired Teacher
Fort Worth, TX

Please vote against voucher schemes of any kind. Texas education needs to stay public and free.

Kelly Rasti, Director of Government Relations
Northside ISD
San Antonio, TX

ESAs and vouchers lack accountability and transparency. Private schools and entities are not required to adhere to minimum safety standards set by the TEA, do not have elected board members, are not subject to annual academic and financial reporting, are not subject to the Open Meetings Act nor do they have to comply with Public Information Requests. They are not subject to state and federal special education laws, they are not subject to the A-F accountability rating system, TEA does not have oversight of them, they do not have to have a SHAC (seemingly noteworthy considering renewed focus on sexual education), their library books will not be subject to any related laws passed by the 88th legislature (nor will they be subject to really any of the bills passed by this legislature), their teachers and employees do not have to take the same required trainings (including safety), they are not subject to the Reading Academies of HB 3, no State-required teacher certifications, no requirement for their APPOINTED boards to adopt instructional materials in an open meeting, no requirement for board members to go through state-required trainings...

This list could go on for some time. The legislature should focus on fully funding and supporting public schools, as is constitutionally required, rather than diverting taxpayer dollars to private entities with no accountability or oversight.

Keegan Webb
self / Elementary Principal
Gatesville, TX

I am an educator and constituent in your district, and I'm writing to ask you to please vote no to SB 8 due to reasons below and the negative effect will have on our Texas Public Schools.

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Jennifer Jordan
Self parent and teacher
Fort Worth, TX

Public funds should not be used to support school vouchers. If parents want to send their child to a private/specialty school, then they can pay for it. School vouchers will continue to promote an unequal playing field. Private schools do not have to follow special education law and they don't even have to accept students with disabilities. Both of my kids wouldn't be able to go to a private school for this reason. And specialty schools cost more, which would still be a cost burden to parents. Public education is the foundation of society. Diverting funds from this already underfunded system chisels away at this foundation. Please vote no to SB8.

Kristin Gust
Self - Homeschool parent/educator
Pflugerville, TX

“Be thankful we’re not getting all the government we’re paying for.” - Will Rogers

We can all agree that our state, and our country, thrive best when we have a well educated society. How is this best achieved? The bills up for consideration make the case that an option for state-funded private education is the answer, but I argue that government funding of private schools will, eventually, bring about exactly the opposite.

Educational Savings Accounts are not in the best interest of our state, our schools, or our children. In the Great State of Texas, we already have complete freedom in school choice, and supplemental funding for private education should come from private sources, not public money. Tax revenue for education should be directed exclusively toward public schools, and those monies should be used to fully fund and improve those schools. Private schools (including homeschools) currently have the freedom to operate without regulation or testing requirements, but once schools begin to receive public funds regulations and requirements are bound to follow in short order.

One of the beautiful things about Texas, in my eyes, is the freedom I have to educate my child in the way that I see fit. I currently have the complete freedom to choose by which means, mode, and method I will impart knowledge, skills, and values to my student. As a homeschooler it is my privilege to educate my child personally, and to sacrifice in order to do so. It is not an easy sacrifice financially, logistically, or personally - and yet I cherish it.

Many are arguing that ESAs will allow low-income families to have more “choice” because the funding will open doors to private education they can otherwise not afford. I argue that these funds will not be sufficient for them to put their students in the high quality private schools, but only smaller local private schools that may or may not be any better than the local public schools. Additionally, once the floodgates of public funding open, new, sometimes questionable, schools will pop up everywhere. Once these schools are receiving public funding they will inevitably be subjected to testing and curriculum requirements which will bring them more in line with the public school education these parents fled. Promises that private schools will keep their autonomy will be broken, because where public dollars flow, accountability and rules will ALWAYS follow (they must). Please, preserve the freedom of our private education by keeping it PRIVATE. Invest this money instead in building up our public schools.

Side note: If you have not yet read the essay “The Lost Tools of Learning” by Dorothy Sayers, I highly recommend it. Our schools need to return to a model of education which raises thinkers, not merely those who can pass a standardized test and then purge that information. Personally, I have little use for algebra on a daily basis, yet logic, dialectic, rhetoric? These things can benefit us all every day of our lives.

Shari Mason
Shari
DUMAS, TX

I am a public school teacher who raised two daughters in public school and currently have three granddaughters attending public school as well. I know all too well how important it is to protect our funding for our students. Please respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers. Vote NO on SB 8. Thank you.

Lisa Goar
Self
Waller, TX

I do not support funding for a private school. In years pass, it was up to the parents/guardians to provide the tuition for private schools. As a taxpayer, I should not have to pay for a private education for someone else’s child when public is provided. The parent needs to get involved more in the public sector OR, like the rest of my friends and family that chose private, pay out of pocket.

David Cannon
Self, parent
Austin, TX

I am the father of two school-aged children, and I OPPOSE SB 8. I urge all members of our state legislature to say no to any education savings account or voucher. Instead, focus on strengthening our public schools by addressing important issues such as school safety, teacher shortages, and student funding/recapture. We should invest in quality public school choices and innovative programs that benefit all students, rather than diverting public tax dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

Texas public education funding is already ranked amongst the bottom 10 states in the nation, as reported by Education Week - Quality Counts. Diverting much-needed money from our public schools to private or for-profit institutions through voucher programs would further exacerbate this issue and hinder the ability of our public schools to provide a quality education for all students.

Private schools are not required to accept all students with a voucher, and they are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. Taxpayer dollars should not go to private institutions that do not have to play by the same rules as public schools, and vouchers expose taxpayers to the risk of fraud.

Voucher programs reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and have a long history of expanding beyond their intended scope, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows that vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Lastly, vouchers impose a burden on middle- and lower-class families, as they rarely cover the full cost of private school tuition, leaving families to pay the difference, which could be tens of thousands of dollars. This places an unfair financial burden on families who may already be struggling financially.

It is crucial to prioritize the needs of our public schools and ensure that public tax dollars remain in public schools. Vouchers have a detrimental impact on our public education system, and we must protect the rights and opportunities of all students in Texas.

VOTE NO TO SENATE BILL 8!

Erin Stockton
Self (Parent and Public Educator in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD)
Cypress, TX

Good Morning,
As a conservative, Christian, public educator, and parent I oppose this bill.

I believe in the educational right for all students. I believe when a society educates all, it helps society as a whole. I have two children of my own and to be honest, the past couple of years in education has made me question my commitment to public education. However, if we want our society to thrive, we should be placing more resources into the public education system, NOT pulling resources from them.

I have heard from the proponents of educational vouchers that it will not pull away from public education. But I just cannot see how that can be true. What I see happening is a further divide from the have and have-nots. Those who can afford to pull from the public education due to fear mongering...will. But I guess I am also falling prey to fear. Fear that our school system will not be able to get the funding needed to help ALL students. Students like Alfred, who was able to take advantage of dual credit classes as well as an EMT-Basic certification. His goal is to become a firefighter. Students like Javion, who has found his path junior year and is studying to be a real estate agent. Students like Zoe, who is earning her Associate Degree before her high school diploma. Students like Sean who has been deemed homeless by our school district, feels unwanted by his parents, but feels belonging and family at our school. There are so many products of public school education who have gone on to thrive and give back to society. And I do fear that this bill will take away resources and force school districts to cut programing that is essential to helping society function.

Private schools may have the monetary funding, but they do not have the comprehensive pathways that they public school system does. While I have not worked in private education, I have been a counselor and had to enroll several students who were not allowed back in the private school. I have researched surrounding private schools and do not believe their impact on society to be as great as the public school environment.

What I would like to see, is a commitment to helping our public educators thrive. Allow us to hold students and parents accountable for truancy and for misbehavior at school. Help our society by placing a higher value on education in order to encourage different cultures to increase the value. Keep our schools safe by providing more funding for officers.

I am fortunate to be in a great district, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD. I have worked in several of the schools and feel that the educational opportunities exist in each of our schools. We do our best every day to help EVERY CHILD who walks in the doors.

Help our society by keeping the funding in public schools and supporting public educators in the challenges we face. Please vote NO to the voucher system.

Thank you!
Sincerely,
Erin Stockton

Darby Tobolka
Self- proud public school educator
AUSTIN, TX

Public funds should NOT be taken away from already underfunded public schools. Every American deserves to be a part of an equitable education system so that they can positively contribute to society. I think everyone deserves a high quality education regardless of how much money you have, the color of your skin, or who you worship. If public funds are robbed to provide discounts to private education then only public school kids suffer. You create a bigger problem of the "haves" and the "have nots." Let's properly fund our public schools, improve testing practices, focus on less and more important concepts (rather than hundreds of standards per grade level) and see what happens. I think about the future of society when I consider using public funds to pay for vouchers and I get angry. I want the most educated and adaptable people caring for me when I'm old. I want to see others be able to provide for their families because they have good jobs. When we all are successful we are happy and I want everyone to be happy and productive.

Jill Lankford
Self/retired educator
Midland, TX

As a retired public educator who devoted 34 years to serving students in Texas, I oppose providing state funds to private schools, home schoolers or any type of education savings accounts.

Jana Fite
Self
Boerne, TX

Vote NO on SB8!!

Tammie Gilfillian
Self - school counselor
Stowell, TX

Please say NO to HB 8. Our public schools, teachers and students deserve better !

Linda Litzinger
Texas Parent to Parent - Public Policy Specialist, and self (public policy)
Austin, TX

Thank you for this opportunity to speak against SB8. Texas Parent to Parent is a statewide nonprofit serving families who have children with all types of disabilities, mental health or special healthcare needs. We do not support SB8, because private schools are exempt from adhering to federal IDEA rules, and because vouchers will weaken public school budgets. Thank you

Dorcas Schroeder
Self
Brenham, TX

I support school choice

Dawn Goings
Self - Special Education Teacher
Paris, TX

The committee should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers.

Mary Ellen Scribner
AAUW (American Association of University Women) Austin Public Policy Committee
Austin, TX

AAUW Austin believes that private voucher schemes pose a significant threat to public education in our state and must be stopped. Education savings accounts, tax credits, and voucher programs are a peril to the principles of the public school system of Texas and the approximately 5.5 million students it serves. The Texas state constitution says our Legislature is responsible for funding our neighborhood public schools for students, not subsidizing tuition for wealthy families at exclusive private and religious schools that pick and choose who they will enroll. Our association firmly believes that public dollars should stay in public schools. Please vote down any voucher scheme that diverts tax dollars from neighborhood public schools.

Colleen Wu
self
Austin, TX

I am strongly opposed to this and any parent "choice" or voucher related bill. In every state these have been tried the effect has been to destroy public education systems while enriching private schools. These bills are just an attempt so subsidize the wealthy to send their children to private schools. Additionally, these private schools are not required to education ALL children leading to inequality. Studies have shown that students educated in these private schools show no improvement in outcomes and in fact often show a decrease in test scores.

Lee Ann Watson, Mrs
Self, Educator
Coppell, TX

Support public education and vote no

Ruth Torres
Self
Dallas, TX

If I gave you 3 plates of food that all looked and smelled good, I am giving you choice. If I do not tell you 2 of the plates have an ingredient that will make you sick, I have given you uninformed choice. Such is the “choice” of charters and vouchers.

This issue isn't about party, it's about profit at the expense of our kids future.

A basic principle of government & basic RESPECT for parents is to LISTEN to us on matters that concern our children. So please save the rhetoric in valuing parents and giving parental choice when you don't even give us the option to speak and be heard on last minute changes to a bill that will impact our kids education for decades.

#Vouchers are a TRILLION dollar public land grab so taxpayers pay for private lands & no bid contracts while robbing kids of quality public education, which is guaranteed by our constitution with uncertified teachers, resulting in increased crime & incarceration in 4 profit prisons.

The top zip codes for incarceration in TX have the lowest performing schools and are filled with charter schools that are doing worse or at best equal with ISD schools. Nothing about these bills is improving education outcomes but worsening them, especially for our most vulnerable and marginalized kids. This is the epitome of abuse of power and failure to protect them.

All of this is happening for politicians profit from campaign contributors. Abbott doesn't care about not getting elected again, he has many millions in the bank but there will be a reckoning for every Judas politician.

I have seen this many times in corporate America. Senior execs are preparing for retirement so they implement significant changes for their own short term profit. By the time the changes take effect they are long gone enjoying golf & drinks while everyone else is left trying to pick up the pieces. I BEG you to pay attention and not align with these strategies. Do NOT sell us out. Keep your oath to God & US, not any person, party or personal profit.

See: Isaiah 10:1-4: Woe to those who write unjust laws and oppressive decrees to deny the people justice and fair treatment, to take advantage of the vulnerable. Where will you go when accountability is required? What good will the riches received by evil gain benefit you?

Please see BackpackFullofCash.com showing how vouchers and charters have already impacted other cities.

No matter how much rhetoric and manipulated spin there is for vouchers and charters, they don't give parents choice, they take choice away from us and give all the power and benefits of taxpayer dollars to private entities absent oversight.

By the time the public lands taxpayers have been paying for decades are empty, abandoned to be sold for low prices as kids shift to charters and vouchers and the damage has been realized, the cost will be too great to recreate our current infrastructure and the politicians that profited will be long retired enjoying their wealth at the expense of our kids futur

Ruth Torres
Self
Dallas, TX

No VOUCHERS.

2/2.

We will have the same thing happen to public education that has happened when our hospitals become for profit and reduced or closed, the same thing when Walmart comes in and drives out all small businesses then leaves creating food desert.

Taxpayer \$ must NOT pay for private lands, taxpayers must retain our public lands and assets.

The "church" and private schools can hire whoever they want. They don't have to go through background or drug checks. They don't have to have cameras or policies that prevent adults alone with kids or prevent kids being left unsupervised. The church has hidden and protected child molesters for DECADES, an issue still not resolved to prevent reoccurrence and you want to hand them more kids, our most vulnerable kids?

We don't want more tests on our kids to pay test makers to stress our kids out and have zero change to their curriculum or education path.

We don't want unequal systems. We need certified teachers and equal quality systems for all kids.

The same performance requirements, the same testing and management policies, the same PIA and Open Meetings, the same contract bid statutes, should ALL apply to ALL education providers receiving tax payer money.

SARA FERNANDEZ, Mrs
Self
Houston, TX

School Vouchers will not serve Texas students. Voucher money would not be linked to any form of accountability. The money would be going into a black hole and public schools would suffer further budget cuts. Educational funding needs to be accountable on multiple levels.

Elena Westbrook
Self
Fairview, TX

Please vote NO and reject this backdoor attempt to definable public social under the guise of "parent choice." Strong public education is essential to democracy and economic strength. Furthermore, public schools educate all children, regardless of handicap or family wealth.

Our public schools are already dangerously underfunded. Don't take away even more. Vouchers aren't just a threat to children: they are a threat to our entire society.

Penny McDonald
Self
Carrollton, TX

Vouchers should not be allowed.
They will erode funding for public education

Jennifer Kost, Mrs.

self / mother & school-based volunteer

Austin, TX

Please vote this bill down.

At the very least, strike the proposed addition of Subchapter J, Education Savings Account Program, to Section 2.002. Chapter 29, Education Code. "Education Savings Account Programs" and "vouchers" for K-12 are terrible for students and their families, and for the state. Giving state money to unaccountable private institutions, including religious and for-profit institutions, is bad fiscal policy and is a gamble on educational outcomes for the next generation. Far from empowering parents, students' and parents' rights at private schools are limited compared to public schools.

Instead of funding special interests, fully fund public education in Texas. It is an abdication of responsibility to say "some public schools are failing students" and not fix those schools.

- Just to keep pace with inflation, the basic allotment should be raised by \$1,000 this year.

- As I understand it, adding \$4,000 to the basic allotment would get Texas up to the national average in per-student funding.

- Additionally, we need to finally add an automatic inflation increase to the basic allotment.

- Changing the basic allotment to enrollment-based rather than attendance-based would help fund the schools the way they need to be funded - when students are absent, schools don't spend less on teachers, transportation, and HVAC costs - those are based on enrollment. Schools actually spend more resources on students who are chronically absent, trying to connect with families, resolve barriers to attendance, and catch students up on what they've missed.

Thank you for your time.

Vote "No" for all ESA/Voucher proposals.

Karina Quesada

Myself

Houston, TX

Good afternoon,

As a mother of a child who receives SpEd services and 2 other neurodivergent children, as well as being lifelong Texas resident and voter, I strongly urge you to vote against S.B. 8.

“Parental choice” is a LIE. The real choice will

lie with the private schools. And riddle me this, which private school is going to willingly choose my children who are more “expensive” & harder to educate? None of them will. By voting in favor of SB 8 you are voting in favor of allowing discriminating against Special needs kids and creating a separate system of education for them. Vouchers will cause even tighter budgets for public schools (slowly killing them) and the public schools will be left to educate my children with less resources than they have now! My children are worthy of a great public education. Instead of this mess please focus on making public education, great, comprehensive, free and something that is available to all children. Also please stop focusing on standardized tests which dumbs down the curriculum, kills curiosity and a love of learning.

School voucher proposals have come up many times in the legislature, and deservedly died when they are recognized by members of all parties as what they are -- attempts to privatize education and shift funds away from public education. My children, SpEd kids, and other at risk kids need you all to fight for their education and vouchers are not it.

Sincerely,

Karina Quesada

(832) 462-4175

Michelle Potter
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am commenting as a mother, as a taxpayer, and as a former public school 1st grade teacher. Our public school system is already underfunded in Texas. Funding has been siphoned off to charter schools. The last thing we need is to use taxpayer dollars to fund three separate school systems -- public, charter, and private. There has been a lot of discussion about "parent rights" as though the only people who have a stake in children's education are individual parents. We all have a stake in having an educated populace whether we currently have a child(ren) of our own in school or not. My tax dollars help pay for other people's children to go to school, which I am perfectly fine with as long as those tax dollars go to public schools. I can hold them accountable. I can help elect school board members. I can attend and speak out at school board meetings. I can run for school board. Where is the accountability for ESAs? There won't be any. Money will be diverted from the system that serves the HUGE majority of Texas students.

There has also been a lot of discussion about "parental choice." The truth is most school districts already offer choice . . . open enrollment, magnet schools, etc. So, this is clearly not really about choice. Let's look at an analogy. Let's say I decided I want to take my child to a private park at which I have to pay a fee to enter. I have the right to do that if I so choose rather than take my child to the public park that tax dollars support. But why on earth would I expect other people's tax dollars to pay for my child to go to the private park? Schools are not any different. I am not paying my taxes for that money to go to an individual parent for her/him to use as s/he wants. I am not paying my taxes for that money to go to a private school (or a private park). I want my tax dollars going to public schools.

Please vote against SB8. We need more funding for our public schools. Let's strengthen the system that we already have. Thank you/

Sean McGillicuddy
self
Austin, TX

School choice/vouchers will degrade the public education system. Please do no vote for this bill. The constitution requires a free public education and this would take dollars out of the hands of the schools.

Jane Weiner
self
Houston, TX

As a teacher I strongly urge you to vote against S.B. 8.

This bill would expand the number of required high-stakes standardized tests from 20 to 48 a child would be required to take over the course of their K-12 experience. It will narrow the curriculum even more.

School voucher proposals have come up many times in the legislature, and deservedly died when they are recognized by members of all parties as what they are -- attempts to privatize education and shift funds away from public education.

The latest iteration frames the issue as "parental choice," when in fact the real choice would lie with the private schools, which can accept or reject students at will based on which students are cheapest and easiest to educate. At-risk and Special Education students would be, as always, left to public schools with ever-tighter budgets.

PS: Thank the Democrats and Republicans King and Allison for their votes against vouchers last week and encourage them to vote no on this bill.

Since this voucher bill may get out of committee, if you live in Southwest Houston, call Houstonian State Rep Thierry and demand she stand with public schools. She changed her vote after the fact not to have a late night last minute voucher bill hearing and sided in support of holding one.

Janet Dudding
Self
Bryan, TX

GREAT BIG NO on this bill.

Irresponsible use of public funds on private schools.

No. No. No.

Monique Flanagan
Retired Educator
Glenn Heights, TX

Please vote NO. Public school funding should only be used for public schools.

Tara Young
Self software engineer
Georgetown, TX

Please vote no to school vouchers! The state is already bleeding funds from public education. I also do not support using public funds for religious schools. If parents want a religious education for their children, they can pay for parochial schools.

Eileen Dunne
self
Austin, TX

I am opposed to this bill and any voucher bills for the following reasons: - It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.

- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
 - It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
 - It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
 - It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.
-

MaryChris Gibbons, Ms
TSTA Retired
Ft Worth, TX

Any type of voucher money will ruin public education and hurt our most vulnerable children.

Hector Arce, Professor
Public schools
San Antonio, TX

Hot Wheels smells \$ and he wants it ??

Christine Sitzes
Court Reporter/self
San Antonio, TX

I am writing to you as a concerned taxpayer, voter and parent. I do not believe that vouchers are a good idea for public schools. I must not be alone since you are trying to sneak this bill through with zero in-person opportunities for the public to weigh in on your bill. The United States Constitution clearly states that there should be separation of church and state. Many of these charter schools are religious based and will try to indoctrinate their students in their beliefs. I attend church regularly and preferred to expose my child to our religious beliefs without worrying that her school would be religious. Not everyone believes the same thing and that is why the continued separation of church and state is so vitally important.

Fully funded nonreligious public schools would benefit all Texans, not a voucher system that lets rich folks send their kids to private schools on our dime. My property taxes are already high enough and we have a teacher pay crisis and other issues that would be better addressed by the Legislature focusing on funding the schools we already have and improving them instead of creating new problems with vouchers. My daughter was fortunate enough to attend a fine public school district and is now attending a public Texas university. I would hope you would continue to fund our public schools and give all other Texas children the same opportunities she had. Thank you for your time and please vote against this terrible idea.

Cathy Hazzard, Mrs.
San Antonio AFT Retirees Plus
San Antonio, TX

Reduction of state funding for Public Education will leave already underfunded schools with even less of the resources they need; unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose their students, making discrimination likely; this bill makes state and federal protections for students with disabilities optional for private schools, opening the door to further discrimination; this program is projected to cost Texans \$800 million dollars

Vote no on SB 8

Roxann Brent, Mrs
Self/Retired Compliance Officer
Magnolia, TX

No Vouchers.. Educational needs for students will not be accomplished.

Jennifer Swegler
Self- Teacher
Grand Prairie, TX

I do not believe there should be the creation of an education savings account program. I strongly believe that if the state of Texas would put their resources into the schools they have, rather than blame the system they created, things would vastly improve in the public education system.

JaLana Stewart, Teacher
Self/ Teacher
HUNTINGTON, TX

I am opposed to vouchers and the changes being proposed to STAAR are not the right changes.

Lynne Joynton
Self, retired
San Angelo, TX

I oppose this bill

Rachel Sneed
Self
bryan, TX

I do not support in any form the school voucher program. It is a taxpayer subsidy for wealthy students and will further harm low income students. Vouchers are another form of segregation and also violate the first amendment and the separation of church and state.

Anna Thomas, Mrs.
self
Belton, TX

I am opposed to this bill.

Margaret Talbot
self--independent biblical scholar and freelance editor
Austin, TX

I am against SB8 and encourage politicians who have the interest of Texans and our common good in their heart and mind to listen to experienced and effective educators and to young people as they seek solutions. Our public education system needs revitalizing. Creative solutions are crucial. Privatizing education (via "competition" that vouchers supposedly would encourage) is no more satisfactory a singular answer than testing (No Child Left Behind) was. At this point, given the information available, these two options of the past two decades reveal a distinct and tremendous lack of imagination. We cannot form a satisfactory and revitalized education system as long as we try to offer one so-called solution at a time.

In addition, I invite committee members to consider, alongside any concern with "parental rights," children's rights as articulated by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. I provide a link here to the children's version: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text-childrens-version>. Open minds and hearts are crucial to human thriving, and public education as a common good is crucial to a healthy democracy. We can do better than SB8.

Mary Frazier, Mrs.
self
Kyle, TX

I do not want the State to support private schools. Increase funding for public schools.

Irene Cardoso
Self - teacher
Dallas, TX

School choice vouchers hurt public schools and ultimately hurt students. Funding based on attendance has already hurt public schools. It will continue to do so if nothing is done. Private schools can turn away students with disabilities; I know this because I used to work at a private school. Students with disabilities are vulnerable and need services that are not provided by many private schools. No student should be educationally disadvantaged. If public schools were properly funded, this wouldn't be an issue. Tax payers should not be funding private schools!

EVE MARGOLIS

Self

Austin, TX

Representatives:

I vehemently oppose this bill. The different requirements for private schools and public schools is undeniable. The fact that public schools are underfunded is also undeniable as per the commissioner and national comparisons. Harrison and Schafer and Hefner continue to discount the importance of funding in the success of public education.

Teacher shortage is also a misnomer. There is no shortage of teachers, there is a shortage of adequate teaching positions. This bill is a conglomeration of other bills that harm public education and students.

Jonathan Manrique

Self - Teacher!

jersey village, TX

how is that parents supposedly know what is best for children? There is a reason why teachers have to get a degree and prepare themselves for this. As a teacher, I see questionable actions and decisions from the same parents you want to make school about. As teachers we are asked not only to impart knowledge and simply teach, we are asked to be mental health supporters and advocates, parent support, instill basic manners, and many times be more of a parent to children that we see more time during the day than their own parents... all while asking perfect STAAR scores so TEA do not come jumping on the district, school and teachers. It is sad that you all are playing politics with the education of students, while we have to teach understanding and equality in school, you all want to pass this bill that complies with what some parents want. Just so you know, it is an option for any parent to homeschool their children and teach them whatever values and even curriculum they want, with NO former college education in the side of the parent. So if that is an option, why is that instead of giving funds to schools and just pay to teachers, you want to give the option to parents to play with their education money?

Hacqui Dunleavy

Self

Austin, TX

As parents of public school children, I thoroughly reject school vouchers. This is not how you improve the education system. Listen to those in public education. Respect public education.

Jessica Hale

self

Austin, TX

Vouchers undermine strong public education and student opportunity. They take scarce funding from public schools—which serve 90 percent of students—and give it to private schools—institutions that are not accountable to taxpayers. Voucher systems increase costs, by requiring taxpayers to fund two school systems, one public and one private.

This means public school students have larger class sizes, and less access to modern technology, music instruments and science equipment, textbooks, and after-school programs which many working parents rely upon. Vouchers rarely cover the full tuition, so families who were promised a better education are left footing the bill.

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.

Furthermore, vouchers have been shown to not support students with disabilities, they fail to protect the human and civil rights of students, and they exacerbate segregation and discrimination. Vote NO on SB-8.

Carol Moncriste, Mrs
Self
Missouri City, TX

SB 8. School Vouchers

Julissa Martin
self - homemaker
Mission, TX

I support school choice!

Annette Orosco, Ms
self
Houston, TX

NO VOUCHERS!

I don't appreciate the shadiness of the house trying to rush a bill under the publics eyes. It makes you look bad. Like there is something to hide. We elected you and public school teachers are not being heard. I am against school vouchers. Our public schools are facing so much more than 20 years ago. Parents expect more from us, elected officials expect more from us, TEA expects more from us and you want to take away funds? Listen. to. us. No vouchers.

Susan Cooper
None
Richardson, TX

I believe in the concept of PUBLIC education. I am adamantly OPPOSED TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS. Vouchers would divert much needed funds away from public education. Voucher would go toward private schools, some of which are not adequately accredited. There for students on vouchers might receive an inferior education. As a taxpayer, I do not wish to support inferior education. As a taxpayer, I do not wish to support rich people who want to send their kids in an exclusive school. If they wish to do so, they should pay for it! As a tax payer, I also do not want to support other people's religious education, and I don't expect tax payers to pay for religious education for my kids. I interpret the concept of vouchers as a way of inserting religion into the public domain against our will. Religion is a private matter, and the concept of Separation of Church and state should not be violated!

Kathryn Stephenson, Mrs
Self - Regular Texans caring for more than myself
Murphy, TX

Vote NO to SB 8 and any other voucher scheme that would take taxpayer money from Texas public schools. We desperately need to put MORE money into truly PUBLIC education, not less. Look at other states who have done this -- it has not improved education outcomes. All kids need a shot at great education, not just the privileged. It's a joke to pretend that all people earning in the lower 30% of wages, or unhealthy parents can transport their kids to a quality private school offering the kind of great educational opportunities our public schools CAN offer locally. Parents are too taxed, spread too thin, and you're missing the obvious way to improve education -- provide what it costs to educate ALL kids. We can do this. Say NO to any type of scheme putting taxpayer money toward private schools.

Jill Pro
Self
Georgetown, TX

As a taxpayer, I am against school vouchers.

Kirk Pate
Self
Flatonia, TX

Vote NO on SB8.

Terra Bruder
self
Houston, TX

Reject SB 8. Allowing public education funds to be indirectly funneled to special interest private schools would:

- allow for a dangerous indoctrination of Texas students
 - reduce transparency of public spending
 - reduce the consistency and quality of education overall
 - disproportionately harm populations for whom the cost of school is not the highest barrier to education
 - set a catastrophic precedent for other states, which look to Texas as a leader in education
 - fail to address the actual issues responsible for the poor performance of the Texas education system—40th out of 50—relative to other states
-

Martha Stallman
Self
Austin, TX

First, thank you so much for this opportunity to comment on SN 8. I am, myself, a product of public schools, a National Merit Scholar who would never have been able to attend college without a scholarship, one who now holds graduate degrees from two prestigious Texas universities. I'm writing to tell you that this bill will not work. No matter how much money you funnel away from public education, no matter how hard you fight to keep the poorest students in Texas under your thumb, no matter how little interest you continue to show in doing your actual jobs, it will not work. The future belongs to all our kids, not just the ones in private school, or in "good" neighborhoods, or with the right sort of family name. Like it or not, Texas is moving on without you.

Darlene Aksoy
self
Coppell, TX

I am opposed to public tax dollars being diverted to the so-called education savings account program. I am opposed to any scheme that diverts public tax dollars away from public schools and public education. Please vote NO to any sort of private school vouchers, education savings accounts, or any other name by which programs are invented to siphon public money to private schools. Please vote NO to Senate Bill 8.

Manuel Alcozer, Attorney At Law
Self and Belton Ind. School District
Belton, TX

Representative Buckley, please represent your constituents, as opposed to pushing the Governor's agenda. If you polled your voters, you would see the vast majority oppose vouchers. Don't put politics before our children. I am quite dismayed at the procedural move you attempted last week. Actually, quite surprised. I would not expect that from you.

Patricia Murillo
Self
Fort Worth, TX

Yes, I support this bill. I would like my money to go with my child. All parents should have this right.

Jesse Jenkins
Self
San Antonio, TX

I am a Texan, I am proud of the public schools that I attended.

I am against SB 8 following reasons:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Do not pass this bill.

Raul Rodriguez, Mr.
Self
Arlington, TX

Unfortunately, I am not able to comment on this at a public forum because this bill is trying to get rushed through. As a high school teacher, we are all already overloaded with standardized testing that limits the number of instructional days we have. These tests do not serve as a true measure of intelligence for students. Furthermore, the mischaracterization of this bill as one that will cut back on standardized testing is meant to mislead the public. For too long, Texas teachers have suffered because of representatives that do not know about education trying to pass laws that fall along partisan lines rather than laws that help our teachers and students.

Jimmi Fischer Rushing
Self - Retired Librarian
Kingwood, TX

Support public schools by voting NO on SB 8. The public school system plays a critical role in providing equal opportunity for all. It is sometimes the only place a child gets crucial social and intellectual support. We should be encouraging more creativity in designing schools that work for specific communities whether they are in urban, suburban, or rural areas, along with more flexibility in choosing educational materials. We should also be investing in programs that provide students with vocation based training so they are ready for some jobs right out of high school. Vocational education seems to have been left behind or left to community colleges to provide. Not all students want or need a college bound program. Other students are benefiting from early college programs that prepare them to enter higher education programs mid level, saving tuition and time in their chosen path.

My father was a school administrator and teacher in Missouri. His small town one building school provided an excellent preparation for students; he had the flexibility to select programs and textbooks that best supported learning specific to his small community. For example, he was an early adopter of computer-based math programs that led to higher success rates on math tests and he selected a college level physics text for one high school program that was superior in communicating and demonstrating physics principles. Without that flexibility, he would have been limited to cookie cutter curriculums that don't always work.

Teacher and administrator input is critical, along with community and parent participation. We need to be providing incentives, benefits, and support to encourage those with the interest and ability to teach and lead schools. Public education should have more support, not pull support away to fund programs that are held to the same standards .

I have worked with public libraries in large cities and small towns as well as academic libraries in higher education since the mid-80s. So I have seen first hand both community needs and how well students are prepared for higher education.

As a parent, a grandparent and community member who pays taxes to support my local public education program, I urge to redirect your attention to investing more into improving our sadly ranked public education system. Thank you for considering the needs of all Texans.

Cindy Montes, Mom
CDE
Houston, TX

To pass legislation that would give parents funds to homeschool their children

Eric Mata
Texas Organzing Project
Dallas, TX

Dear Members of the Texas House Public Education Committee,

I am writing today to express my firm opposition to SB8, a bill relating to public education, parental rights, instructional materials, and the establishment of an education savings account program. As a concerned citizen, I firmly believe that this proposed legislation would have detrimental effects on the quality of public education in Texas and undermine the rights of both students and parents.

First and foremost, SB8 poses a significant threat to the fundamental principles of public education. Our public school system is the cornerstone of our society, providing equal access to education for all children, regardless of their background or economic status. By diverting public funds to education savings accounts, this bill jeopardizes the resources available for public schools and the ability to offer quality education to every student.

Furthermore, SB8's provisions regarding instructional materials raise serious concerns. Education is a dynamic field, and it is crucial that our students have access to diverse and up-to-date instructional materials that reflect the most current knowledge and research. Granting parents unrestricted control over instructional materials could result in an unbalanced and potentially biased curriculum that does not adequately prepare students for the challenges of the modern world.

Additionally, the establishment of an education savings account program may inadvertently widen the existing achievement gap and exacerbate inequalities within our education system. These accounts may disproportionately benefit families with higher incomes, further marginalizing students from low-income backgrounds who rely on the public education system as their primary source of educational opportunities.

While parental involvement is vital for a child's academic success, it is equally important to strike a balance between parental rights and the collective responsibility of public schools to provide a well-rounded education to all students. SB8 seems to tilt this balance in favor of individual preferences without sufficient consideration for the broader societal implications.

As lawmakers entrusted with the welfare and future of our state's students, I urge you to carefully consider the potential consequences of SB8. Instead of diverting resources and undermining the public education system, let us focus on strengthening our existing schools, improving teacher support, and addressing the systemic issues that hinder student success.

I implore you to reject SB8 and prioritize the well-being of Texas students by supporting policies that foster inclusivity, equitable access to education, and a commitment to the public education system. Let us work together to ensure that every child in Texas has the opportunity to receive a high-quality education that prepares them for a prosperous future.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Kristen Weaver
self- SPED Teacher
Denton, TX

No vouchers ! Morally wrong.....why on earth does anyone think that it's okay to abuse the tax payer's trust by taking from the public to give to the rich ? A society is strongly based on how we educate and treat our vulnerable populations !! The future of a strong Texas is in how we educate our children. ALL CHILDREN ! They are the tax payer's of the future, and if we do not educate them properly they will be a DRAIN on the tax payer. Do the right thing ! Be on the right side of history.....educate everybody, not just who YOU think should be . These will be the ones running the state in the next 10 years !

Peter Isburgh
Self / Big Tech
Cedar Park, TX

Listening to the testimony so far today, the focus pulled to the 15% of the population needing SPED. This is like the tunnel vision seen on “trans” irrationality. Nothing is wrong with considering SPED issues, but you can’t turn an aircraft carrier on a dime. Let’s get the most good for the most kids on the first try...talking about private/public school resource funding equivalency is specious. You can’t climb Mt. Everest in a day. SPED is a poison pill from Educrats.

Dixie Ross
public school teacher, 37 years
AUSTIN, TX

This bill will do severe damage to our public education system which educates the vast majority of Texas schoolchildren. Do the right thing for ALL of Texas, rather than just those who are vocal and have an axe to grind. DO NOT use public money for private schools. Vote NO on vouchers of any kind, for any subset of students.

Jose Santacruz
Teacher
Laredo, TX

Hello...I am a teacher with 27 years of experience here in Texas. I have read about the plan for education savings accounts here in Texas to increase opportunities for students state-wide who may be attending underperforming schools around the state. I have also read that some politicians are promoting the idea that many of our schools in Texas are promoting "woke" ideologies to students. These are the two main talking points that I keep hearing from those in support of this Senate bill. I must say that I am extremely disappointed that this bill is even being discussed. We place elected officials in office to serve us and to do what is best for the public interest and not the interests of a small portion of the state. I do believe that economically disadvantaged students deserve the same opportunities as everyone else. I teach in a district that has a large number of economically disadvantaged students and many times they are denied opportunities because of their financial position. It saddens me to see that instead of sending funding to school districts that are struggling along with other modes of support (such as personnel, resources, knowledge) that could help bring students up to where they need to be, committees are discussing sending financial support to private schools or other groups that do not have the necessary training to meet the needs of those students. Even in the public schools, we struggle with those issues but have hardly ever received adequate support from our government and our kids are hurting for it. You want to throw money at a solution that will only help a small percentage of the population and the solution is not even guaranteed to make any difference whatsoever because private schools will not have to change their policies, yet they will receive public funding. The issues with our education system go way beyond this issue, but diverting public funds to private schools is not the solution. It does not address the issues, which are that our public schools are struggling to retain teachers (the state has an opportunity to fix that but has dropped the ball repeatedly, but that is another issue for another day) and also properly support our students with the resources they need to be successful. Solutions usually involve making the test harder, holding the teachers accountable, changing requirements for schools to be considered "acceptable", making pay raises incentive-based, etc., Our state government never truly addresses the issues that can potentially make an impact. I know this comment will be read by some and potentially be critiqued as being written by a grumpy teacher who just wants more pay or a "woke" teacher who is against school choice...interpret it any way you want. But one thing can't be denied...making funds available to a small portion of our state in the name of choice is not going to fix anything. As I said before, I am really disappointed that this is even being discussed. Thank you for your time.

Mary Selby
Self
Austin, TX

I strongly oppose SB8. Please keep tax dollars funding public schools. I do not support funding private education. Let's keep all of Texas children safe, educated, and happy. Taking money away from public school is actually taking away choice, not increasing it.

Andrea Sparks
Self - BHA
La Porte, TX

It's very important for parents to be able to choose how and where their children are educated. Please pass this bill.

Mary Brown
Self
Jacksonville, TX

I am writing as I oppose SB 8. We need to strengthen Public Education. SB 8 has been modified multiple times and without enough time for most voters to digest. Vouchers are not for the benefit of all no matter how the bills are worded. Please vote NO.

Diane Thorpe
Self / Parent
Fort Worth, TX

This is a terrible bill. We do not need OER in our schools. Screen time is already killing our kids. We already have school choice in Texas and do not need this bill!

Erica Jackson
Self- Public School Administrator
Liberty Hill, TX

Good morning,
I am writing to you in OPPOSITION to SB 8. Please see my below reasons.

1. You are only allowing invited testimony, which in my view is wrong. You need to hear from teachers, students, and parents on this bill; those who it will actually affect.
2. Vouchers take away funding from public schools. Private schools do not service all students and do not have to meet the same requirements as public schools.
3. Tax payer money should go towards public schools and not private schools. Public schools serve all students, private schools do not.
4. Having a school voucher bill that also encompasses testing requirements does not make sense. These are 2 separate entities. These are not linked.
5. Taking away STAAR tests and adding in the Texas Success Initiative Assessment for grades 3-8 also does not make sense. We should not be adding in more assessments. Students already feel anxiety and stress around STAAR testing and this would only increase this.

There are many other reasons but this bill should not be passed but the above 5 reasons should make you reconsider this.

Kind regards,
Erica Jackson
Assistant Principal & Parent

Gilbert Hine
Self, Retired
San Antonio, TX

I support broad student and parent availability to the school that best serves the needs of individual students. Many have listed the advantages across a wide range of student and parent needs. What I see as most valuable and truly exciting is an explosion of teaching innovation as both teachers and parents are able to try new and different learning environments and curriculums both in public and private settings. There can be a mix and match of choices to optimize learning environments for each individual, unique student. In so many other parts of our society, a broad array of choices has generated a remarkable legacy of success and advancement.

Kaylee Christine
Send
Houston, TX

Please reject SB 8. We need funding to go to public education that supports everyone, not private schools

Clarice Dansby
self - Accountant
Austin, TX

Vote no on SB 8 - specifically regarding ESA which will transfer limited funds that have been provided for public education in Texas to private schools and charters, which are not required to follow the same accountability rules and do not educate all students in TX, esp. students with special education needs. We need to improve and invest in public education with public funds. Parents can choose to take their kids to private schools but its a choice that should not be reimbursed with tax dollars.

It is the basis of our State Constitution:

THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE 7. EDUCATION

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

(Feb. 15, 1876.)

Jessica Poer
Self pharmaceutical reimbursement
Royse City, TX

Please do not pass SB 8 as it stands. There are already huge discrepancies in funding for schools across the state. I also do not agree with the curriculum restrictions as stated.

John Chavez
Self Retired public schools teacher
San Antonio, TX

Vote no on Vouchers, more money needed for public schools

Janet Hudgins, Mrs.
Self- Teacher
Van Alstyne, TX

I am a current public school teacher. I have also been a private school teacher and been a parent of students in both settings. Parents should be able to choose an educational setting for their child, but should be wholly responsible for paying for private school or homeschooling should they choose this option. Please fully fund PUBLIC EDUCATION for all Texas students. Please vote no to vouchers that allow public funds to pay for parent choice private schooling.

Kathleen Williams Bryson
self grandmother
Kerrville, TX

My many generations of Texans since Sam Houston and the mid-1800s German immigrants have been educated and worked in Texas public schools. Public schools are the backbone of our communities - especially for those of us in rural and semi-rural communities. I'm outraged that the governor would divert MY tax dollars designated to educate my grandchildren in Kerrville Independent School District to private schools. My tax\$are for public schools.

Ashley Richey
Self
Schertz, TX

I oppose SB8 for many reasons, including the following:

- It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA.
- It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Texas public schools are under attack, and I am asking for you to stand up for your constituents against out-of-state private school vendors looking to defund our community's public schools.

Please vote no on vouchers in any form, regardless of what they are being called (vouchers, school savings accounts, school choice, etc)

Margaret (Peggy) Borchert
self retired public school speech therapist concerned citizen, mother, grandmother
Fort Worth, TX

Dear Representatives,

First of all I am for truth not enticing deceptive rhetoric. Secondly, I oppose SB 8 in any form I am for all children having a basic education concentrating on traditional academic subjects along with common sense discipline including consequences for behavior not conducive to learning. Students need to be attentive to the teacher. They need to respect authority. They need to learn objective truth so that they can learn to be self-governing productive adults for their own safety and happiness that are not controlled by group think but can stand alone. The primary goal of school should not be socialization and even worse indoctrination but traditional academics . If they cannot read or do math, they most likely will not succeed in becoming a self-governing individual prepared to take care of him or herself and perhaps a family. For our children to survive and even thrive in this difficult world they must have objective truth which they gain by being disciplined and by being able to read and do math etc and not by encouraging them to think of themselves as victims.

SB 8 includes rhetoric about parent empowerment, but government has never empowered people through money. Government money does not empower people but rather enslaves them to the government.

The school choice part of the bill makes it clear any school or vendor receiving the money must be accredited or certified. That means the school will be controlled by the government. How is that different than what we have now? It is just expanding the problem, more schools will be controlled by the government. Only schools not taking the money will be free from government.

It appears that education today in Texas is not academics based. Academics are incidental. Academics are now taught through the lens of psychology. The goal is to change the children's old fashioned values based on right and wrong - objective truth, to new supposedly improved values of so-called equity, diversity, and tolerance which are subjective opinions not objective truth with the goal of changing their behavior. This is tested by assessments to see if the child has learned these new values such that they are demonstrated through their behavior. Tests should be testing objective truth not subjective feelings.

I ask you to vote against SB 8 and any so-called school choice bill. It does not empower parents but further enslaves them. I don't like the language suggesting the government will empower parents or allow parents a say in their children's education. They are our children. You are given permission to do what we want. Parents send their children to school so that they can learn to read and do math and learn objective truth so that they can be self-governing adults for their own safety and happiness not for the good of the state. Our children belong to God and to the parents not to the government.

Margaret Borchert

Felicia Weick
self, DevOps Engineer & Parent
Lewisville, TX

Public money needs to remain in public schools. The answer to not enough funding in our public schools is not to move it to private schools. Public schools are the backbone to our success as a free and educated society. We should find ways to fund our public schools better, not move money out of them.

Chris Donofrio
Self
The Woodlands, TX

I urge you to pass SB 8 out of committee.
But make no mistake, I strongly oppose SB 8.

I'm just looking to waste House and Senate time as this session draws to a close.
Last night, Governor Abbott said he'll veto SB 8 because it doesn't go far enough to destroy our public education system.

I'm a progressive. Nothing would please me more than watching this bill's Republican supporters bend over backwards to pass an even more restrictive version of SB 8.
As you do so you'll accomplish 2 goals I have.

SB 8 is fiscally irresponsible.
The May 5th final fiscal analysis came up with the following:
Through 2025 there will be a \$584 million negative impact to the general fund, with \$0 in probable savings.
Through 2028 there will be a net negative impact to the general fund of \$1.5 billion!

SB 8 is the current strategy to provide a financial incentive to parents who remove their children from public schools.
At the Senate hearing for SB 8:
Support: 88 showed up to offer testimony. 43 from organizations (6 written testimony) / 45 listed as 'Self' (7 written testimony).
Oppose: 263 showed up to offer testimony. 88 from organizations (23 written testimony) / 168 listed as 'Self' (17 written testimony).

Those supporting SB 8 represented a mix of conservative Christian schools, the Catholic Church, conservative and right-wing groups supporting vouchers and teaching Christian values, and 11 organizations completely uninvolved in parental choice although they're very involved in pushing a MAGA-centric agenda. The remaining 32 benefit from vouchers and the degradation of our public education system. They also indoctrinate their students in the worst of 'Christian values.'

There are only 3 that have standing to support SB 8.
Waterloo School
Vine School
Texas Assoc of School Boards

I choose to stand with those who oppose SB 8.

17 educational associations. These deal with the impact SB 8 will have on public schools and represents:
Rural to urban schools
Agriculture education, which impact rural schools.
Teachers
School administrators
Special Education
School psychologists

6 ISDs, that include rural, urban, conservative, moderate, large and small, and 310,727 students.
Spring Branch: 50 schools/34,681 students
Northside: 126 sch/106,501 st
Arlington: 77 sch/59,900 st
San Elizario: 6 sch./3,668 st
Alvin: 33 sch/25,945 st
Austin: 129 sch/80,032 st

Texas Association of Midsize Schools: 225 ISDs across Texas.
Texas Rural Education Association: 410 ISDs across Texas.

American Foundation of Suicide Prevention
Texas Psychology Association
Autism Society of Texas
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities

A member of the State Board of Education
168 Texans from across the state testifying in opposition to SB 8.

Let me close by noting.
Sen Creighton represents my district. I will vote against him and strongly support his opponent.
I will work to vote those who support SB 8.

Respectfully,
Chris J. Donofrio

Tamecia Crump
Self-Teacher
Carrollton, TX

School vouchers hurt public schools! The most educationally disadvantaged students are those with disabilities; the most vulnerable students need public schools and the services that are provided by public school educators. Private schools can turn away students, especially those with disabilities. No private school should receive public tax dollars.

Jo Wilson
Self
Dallas, TX

You must vote no on SB 08. Tax dollars should not be used to fund private schools

Mike Cato
self
Buda, TX

Vote NO. Do not dilute public education. Public education raises all individuals' abilities and thus is a benefit to ALL enterprises from tree trimmers to fast-food workers to blue collar, to white collar, to cybersecurity and other professionals. Anyone who understands why a superior is making a request/demand, and any superior who understands how to convey their request, makes the whole organization work better. I don't blame the committee for trying to fix a problem, I blame them for not understanding the problem in the current system and fixing that, instead of trying a wholesale replacement of a system.

Melanie Kieffer
self/self employed
Plano, TX

Honorable members of the Texas Legislature, please! Regarding SB 8, I urge you to OPPOSE the creation of any private school voucher program, including education savings accounts, in Texas. You who serve in this legislature have a Constitutional responsibility to provide for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public schools—NOT divert MY tax dollars to private institutions with no transparency and no accountability. I treasure our public schools—they are the foundation of our communities and are tasked with meeting the needs of ALL students regardless of race, income, or ability. This session, please focus your efforts on investing in the children, families, educators, and staff who are building the future of Texas in our public schools. Oppose SB 8! Thank you!

Dana Kato, Mrs.
Self
Humble, TX

Please vote against the House Version of Senate Bill 8

1. Parents already have a choice in TX as to their child's education. In many larger school districts students can go to any school in their district/ not just their assigned school.
2. As over 90% of TX children attend public school and as the Texas Constitution requires adequately funding public schools- not private.
3. I do not as a taxpayer want to fund a unregulated religious school.
4. Your bill gives more funding to a student leaving a public school than one in a public school. Ultimately public schools will suffer financial defunding.
5. I don't understand how you can decrease property taxes, and decrease school funding, without harming public schools- especially those in rural areas, which are already suffering.

Please vote no on the House version if Senate bill 8.

Dana Kato, Retired taxpayer who votes

Lee Carrier
Self
Houston, TX

Dear Committee,
Please respect our public schools by rejecting school vouchers and voting NO on SB 8.
Thank you.
Lee,

Ashleigh Lowe
self
Austin, TX

It is imperative that you do not take any more money from public schools who have no choice in who enrolls. They need money for special programs and funding already lacking budgets. This is an obvious attack on public schools. Texas deserves better. Our children deserve better. Our hard-working educators deserve SO MUCH BETTER!

Gina Biekman
Self
Houston, TX

Please vote no on SH8. This bill will gut public schools in favor of charters. We need to serve ALL children no matter their challenges.

Kathi Thomas
myself
Austin, TX

I turned in some written testimony this morning but want to tell you a little more about the dangers of these private school vouchers.

In 1990 I opened a floral design school- which was considered a “Proprietary” (or “trade) School under the law. At that time, it was regulated by TEA.

I was stunned when I found out how much TEA charged to open such a school (at that time \$1,000) + all the regulations. The one that made the least sense to me was that you could take 1/3 of the money at the beginning, 1/3 halfway through, and the last third 2/3 of the way through. My school was one week. I asked did I take it Monday, Wednesday and Thursday? TEA (then) director Dee Bednar told me it was because trade schools had ripped off students by taking all the money up front, and then when the students returned after a weekend, the school- and all their money- would have disappeared. They still owed the money, but with no education to have the means to pay it off. It was a huge scandal in the 1980s. So that legislation was written. They didn’t know about small schools like mine- or the 1-day test prep schools like Kaplan, etc. I asked how we could get that changed, and Bednar said it was legislative. We formed a “Small School Committee” and with Ms. Bednar’s help, crafted language that would give small schools of 2 weeks or less, that didn’t take federally guaranteed loans, a LOT of exemptions from the bill. As I explained to legislators, we have “no motive to steal.” With a full classroom, that would have been \$2,500- hardly enough to risk going to prison over!

Rep. Delco took the bill, and, though it took 2 Sessions, we got it passed, and I still have the pen with which Gov. Richards signed it.

All during the process, the big schools kept trying to piggy back onto our bill, so that they could once again have little to no regulation over them, but I’d go back in and remind the legislators about what those types of schools had done in the past, and it was a clean bill. They informally called it

“The Kathi Thomas Small School Bill.”

I tell you this, because, as one person testified today, a voucher bill will bring out all kinds of people getting into the “school business,” with little to no regard for the education they actually provide. Just as happened with proprietary schools, unless you put strictures in, vouchers will cause a “free for all.” For example, SPECIFY what “certifications” the private schools must have. Honestly, ANYONE can start a “certification” program- many of those trade schools who stole the money were “certified” by someone! Require something like a minimum number of years in business before a private school can qualify for vouchers. And, in order to qualify for vouchers, they should have to follow every single stricture of public schools- every one, including letting taxpayers elect their school boards!

Otherwise, you’re risking the education and future of a lot of kids in Texas, and I can’t imagine anyone would want that.

Lindsey Lacombe
Houston heights high School
Houston, TX

Against.

John Chavez, Dr.
Self, College professor
San Antonio, TX

Vote NO to vouchers. They are detrimental to the Texas education system and the students. They only serve a few and not the general student population of Texas. Dishonorable to teachers and students.

Scott Hudson, Mr.
Cypress-Fairbanks ISD / Self
Tomball, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 8 and urge you to oppose this legislation.

As a Texas resident, I believe this bill is harmful to Texas students, parents, and our communities. Public School Systems are the backbone of all communities. This bill does nothing to increase the student allotment for public school students, it does nothing for public school teachers, the support staff, or other employees, and it does nothing to allow school districts to keep the services they provide. It will force public schools to cut services or even employees.

Private schools aren't required to accept all students, including those with disabilities or special needs. In fact, private schools are more likely to reject these students. Tax dollars should not be going to private institutions that don't have to play by the same rules as public schools and are not accountable to taxpayers. You were elected to be the stewards of taxpayer dollars and a vast majority of taxpayers do not want this bill. They want increased public school funding to closely match the nation average, they want better pay for the teachers, support staff, and other professionals that serve everyday to educate the future of this state. Consider a compromise of raising the current student allotment from \$6,160 to a minimum of \$8,160, increase the safety allotment per student, provide at a minimum of 5% pay increase for teachers and support staff, provide a minimum of 3% for all other district employees. Take leftover funds and apply to a voucher program., if that is the wish of the minority and not the majority.

SB 8 also increases the number of state assessment administrations given to students from third to twelfth grade. It may eliminate STAAR, but it ramps up testing under a different name and gives more control to the commissioner of education to over-test our children.

Thank you for listening. I trust that you will carefully consider the concerns raised and make the right decision for the future of public education in our great state by Saying YES to Public Schools, their Students and Staff, and say NO to SB 8.

Ann Reynolds
Self
Houston, TX

I do not want public funds to pay for private school indoctrination vouchers. Christian Nationalism is running rampant in the private school industry and this anti democratic pro fascist movement should not use public school funding to brainwash our children

Trisha Harris
self
Navasota,, TX

Vote no to education savings account. They would be detrimental to our public schools.

Tracy Kotts
Self / Read 180 Paraprofessional
Houston, TX

SB 8 CREATES THE LARGEST VOUCHER PROGRAM IN THE NATION! KEEP PUBLIC FUNDS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

- 1). It diverts much needed funding from our public schools to unaccountable private schools.
- 2). It erodes the rights of parents of special needs students and fails to maintain protections under IDEA federal laws.
- 3). It does not prioritize parental choice, just a private school's choice in which students to serve.
- 4). It replaces STAAR with a different exam, without deemphasizing standardized tests in our A-F accountability system.
- 5). It gives the TEA Commissioner too much authority.

Think about what this does for our future.

Respectfully,

Tracy Michelle Kotts
Alief ISD
Killough Middle School
Read 180 Paraprofessional

timothy driggers
Teacher of Texas/Self
san antonio, TX

This voucher deal has all the smell of a money grab. Who is benefiting from this money: It is not the greater public of this great state. Who does the money answer to once received under the voucher system. There isn't an oversight group like that of the public. That's why charter school ceo's are buying up private property off the publics dime. The rich get richer. Stop this nonsense and use the money to pay us teachers a proper salary. Wait... not gonna happen is it?

Angela Johnson
AFT- Texas
Houston, TX

Vote NO on SB 8. Please respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers.
Special Educaiton students will not get a fair deal in private schools. They don't have the support systems in place.

Jude Zash
Self, development coordinator
Austin, TX

Please say no to SB 8 and any other voucher scheme that would take taxpayer money from Texas public schools

Richard Faidley
Self -- securities trader
Austin, TX

I am strongly opposed to the use of vouchers in our educational system. Our public schools are underfunded -- chronically so -- and draining even more money away from public schools to be used in a system of vouchers that fund private education is a terrible policy. This is nothing but a deliberate attempt to erode public education, and has resulted in as much in states that have instituted voucher systems.

Please oppose vouchers in any form. Thank you.

Paul Dabbs, Dr.
Self, retired public educator
Frisco, TX

I am opposed to Senate Bill 8 and urge the committee to oppose this legislation.

This bill is harmful to Texas students, parents, and our communities.

Diverting available state revenue to private schools under any terminology or title takes available funds away from public education. Public schools serve all students and families in every neighborhood in the state.

The work of our public educators should be supported, not threatened or demeaned, as too many of our elected officials have been doing.

Vote NO on SB 8.

Kimberly Rogers
Self
Colleyville, TX

Support public ed by saying no to SB 8! As a mom to three different learners with IDD, dyslexia, and ADHD taking money from public Ed for a so-called Ed savings account is unfair to SpEd and 504 Plan. The minimal amount put into a Ed savings account wouldn't make dent in full cost of private school.

Carol Ortiz, Ms.
self/retired
Montgomery, TX

Stop trying to defund TX public schools by diverting tax dollars to private and religious school vouchers. NO on SB 8 and "education savings accounts."

Public money should stay in public schools for the benefit of our communities.

Shawn Zurek
self - IT Manager
Baytown, TX

I am writing to ask you to protect neighborhood schools and oppose private school vouchers in Texas. Private voucher schemes pose a significant threat to public education in Texas and must be stopped.

All Texas students deserve an education that prepares them to succeed, not just students at exclusive private schools. The Texas state constitution says our Legislature is responsible for funding our neighborhood public schools for students, not subsidizing tuition for wealthy families at exclusive private and religious schools that pick and choose who they will enroll.

As a concerned Texan, I ask you to vote down any voucher scheme that diverts tax dollars from neighborhood public schools.

Public dollars should stay in public schools.

William Ott
Three Way ISD
Stephenville, TX

I consistently heard at least one representative repeated point out the high percentage of public school students who do not perform on grade level. This were we must a take a hard look at the data because 50% of U.S. adults can't read a book written at the 8th-grade level, according to the OECD. The average American reads at the 7th- to 8th-grade level, according to The Literacy Project. That would mean at least half the committee reads on a 7th grade level or less. I only point our reading because it is pivotal to the performance of every other subject. My point is, the measure is broken. We must establish a valid measure and then develop a valid and reliable scale with which to balance and measure it. After we do so, then we must talk about a proper measure of accountability for all those who receive state educational funding. Yes, even in the form of an ESA. Just labeling it as giving parents the freedom to choose is a farse. One representative stated, "we must allow parents to choose the best fit educationally for their kid." If that is true must come up with measures that actually provide a better choice. A better choice must consist of, curricular accountability, teacher accountability (certified and highly qualified teachers), and means for the the sate of Texas to ensure that the Every Student Succeeds Act, IDEA, and Section 504 are actually being followed. Oh yeah, and that the private school where an ESA is provided has a proven track of students performing on grade level. There must be further protections in place for properly funding the student when they return to public education. Public schools need and want parents who are involved in their child's education. On average, students in kindergarten through grade 12 had parents who reported participating n 6.5 school-related activities in the 2018–19 school year. The most common school-related activity was attending a general school or parent-teacher organization or association meeting (reported for 89 percent of students). That was followed by attending a school or class event (79 percent) and attending a parent-teacher conference (75 percent) (table 2). I realize that 6% of all K-12 students in Texas are educated in private schools (compared to the national average of 10%). Let this sink in, an ESA will only seek to lessen the number of involved parents in public education. Finally, I am not against ESAs if they are developed correctly (accountability measures are the same for everyone, teachers and administrators must be certified or suitably educated, and every student has a choice and it is NOT the institution making the choice)

Natalia Reyes
Self
Boerne, TX

I am not for the Voucher program that takes funds from the public education. Do the math, there are many more children in public education than in private education. These are the students that would be abandoned by the support of our state. Included would be the special education and these students need not just adequate care by superb care that addresses their ability to learn. The student that killed 19 students in Uvalde was not given the attention he needed in that school district and dropped out of school at the age of 19 having completed only the 9th grade. 19 are dead because of his lack attention and education at his level. If you want vouchers, fund it, but on the backs of the current student body. j

Jose Munoz
self
Cypress, TX

I oppose Senate Bill 8 because the education savings account program diverts public dollars from public education and does not hold alternative educational assistance organizations to the same standard as public schools. Texas public schools are funded with a mix of local tax revenue and state dollars—with state money distributed on a per-student basis. An education savings account program siphons funding from public schools when local students enroll in alternative programs. The loss of just 5 to 10 students means that hundreds of Texas school districts must decide whether to eliminate a teacher's salary or to cut academic or extracurricular activities. Getting rid of a teacher decreases the community's taxbase while cutting programs has an adverse impact on the community traditions and culture that bond its residents. The bill's amended provision to provide \$10,000 for five years to children who enroll in the savings account program only applies to districts with fewer than 20,000 students. This provision is intended to provide a "soft landing" for rural districts, yet they will still face the loss of funding once the extension ends. With student enrollment of over 118,000 students, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD is not eligible and would lose funding immediately.

Private schools are not required to administer the STAAR test or end of course exams, be rated under the state's A-F school accountability system, or transparently account for their funds and spending. If the idea of an education savings account program is truly to promote innovation and competition, then private schools should be held to the same standards as public schools, including accepting all students. Cypress-Fairbanks ISD's motto is "Opportunity for All." Our district provides educational opportunities for one of the most diverse student bodies in the state, including over 13,000 special education and 23,000 ESL/Bilingual students. Admittedly, there are students who are not successful on state assessments, and our teachers and administrators work diligently to design innovative education solutions to meet their needs. Unlike others, CFISD and school districts across Texas do not deny admission to these students based on their past academic performance. All means all. Public schools are the glue that bond our communities—large and small. I grew up in the small town of Navasota, Texas where high school football was Friday nights; where the NHS fight song connected old and young; and where anyone could aspire to attend the state's top university if he or she studied and worked hard. While Cypress-Fairbanks is a much larger district, it cherishes the same small-town values that I enjoyed as a youth. Our schools serve as pillars of refuge during difficult times (e.g., Hurricane Harvey) and as places of inspiration each day, creating a community culture that makes CFISD a destination district. Please oppose SB8 and work to fund public education!

Zachary Kingsbury
self - engineer
Austin, TX

In the aftermath of another school tragedy in Texas, we are again reminded of the failure of Texas ISDs to keep young Texans safe. After the last such tragedy, Texas pushed to remove the barriers for teachers to carry in schools and protect both themselves and their children. However, there is a problem with this strategy as the teacher is neither paid to work security and to put his or her life on the line, nor is it reasonable for society to expect this of them. There must be a concerted effort on behalf of an institution that requires young Texans attendance to provide a safe environment for them to learn.

Since ISDs will push for a "political solution" based on their own ideological bent rather than guaranteeing the safety of young Texas, ISDs need to lose the critical advantage they have to require young Texans to avail themselves of their services. It is time that every school must present a safe environment to gain the privilege of teaching young Texans. This will only happen once universal school voucher programs are in place. Every child should be either guaranteed a safe school by their ISD, or take the money allocated for them to another school that will guarantee their safety. We need a voucher program that is non-discriminatory, where children can choose to go to religious, art, STEM, technology and any other oriented school is available to them. Let the free market end the tyranny of forcing children into unsafe schools, and let young Texans thrive.

Janice Riddlehoover
Self
Austin, TX

I do not support education savings accounts or school vouchers. I support further per student funding for public schools

Cynthia Dwyer
The Tarrant Together Project
Fort Worth, TX

I am against this bill.

Michelle Thompson
Self
Georgetown, TX

We need to be sure to allow all children access to all opportunities. If you do vouchers, that will not be happening. More and more money will be funneled to rich schools and minority access will suffer. We also cannot have our tax dollars go to schools who will make private school rules such as banning LGBTQ students and family. This is happening in Florida and is a heinous and bigoted practice. If you continue that route you need to allow families without children to not pay into those schools.

Stop attacking our kids and their education. I grew up overseas and let me tell you, we as a country are getting more stupid by the year because of this. You are destroying this country.

Marlene Lobberecht
retired teacher/ self
Houston, TX

And this just adds more tests which could be worse than STAAR. Commissioner gets to decide w/no oversight. Goes from 20 to 48 tests. Not an improvement. Kill the bill! No vouchers!

Kim Horton
self/teacher
Weatherford, TX

Please oppose Senate Bill 8. I am not in favor of all the regulations that will come with Senate Bill 8 as a school choice option. We already have choice, if we want it. This is all about tax dollars and I heard enough this morning that it will only leave a huge hole in Public Schools and cause more regulations for all the schools. And it still won't be able to help every child. It will only start private schools down the process of being regulated by the state and godless state regulations haven't proven to be successful, as we see the reality of Public Schools now. Really we need to overhaul our public schools. So much behavioral problems exist causing learning to be trampled on and teaching becoming the last thing that teachers can do. After hearing some of the testimonies this morning, I am truly saddened. Our federal government and state has stripped the very thing that can give us hope. Our society speaks for itself and the unfavorable results that we see in society coming directly from our public schools. It is a shame and unless we realize that we must have God back in our public school and go back to the basics of what our schools were all about, we will continue down the spiraling path where students do not know who they are, what their purpose is in life, as they plummet out of control taking their own lives at a younger and younger age. Teachers will have to be psychiatrists but with no real and or lasting results. We must have the Creator put back in school and godly Biblical Christian values implemented in the educational system where we are learning to read because we want our children to know the God of the Bible. Texas can do it, but we must have strong leaders to start going down that path. We have trampled on God and thrown Him out of our learning process and He says. if you don't want Me, here is what you will get. This is it, a godless society of young people because we have tied our Christian teacher's and administrator's hands and gagged their mouths and said no, to God and His name and His ways. We have allowed there to be all kinds of shameful nonsense, coming from younger and younger ages. We must stop these debilitating social problems spewing out from our public schools and start teaching about the God of the Bible. When a preschooler can bring a gun with bullets to class, when kids are traumatized over one child's behavioral issues, and recently, when a 6 yr only preforming oral sex under a table in a classroom at a public school while another 6 year old boy videos it, God help us! This must stop!!! Get on board with the God of Creation to say enough is enough!! If you know the God of the Bible, pray and stand on the word and power of our God to PUT HIM BACK INTO TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS! We want that resolution!! We will be down in droves to support it!! Let's get the mess cleaned up with our only hope!!! Stand with the God of the Bible and victory is ours!! Praying for you! Kim Horton

Vicki Larson
Self / teacher
Justin, TX

Hello,
I am a Texas HS teacher and have been for 23 years. Since 2000 things have been “getting worse” for students in Texas public schools. What I mean by this is students have been receiving less and less funds/student each year. And kids who attend schools in more economically disadvantaged or rural schools suffer the most.
Please show that you believe all Texas kids (mine included) are worth state funds. Please show you you believe someone like me— a person who has devoted 23 years to teaching in this state— is worthy of state funds.
This is an ethics issue. It is only ethical to SUPPORT Texas public schools, not divert funds to people who will not be required to serve all children.

Sheryl Bell
Self- Educator
Houston, TX

Please respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers.

Rebecca Clark
Self, Retired Geophysicist
Richmond, TX

This bill was ill-conceived from the beginning and has only gotten exponentially worse. I and a couple of my colleagues met with legislators in the beginning detailing our concerns as well as providing alternative language that would improve the bill quality, effectiveness as well as protect private and homeschools from government overreach. Some improvements were made but the deterioration of the language with each revision far outweighed these minor improvements. What disappoints me most is the seeming determination with which certain legislators are moving forward to ram this thing through come hell or high water. That is not prudent operating procedure. No deal is better than a bad deal. Let's take our time and put together a bill that doesn't bloat government at the expense of our children. I implore you to please vote NO to SB8.

Rosalie Weisfeld
Self
McAllen, TX

Please vote against the so called education savings account in SB 8 and any other mechanism that would drain much needed money from our public education system.

It is much better for our society when we instead strengthen funding for all the children in our state. Students with physical, mental, behavioral and emotional disabilities; students whose strengths in the fine arts such as singing, theater, painting, playing musical instruments, sculpturing, dancing; students with scientific, mathematical, or linguistic special talents all need to be supported by our public education system. Instead of diverting funds for those students who might have access to private schools we need to ensure that all students have access to a well founded public school system that helps each student achieve their individual maximum potential.

My son excelled in music. We fortunately had the financial wherewithal to hire a private voice instructor, provide him with piano and violin lessons. Not all parents have the financial wherewithal to provide those extra outside education opportunities. It would be better if we provide those kind of extra education programs through our public education departments to ensure all students receive the best education to support their individual strengths. Please do not dilute the funding sources for public education. Public education needs every dollar available.

Marcia Shea
Self
Friendswood, TX

Stop school vouchers. Properly fund public schools.

Robyn Tatman
Myself
Richardson, TX

Please Vote noon SB8! As a former educator in this state I know first hand our public schools need more funding not less. Show your support of our public school educators and the children of this state by voting no.

Katherine Regis
Self / Engineer
Wimberley, TX

Please reject SB8. The Education Savings Accounts of SB8 would be disastrous for our local public schools, especially in our more rural districts. Public schools are vital to a functioning democracy. Schools need to teach consensus curricula. Having individual parents changing learning objectives is impractical.
Please stop SB8.

Joshua Atria
Self, Architect
Richardson, TX

I would like to voice support for this legislation, but do not like that language is being added to exclude or give lower preference to individuals whose schools receive grades higher than B for this program. There are reasons other than this for wanting to place a child into private education.

Arnetta Murray
County
Rosharon, TX

Please respect black and brown kids Respect Public Schools stop trying to disenfranchised hardworking folks who are not rich. Reject school vouchers, this is a way to cripple the Education System. Your grandparents of old had a heart. These lawmakers are the destroyers of Democracy. Some of the immigrants coming here are not the problem, it those sitting at the State Capitol trying to increase the divide. Using tax payers money to go to a private school where the school can pick and choose who attends. So sad, while at the same time crippling the Public School System with this hostile Takeover. Your name and harsh hate for Public Education will never be forgotten. Reaping and sowing is real.

Adriana Edmond
self
TOMBALL, TX

I approve a version of this bill. Public schools are failing our children and I have a right to take my tax dollars to another school of my choosing to educate my children. I can not wait until the public schools are fixed, I need education for my children NOW.

gian calaci
self
austin, TX

I am a staunch believer in public education. One of the wealthiest nations on the planet should provide fabulous education for all it's growing citizens. I want to live in a country where all students have a well-rounded education. I want students who have been taught to make reasonable decisions based on facts. We can only have this if we focus out funding on public education. I urge you to vote NO on SB-8. Thank you, Gian Calaci

Nicole Ma
Organizing and Policy Associate at Woori Juntos and Self
Houston, TX

AGAINST this bill.

Pi Huei Chiang
Self
Richmond, TX

Parents are the primary decision makers for their children in all matters. This authority shall be protected as an inalienable right. This shall include the choice of schooling where the money follows the child without strings attached, and enforcement and penalty mechanisms when parents' rights are violated. The right to education shall be free from any social theories.

judy youngblood, Professor
self, Professor Emeritus, University of North Texas
Dallas, TX

Im writing to ask you to vote NO on SB8 which will take public money from our already poorly funded schools and give it to private schools that do not have to take all students and can teach whatever they want about science, civics, religion, and/or history. The private schools are not accountable to the taxpayers.

I believe in the power of public schools which all American children share. They teach all kinds of children to live and work and learn together. We need a public school education to help bind the many folks into one American nation. I believe that voting no to SB8 is the only democratic and patriotic thing to do.

Marsha Kamish
Precinct 1054
KATY, TX

I am against this bill. It hurts non-rich families and rural districts.

Patrick Betik
self
Grapevine, TX

SB 8. 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 vote in favor of this initiative. Thank you in advance.

Martha Eberle
retired R.N./self
Dripping Springs, TX

It is not right to divert public education funds away from public schools to vouchers for private & religious schools. We NEED public monies for PUBLIC SCHOOLS so ALL Texas children have good resources to learn. Since many of the vouchers are for religious schools, it is a direct assault on the separation of church & state, which is enshrined in our national Constitution. I do not want one dollar of my tax monies going to a religious institution -- those parents can get religious teaching for their children within their churches, synagogues, mosques, etc., NOT with our public tax dollars. If parents want to send their children to private schools, they can pay the tuition themselves. My public education was excellent, and that of my children, also. The United States, of which Texas is a state, is a secular society, and religious instruction is separate, for those that want it. In our Texas constitution, the legislature is empowered to provide for PUBLIC education for the students of Texas, and any monies you divert from that, is weakening our childrens' education. NO to any vouchers.

Lori Jones
Retired teacher
Fort Worth, TX

If you pass vouchers,you might as well defund education. Too many will not use correctly and will financially bankrupt Texas education. Make kids have consequences so that private school isn't so appealing! Vote against anything with vouchers!

Phillip McJunkins
Self - software
Austin, TX

As a Texas parent, I am opposed to SB8. I highly value having strong public schools in our communities and our state.

Rachel Mendoza, Dr.
Higher level
Grand Prairie, TX

Do not support school vouchers.

Cynthia Reynolds
Self, property manager
Austin, TX

All Texas school children deserve a good education and public schools should be well funded.

Rodney Klett
Self/Retired Teacher
McKinney, TX

Vote no

Steve Crawford
Self
Cedar Park, TX

My fear is that school vouchers have a strong likelihood to create an inequitable system of education. I do not think the intent of school choice works by draining public funds for private school experiences. Furthermore, taking public funds and NOT being accountable to the same federal and state guidelines will create a false comparison. If you are going to take the same money, the same rules should apply. For example - STAAR Testing, IDEA, FAPE, separation of church/state... If this SB 8 passes, you have created a public school that will likely be populated with minority groups, marginalized populations, and create a system of inequity under the illusion of school choice. There is another way to bolster school choice - taking public funds without the same rules and accountability is wrought with problems. If you want to shake things up in education, bring the right people to the table - public, charter and private school administrators and teachers. I am sure that the private sector is motivated by accessing millions of dollars...it will be at the expense of millions of children. Step carefully....

Robert Comeaux
Self
San Antonio, TX

This is bad legislation -- probably unconstitutional. Please oppose.

Chris Miller, Dr.
Blue Ridge ISD
Blue Ridge, TX

Please fund public education. ALL 5.4 million Texas school children need your help. Texas schools continue to improve without the needed funding. Just see the new accountability system where school standards are being raised because Texas schools hit targets early. Teacher pay raises and local accountability will bring the very best to ALL of Texas' children. Vouchers and ESA's will be for a few Texas children and the ones that need your help the most will continue to be underfunded and their amazing teachers forced to look for jobs elsewhere.

I am one voice, but please look at the election support of local school boards and bonds. According to the elections just days ago, Texans love their public schools. A vote for funding public ed will not only benefit ALL 5.4 million students, it will also benefit you as elected official for being where the current support is in Texas - Public Schools!

Bartolo Acantara
Self
Hutto, TX

I am NOT in agreement that my taxes, I pay for the public school (PFISD RRISD, RRISD AND HUTTO ISD) be taken to fund privet schools to pay for the education of rich citizens instead of provide improvement to the schools for which it is meant.

Kendra Zachrison
Self/Registered Nurse
Driftwood, TX

I am opposed to any tax payer dollars going towards private education. I do not support ESA programs. I oppose this bill.

Tina Rodgers
self/Public School Teacher
Breckenridge, TX

The ideal of public education sets America apart from the rest. That ideal has to be believed in fiercely, continuously fostered, and forever protected. It is our hope. WE are all accountable for this but your vote DIRECTLY impacts these decisions. I am AGAINST the voucher system as it is being proposed for you to vote. Taking public funding and giving it to private entities is not ok. I am a Christian who fervently believes in the separation of church and state. It is short sighted to say the least, to abandon this! I am a REPUBLICAN, CHRISTIAN who believes in the separation of church and state. I believe there are many, like me, who are pretty silent until it's time to vote, and then it won't be so quiet. Vote no for vouchers.

Mark Wilfert
Self
Rosebud, TX

Against - Why would vouchers make a difference? Private schools don't want public school problems. Private schools will just raise tuition to keep poor students out so nothing will change.

If the State wants to make a difference, help schools return discipline to the classroom. It's hard to teach good kids when you have a mentally ill student screaming and climbing on tables. The best teachers in the world can't control them. Do you think for a minute the private schools want those problems? I think not.

As a tax paying voting citizen. This is crazy. Fix what we've worked for years to develop.

Rosalie Klepac, Mrs.
Self
San Antonio, TX

Texas students deserve well-funded public schools no matter where they live. In my experience, those students who left the public schools returned very dissatisfied with the education offered at these other establishments.

Katie Ericson
Texas Teacher
Seminole, TX

Do not use public funds for private school tuition. This only put more money into the pockets of those that are already able to afford private schools. Do your research.
Do not increase the amount of testing of our students. They are already over tested, stressed, and waste enough valuable time testing in this state.

Donna Wright, Pastor
Self - Lutheran pastor
Valley Mills, TX

Texas ranks in the high 40s among the 50 states in per pupil spending. This bill would take money away from our public schools and give it to private schools which would not have to account for how it is spent.

No blank checks for private schools!

My property taxes should go to public schools to pay for a broadly educated citizenry.

NO on SB 8.

Alison Norman
self
Austin, TX

This bill deserves a public hearing! Parents should get to speak about what they want with their tax dollars.

Deborah Guidry, Ms.

Self; teacher and intern school counselor

San Antonio, TX

Public dollars are meant for public education. By going against the public's wishes and utilizing public dollars to send children to privatized institutions, not only are you undermining the very democratic republic which you are supposed to uphold under your oath of office, you are forgetting that you are a servant of the people. Worse, you are re-introducing Segregation of the public by a different name. Instead of defunding the institution set forth by the 14th Amendment of the Constitution of the United States and the Civil Rights Act of 1963 via Brown vs. the Board of Education as the standard for creating equity in education, provide the excess funding you have denied public education for the last twenty years, so that public education can equitably provide learning experiences for all children regardless of socio-economic background, culture, language, sex, or a plethora of other issues that can create inequity in our communities.

In short, stop denying all children the right to be educated. It is an inalienable right recognized in this country. It is your responsibility to fund PUBLIC education, not private. Parents, educators, and your constituents have made it clear that they DO NOT want public dollars going to private schools. Stop undermining this desire and listen to your voters. Fund public education for the first time in two decades. Bring back an equitable education system that is creative, dynamic, engaging, and encouraging of young people. Support your public educators and your public education system. Stop undermining the very thing that is required in order to have a working democratic republic--because without an educated PUBLIC, our republic will crumble.

Jordan Hennington, Mrs

Self

MANSFIELD, TX

Please vote against SB 8. It will not benefit middle and lower class students. Teachers do not have to be certified. They are not accountable for standardized test nor the needs of special education students. Voting for it would lead to a faster downfall of public education which as a teacher I witnessed starting to deteriorate in 2016

Gloria Gutierrez

Self / Retired

San Antonio, TX

-Allowing unfettered challenges to local elections through requests for explanation of real or perceived irregularities places too much discretion in the hands of individuals with partisan interests. Local elections are complex enough without adding the threat of unsupported challenges, audits, and conservators. Local election officials deserve the support of the Secretary of State, not the threat of a takeover. I urge you to oppose this costly and heavy-handed legislation.

Please vote no on SB 1039.

Leviticus Williamson

Texas citizen

Spring, TX

The revisions of SB 8 not only seem to be deceitful, but a calculated effort to defend the public system in which our tax dollars fund to help fund private institutions that already receive plenty of funding. The continued efforts to reduce the resources of our public school staff and students is unjust at best. If Texas TRIES to say our children are a priority, this in NO WAY SHAPE OR FORM exhibits that.

Elizabeth Simpson
Richardson ISD Parent
Richardson, TX

Please DO NOT use my tax dollars to support private schools. More funding is needed to support and improve public schools - not less! Please vote NO on SB 8 Voucher Bill. Thank you!

Karen emily Anderson, Mrs
TRTA
Fort Worth, TX

School vouchers by any other name are still giving money earmarked for public schools to parents to use in private schools Texas Public Schools cannot afford to have money siphoned from their allotment go to private institutions that do not have to answer to the same standards as public schools. Texas cannot afford to underfund the education of children whose parents cannot afford to send their students to private schools.

With all the social problems and issues of safety, public schools need more funding, not less.

Please cite no on school savings accounts. Texas deserves better than this.

Juanita Jones-Royal
AKA
richardson, TX

Please do not support SB 8, the voucher bill. We need strong public schools for the vast majority of our children. The public school system is currently under funded and we are losing our best teachers due to low pay and under appreciation by the state of Texas. Your support for Texas citizens and Texas children will be greatly appreciated by the voting population of Texas.

Susan Hefner
Rains High School (Retired)
Como, TX

Vouchers are just a way to steal money from public schools! Don't buy the lie! Support ALL Texas children.

Victoria Kindt, Mrs.
Self - proud stay at home mom
Alamo Heights, TX

I strongly disagree with vouchers! Public funds shouldn't go to private schools! Texas is already number 48 in funding per student, compared to other states. That is absolutely shameful, and this bill will only hurt public school students. I'm very disappointed in this smoke and mirrors- do better for Texas children!

Kristin Elliott
Self
GUN BARREL CITY, TX

It is high time we stop talking about vouchers for private and home schoolers! These "teachers" are not held up to the same high standards as public school teachers who have gone to at least four years of college, hundreds of hours of extra trainings throughout their career and work long hours just to keep their heads above water! All while making barely above poverty level pay.
Keep this money in the public schools and give the teachers a raise that can at least keep up with the price of inflation!!!

Cindy Travers
self
Kingsland, TX

I oppose SB8. I am a Republican voter who is concerned that Bills like HB8 are tightening the vice on our public servants and schools. Very specifically, I oppose Article 2 – Education Savings Account. As an opinion, this portion should not be within this bill as Article 1 and 2 are two very distinct topics. The price to the state - with benefit ultimately going to those that can afford/have access to private education is NOT in the best interest of Texas children. The bill as written does not benefit the majority of the student population in Texas. Use those funds to fund HB 9 and raise the salaries! Or better fund public education! Additionally, the requirements in SB8 will likely add costly, impractical layers of bureaucracy and red tape for our school districts and state govt. I believe we need to spend our taxpayer dollars on public education and creating first class public school systems in Texas. That's where the real work needs to be done. Please vote NO to SB8.

Cortney Schwalbe

Self, Founder & CEO, Peak Career Services, LLC

Austin, TX

I am so glad I showed up on Wed 5/10/23, visited all of your offices & spoke to 5 of you, plus almost all of your staffs. Today I watched the PEC hearing in the room. I did not get asked to come speak. That's ok.

Our family faithfully served this country in the US Navy for nearly 23 years. We buried a 5-day old child, due to poor healthcare in Crete, Greece. I feel like we have made some sacrifices, so I am grateful to take my ~3000 letters, & tell y'all why parent choice should not come to Texas.

We saw first-hand what alternatives to public education do to a community. Here in Texas Dan Patrick calls it "parent choice." First come privates, then come charters, then come undesirable ISDs, then come lower home values...then comes Texas pulling up last in education...falling from 43 to 50 in the USA.

Our 1st grade daughter was physically bullied at her Fairfax County Public School. A class of 29 kids, 8 IEPs. The admin screwed it up so badly a school board Trustee had to remove her. She was placed in the lower-rated, Spanish immersion school. They took her OUT of the school with DC's elite. Best thing ever! 7 other families left & 5 couldn't afford privates, so military/civilian wives quit their careers to become home school teachers. Sidebar: FCPS dropped teacher retirement from 4 to 3%. Attrition skyrocketed!! Imagine that.

Next duty station, we won the charter lottery (but not the cash one-bummer!), and attended a free charter in San Diego Unified. It was funded by rich people who threw a big gala. We didn't have a lot of cash to give them but felt pressure to do so. The charter was diverse!! Yay! But the rest of San Diego Unified was mostly a mess. The Navy extended us by 8 months & our landlord would not extend our lease. I wouldn't either if my home value kept dropping, due to the failing public school system.

Annapolis, MD public schools...no go, mostly. Our neighbor used his entire Navy retirement pay for the \$50k/year tuition for 2 kids. Huh?? People went into debt to avoid the public schools.

If any of y'all went through what we did, you would understand what a disaster SB-8 was, is and always will be. What Chairman Buckley did Wednesday night was an embarrassment.

Remember the data...76-65. I get it...he was told he had to.

Enough! I'm proud that SB-8 will fail, but I hope the best idea I've witnessed, is actually heard by Gov Abbott. Rep Talarico suggested we spend our multi-billions-dollar surplus and PUT IT INTO PUBLIC EDUCATION. Please say it louder for those in the back!

"Parent Choice":

- It does not make sense for rich people.
- It does not make sense for poor people.
- It does not make sense for middle-class people.
- It does not make sense for teachers.
- It does not make sense for students.
- It does not make sense for education staff.
- It does not make sense for communities.
- It does not make sense for homeowners.
- IT DOES NOT MAKE SENSE FOR TEXAS.

Sincerely,

cbs

@bigfatmessylife

Annette Martinez, Ms.
Self Retired Teacher
Austin, TX

As a retired Texas special education Teacher, I am vehemently against SB 8. The Texas Constitution requires the Legislature to properly fund Texas PUBLIC schools - not pass the responsibility of educating our future citizens to private schools.

Public schools provide an equitable education to all our children, whether they live in rural, suburban, or urban areas of our state or are special needs, gifted, or from low SES families. Private schools are rarely found in rural and low SES areas, so families in those areas would not be able to take advantage of the program in SB 8. Private schools also do not have to admit special education students, so SB 8 discriminates against special education students.

SB 8 creates a 2 tiered system of education in our state - a system paid for by those without access to private schools for the benefit of those with access. SB 8 is against the Texas Constitution, and because it discriminates against special education students, it violates the ADA and the U.S. Constitution. SB 8 is a waste of time because it will be struck down in court as unconstitutional.

Honor ALL Texas families and children and do not pass SB 8.

Linda Causey, Mrs
Self
Lewisville, TX

Those that will be left behind in Public Education are the ones that need the most help. I've had a child in private school, and there is more involved than tuition, for instant pay to play or being involved in after-school activities. The ones that could afford to go even with the state supplement, will still have to pay.

Nathan Hays
Wife (Public School Teacher)
Lubbock, TX

Yes

Brittany Boldt
Self - Parent
Carrollton, TX

If you want to claim that Texas is the best state in the country or induce more families to move here, public education has to be IMPROVED, not cut down. There are avenues for parents to make different choices for their families already. Taking funds away from public schools and disrespecting teachers by not providing an across-the-board salary increase will continue to erode the education systems within Texas. We will continue to fall behind until we invest in public schools for all.

Stephany Bauer
Self
La Feria, TX

Vote No

Paula Hansen
self
Sugar Land, TX

I oppose SB8. I am writing to ask you to protect neighborhood schools and oppose private school vouchers in Texas. Private voucher schemes pose a significant threat to public education in Texas and must be stopped. As a concerned Texan, I ask you to vote down any voucher scheme that diverts tax dollars from neighborhood public schools.

Bridget Brame
self
Georgetown, TX

My family and friends support SB 8. ALL parents need this option and not just those who are low income. Please vote YES and push to Governor Abbott for signature. We are praying for you.

Cristina Mejia
Self
Houston, TX

I am against ESAs. Public schools are the only schools that accept all. Even some of the witnesses today said this. Private schools cannot and will not accept all kids. Even with the 8,000, this does not cover the full cost of tuition and doesn't provide transportation. Do better for public education.

Christina Ginn
Self
Houston, TX

I oppose this bill. Please vote no. It will only harm our public schools.

Jessica Welsh
Self, Stay-At-Home-Mom
Spring, TX

We urge you to remove table CSSB 8 until it can be revised to separate vouchers and assessment. These issues do not go together and a complete revision to the entire assessment system deserves a full public hearing with open public testimony, not just hand chosen witnesses. If not, then vote no. On assessment the bill does one good thing in removing exit level requirements for a high school diploma. But the cost is high. Tripling assessment will triple the time away from authentic learning and lead to full year test prep. When you attach high stakes you don't lessen the importance of the assessments by having three administrations. You triple the drill and kill test panic on every campus. There is no other outcome no matter what people not on the ground are telling you. The assessment provisions of CSSB 8 must be stripped and open hearings held. Give vouchers a straight up vote on its own.

Arati Singh, Board President
Austin ISD
Austin, TX

Vouchers and education savings accounts will reduce the quality of public schools, where the vast majority of Texas children attend. This actually REDUCES choices for students to prepare for college and careers. There is no research that indicates vouchers improve outcomes for students.

Anne Russey
Self
Katy, TX

I oppose this bill and any and all efforts to implement vouchers, ESAs, etc etc etc. Public tax dollars belong in public schools.
Period.

Mitzi Higginbotham
Self/Educator/Parent
Reklaw Texas, TX

I OPPOSE SB *

"Sec. 39.0221. TRANSITION TO TEXAS SUCCESS INITIATIVE ASSESSMENT. (a) As soon as practicable and not later than the 2027-2028 school year, the agency shall: (1) adopt or develop assessment instruments in accordance with Sections 39.023 and 39.0236 as those sections were amended by __.B. __, Acts of the 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023; (2) submit the assessment instruments described by Subdivision (1) for federal approval; and (3) transition from the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) assessment instrument and implement the assessment instruments described by Subdivision (1)."

(1) For Federal Approval???

Based on this language I cannot find a way to support this bill. Why would we pass a law that creates a new relationship to the federal government? The federal Dept. of Education is not even constitutional and yet we are acknowledging it in a bill? It also mentions "homeschool" which the previous bills have been careful not to do – for good cause and caution. I urge you to oppose this SB 8.

Paula Phelps
I'm a Public School Educator.
Galveston, TX

Most of you were educated in public schools. Why would you turn your backs on those that help you to get to where you are now?! The members of this committee should respect public schools by rejecting school vouchers! Vote NO on SB 8!

Jennifer Simpson
Self/ counselor
Cypress, TX

I oppose this bill. I oppose all Boucher programs that divert public education funding to private schools. This version of school choice does not work. It does not benefit ALL students.
Additionally parents have rights in public education now.
Attention needs to be given to increasing the average daily allotment and properly funding public schools.

Frank Pratka
Retired
Houston, TX

Reject vouchers! Support Public Schools!

Cindy Travers
Self
Kingsland, TX

I oppose SB8. I am a republican voter who is concerned that Bills like HB8 are tightening the vice on our public servants and schools. Very specifically, I oppose Article 2 – Education Savings Account. As an opinion, this portion should not be within this bill as Article 1 and 2 are two very distinct topics. The price to the state - with benefit ultimately going to those that can afford/have access to private education is NOT in the best interest of Texas children. The bill as written does not benefit the majority of the student population in Texas. Maybe, use those funds to fund HB 9 and raise the salaries! Or better fund public education across Texas! Additionally, the requirements in SB8 will likely add costly, impractical layers of bureaucracy and red tape for our school districts and state govt. I believe we need to spend our taxpayer dollars on public education and creating first class public school systems in Texas. That's where the real work needs to be done. Please vote NO to SB8.

Joan Plotnick
Self
San Antonio, TX

The biggest problem with SB 8 is that it is unconstitutional to use taxpayer funds for religious education. Secondly, regardless of what proponents say, it will take money from public schools. The public schools are funded on a per pupil basis. Fewer students mean fewer funds - but not fewer costs. It costs the same to educate a class of 20 students as it does a class of 30 students. The building still has to be heated, etc. Further, not all private schools are alike. This bill would create a costly voucher program that would steal money from our public schools to subsidize tuition at unregulated and unaccountable private and religious schools. Many of these schools will be of lower quality than the public option. Finally, I doubt the state will fund schools that teach banned books or other items that public schools are not permitted to teach. So there is no real "choice." I doubt that the state will use taxpayer funds to teach, for example, that no one gets to heaven unless they are Moslem, or comprehensive sex education. And if it won't, where's the choice?

LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENED IN ARIZONA WHEN IT CREATED A SIMILAR SYSTEM. THE QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WENT DOWNHILL FAST.

I implore you not to harm the public school system in this way.

Elena Cantu, Mrs.
Self-Teacher
Humble, TX

I as a current teacher do not think that this bill should be rushed through without public input. I think you should vote no on SB 8 and respect public schools and not support school vouchers.

Raymond Meza, School Board Member
San Felipe Del Rio CISD
Del Rio, TX

Please vote NO for this bill. It would hurt our children that we serve by channeling public school money to schools that select not to serve our most needy children. They will not provide services for all special education students. They are selective in their enrollment.

Angela Pennington
Professional Educators of Texas
Schertz, TX

Per Honor & Respect,

On behalf of all public schools in the city of San Antonio, and its surrounding districts, including Schertz Cibolo Universal Independent School District (SCUISD), I would like to express my support for the PARENTAL EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM (PEP), a bill to be entitled an act. Parents are enshrined as the primary decision makers in all matters involving their children. The purpose of the PEP is to increase efficiency by empowering parents to make the best decisions for their children's education.

The objective is to fully fund schools while giving parents a choice about which school (traditional public school, public charter school, magnet public school, private school, online learning, or home schooling) is right for their child. Whether enrolled or entering a public or private school of choice, any Texas Child in Kindergarten through 12th grades would be eligible for the PEP. Every child deserves a quality education. Parental school choice shines the brightest possible spotlight on the importance of the many opportunities available in K-12 education.

Before the pandemic, educators and policymakers focused most of their attention on school failure measured by standardized test scores. Due to the pandemic, schools abruptly shut down, and all students were forced to receive remote learning instruction at home. This unprecedented situation not only broadened the achievement gap, but also wreaked-havoc on the social-emotional health of students all around the world. Now, overwhelmed, over-worked educators are doing the best they can to triage this critical issue; many without success. We learned, the hard way, that traditional public school is not a one-size-fit-all model. Parents need choices.

As a retired educator and administrator of 42 years, I have first-hand experience. Educators have needs too; nevertheless, they are anxious and feel pressured to be resilient. Now, I embrace the opportunity to volunteer at a neighborhood elementary school every week. I personally observe the long, hard days in the lives of educators. Unfortunately, classroom teachers are challenged with academic progress, as well as the social and emotional well-being, of a diverse group of students, both conventional and unconventional. Students need choices too. Many of these students could potentially benefit from a non-traditional public or private school of choice.

However, most parents are not financially able to access the best educational choice for their student. As the primary decision-maker for their student's education, parents must have choices.

Students should not be disadvantaged by income, disability, or educational environment. School choice should be an equal opportunity for all. Parental school choice improves outcomes for students of every race, creed, or color, not just for the students of affluent families. Thank you for your vote to support parental school choice. Your vote makes the difference in the lives of ALL children.

Mandy Smith
Self
Webster, TX

I am against this bill

Earl Brewer III
self, Retired
Houston, TX

Dear Sir or Madam

I am opposed to the House version of SB8. I sense their subterfuge afoot. I do not believe in using taxpayer money to fund private, or charter school education. This undermines the funding for our public schools.

I am also concerned about who profits from private and charter school vouchers. How many tax dollars will be collected for personal benefit by people such as Joe Basel, Monty Bennett, Aaron Harris, and Kalese Whitehurst, an executive with Responsive Education Solutions. Please do not allow this bill out of committee, thus harming how our public education system is funded. <https://www.texasmonthly.com/news-politics/inside-the-secret-plan-to-bring-private-school-vouchers-to-texas/>

Respectfully
Earl J. Brewer III
15819 Locust Grove Dr
Houston, TX 77095
281.827.3564

Melissa Kuchar
self
Houston, TX

Please say no to vouchers. Please raise the public school allotment by \$1000 to keep up with inflation.

Susan Nayak
Self, Website and Management Consulting
Austin, TX

I strongly oppose SB8. SB8 increases rather than decreases testing for public schools, while at the same time allowing private schools to operate without any accountability (see 29.371 -- the results of the assessments are collected, but they are not required to be disclosed). The only accountability I see is that private schools will have to pay for the testing, but since it's not required to publish results, that's even more incentive for them to skip testing. This testing is overseen by an unelected Commissioner that has no third-party oversight.

I agree with Section 26.0026 in that 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. This Education Savings Account is another attempt to provide vouchers at taxpayer expense, and will decimate our public schools. The amounts listed in Section 29.361 are not enough to fully cover the cost of private school, so the education savings account 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.

My son graduated from AISD well prepared for university education. Not all schools in AISD had the same resources his schools had, however. The PTA had to fund art, music, and language instruction because funds were not available otherwise. Texas public schools have been starved over the past decades, and this bill would starve them even more. If you are looking at ways to improve education in Texas, the Robin Hood program should be abolished, or at the very least should be used to distribute funds within the school district, not outside. Public schools should get more investment, not pulling funds away from public education via vouchers or education savings accounts. Private schools are also not required to educate all students, so students who need more resources end up being kicked out.

I'm also concerned with the goals of tying education to high-demand jobs. Many of the jobs that will be needed in the future don't even exist now. By the time the assessments come out, they will be outdated. We need to be teaching children how to analyze and solve problems, how to think critically, and how to learn so they are prepared for inevitable changes in the future.

The one good aspect of this bill is eliminating the high school graduation requirement which is not required by federal law. Please remove the high school graduation requirement without the other changes in this bill.

Children in Texas have the right to meaningful and engaging learning that prepares them for the future, with less time and focus on standardized testing, and without an unelected commissioner overseeing their education.

Amy Pagan, Ms
Parent in PISD
Plano, TX

I am opposed to a voucher system- by any name. Support our public schools. Not charters and private schools who are not accountable and are not required to adhere to 504 accommodations. I vote. And so do my friends.

Emmaleigh Toto
Self
San Marcos, TX

Your response to a surprise vote on an unheard voucher bill being denied by the Texas House cannot be to call a pro-forma hearing that still bars the public from speaking.

Our communities deserve a voice in this process. The brand-new, 80-page bill you are hearing would radically transform our public education system and cause serious harm to our public schools.

I am horrified that the committee is keeping Texans from making their voices heard on it.

Rushing a vote on this bill is a gross and underhanded move, and I consider it a slap in the face to our public schools, the 5.5 million children they educate, and the 650,000 Texans they employ.

I urge you to vote NO on SB 8 and this attempt to divert taxpayer dollars away from our neighborhood public schools.

Maria Hernandez, Substitute teacher
Episd
El paso, TX

I do not approve my tax property money going to charter schools. As it is the public schools still need for funding to better properly attend the students for a better and more effective education. Taking money from the public schools schools,will worsen the issue.

Amy Crist
Self
Lubbock, TX

Support public schools!! They are the cornerstone of a democratic country. No to vouchers. Public schools need to be fully funded... go visit more public schools. I went to public school, my children are still attending public schools. Taxpayer money should not be used to create vouchers which will go to "schools" that are not transparent in how they spend money. Using taxpayer money to subsidize private school tuition is wrong. Any school receiving money from taxpayers should abide by the same guidelines as public schools and take the STAAR or whatever state mandated testing is required. No to vouchers!!

Sincerely,
Amy Crist
Registered Voter and Taxpayer

Stacey Brister
Little Cypress-Mauriceville CISD and myself
Orange, TX

Please stand firm and say NO to ESA/School Vouchers on SB 8!

There are so many more requirements of Texas public schools than STAAR testing. If private schools/homeschools receive state funding, then hold them to the state standards of instructional minutes, calendar minutes, waivers for missed days, all things SpEd, discipline requirements, salary schedules, school ratings, instructional mandates (TEKS), graduation requirements, transparency of finances, transparency of instructional materials, G/T requirements, and required testing at the SAME level as public schools (Iowa Test of Basic Skills is not the STAAR test).

Do private schools want state money if it comes with government oversight? I doubt it.

Public school educates all--those of poverty, of color, with special needs, with dysfunctional families, and those with mental health challenges. What a shame it will be for Texas to have the power and the ability to help overcome generational poverty but CHOOSES to give to those who "have" for private schools and takes away from those who "don't" who often require more to educate.

The public schools of Texas make up our communities. When public schools fail, communities fail. When communities fail, business fails. When business fails, Texas fails.

I welcome you to spend real time in your public schools. You'll have a new appreciation for the teachers on the front line every.single.day! Please say NO to vouchers!

Allison Brown
Self
Midland, TX

Vouchers, no matter how well intentioned, take money from the public and benefit only a select few. The general population is always the loser in this situation. Voucher do not help public education. Please vote a resounding NO on this bill!

J Schou, Ms
Self
Keller, TX

All Texas students deserve an education that prepares them to succeed, not just students at exclusive private schools. The Texas state constitution says our Legislature is responsible for funding our neighborhood public schools for students, not subsidizing tuition for wealthy families at exclusive private and religious schools that pick and choose who they will enroll.

As a concerned Texan, I ask you to vote down any voucher scheme that diverts tax dollars from neighborhood public schools. It isn't right to take taxes from citizens for religious schools that not everyone practices. Private schools have always had their own agenda, students and tuition and it should remain that way. By forcing people to pay for schools that already have their own tuition established is immoral and unfair. This is ridiculous that it's even being considered and pushed forward.

Public dollars should stay in public schools.

Michelle LoweSolis
Self
San Antonio, TX

SB 8 is a bill that will destroy public education as Texas cannot fund two systems. We are the 9th largest economy in the world, but we are 44th in per student funding. We have a \$33B surplus this year. If we can't public education and pay teachers this year, then when? Taxpayer money should not be going to private schools. Taxpayer money should be used to fully fund public education. That is your constitutional responsibility as legislators. I ask you to OPPOSE SB8.

Judith Soriano
Delf
Fort Worth, TX

Do not drain the funding of public schools . We know what you're up to.
All available funds belong in rural, suburban, and urban PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Vickie Echols
Wellness for Educators
Dallas, TX

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 8 (CSSB 8)

Dear Mr. Brad Buckley and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 8 (CSSB 8), which is currently under consideration in your esteemed committee. As an educator, parent, concerned citizen and advocate for quality education in Texas, I believe that CSSB 8 poses serious threats to our public education system and the well-being of our students and teachers.

One of the key concerns regarding CSSB 8 is its provisions related to standardized testing. Contrary to the claims made by proponents of the bill, CSSB 8 does not eliminate the STAAR test. On the contrary, it would significantly increase the number of standardized tests our students must endure, from 20 tests to a staggering 48 tests throughout the school year. This excessive number of tests places an undue burden on students and raises questions about the necessity and appropriateness of such a system.

According to an analysis conducted by Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment (TAMSA), students in grades 3-8 would transition from taking the STAAR test once a year to a test administered three times a year, with the specific test to be determined at a later stage. This would result in elementary and middle school students facing an increase from 15 tests to 42 tests, nearly tripling the number of assessments. High school students would also experience an increase, from five end-of-course assessments (of which only three are federally required) to six tests.

What's deeply concerning is the link between these accountability changes and CSSB 8's proposed voucher system. Students utilizing vouchers to attend private schools would be compelled to participate in the same excessive testing regime, while their counterparts in private schools would not face such requirements. Moreover, the bill fails to outline how these assessments would be practically administered, with little consideration for the social and emotional well-being of students who would be required to leave their schools during testing windows.

Vicki L Bunderson
Self - Retired Teacher
Brownsville, TX

Vote NO on SB 8

Vickie Echols
Wellness for Educators
Dallas, TX

Dear Mr. Brad Buckley and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 8 (CSSB 8), currently under consideration in your esteemed committee. As an educator, parent, grandparent of children in public schools, concerned citizen, and advocate for quality education in Texas, I believe that CSSB 8 poses significant threats to our public education system and the well-being of our students and teachers.

One of the key concerns regarding CSSB 8 is its provisions related to standardized testing. Contrary to the claims made by proponents of the bill, CSSB 8 does not eliminate the STAAR test. Instead, it would drastically increase the number of standardized tests our students must endure, from 20 tests to an astonishing 48 tests throughout the school year. This excessive number of tests places an overwhelming burden on students and raises questions about the necessity and appropriateness of such a system.

According to an analysis conducted by Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment (TAMSA), students in grades 3-8 would transition from taking the STAAR test once a year to a test administered three times a year, with the specific test to be determined at a later stage. This would result in elementary and middle school students facing a nearly threefold increase in assessments, from 15 tests to 42 tests. High school students would also experience an increase, from five end-of-course assessments (of which only three are federally required) to six tests.

What is deeply concerning is the connection between these accountability changes and CSSB 8's proposed voucher system. Students utilizing vouchers to attend private schools would be compelled to participate in the same excessive testing regime, while their counterparts in private schools would not face such requirements. Furthermore, the bill fails to outline practical details on how these assessments would be administered, showing little consideration for the social and emotional well-being of students who would be required to leave their schools during testing windows.

I strongly believe that education should prioritize the holistic development of students, fostering their intellectual, emotional, and social growth. Students are more than just test scores, and their education should encompass a wide range of skills and abilities that prepare them for success in the real world. CSSB 8's emphasis on high-stakes testing undermines this principle by narrowing the focus of education solely to test preparation, neglecting other crucial aspects of learning. This approach places unnecessary stress on our students, creating an environment that stifles creativity, critical thinking, and the joy of learning.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I trust that you will carefully consider the voices and concerns of educators, parents, and citizens in your decision-making process.

Angela Groves
Self
Fort Worth, TX

NO !

Cassandra Morris
Self
Mesquite, TX

I urge you to oppose the creation of any private school voucher program, including education savings accounts, in Texas. The legislature has a Constitutional responsibility to 'make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools'--not divert public tax dollars to private institutions with no transparency and no accountability. Our public schools are the foundation of our communities and are tasked with meeting the needs of all students regardless of race, income, or ability. This session, please focus your efforts on investing in the children, families, educators, and staff who are building the future of Texas in our public schools.

Vickie Echols
Wellness for Educators
Dallas, TX

As an educator, parent, concerned citizen, and advocate for quality education in Texas, I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 8 (CSSB 8) currently under consideration in your esteemed committee. I firmly believe that CSSB 8 poses significant threats to our public education system and the well-being of our students and teachers.

One of the primary concerns I have with CSSB 8 pertains to its provisions regarding standardized testing. Contrary to the claims made by proponents of the bill, CSSB 8 does not eliminate the STAAR test. Instead, it introduces a drastic increase in the number of standardized tests our students would be required to take, soaring from the current 20 tests to an astonishing 48 tests throughout the school year. This overwhelming number of tests places an excessive burden on our students and raises serious questions about the necessity and appropriateness of such an extensive testing regime.

According to an analysis by Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment (TAMSA), students in grades 3-8 would face a significant shift in testing frequency. Instead of taking the STAAR test once a year, they would now be required to undergo testing three times a year, with the specific test to be determined at a later stage. This would result in a nearly threefold increase for elementary and middle school students, going from 15 tests to a staggering 42 tests. Even high school students would experience an increase, from the current five end-of-course assessments (of which only three are federally required) to six tests.

What deeply concerns me is the link between these accountability changes and CSSB 8's proposed voucher system. While students utilizing vouchers to attend private schools would be subjected to the same excessive testing regime, their counterparts in private schools would be exempted from these requirements. This disparity raises significant fairness and equity issues. Furthermore, the bill fails to provide clear guidance on how these assessments would practically be administered, showing little consideration for the social and emotional well-being of students who would have to leave their schools during testing windows.

In my view, education should prioritize the holistic development of students, encompassing their intellectual, emotional, and social growth. Our students are not merely test scores; they deserve an education that nurtures a broad range of skills and abilities essential for their success in the real world. Unfortunately, CSSB 8's emphasis on high-stakes testing undermines this principle, narrowing the focus of education to test preparation while neglecting other crucial aspects of learning. This singular focus on testing creates an environment that unnecessarily burdens our students, stifles their creativity, hampers critical thinking, and erodes the joy of learning. Instead, we should strive to provide our students with a well-rounded education that cultivates their intellect.

Joe Cardenas
Self- teacher
Louise, TX

As a teacher, I'm offended at this naked attempt to defund/ redirect tax monies away from brick and mortar public schools under the guise of school choice! Vouchers are not an alternative to either school funding or choice- it furthers the ideas of self segregation at public expense rather than fostering and utilizing local district processes to effect change. Private schools, parochial schools, and for profit charter schools are choices that should depend on the principles of supply and demand, not the public purse! This voucher scheme smacks of racism in light of the state's public student-body being majority minority. Why else devise a funding mechanism for failing charter schools that do not outperform brick and mortar public schools?! Other states with both charter schools and vouchers can't point to an effective system of education- these expensive experiments must end! Fund brick and mortar public schools and stop the shameful insincerity and mispronunciation of the situation!

Judith Ramos, Mrs.
Self/Public Educator
Humble, TX

I am active public school educator at Humble ISD. I am asking that public schools be respected by rejecting school vouchers. Please vote NO on SB8 and consider compensating all public educators for the passionate, tireless work they do. It's time that public school educators get acknowledged. Please vote NO on SB8. Thank you.

Liz Morse
Richardson ISD
Dallas, TX

Senate Bill 8 creates a voucher-type program that will ultimately hurt public schools by taking funds that are needed to support students in public schools, especially given the learning loss that we are still working to reverse and the inflation that has created budget deficits to meet rising costs.

First, please fund public schools so that we can meet the standards you have set. Do not a new entitlement system that will weaken public schools and has no accountability to taxpayers.

Vote No on SB 8 or any voucher-type proposal. Support your public schools!

Jodi Meyer

Self, parent & former public school teacher

San Antonio, TX

This bill is a wolf in sheep's clothing. Increasing the amount of State mandated testing that already causes such anxiety for children in every grade level is a recipe to increase the mental health issues of the children most in need of our support.

Instead of funding our existing schools and building them up to success, this bill seeks to take away money from struggling schools to allow select students the option to opt out of testing entirely.

Haven't we already tried and failed at this "separate but equal schools" route? To have a different education system for people who can pay \$30,000 a year tuition is already unconscionable. The fact that it's being masqueraded as supporting poor children is just plain wrong.

So not only will we spend more money testing the students even more who struggle the most, but we will take more money from the schools that are struggling and give them to the few wealthy students who can afford private school already.

To see the inequality, just look at the account balance. Why is it that private schools voucher programs include an \$8,000 account, when the state only allots \$3,500 to the public school that's already educating them?

How is it possibly not going to steal money from local schools if these private savings accounts are worth more than double what a local School receives?

As a parent and burned out former teacher, this is just plain wrong and destructive. If we want a better society, we need to support education, not defund our local schools.

Please forgive typos. I am using voice to text.

Mark Antley

Alief AFT

HOUSTON, TX

It is both fiscally irresponsible and morally wrong to rob Peter to pay Paul. SB 8 will gut constitutionally mandated funding for public schools in order to create gratuitous educational savings accounts. This must not come to pass

Linda Wilbourn, Ms

Self

Kerrville, TX

I live in Kerr County in Kerrville Independent School District. I'd like to urge a "NO" vote on SB 8, as I believe it will take our tax dollars to support private schools. This will take the dollars needed to support and improve public schools. I appreciate your attention to this.

Hannah Varghese

Self

Allen, TX

Please do not vote for this. It does not provide equal access to education for students and is a potential misuse of funding where educators need it.

Dawn and Steven Hallman
Self
Garland, TX

No to Vouchers!!!

Delana Haney, Mrs.
Self/teacher
Round Rock, TX

As a Republican school teacher, it's really getting hard to stick with the party when y'all are going further and further away from our core principles. We need an educated Texas. Quit adding more standardized tests that do nothing for our students. Do not give vouchers. Public schools are a founding idea of this country. Please vote No for SB 8.

Mark Saffer, JD, CPA
Myself
Houston, TX

I request this committee to vote "NO" to SB8. I have been closely following SB8 along with the many amendments and commend the committee for the hard work that has been applied to this. We call this Parent's choice, but why not spend these funds on the public education system that this committee recognizes are not meeting the teaching standards. The committee has said the percentage of students that use the ESA account in other states is a low percentage, if this is true, than how can it be considered a benefit for all. The bill even specifically identifies districts that receive an F rating for two periods in a row, shouldn't this further stress the need to provide the funds to the district receiving the F? Providing funds to the public education system helps all and makes the choice to stay with public schools easier. Thanks again to all of you and your consideration to this critical topic.

Madison Edgar Mathis, Dr.
self
Spring, TX

I oppose this bill.

Preston Tirey
Self - College Math instructor
Canyon, TX

SAY NO TO VOUCHERS!!!!!! This only benefits 6% of our statewide students, almost all of which are part of families in the top 50% economically anyway! It harms public schools and public school teachers. The majority of the state does NOT want this.

Jennifer Roberts
Self
Mansfield, TX

As someone who attended Texas public schools and sent my (currently) 21 and 23 year old children to Texas public schools, I oppose ESA's and vouchers in any form. The current focus in this session should be to properly fund public schools so that ALL students may be educated well. ESA's and vouchers primarily benefit higher wage class families who can already choose private schools.

ALL families may choose public or charter schools. These are the schools who should be receiving funds to educate our children as they do educate the vast majority. It's really that simple. Thank you.

Tracy Walton
Self
Fulshear, TX

As a public school educator I completely disagree with this bill. It is terrible for public education. Plus it's not okay to use tax money to pay for private schools. This drains money from public school which despoñese adequate funding.

Frankie Weaver
Parents
Pottsboro, TX

Stop the assessments on our children! It's detrimental to their mental health.

Souvany Jennings
Parent/teacher/self
Dripping Springs, TX

No to tripling high stakes staar assessments. We want authentic learning to take place in the classroom. I am a 4th grade teacher who loves teaching reading, Humanities and Texas history. I gave 3 high schoolers in Dripping Springs isd. No to vouchers too!

Chris Grisolia
Self/Business Management
Krum, TX

I am 100% apposed to this bill. Taking money away from public schools will take Texas backwards in education. We are already at the bottom of the heap. Do NOT pass SB 8 in the house.

Thank you for your service.

Tasha Yarbrough
Parent
Channing, TX

STAAR Testing is detrimental to our students and their education. It is biased and unfair, especially to students with any learning disability. Adding more tests throughout the year is nothing short than abusive to our children. As a parent to children, I am very much against adding state mandated tests. The millions spent on these exams would be better spent on properly funding public education. NO MORE STAAR TESTING!!

Janeva Wilson, UT Austins Student
Self
Austin, TX

I strongly oppose SB 8 as it diverts public funds for education away from all students the hands of the privileged and rich. Texas should be serving students in the education system with adequate resources and funding. SB 8 only empowers students who come from families that can afford the remaining costs of tuition, as well as those who have access to private schools. Legislators should promote a system that benefits all students regardless of race, ethnicity, background, and zip code. SB 8 does not support such a system.

Wendy Brajnik
Self, homemaker
Paradise, TX

Vote no or table CSSB 8. The changes to assessment deserve a full standalone hearing with public testimony, not just invited witnesses. Texas parents won't be fooled.

Carolyn Collins
Self
Lubbock, TX

This is necessary especially in this time. We need options for our children to get an education in a safe environment!!

teresa kulupka
Self
Southlake, TX

Keep public school money in public schools.

Kitchell Collins, Dr
Self
Lubbock, TX

Absolutely important to pass this bill for our children. We need safe place for an education without our children being influenced by beliefs opposing what we have always stood for.

Kamie Herrera, Mrs.
self
Longview, TX

I am against any legislation that would take away funding from our public schools and or public funds being given to private or religious groups. Our public schools are struggling to keep up with inflation and provide quality education with the current funds they are given. Texas has a record surplus and it is imperative we use as much as we can towards public education. Today my 4 children were put on lock down due to a direct violent threat towards the campuses. Thankfully our law enforcement and district staff acted quickly preventing a tragedy but I hate to think of what could happen with less resources and or staff available due to less funding because funds were diverted elsewhere. Public schools simply cannot compete with private schools in any way. Everyone says vouchers will make public schools more competitive, but how? How can they compete with less funds and less resources available compared to private schools? My youngest son, Rex, receives autism therapies through the life skills program in our district. He would not have the same resources available to him through a private education. Simply because private schools do not have to accept all children nor do they have to keep children enrolled based off educational needs. If a child has special educational needs a private school has the right to expel them. Public schools do not have this luxury. Our Texas House of Representatives already voted to not increase the funding for our special education students, vouchers would only take more funds away from our most vulnerable. Vouchers are a violation of Church and State. Vouchers are unconstitutional. Vouchers have the potential to increase our education budget \$3.18 billion dollars. Those entrusted to help come up with the education budget have already said our Special Education programs are short \$2 billion. Please do not support taking away funds from our public schools. Not all Texas child have access to a private education, vouchers only help the most privileged. Please think of children like my son Rex, his friends and their teachers as they are the ones that will hurt the most if voucher bills are passed. These children often cannot speak for themselves, please do not take funds away from them making their voice smaller then you already have by not increasing their budget.

Kori Acevedo
self teacher
Canton, TX

NO to Vouchers, No taxpayer funds should be spent on non-public schools that do not have to abide by the same standards and do not have to accept all students.
Stand up for public schools, teachers, and ALL kids!

Christina Cox, Mrs.
Self
Nacogdoches, TX

Vouchers are about politics. Not students. Destroying public education in Texas is not the priority of legislative session. Providing public school funds for public school students should always be a Texas priority. Vouchers should not be allowed, nor should "private school accounts."

Jennifer Burcham
Self/Business owner
Canton, TX

I am a mom of 3 public educated boys. I am also the proud daughter of a retired superintendent & a curriculum director. Public education is the backbone of my community. Martin's Mill ISD is a wonderful school district. They exceed goals every school year. We have won academic contests including state UIL robotics multiple years in a row, regional UIL academic champs, and countless other academic awards. And by the way my State Senator Bob Hall NEVER acknowledges these achievements. We are also athletically gifted. My oldest was a state qualifier in golf every year in high school. This made an athletic college scholarship possible which also enabled him to graduate from Texas A&M law this year. My middle was in special Ed. He needed help with speech & some OT. He then went on to join the Marines where he has achieved the rank of Corporal. My youngest was on the state robotics team & won state every year of his high school career. He is now an E4 in the AirForce and was just selected for special forces training.

All of this was possible because of their superior education in a Texas PUBLIC SCHOOL. Texas ranks 49th in teacher pay. They rank 48th in mental health availability. Giving a private school more than you give a public school for daily allotment is CRIMINAL. It is not conservative. I always hear about wanting businesses to relocate to Texas. If you approve vouchers public schools will fail. You will then have an economy drug down because of legislators who vote for vouchers.

I keep hearing about "parental choice". We already have that. You can homeschool, you can send your child to private school or whatever public school you like.

Do not ask me to subsidize someone else's education that may be highly inferior to that of my public school. There is no accountability with vouchers. There is no oversight of the money. If a student leaves, where does the money go? And how do you make sure they are learning? They aren't taking the STAAR test.

Greg Abbott & Dan Patrick have so vilified our teachers in public school that they should be ashamed. They are holding up raises for teachers so their mega donors get their way.

It is disgusting & honestly criminal.

Elizabeth Burns
Self - Creative Director
Austin, TX

NO ON SB 8! Shame on you for trying to push this through despite public outcry. Our public schools deserve full funding and not to be siphoned away from with vouchers.

Mark Yokim
Self
Dallas, TX

No.

Marla York
Self/teacher
Belton, TX

In no way should tax dollars go toward an education savings account.

Bobby Nieman
self- former public school student, parent, adjunct instructor in human development
Quinlan, TX

I support the availability of tax-supported public education to all children residing within the state through grade twelve because I believe every citizen in the state benefits from an educated workforce capable of meeting the needs of employers and exercising the civic responsibilities of those who reside within our representative republic. If elected representatives consider that a socialist perspective, so be it. My position deserves their support because of the universal benefit that accrues to all citizens.

I oppose any voucher system offered under the rubric of "school choice" unless the vouchers are constructed so as to provide a complete alternative to funding all education within the state. That is, the voucher would pay the expenses of any child to attend any educational facility within the state. My reasoning is as follows:

1. Partial payment vouchers would have the effect of encouraging segregation of public schools on the basis of income as well as ethnicity, in violation of the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling of the U. S. Supreme Court.
 2. Educational facilities in Texas are not created equal; public schools are mandated to provide services that other schools are not, such as busing in rural areas, classes for special needs children, and public school students are compelled to attend, which compounds disciplinary problems and increases the costs within public schools. (I believe many of the goals of the voucher system currently being considered could be easily accomplished if school attendance was not compulsory or if students could be expelled through legal means guaranteeing the student's rights.)
 3. Because of the Constitutionally mandated separation of church and state, religious indoctrination is prohibited in public schools and should be prohibited in any school supported by state taxation. (The idea that partial-payment vouchers would allow children to attend "Christian" schools is an illogical fantasy because such vouchers would also encourage attendance at the private schools of other faiths.) If allowed, such a situation could well be detrimental to our representative form of government. Religious indoctrination should occur within the context of a religious congregation, not within an educational facility.
-

Tina Merritt
Self
Richmond, TX

While I think this bill has been written with the best intentions for our children, I feel the language has failed to make that certain. Having STAAR 3 times a year with the high stakes attached to it will not help calm our children down. The kids will get worked up more, the school will waste weeks upon weeks of instructional time preparing for this. The schools already spend too much time as it is. As a parent I feel like the quality of education my children will receive will lessen. I am all for year round assessments like district level benchmarks and MAP testing but now adding 3 STAAR exams with the high stakes, you just won't get the results you want. Take off the high stakes component and you'll get a more accurate look at where our children are at. Trust in the certified professionals at the school level to accurately grade and promote our children. Don't force colleges to take STAAR results, let them use the nationally recognized exams like SAT, ACT or their own criteria. Unless you are planning on fully funding those campuses, let them choose the criteria for acceptance.
Signed a mother of 2. A secondary advanced student and an elementary SpED student.

Bobby Nieman
self- former public school student, parent, adjunct instructor in human development
Quinlan, TX

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-

Linda Terry, Mrs.
Retired special Ed teacher of 36 years mainly w Dallas ISD
West, TX

I am very much opposed to vouchers. I feel that they will diminish support of the public school system which is already underfunded. I am especially concerned that special ed populations will not be served by voucher schools since they require so much extra funding for materials and special needs personnel. I feel these populations will be left for the public schools to serve thus putting more strain on their budgets and less strain on voucher schools.

David Adams, Mr
TRS
Midland, TX

We need to keep state money in public schools. Private schools should stand alone.

Donna Mohlman
Self-retired
Baytown, TX

This bill will only further weaken public education and in NO way support education for economically disadvantaged students. Parents already have choice of schools their children can attend. An education savings account program will only financially benefit those who are members of the dominant culture who already benefit from existing laws and neighborhoods. If you are indeed "pro life," adequately fund public school education so ALL lives have equal access to high quality education. I spent more than 40 years in education at all levels K-12 and college in both public and private schools. To improve lives of Texas citizens, ensure they are able to read on grade level by third grade.

Kathryn Kizer
Access Education RRISD
Austin, TX

I am very opposed to this bill. I do not believe that my tax dollars should go to private religious schools.

If private school curriculum is the same or better than TEKS, then they shouldn't have any problem taking the STAAR. In fact they would likely outperform public schools on the STAAR if their curriculum is so much better.

Like RYH Texas, I would like to see less emphasis on standardized testing for the K-8 school rating.

Alan Higginbotham
self
Reklaw, TX

I oppose SB 8. Why would we pass a law that creates a new relationship to the federal government? Why are you guys so intent on letting the left run our schools? You continually try to give TEA authority over the SBOE and now you're even getting homeschools involved. Oppose SB 8

Lizdelia Pinon, Dr.
Self - Mom of 4 special needs students Texas schools
Crowley, TX

My three special needs children in TEXAS public schools were not allowed to apply to several Fort Worth private schools in the past couple of years. One was even a private school only for special needs, and they also DENIED us to apply. They all stated they could not care for their needs. One of my daughters has Cerebral Palsy and needs help moving in her wheelchair at the school. My oldest with IDD was at a charter school in Fort Worth, and after one year was asked to find a better place for him.

Say NO to SB 8, Private schools DO not welcome special needs as they have said they do.

PATRICK BLACKARD

Self TV camera operator

Round Rock, TX

No public tax money for private schools. Vouchers, education savings accounts, or whatever you want to call them, will destroy public education, especially in rural areas. Your constituents will never forgive you, once they see the results.
