

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Public Education  
For Hearing Date: Monday, August 12, 2024 9:00 AM  
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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 Educational Opportunity

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Valarie Galindo  
Self  
El Paso, TX

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators. Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students. Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents.

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John Russell, MR  
Self  
Houston, TX

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Beronica Russell  
Self  
Houston, TX

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Marilyn Schmiedel  
Self  
Pflugerville, TX

Public schools need funding. Vouchers for private education do not help my children, but harm them. Vouchers take money from public schools and have been shown in multiple states to be used by people who are already using public education and do not help everyone. My daughter in particular is excluded from vouchers, because private schools do not have the infrastructure for special education for a child in a wheelchair who uses a feeding tube and a communication device. Vouchers erode the public school system and make it so that people like my daughter are stuck in schools that don't have enough money to function. Please say no to vouchers.

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Jeanette Torres  
Self/ teacher  
El Paso, TX

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Alonzo Martinez  
Self  
Abilene, TX

We are currently experiencing a lack of funding in our area of West Texas. These vouchers do not help a majority or the constituents in the Big County. Rebranding or a change in verbiage does not stop how this socialism for the wealthy decimates the culture of our areas. From football rivalries to academic readiness, this only creates multiple poorly financed systems at the expense of fracturing community. I urge every member to vote against this bill with such a disingenuous title.

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Amy Gardner  
Self, Texas Public School Educator  
Austin, TX

I'm a Texas public education teacher and am strongly against the adoption of vouchers, education savings accounts, or any other scheme to divert funding from our public schools in Texas. I'm disappointed that we're still discussing this, given that this is irresponsible fiscal policy that has been shown to be used more by wealthy families already homeschooling or attending private schools, ultimately adding to the state's roster of students we're paying to educate instead of sending more funding to the schools that need it most.

We need to focus our work on raising teacher pay, supporting college and career pathway development, and filling high-need shortage areas like special education and bilingual education. Time is ticking and we're wasting it. For example, in my experience, my teacher colleagues are leaving because the workload is too high and the pay is too low. We are unable to fill special education positions and our bilingual educators are losing their stipends, forcing them to change jobs while dual language teachers are overwhelmed, overworked and underpaid as their class sizes change weekly, rising to 25-35 students in a single classroom while their monolingual colleagues have 12-14 students. These teachers are spread too thin, feeling unable to close achievement gaps which results in further loss of money as these teachers do not meet the criteria for additional pay if they are on a campus with Teacher Incentive Allotment.

Educational opportunity in Texas should be about opportunity for ALL, not a select few. Vouchers and ESAs will only limit future educational opportunities for the majority of Texas students.

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Gracie Niver  
Self  
Waller, TX

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators.

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Debbie Callender  
Self  
El Paso, TX

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Cody Knott  
self  
Eastland, TX

To Whom It May Concern:

As a dedicated Texas educator, I humbly ask for your careful consideration before passing a voucher bill in our state. Teachers have been unduly impacted by politics for too long. Similar to police, firefighters, and EMTs, teachers are public servants who wholeheartedly devote themselves to their students. We must preserve public schools because they cater to ALL students, unlike private and charter schools, which have selective admissions processes.

We must ensure that public funds remain within public schools and dispel the notion that parents are not involved in their children's education. While some parents actively participate, others choose not to. However, it's crucial to remember that parents are the primary influencers in their children's education. Despite teachers' efforts to communicate through calls, emails, and letters, some parents are not engaged. Data from parent-teacher conferences statewide shows varying levels of participation. Let's refrain from using teachers as political tools in state matters, and 'school choice' should no longer be a political slogan. Parents are always encouraged to engage with their child's teachers regarding their education.

We are puzzled by the teacher shortage. We watch the news and notice how many teachers are criticized by people in Austin. If you want to bring about change, it's crucial that we consult and unite with teachers. Change only occurs when we are all united in what needs to be done. Prioritizing students is what we should all strive for in our collective progress.

Please consider the best interests of students as advocated by teachers. Parents and teachers should collaborate to ensure the well-being of all students. Avoiding political slogans and unfounded criticism is crucial for constructive dialogue. It's important to schedule more meetings involving both teachers and parents at public schools. Public school teachers must have a say in this matter as we are dedicated individuals serving our communities through education.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter.

Sincerely,

Cody Knott  
Teacher  
Eastland, TX

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David Greer, Dr.  
self  
Celina, TX

In every state that has enacted vouchers public school achievement as well as individual student achievement has improved. There is no down side to vouchers. It is a win win all the way around, students, parents, communities and public education. PLEASE VOTE FOR VOUCHER LEGISLATION NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

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Jacqueline Nudd

Self- special education teacher assistant

Round Rock, TX

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Kristen Mast

self

San Antonio, TX

I am a public school teacher and am against vouchers. Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators. Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students.

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Susan Knepler, Ms.

Self

Houston, TX

Vouchers will take the needed money from our public schools. They will not help the students who need them for many reasons. It is so hard to believe that our state has left our students behind and have not properly funded our schools. Texas is better than this!

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Philip Dodd

self/Retired Texas Teacher

kingsland, TX

As a Texas Teacher for all my working life, I can tell you that pumping money into schools that have teachers that care about money and not the education of our children has NEVER done anything positive for Education in Texas. It is about time you realize that and offer the opportunity for parents and their children to get an education where ever there is a school that can show that children are being served by caring educators that are not "woke" and put the children first. Vouchers will permit education of children in Texas to have that opportunity. Please don't continue to fail Our Children. With Respect, Thank you !

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Afton Crissey

Self; stay-at-home mom

Dallas, TX

I grew up in a rural farming community. I'm a product of public schools because, in our community, there were no private school options. Your constituents in rural areas do not benefit from vouchers. Now I live in Dallas and, theoretically, my sons should have many school options. But my youngest son has autism and his "educational opportunities" are drastically limited. I can't explain the frustration I felt when he was diagnosed as a small child and I looked for a new preschool that I felt was better suited to his needs. My child fell into this in-between where he was either too disabled or not disabled enough for each specific school. I was thrilled to learn that, due to his autism diagnosis, he qualified to attend public school starting at 3 years old. He spent his pre-K3 year in special ed, his pre-K4 year in a combined classroom of special Ed and general education kids and was ready for a general education classroom setting by kindergarten. We depend on Texas public schools for his education. I've spoken to other mothers who've tried to send their autistic child to the same private school their siblings attend, only to be told after a lengthy trial period that the school can't accommodate their child's disability. There is no "school choice" when your child has a disability. Your options are limited. I've also spoken to family members and friends who teach in both public and private schools to ensure that I'm getting the very best education for my child and the answer is always the same. Private schools do not have the regulation and oversight to ensure that a child with a disability is getting their needs met. They often cannot provide the appropriate environment. Texas public schools are legally responsible for providing him with everything he needs to be just as successful as his peers. Please focus on fully funding public schools and strengthening the great institutions we already have in place. Teachers, students and parents will all thank you.

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Liz Picone

self

Austin, TX

Texas public schools are already underfunded. They receive more than \$5,000 less per child than the national average, and Texas teachers are paid more than \$9,000 less on average than their peers in other states. Stop bleeding the public schools! Say no to vouchers and adequately fund our Texas public schools!

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Kimberly Whitt

Self/ teacher

Houston, TX

Please vote against sending state money to private schools. The private schools don't lack funding, but public schools are perpetually underfunded. Instead of wasting state money on vouchers, let's improve school choice through supporting public schools more and making them better.

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Veronica Doxtader

SELF Educator

Victoria, TX

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Annette Montgomery  
self/educator  
MEMPHIS, TX

Vouchers will only profit large districts. Rural districts are scraping by, students and educators.

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anthony atwood  
Self, Austin Public School Teacher  
Austin, TX

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Kitrina Magee  
Self - school psychologist  
Pflugerville, TX

Please vote "no" to vouchers. State education funds should not be utilized to pay tuition for institutions that do not accept all children. My son is severely disabled, no private school will provide him with an education. Please keep that money in public schools for children like my son that are NOT given a choice in where they attend school.

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Francisco De Hoyos  
Self/teacher  
Edinburg, TX

Governor Abbott, cease diverting funding from Texas public schools. Our schools are already underfunded, receiving \$5,000 less per child than the national average, and teachers are paid \$9,000 less than their peers in other states. This lack of investment harms students and educators alike, leading to larger class sizes, fewer resources, and diminished educational opportunities. Instead of pursuing policies that further erode public education, you should prioritize increasing funding to ensure all Texas students receive the quality education they deserve. It's time to stop the cuts and invest in our future.

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Jeanette Burciaga  
TSTA and Self  
San Antonio, TX

It goes without saying that most Texans care about the future of young Texans, and the person who should lead this charge is the one who seeks to defund that future. Districts are on the way to downsizing because Abbott won't do what needs to be done for ALL Texas children. As a parent, I am very well aware of my rights with regard to my children's education, and I currently engage in school choice for my children. Parents know their options. What Abbott isn't telling his select middle-class audience is that his voucher plan doesn't account for the overage expense of private education. It does not account for private schools that will do little, if anything, to subsidize tuition for families who cannot afford. His voucher plan does not account for the families who might intend to use those funds only to be rejected by private schools when applying. And ultimately, Abbott's plan doesn't provide for the future looks like for public education when the well runs dry. Thousands of educators stand to be devastated due to job cuts because of the severe underfunding ahead of vouchers become a reality. The reality is, Abbott is NOT for all Texans with this voucher plan because a sensible understands a private education isn't for everyone - whether it's a religious factor or a financial one, this plan stands to help only those who can already afford to send their children to a private school. So it comes down lining the pockets of the wealthy and watching those less fortunate suffer in the educational journeys.

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BA Blazek  
Self/retired  
Ennis, TX

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Joe Blazek  
self/retired  
Ennis, TX

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Tyler Simpson, Mr.  
Self  
Lucas, TX

Please support our public schools first and foremost by increasing the basic allotment to at least keep up with inflation. My kids' school district has suffered tremendous cuts as a direct result of the lack of increase in the basic allotment since 2019. I don't want to hear any more excuses or reasons why we have to tie this necessary funding increase to ESAs. It's time to do your jobs and provide for our children in public schools.

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Lindsey Ramirez  
TPTA  
Austin, TX

I am commenting to voice my support for Texas public schools and encourage you all to reject attempts at allowing school voucher bills to pass. The money will be diverted from public schools, which educate the majority (whom the community has a vested interest in being well educated) to benefit the wealthy and the vouchers don't cover costs enough for people who are low income to attend. Additionally private schools have no obligation to provide an inclusionary and equitable education to those with differences as public schools are beholden. Big money interests are at play and are willing to sacrifice our children to us their pockets.

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Javier Ruiz  
Ector Co TSTA  
Odessa, TX

Educational vouchers are a disaster! That's a word your people use. Maybe you will understand it better if I use simple language.

Passing vouchers only benefits the families that already afford this type of education.

Passing vouchers will drain your governmental surplus you're so proud of since you never use it to FULLY fund public education. Look at other states that have already gone down this road.

This is a Pandora's Box you don't ever want to open. No one will ever be able to repair this financial ruin you will create by funding private facilities.

If the private entities want to play with us and get funded, they need to be held accountable then. They need to feel the same fire that all public schools feel.

You will be known as the administration to drain the coffers because you wanted to impress your base.

If you want to do the right thing, take that money and fully fund public education. Stop holding funds for ransom while you throw a hissy fit to get your way. I don't know who negatively impacted your life to have these ideas about public education, but get some therapy and do the right thing: FULLY.

FUND.  
PUBLIC.  
EDUCATION.

Thank you

Javier Ruiz  
Odessa TX

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Jeannine Lee  
self  
Garland, TX

I don't believe there's an active bill at this time, yet I'm want to express that I am against vouchers under any name. Public schools need to be FULLY FUNDED, the state needs to increase the basic allotment, and legislators must pass legislation that requires all monies collected as part of our taxes be spent on Public Schools. It sickens me that we're having to go through this again this session, when voters clearly expressed their dislike for vouchers. Gov. Abbott and the pro-voucher legislators are destroying our public schools on purpose if they push this through. From someone who attended public schools and who sent her children to public schools, even with the amount being offered thru vouchers, there was no way that I could have afforded private school (especially w/ today's costs) for my children. Instead we need to be funding our schools so they can provide better education and stop attacking them.

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Wendy Kirkle  
Self; job-seeker  
Katy, TX

State funding for improving public education simply must be increased to keep Texas attractive and competitive to companies seeking to do business in this state. Vouchers do a great disservice to the public and all taxpayers in many ways - they undercut school systems' budgets as well as the morale of hard-working men and women already struggling to provide an outstanding education to ALL children. Classes offered, class sizes, and materials available all depend on the revenue and support provided to a school. Private and religious schools do not have to accept children who are handicapped, or otherwise need accommodations. Moreover, private schools are not even held to the same standards as public schools. The government has a responsibility to taxpaying constituents to add value and improve the local school systems, not to scrap them and have a patchwork system of schooling that would not serve either families or businesses OR governing bodies well. The vast majority of parents support public schooling and have a vested interest in their children's school! Forget the greedy vouchers, focus on funding and fixing Texas' public schools.

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Mary Cherry  
Self  
San Antonio, TX

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So many of the places that would be hurt the most actually have school choice policies in place, where students can select to attend a different public school than their neighborhood school. This fact is frequently left out of the information shared with the public. Please share the whole truth.

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Dale Dlouhy  
Self  
Friendswood, TX

I am writing concerning the School Voucher Plan. I am a veteran of the United States Army and now I proudly serve our beloved nation as a public-school educator. The argument that vouchers are about parents' choice and that the public school system is failing is false. Parents have always had the choice to send their children to private schools. Parents who want to send their children to a religious private school or any such private educational institution are free to do so. The argument that vouchers are about parent choice is a fallacy because the ability to choose has always been in effect.

Public schools are the place where our citizens can send their children to receive a high-quality education so they can contribute to society. Public schools are the foundations for our democracy because they give every young person the education required to participate in society. Pulling funding from the public school system to subsidize tuition costs for private citizens erodes that foundation. The Legislature must focus on doing its job by making the public school system as strong as it can be. Some argue that public schools are failing and the idea that vouchers are the solution is nothing more than a failure of the Legislature to adequately support the very public schools that have been entrusted to them by our beloved state constitution.

My fellow public-school educators and I will continue to do our best to educate our youth despite the challenges we face. Daily, I work within our public schools to help every young person to have the opportunity to live the American Dream. We need your help to successfully do our work. Vouchers take valuable resources away from the public school system. Resources that we desperately need. The governor and his political allies need to pass legislation that provides funding to support the education of our most vulnerable youth.

I hope my words do not fall on deaf ears. Common sense dictates that a strong public education system will result in a better future for our nation. Regardless of the legislative outcome, I will continue to serve our nation as a public-school educator with steadfast resolve. For it is my duty to ensure the students entrusted to me will receive the highest level of education so they can have a promising future. Please reject the voucher plan and support the public school system.

Kind Regards,  
Dale R. Dlouhy

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Rebecca Blahnik, Ms  
SELF  
New Braunfels, TX

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Stephanie Russell  
Self/Teacher/Parent  
Pflugerville, TX

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Christina Sorensen  
VOTER  
Cypress, TX

No Vouchers.

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William Simms  
Self  
Houston, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Gov. Abbott's call to back legislation that would provide public school vouchers to families in Texas. As a concerned citizen and a parent, I believe that public school vouchers would have a negative impact on our public schools and the students they serve.

Firstly, public school vouchers would divert public funds away from our public schools, leaving them with fewer resources to educate our children. This could lead to a decrease in the quality of education provided by public schools, as well as a reduction in the number of programs and services they are able to offer.

Secondly, public school vouchers would further exacerbate the already-existing problem of segregation in our schools. Private schools that accept vouchers are not required to adhere to the same standards and regulations as public schools, and as a result, they can discriminate against certain students based on their socio-economic background, race, religion, or other factors. This could lead to a system where only privileged students have access to high-quality education, while the rest are left behind in underfunded public schools.

Finally, public school vouchers would not necessarily improve academic outcomes or increase school choice. Research has shown that voucher programs have mixed results, and in many cases, students who receive vouchers do not perform any better than those who attend public schools. Additionally, vouchers do not guarantee access to high-quality private schools, as many private schools are already at capacity or may not be willing to accept students with vouchers.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to vote against any proposed legislation that would provide public school vouchers in Texas. Instead, I urge you to support policies that invest in our public schools and ensure that all students have access to high-quality education, regardless of their background or economic status.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important issue.

Sincerely,  
W. Simms

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Jaime Watson  
Self; small business owner  
Katy, TX

Vouchers are coupons for the wealthy. They will do nothing to help public schools, public school students, or any students whose parents aren't currently funding private school. In the states that have approved vouchers, private schools have increased tuition by the amount of the voucher, thus costing the parents the same amount of money while taking that money out of our equal-opportunity public school system. At this juncture, when teacher attrition rates and illiteracy rates are at an all-time high, the most irresponsible thing our lawmakers can do is approve the so-called "school choice" vouchers. If you want to prove to your constituents that you don't care about the future of Texas children, go ahead and vote yes for vouchers. If you want to show that you understand the weight of the responsibility you've been tasked with and prove your loyalty to the people you were elected to serve, you know what to do—vote for the children. Vote no.

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Robyn Cantara  
Public School Teacher  
Houston, TX

Please do not pass vouchers. Voucher's take money out of public schools that are already underfunded.

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Wade Callaway  
Gruver ISD/Texas Public Schools  
Gruver, TX

As the Superintendent of a small, rural public school I have seen firsthand the ramifications of underfunding public schools in Texas. Our district, located in the north-central Texas panhandle, recently had its third campus nominated for a National Blue Ribbon Award for "Exemplary High-Performing" campus. This will be our THIRD such award in three years, with ALL THREE campuses (Elem, JH, HS) being so recognized. We are the first district in the state to achieve this remarkable honor and our principals, teachers, aides, and students have done it while being severely underfunded! Gruver ISD will once again pass a huge deficit budget because our values are down and our M&O tax rate has been compressed again. Our teachers are the backbone of our district and do a phenomenal job. Unfortunately, the only way to cause meaningful reduction in our expenditures is to reduce faculty and staff. It is asinine to even consider this because, as it was just mentioned, they are the people who make the difference in our students' lives. To hold the funding of public schools over ESAs has been, and will to continue to be, very hurtful for our district and hundreds of others just like us. Gruver ISD is everything good about public education, yet we are receiving little help for our State. We need funding to keep up with inflation, we need our politicians to stop the vitriolic attacks on public schools, we need your help.

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Teresa Cranford, mrs  
Self Grandparent  
Livingston, TX

No vouchers please.

---

Mark Sowden  
Self  
Houston, TX

I ask that you take a moment to understand the implications of the school voucher system. This bill will crush rural communities and low income areas and you know it. There was a time that I was a proud Texan. That is no longer the case. A governing body that would delay funding for CHILDREN (for years) for their own selfish reasons is not a governing body that I can support. Our kids' education is suffering, and holding their funding hostage is a despicable act, and you know it. The Republican party used to have character. Prove that you still do. It's not too late. NO SCHOOL VOUCHERS.

---

Audra Fuest  
Self  
KATY, TX

No vouchers of any kind.

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Karyn Lewis  
Self- school librarian  
Katy, TX

Taking money away from public schools for vouchers is not going to fix our current education issues. Instead we need equitable funding in order to implement the programs necessary and retain talented educators.

---

Kyle Weems  
Self  
Katy, TX

Vouchers have no place in Texas in any form. They rob taxpayers of quality public education for the sole purpose of lining the pockets of private institutions and giving a discount to the wealthy at taxpayer expense.

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Melanie Beller, Ms.  
Myself  
Dallas, TX

My name is Melanie Beller and I am an 11 year resident of Dallas, Tx. I am also a 3rd year Seminary student at Perkins school of Theology at SMU. I am writing in strong opposition to a proposed voucher system in TX. First, vouchers provide a direct payment from the State (comptroller) to private non-profit organizations. Such payments – even for redistribution to taxpayers – qualifies as a voucher. The state legislature has repudiated these schemes for over 25 years. If a \$6500 voucher was granted to 10% of Texas public school students (like in Florida) it would cost \$3.5 billion.

- Second, Private schools would not be required to meet state curriculum requirements or maintain the same fiscal accountability as public schools. Texans overwhelmingly believe that schools that receive tax dollars should be accountable for how they are spent, but the schools that receive vouchers would not be accountable to taxpayers.

Third, voucher schemes are inherently designed to be used by those who generate enough income to qualify for a tax break. Economically disadvantaged parents would not be able to use a voucher unless they could afford pay the difference between the voucher check and the actual tuition, in addition to the cost of transportation. Other taxpayers would pay the price for vouchers that would primarily benefit those who could afford expensive private schools. Thus, vouchers essentially subsidize the wealthy at the expense of others that can't afford it. Finally and importantly, according to recent SCOTUS rulings, states that provide a voucher program must make those vouchers available to private religious schools. Taxpayer funds used for religious content or services violates the establishment clause of the first amendment and tramples the separation of church and state. This decision undercuts the principle of religious liberty, which is an eternal and universal moral truth of God. All authentic faith is voluntary and free. God has ordained it to be so. It can never be legitimately advanced or endorsed by human government. The proper function of government is to protect a free expression of religion devoid of any governmental role. This protection of religious freedom is the foundation upon which our nation was founded and continues to be the civic value that holds our diverse population in national union and concord.

For these reasons I ask that this body refuse to take up any further bills that would promote school vouchers in Texas. Thank you for the chance to communicate this testimony. Melanie L Beller

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steven dickerson  
Self/ coach  
KATY, TX

No vouchers of any kind. Fund our PUBLIC schools as is directed by our state constitution

---

Elizabeth Perry  
Self  
Katy, TX

No vouchers of any kind. Keep the money for public schools

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Diane Garland  
Self  
Cypress, TX

Please OPPOSE ALL voucher bills (aka Education Savings Accounts).

Why, you might ask? Here are 6 specific reasons for that request:

- 1) ESAs divert funds from public schools to private schools and vendors. Our public schools are already being short changed when it comes to financial support from the State. Taking away more will put them in an even more negative financial situation.
- 2) There is NO FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY on the use of the funds, which can lead to mismanagement of our taxpayer dollars. Public schools have a school board and the TEA that they must answer to if funds are not used appropriately.
- 3) There is NO STUDENT PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY. Public school students must take the STAAR test, at present, to show academic growth and achievement. Home school and private school students do not have any such measures.
- 4) Private education providers DO NOT HAVE TO ACCEPT ALL STUDENTS. My neighbors children are not going to be allowed to come back to their private school next year because “they require too much support in the classroom.” They will take the money, but not the student.
- 5) Subsidizing current private school students would put a huge financial burden on the State – which is currently ranked 49th out of 50 in funding its public schools (See #1)
- 6) Private schools accepting public dollars should at least face the same requirements as public schools: safety standards, STAAR, public meetings, records, accepting all students and providing appropriate services, and more.

Thank you for your consideration.

---

Taylor Kent-Kowalski  
Self  
Houston, TX

NO SCHOOL VOUCHERS!

---

COURTNEY CARPENTER

Argyle Independent School District

Argyle, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on educational opportunities. We all share a commitment to providing the best opportunities for our kids. However, I want to express concern about how the discourse around ESAs is affecting districts like Argyle ISD, a fast-growth, high-performing school district.

Argyle ISD is a destination district of excellence:

We are 13-time UIL Lone Star Cup award winners.

Our marching band has won the UIL state championship 8 times.

We serve a community with incredibly high expectations for education.

Despite having a successful private school in the middle of our town and multiple charter units in Denton County, our enrollment remains strong. This speaks to the trust and confidence our community places in our public schools. We understand the need to address situations where educational opportunities are lacking, but it is unjust to deny us an adequate increase in the student basic allotment because of political gridlock.

Without an increase in state funding, school districts, including Argyle ISD, will face further budget reductions. Let me highlight some specific impacts on Argyle ISD:

Argyle ISD received the Formula Transition Grant, part of the HB3 solution, since 2019 and now faces a significant funding cliff beginning with the 2024-25 fiscal year.

We are subject to losing approximately \$250,000 in local property tax revenue through the Robin Hood recapture formula, which must be paid back to the state.

Like most Texas districts, Argyle ISD is struggling to provide meaningful raises to our teachers, requiring us to go to our voters to consider a VATRE just to compensate teachers.

Our teachers are the backbone of our students' success. The February 2023 Governor's Teacher Vacancy Task Force report emphasized the critical role of classroom teachers in academic success. The report also highlighted that teacher salaries are not keeping pace with inflation, recommending a significant increase in the basic allotment to support these essential educators.

On top of these challenges, our budget is strained by underfunded state mandates:

Argyle ISD is projected to spend 154% more than the state allotment for Special Education (SPED) to meet program requirements.

To comply with new state safety mandates, Argyle ISD will spend 367% more than the state allotment because safety and security are, and will continue to be, top priorities.

The state MUST provide adequate funding to sustain the programs it mandates.

Respectfully,

Courtney Carpenter, Ed.D.

Superintendent

Argyle ISD

---

Alana Meyer

Self - retired

Houston, TX

No school vouchers!

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Monica Morales

Self

Magnolia, TX

I am writing today regarding the committee's stated goal of looking at ESAs. There are many examples from other states of the problems caused by voucher programs, such as over drawn budgets, higher property taxes (which are already crippling and currently being fought here in our great state), and strings that have come with various programs.

This idea is not really about "educational opportunity" but about financing education. Taxpayer-funded voucher programs create a new welfare program, redistributing funds, creating more administrative overhead, and takes control away from parents and gives it to bureaucrats. We want less government, not more.

I, along with many other Texans are concerned that voucher programs will jeopardize the unique freedoms currently enjoyed by homeschoolers in Texas. This has been the experience in other states already - despite the best intentions. I believe that families should have the autonomy to educate their children unnecessary without government interference.

While many Texas "school choice" advocates believe homeschoolers will "only" be subject to accountability measures – such as accreditation or standardized testing – if they opt into the ESA program, those are still government regulations that take autonomy away from families. Historically, government programs do not reduce in size or scope, and homeschoolers in other ESA states are finding that they are having to fight to differentiate themselves from those who do take the government money. Through much effort of pioneering homeschoolers, Texas is unique in their current homeschooling freedoms, and we are not willing to risk those by acquiescing in the name of "accountability."

As mentioned at the start, current "school choice" proposals in Texas are not about freedom of educational choices, but about funding of educational choices. Those are very different ideas and "school choice" proposals only address funding, not freedom.

I encourage the Texas legislature to explore alternatives to ESAs, such as tax exemptions that allow families to use their own money to choose the educational options that best suit their needs, which is a much clearer stance on the freedom, than the purported ESAs.

---

Jennifer Rowe

self, concerned parent in Lovejoy ISD

Lucas, TX

PUBLIC education opportunity - Please consider fully funding PUBLIC education. We are in a struggling district that has done everything to reduce operating costs and overhead, close down a school to consolidate, not back filling position and even share expenses with parents (transportation). Our money is being redistributed to other districts yet we are still struggling. The State is sitting on funds that tax payers have paid and yet nothing is being looked at in ways of funding public education. Not all districts are the same. I ask that you look at the excess that has been collected and then look at districts like ours (Lovejoy ISD) and find a way to fund PUBLIC education.

---

Shannon Verschage

Self

Lucas, TX

Public education is one of our countries most fundamental values. Please fully fund our public schools. Texas is woefully ranked in the nation for public education funding.

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Lauren Tullos, Mrs.  
Argyle ISD  
Corinth, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on educational opportunities. We all share a commitment to providing the best opportunities for our kids. However, I want to express concern about how the discourse around ESAs is affecting districts like Argyle ISD, a fast-growth, high-performing school district.

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To comply with new state safety mandates, Argyle ISD will spend 367% more than the state allotment because safety and security are, and will continue to be, top priorities.

The state MUST provide adequate funding to sustain the programs it mandates.

---

Alicia Smith

Self Retired teacher

FAIRFIELD, TX

I am a parent, and I taught in public schools, and I know that unlike the political rhetoric that has been spread through the media, parents through the years have always had choices for their children's education. It took effort on the parent's part to work through the system to get to a solution for their child. If they were not satisfied with the outcome they had many choices. They could pull out of their district school and enroll their child in several neighboring districts, that were easy driving distance, if there was an opening for them. I never knew of a time that a student could not be accommodated in one of the neighboring districts. They could also drive 45 minutes to a private religious school at their own expense, and they have the choice to educate their child at home. Tax-payer monies should be staying with public schools that are held accountable by the state for the way the money is spent, and high standards are strived for by highly trained teachers. Giving taxpayer money to private schools, charter schools, and individual home schools with no accountability to how or where the money is spent is wrong and not cost effective by the state leadership that oversee it. If money is given in ESA's/Vouchers, then the state should expect and have proof that an equal amount of education be taught to and by the end of the year learned by students. If there is no accountability built into the system there are many, many, instances that the money spent did not end with the appropriate outcome of educating Texas students. Many times, the students end up back in the public school where the funding is already spent. Accountability needs to be put in now so that in years to come we will have educated students that can get and hold well-paying jobs and will not be living on the welfare system. Having an undereducated population will be accountable to your decisions now. You as legislators know that every home school, public or private school or charter that will apply for these taxpayer monies, ESA's, will not come up to the educational standards Texas students need. Your goal should be that our students will be an asset to our local communities across Texas. Accountability needs to be added into the language of any bill you pass forward into law. If this is the path that is being steam rolled into Texas, accountability needs to be added for the money given and the proof of student learning. Our Texas constitution requires you to fund free public schools for the education of students across Texas and you have not fulfilled your duty.

Sincerely,

Alicia Smith

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M Mock

Self/self employed

Cypress, TX

No vouchers.

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Jennifer Stuchly

self

Fairview, TX

I oppose an ESA (voucher) program. The legislature should prioritize funding our PUBLIC schools, and at a minimum, increase the basic allotment per student as soon as possible.

---

Tracie Parzen

self

Houston, TX

Public dollars should stay in public schools. No matter the name, vouchers or ESAs do not belong in Texas. Instead, please pass legislation mandating recapture dollars be spent upon Texas public schools. Thank you for your time.

---

Melanie Greene

Self

Austin, TX

Public dollars should stay in public schools. We do not want vouchers, no matter how what you call them.

---

Felecia Owens

Self/Retired Educator

AUSTIN, TX

As a retired Educator it was heartbreaking each year as students from the Charter Schools were returned to us, not on grade level while they kept finances which means Educators take what little funds they have to make sure these children have what they need to be successful. Over and over, the public has said Public funds from taxes belong in public schools and over and over politics seem to take a back seat to our children and their needs and a front seat to what will keep them in office. Public schools are great schools with great people working in them but you can't expect to produce a diamond out of dirt and that is exactly what you are doing. Public schools are succeeding in spite of your politics but we are not going to continue to succeed with funds being stiped away. Keep public funds in public schools.

---

Anne Guess

Self

Katy, TX

I oppose vouchers in any form and of any kind

---

Vy Malcik

public and private school educator

Edgewood, TX

Please do not take away from our state the time-honored and time-proven advantages of public education. That will happen to or society if you approve school vouchers. Parents must have the freedom to choose a private school education if their children cannot thrive in public schools, but they do not have the right to subvert tax money to fund their choice of private schools. Private schools lead to elitism of the students there. Subverting money intended for public education to private is not what I have paid taxes for nor is it what I strived for as a public school educator. I was born in Texas and have taught in public schools, private preschools, graduate medical education. I spent my career working toward the education of all students in public schools in order to build an educated, productive, freedom-loving society -- because that is what Texas has stood for and worked for during my lifetime and the lives gone before me. You have no right to take the taxes of honest taxpayers who believe we are working for the betterment of Texas citizens and subvert it to your elitist, bigoted, racist leanings. You can be better than that! God demands that of you. I demand that of you.

I believe parents must have the right to choose whether a public school or private school education is right for their children. But they do not have the right to subvert tax money if they choose private education.

---

Christy Forte

Self, Self-employed consultant

Allen, TX

While I am not opposed to some sort of ESA / voucher program, I AM opposed to our legislature not fully funding our public schools. As a parent of two high school students in an exceptionally-rated school district, I hope the Public Education Committee will fulfill their mandate to provide public education for all by increasing the basic allotment and will look for ways to reward high-performing school districts regardless of the socio-economic status of their students.

---

Alexander Vaughn, Dr.  
self, public high school teacher  
Sugar Land, TX

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators. Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students. Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents. Public schools need more funding not less to allow for appropriate class sizes in Science courses and to have sufficient teachers to support advanced and/or elective courses.

Sincerely, Dr. Vaughn

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Sam Jow  
Myself  
Katy, TX

Public school teaches all students and can't hand select who it wants to teach. No to vouchers!

---

April Bergerson  
Self  
Lubbock, TX

Vouchers are not in the best interest of students. Vote no on vouchers for education. Give public school teachers a raise. Texas teachers are grossly underpaid and many, including myself, take on second jobs. Vote NO to vouchers for Texas.

---

Amanda Ammerman  
Self, Physician Assistant  
Austin, TX

Public dollars should stay in public schools. No matter the name, vouchers or ESAs do not belong in Texas. Instead, please pass legislation mandating recapture dollars to be spent on Texas public schools. Thank you for your time.

---

Paul Dunk  
Katy ISD  
Katy, TX

RE: HB 1605

If some of the greatest painters in world history became Texas teachers, the HB 1605 approach would require them to all paint by the numbers rather than utilize their genius. This law is the ultimate insult to professional educators and is nothing more than an effort at top-down absolute control of what teachers do. It is rooted in the false fear that teachers are out there indoctrinating children rather than teachers the TEKS. WHAT AN INSULT!

RE: The school voucher/choice scam.

School choice is a scam. Forcing taxpayers to subsidize an exclusive private school system that takes money from ALL taxpayers but refuses to serve the children of ALL taxpayers is NOT choice. As long as voucher schools are allowed to slam their doors on any child they deem inferior in some way it is private choice, NOT parent choice. Do not use my tax dollars to subsidize that type of educational segregation. Only PUBLIC schools serve ALL children and only PUBLIC schools are mandated in the Texas Constitution (Art. 7). Additionally, in Art. 1 of the Texas Constitution states that, "No money shall be appropriated, or drawn from the Treasury for the benefit of any sect, or religious society, theological or religious seminary; nor shall property belonging to the State be appropriated for any such purposes." Using state funds to pay for religious instruction clearly violates this section. Public school teachers are not the horrible people many lawmakers are claiming them to be. Fund them and give them the freedom to be the best at what they do. Thanks

---

Kevin Cantara  
self teacher  
Houston, TX

No. Y'all need to stop trying to sell people vouchers by using words people like.  
Ask Texans honestly, "do you want your tax money to pay for students to go to private and/or religious school?"

Just ask us. We'll tell you.

Texas has enough money to have a top-tier education system, but we've got people working day and night to throw wrenches into the works so that public ed suffers so they can pass my money to their friends in churches.  
Get out of here with this nonsense.

---

Amber Stephens, M.Ed.  
Self - educator  
Spring, TX

School vouchers will divert public money from the public good. While families should retain the option to send their children to their school of choice, selecting an option outside of the public school system should be at the discretion and cost of the families who made that choice, while public tax dollars should fund the public option at a level that allows for it to best serve all students.

Private schools are neither accountable to nor evaluated in the same manner as public schools. Their current success is a reflection of the both financial and time investments by the parents of their pupils. Rather than diverting public funds to private schools, we should seek to encourage and enable parental involvement in our public schools by investing adequately to support effective communication (and translation) and facilitate more convenient parental involvement, such as through funded childcare for parent meetings.

---

Melissa Martin, Mrs.  
Self, educator  
Cypress, TX

I strongly oppose school vouchers. They are fiscally irresponsible, as has been proven in states such as Arizona. Additionally, the lack of oversight breeds corruption, as we have seen with the under-regulated charter school system that Texas has so heavily invested in.

---

Robert Lawrence  
Self, teacher  
Lake Jackson, TX

I am opposed to the use of tax dollars as funding for private schools via vouchers, ESAs, or other schemes that divert funds from our public schools. Additionally, I believe Texas public schools should be fully funded. Currently many school districts, including my local district, are facing budget shortfalls despite drastic cuts that risk harm to Texas students as well as teachers and staff. The state has a responsibility to support public schools. I speak as the parent of two children in public schools as well as a public school educator. Thank you for your time.

---

John Bishop  
Self - Teacher  
Lubbock, TX

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators. Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students. Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5,000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9,000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents. Please stop the advancing of vouchers in Texas. An overwhelming majority of the public agrees that a free, public education is what makes our society and state great. Serve the students, parents, and teachers well in your community and put public education first.

---

Glenn Rogers, Honorable  
Self  
Graford, TX

Our primary responsibility as legislators is to ensure that every Texas child has access to a quality education, and public schools are the backbone of this mission. By redirecting funds away from public schools, we undermine this essential objective and compromise the future of countless students. Private schools do not serve all Texas students. They have the ability to selectively admit students based on criteria that can exclude those who are most in need of support, such as students with disabilities, or who do not practice a specific religion. This selective process stands in stark contrast to the inclusive mission of public schools, which are mandated to educate every child. Moreover, private schools that benefit from ESAs are not held accountable to taxpayers. Unlike public schools, private institutions lack sufficient oversight and transparency. This lack of accountability means that taxpayer dollars could support schools that do not meet the quality education standards the legislature has established. Transparency is another critical issue. Public schools are required to publicly report on their performance, finances, and other key metrics while private schools are not, thus creating an accountability gap that is unacceptable when public funds are at stake. Beyond the immediate concerns about fairness, accountability, and transparency, it is crucial to consider the financial impacts voucher programs have had in other states. In many cases, these programs have wreaked havoc on state budgets, diverting critical resources away from public schools and creating financial instability. States like Arizona and Wisconsin have experienced significant budgetary strains due to the expansion of voucher programs that often have been riddled with fraud and abuse. Additionally, state funding for private schools erodes the separation of church and state. Texans who value keeping government influence out of their religious institutions should be horrified by this intentional encroachment. Taxpayer funded religious schools risk government involvement in their private worship and religious practices in violation of principles that protect both public institutions and private faiths. The diversion of funds through ESAs threatens the financial stability of our public education system when many schools are already struggling financially. Instead of pursuing policies that siphon resources away, we should focus on strengthening our public schools to ensure that they can provide the high-quality education that every Texas child deserves. Anything less is a betrayal of our duty and a disservice to our state's future.

---

Skye Olsen  
Self - Service Specialist  
Austin, TX

Tax dollars should go to public education. It is despicable to consider using public tax dollars to benefit private schools and their religious agendas. Tax dollars should go to making the community a better place for ALL, not only a select few. Separation of church and state. Keep private school education private so those who subscribe to certain ideals can choose to opt into their children receiving tailored education by paying the tuition required by their chosen school. To each their own. But the majority of the public choose to enroll their children in public education and our public tax dollars should be spent benefiting the public. This money would be better off spent on mental health resources for all students, regardless of whether your parents enroll you in private or public education. This money could be spent hiring more qualified teachers (in both public and private) from credible backgrounds and paying them a worthy wage. This money could be spent increasing elective classes to introduce trades in high schools, like welding, intro to firefighting or ems, basic business foundation courses, coding, etc. This money could be spent making school lunches free for k-12 throughout the state so children can begin to feel safe and taken care of throughout the public education system. This money could be spent bringing the arts back to schools so children can have more outlets to express themselves, not less. I encourage our leaders, who let me remind you were elected by the public who you have also sworn to protect, to vote in the interest of the public to keep public tax dollars, public.

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Sabrina Sha  
Asian Texans for Justice  
Austin, TX

To the House Public Education Committee,

Asian Texans for Justice is a statewide nonprofit that serves more than 1.9 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, or AAPIs, in Texas. We urge the committee to regard concerns towards any potential school voucher legislation, including any attempts to establish an education savings account (ESA) program or tax credit scholarship in Texas. Establishing an education savings account program can pose numerous risks for our AAPI students, making it more difficult to serve immigrant, low-income, and other underserved AAPI students.

AAPIs in Texas are more likely to be immigrants than the general Texas population with 44% of AAPIs identifying as an immigrant and 13% of AAPIs identifying as first generation Americans. AAPIs represent over 50 different ethnicities and speak over 100 languages. The most diverse racial group in Texas, AAPI students have a high need for English Language Learner support and private schools are not required to provide these programs to our community, putting our students at a disadvantage of having systems that meet their needs.

In states that have already passed school voucher legislation, such as Arizona, Ohio, and Florida, families have been left with fewer choices, poorly funded public schools, and diminished public education systems that serve all students, including those with the greatest needs. Rather than increasing education opportunities and creating higher quality schools, private school vouchers are a proven way to exacerbate existing educational inequities for the most vulnerable students and families.

Private schools are not required to follow federal and state regulations around teacher certification, curriculum standards, serving special education populations, or administering standardized tests. In the U.S., only 2% of teachers identify as Asian American and less than 0.5% of teachers are Pacific Islanders. Studies have shown that having educators with similar lived experiences as their students can improve student academic outcomes. ESAs will make it more difficult to implement programs that recruit and attract qualified AAPI educators to the profession.

AAPI students tend to have wide achievement gaps when disaggregated by ethnic background. While East Asian students have reported high levels of educational attainment, Southeast Asian students have struggled. In Texas, advocates have been asking for more data transparency to help close this achievement gap. As private schools are not required to publicly report data on student performance, calls for disaggregated data will be more difficult to achieve – especially as it pertains to supporting AAPI students and families who are immigrants, English language learners, or have refugee status. We ask that this committee consider all students and families as they consider how to best invest in Texas' education system and not leave AAPI students behind.

---

Paul Haupt  
Retired School Administrator  
El Paso, TX

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators.

Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students.

Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents.

---

Jeff Watson  
Self  
Killeen, TX

I am a high school educator in Killeen Texas. I 100% support giving parents the right to choose the Best educational opportunity for their students. I pray the Texas legislature in the next session will rapidly adopt vouchers so that there is more equity and education across the state.

---

Tina Rynbrandt  
Self  
Prosper, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

Sincerely,  
Cristina M. Rynbrandt  
751 Rock Hill Road  
Prosper, TX 75078  
Tinag1974@gmail.com  
703-989-9852

---

Aimee Johnson  
Self/teacher  
Athens, TX

As a public school teacher in a rural school I am extremely concerned that vouchers/ESA will take away funding from our small schools. In most of rural Texas there isn't any private or charter schools. Our lowest income students will not have a "choice" other than public school. They rely on transportation and meals that are provided for them from public schools. Private school also can pick and choose which students they accept. Public schools are required to educate all students.

Public school are held to strict standards set by TEA. Will private schools be required to have any accreditation to receive public money? Will they have to give a STAAR test or something similar to prove they are teaching the standards? And what standards (TEKS) will that be?

Please look at other states that have tried this voucher experiment. Look at Arizona and Oklahoma. I have read where they are having budget issues already.

If a student starts the year in private school but then mid year move to a public school. Will any of the voucher funds then be transferred to the school that is now educating that student?

---

Mona Mehdy  
Self  
Austin, TX

As an educator, parent and citizen of Texas, I am writing to convey my strong support for increasing funding for public schools and to state my strong opposition for school vouchers. The latter would degrade the necessary funding, commitment of the society and the benefits of excellent public schools for our society.

---

Susan Dobrow  
Self  
McKinney, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

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Jody Daniels, Mrs.  
Self, homeschool co-op leader  
Keller, TX

I am very concerned regarding “school choice” “voucher” push in Texas. Looking at other states that have done so, it creates a new level of bureaucracy, expenses, and more government without benefitting those it says it will. Bluntly put, Texas home school families do not want government handouts in place of our current status as unaccredited private schools. Families that are looking for government and taxpayer support can participate in charter schools, use education savings accounts, or stay in the public school system. Don’t let a misguided (THSC, Abbot, people leaving public school) group of people be the only voice you hear. Look at the crisis AZ in less than 1 year of their voucher program. Texas home schoolers, and in the true Texan spirit, want to remain as we are, as was hard-fought to gain, unaccredited private schools that run unhindered by red tape. Having been in the Texas home school community for 20+ years, I can assure you that the only voices for vouchers are public school families and you can address their issues a different way- let them choose what school to attend without vouchers, provide subsidy in specific districts, etc. My own five children are all grown, were home schooled in Texas through high school graduation, and they are successfully in careers and are upstanding, productive citizens, even though we had only one small income. A simple matter of funding is not going to create a solution but rather make more problems for the rest of us.

I would encourage you to look at options that can help the folks that live in a school district that doesn’t work for them by addressing the schools directly, providing tax breaks for families in those districts that need to have choices, and remember that more regulation and burden on taxpayers are not the best, or even the only answer - and creates problems without solving the one it is said it will. Thank you taking time to research and getting all the information for yourselves on this topic and looking for long term solutions to benefit all Texans.

---

Meghan Dougherty, MRS  
self  
Austin, TX

I am an educator with 20 years experience working in public middle and high schools. I also served as an assistant principal in a charter school. I am **STRONGLY AGAINST** the adoption of vouchers, education savings accounts, or any other scheme to divert funding from our public schools in Texas. I'm disappointed that we're still discussing this, given that it was not successful in the last session, and for good reason. I believe many of our representatives realize this would be a blow to public education across the state, and will result in less funding and support for education, especially in our smaller, rural communities.

At a time when Texas, and the US, needs a highly educated workforce ready to compete globally, with new technologies and innovations cutting into our competitive edge, the idea of reallocating money for public education to benefit a very small group of Texan students is shocking to me.

This is an irresponsible fiscal policy that will only add to the bureaucratic "bloat" needed to administer the voucher program at the Texas Education Agency. Voucher policies have been shown to have a ballooning cost over time in other states like Florida, Arizona, and Ohio.

Additionally, research shows vouchers will be used more by wealthy families already homeschooling or attending private schools, ultimately adding to the state's roster of students we're paying to educate instead of sending more funding to the schools that need it most.

I do not have children. I do not see a direct, personal benefit of my tax dollars going to fund public education. But I will happily continue to pay my taxes to Texas PUBLIC schools, because I know that it's an investment in the future of my community and my country.

However, if a voucher program goes in to effect, then how are the children in my community benefitting? How are children in communities where the public school is the only option benefitting? How does this raise up ALL our children, to equip them with the skills and knowledge to get jobs, provide for their families, and experience the American Dream?

Allocating money to a voucher program, which will benefit privately funded schools, undermines the purpose of taxes and the role of government in ensuring some level of equal opportunity for all kids, regardless rich or poor, urban or rural. It is an attack on the American Dream.

---

john Cobarruvias  
Self  
houston, TX

I am opposed to any kind of voucher program in Texas including giving a parent more money than they put into the system. If a parent pays \$1000 in school taxes then a voucher program should max out at \$1000 no matter how many children will attend a private school.

---

Charles McCutcheon  
Self / Teacher  
Austin, TX

I teach Special Education in Round Rock ISD. School vouchers, if enacted, would give taxpayer money to schools that have no taxpayer oversight. Public schools have taxpayer oversight, private schools do not. Vouchers would take billions of tax dollars from public schools within a few years, while their budgets are already inadequate. Texas invests \$5,000 less per public school student than the national average, and vouchers would put Texas even farther behind. Texas schoolchildren deserve better. Texas pays public school teachers \$9,000 less than the national average, and vouchers would put Texas even farther behind. Texas teachers deserve better. Texas gives taxpayers a voice in how Texas public schools are run, but taxpayers have no voice in how private schools are run. Texas taxpayers deserve better. For the benefit of Texas schoolchildren, teachers, and taxpayers, please oppose any attempt to divert tax money to private schools. Keep Texas taxpayer money in Texas public schools.

---

Alison Morrow

self, homeschool coach, teacher, virtual assistant

The Woodlands, TX

While I am glad to see the legislature exploring options to provide parents with more funds for the education of their children, I want to register my opposition to the creation of Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs.) ESAs are merely another welfare program that in other states has led to higher taxes and decreased freedom for homeschoolers. Many families (like mine) come to Texas specifically for the homeschool freedom, and it is so disappointing to see the way our fellow Texans seem to fight at every turn to corrode these freedoms which make Texas so unique in the US and so welcoming to homeschoolers. Government money always comes with government strings and control, and while the original legislation may not include those controls, just the creation of a Big Government program opens the door for amendments further down the road that tighten regulation not just on the families that use the ESAs but on all homeschooling families. If the state truly cares about the education of Texas children, they should instead remove property taxes so parents have more money to spend on their children's education, exempt educational products (including curriculum, tutoring services, outsourced classes for homeschoolers, etc.) from sales tax and allow them to be tax write-offs, and require all school districts to be open districts that allow for transfer in order to increase competition between districts. These measures will benefit parents regardless of what form of education they pursue for their children \*without\* infringing on the rights to educational freedom that Texas parents currently have. We don't need government money – we simply need the government to stop taking our money!

---

Camille Norris, Mrs.

Self

Fort Worth, TX

I attended public school as did my siblings, children and grandchildren. Some of us excelled and others did okay. This was due to the personality, work ethic, determination, intelligence, etc., of each. All institutions have flaws (including the Texas Legislature, Governor's office, and local ISD's) whether they are large or small. I believe it is best to correct the problem areas, rather than allow those issues to just be repeated in a new environment. The school voucher program is hurting public education, by taking away valuable resources from already financially strapped public school districts. As a retired public school teacher, I've known schools that had a better reputation and test scores than others. Find out what makes one elementary, junior or high school better than the one a few miles away. School districts offer the same Professional Development to their staff. Teachers are required to take similar courses in college and pass the same certification tests. So, what's the difference? Is it the administration? Do they have principals and assistant principals that truly support teachers and that students look up to? Do they have veteran teachers who mentor new teachers? How do they deal with discipline? Allowing parents to choose their child's school within the public school system doesn't seem to be a bad idea. But, allowing them to move their child (via voucher) to a charter school or private school greatly damages public school funding, and all of the children enrolled in it. We would better serve all of the children in Texas by figuring out why one public school excels and copy their procedures. Appoint an independent committee (made up of teachers and parents) to appraise local schools. Find out what works and what doesn't. Maybe the administration needs to be changed, some teachers need to be reassigned, ineffective teachers/administrators may need to be fired, the discipline policies need to be improved, switch to year-round schooling, etc. Some children come from impoverished backgrounds. They come to school hungry, sleepy, and dirty. They are more worried about their next meal or what violence awaits them at home, than focusing on sitting up in a chair and listening to their teacher. Allowing them to move to a different school, won't change any of that. Counselors who can focus on the needs of children, both inside and outside of school, are a valuable resource that has been taken away by making them STAAR TEST administrators. They have little time for "counseling". Teachers must focus on repeated classroom discipline issues. Severe behavior students are left in mainstream classrooms and given treats when they behave. Other students see this and wonder why they don't get treats/rewards when they behave daily. SPED students receive limited time in small groups and are often confused when returned to mainstream. Finally, is it teacher pay? Are we attracting the brightest and best? Let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater.

---

Gerald Haschke

self retired

Buda, TX

I'm a former 20 year high school teacher. I left the profession because of lower salaries and limited benefits. I was able to secure another profession for over 25 years with much better salary and benefits.

Many Texas teachers today are leaving the profession for the same reasons.

Texas always brags about wanting to be Number One in the country in everything, the economy, etc. Why not make PUBLIC EDUCATION Number One in the country?

If we want to secure a brighter future for Texas - it depends on an outstanding and well funded PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, with well paid teachers to secure that goal.

Please, in the next session, fully fund TEXAS PUBLIC EDUCATION and NOT Fund VOUCHERS.

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Gary FRANKEL

Gary Frankel

Jersey Village, TX

Release funding to support Public Education. No school vouchers.

---

Jennifer Mountain

Representing my child with Autism

Flint, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

My son has high-functioning autism. His IQ is higher than most children the district has experienced. He was putting 60 piece puzzles together, with the pieces turned wrong side up, when he was 3. He was able to do algebraic functions at age 5. Yet he was delayed in social skills and emotional regulation. He has sensory sensitivities, and was prone to eloping. My child's current (public) school has placed an emphasis on integrating children with special needs, and General Ed. They have slightly larger class sizes, but put funding into several paras per grade who go wherever they are needed. Kids have good days and bad. They step in when a child is struggling behaviorally, or emotionally, and work with that child within the classroom as much as possible. This allows the teachers to continue focusing on the education of the class as a whole. The entire school is set up for inclusion. Fidgets and sensory spaces are made available to all kids. It is not unusual to see a neurotypical child reaching for some headphones, or a group of kids sitting in a quiet corner reading. There is wide spread acceptable of differences and abilities. My son has THRIVED in this environment, and his peers also. He has friends, and everyday he is met where he is. All the children have benefited. Each learning at their capacity, and each building a level of empathy/sympathy with people of all types.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Mountain

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Shanda Bass  
Self  
Fairview, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

Sincerely,  
Shanda Bass

---

Anne Combs  
Self, homemaker  
San Antonio, TX

Homeschooling should not be impacted by taxpayers funds.

---

Nancy Whitfield  
Self  
Denton, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

Sincerely,  
Nancy Whitfield

---

Tawny Crawford  
self - Homeschooling Mom & Brain Tumor Survivor  
PERRIN, TX

I am a lower-income homeschooling mother from a rural area, recently burdened by costly procedures for an Acoustic Neuroma brain tumor. While the financial assistance from Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) could help, I strongly oppose this bill due to its long-term implications.

1. Harmful Impact of Standardized Testing:

The proposed ESA program ties funding to standardized testing, often narrowing the curriculum. Research shows that an overemphasis on testing limits creativity and critical thinking, essential for a well-rounded education.

2. Threat to Homeschooling Freedoms:

Texas is celebrated for its support of homeschooling, with minimal government interference. However, ESAs risk eroding these freedoms by introducing regulations tied to funding. History shows such measures often lead to increased oversight, threatening our right to direct our children's education.

3. Impact on Children with Learning Challenges:

Children with learning disabilities require tailored curricula that standardized models fail to accommodate. ESA-linked accountability measures could undermine the flexibility needed to address these students' unique needs, potentially harming their educational outcomes.

4. Financial Burden on Families Opting Out:

ESAs could inflate the cost of educational resources, making them less accessible to families who opt out. This could disproportionately impact middle- and low-income families, who already face financial challenges. These families might feel pressured to conform to ESA regulations to afford essential supplies, effectively limiting their choice.

5. Harm to Rural Schools:

Rural schools, already struggling with limited resources, could suffer further under ESAs as funding is diverted away. This could lead to program cuts or even school closures, reducing educational options in areas where public schools are often the only choice outside of homeschooling. As a homeschool mom, I understand and support the importance of public schools, especially in rural and low-income areas.

6. Decline in Curriculum Quality and Diversity:

ESAs could lead to the proliferation of low-cost, test-prep-focused curricula at the expense of comprehensive programs that include trade skills, the arts, and classic literature. This risks producing fewer children who love reading and are equipped with critical thinking and necessary life skills. The decline of these subjects could diminish the development of responsible voters and engaged citizens, crucial for Texas's future.

Proposed Alternative: Tax Exemptions and Credits:

If the goal is to enhance educational choice, I suggest offering tax exemptions or credits for families who are using alternative means of education.

In conclusion, while the financial support from ESAs might seem beneficial, the potential harm to educational quality, homeschooling freedoms, and rural schools is too great.

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Kristin Shelton, Mrs.

Self

Austin, TX

As I public school educator and a voter in House District 136, I am concerned about the educational opportunity ideas in which money that should be supporting public schools would go to private schools. As seen in other states, namely Arizona, the cost of such programs has created a serious deficit in the state budget. We have seen how private schools raised their rates so many families with these incentives were still not able to attend those schools. The basic allotment for public schools should be raised, at least at the rate of inflation, for us to operate efficiently. In my district, RRISD, the position at my school that worked with students learning English was abolished due to budgetary constraints. Unfortunately, our roughly 75 students learning English will no longer have 30-minutes a day of small group assistance. The teachers will not be able to provide such important lessons. Cuts like this are a direct result of the state not financing us at an appropriate level. The governor has done all he can to block any financial increase to public schools. I teach PK, now known as PK4 because my students must be four-years-old by Sept. 1st to be eligible to attend our program. My class does not have tuition-based students and is seen as an early intervention. We help build skills in students so they are successful the rest of their academic career. Many of these students are English-language learners. It is unfortunate, at best, that they will not have targeted instruction previously mentioned. Please see that public schools need proper financing before considering giving some of those resources to entities beyond our public school system. In Article 7 of our Texas constitution, Section 1 addresses the requirement "to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools". Fully funding public schools is part of the need to support and maintain our system. Our over 5,000,000,000 public school students and roughly, 345,000 public school teachers need your help! (source: ballotpedia.com)

---

Catherine Kremer

Self / Transportation CSR

San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Catherine Kremer

12639 Hausman Road #4101

San Antonio Texas 78249

bella7114@aol.com

(210)269-6625

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COMMENTS FOR Educational Opportunity

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Stephanie Anderson

Self

Clute, TX

With all due respect, Texas students would have plenty of educational opportunities available to them if the House and Senate passed a clean bill to unlock the funds currently available for public schools, just sitting there. Funds that the citizens of Texas contributed - they're not going to any schools right now, how about that? The Texas Constitution is very specific about duties that the state has to fund public schools. Once that's been taken care of, my proposal is to put it to a direct referendum to voters as to how they want school choice to look. I'm sure, since the legislature and executive are dominated by folks who have long since been bought off by private school special interest groups, that it will be worded in a subversive manner to convince voters that it is harmless, but at least public schools would stop being starved of all oxygen. I don't know if anyone realizes or cares how much students are suffering, or even what that looks like. Does anyone know how much teacher's are struggling without a cost of living adjustment? I know. Nobody cares. You went to four sessions just to tell us you didn't.

We see what you're doing, by the way. Trying to dismantle public education through the death of a thousand cuts. I hope you all get voted out.

---

Nicole Alexander

Self

League City, TX

Vouchers take money from already underfunded schools while not supporting students with disabilities, failing to protect the human and civil rights of students, and exacerbate segregation.

Vote NO to state funded voucher programs.

---

Megan Martinez, Mrs

Self. Homemaker. Mother. Parent.

Lacoste, TX

I want the freedom of school choice.

---

Carl Meriwether

self/nonprofit executive director

Benbrook, TX

I strongly oppose Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) and the use of ESAs in other states and develop recommendations for a Texas ESA program, including suggestions on eligibility and prioritization of applicants. Vouchers are not good for Texas schools. Resist the temptation, please.

---

Michele Beard  
self  
Richmond, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

Sincerely,  
Michele Beard

1809 Mulberry Drive

Richmond, TX 77469

michelereene68@gmail.com

713-882-4656

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Charlotte Smith  
Self  
Lucas, TX

Please release the funds taken to go towards public education to its rightful place. Public schools are not able to appropriately fund themselves and need The State to do what it says it will do in our Constitution. Please, before you continue down the path of vouchers, fix what is broken in funding. The best way to prove that the voucher plan works if passed someday is to put it against a healthy system which we do not currently have. Increase the basic allotment significantly. Increase teacher pay. Stop passing mandates to districts like security without building in the dollars behind the mandates. At a minimum, if a voucher plan is to be passed, the amount given per student needs to equal across the board. A voucher amount should not be worth more than the basic allotment.

My child's school causes severe traffic problems on a main thoroughfare every morning and afternoon because we cannot afford to add more parking lot to get more cars in. This is one dangerous example of how this is already but could more tragically affect people's lives.

Teachers are leaving education at a rapid rate. It's time to put politics aside and support financially the millions of students and teachers who make this state great.

---

Donald Corley, Mr.

Self

Godley, TX

Educational Savings Accounts, Vouchers, are failing miserably in other states. Saving Accounts/Vouchers are a sure fire move towards deeper ties to Socialist Programs. Costs are rising and States like Arizona are fast finding themselves in Voucher/Saving Account quicksand. The biggest problem with family finances in today's world is the extraordinary rise in TAX PAYMENTS. In Godley Texas, the ISD has squandered millions and millions of Tax Payer money on extravagant school buildings and keeps wanting to get hundreds of millions of dollars more. If Property Taxes were eliminated, families would have more money to spend on their kids education and Savings Accounts/Vouchers would not be needed. It is time that our Legislatures started to take real and honest analysis into problems and solve those problems without the constant stab in the Tax Payer wallet. I urge everyone to decline Savings Accounts and Voucher Schemes and let the public take care of themselves. Equality simply does not exist and it can not be legislated into existence. Our Robin Hood School Finance Program is extremely unequal. Overtaxing one population to provide for another population is not EQUALITY.

---

Morgan Collier, Mrs.  
Advocacy for the Wronged  
Talco, TX

Being one of the People (as seen in the 50 American States, & Texas Constitution Article 1, Section 2), republican in form, Sui Juris, do serve this notice to make the following claims and so that you may provide immediate due care;

Please take notice that “All political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their benefit...” (Texas Constitution, Article 2, Sec. 2).

Please take notice that We the People are endowed, by our Creator, with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Please take notice that the Founders sought to ensure that our laws would be Publicly declared, knowable in advance, and the product of democratic processes. They sought to ensure that disputes about their meaning would be resolved by neutral judges, but perhaps most of all they sought to keep the government off the backs of the People and allow them room to author their own lives. Where rights secured by the Constitution are involved, there can be no rule making or legislation which would abrogate them.

U.S. Constitution, First Amendment: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Please take notice that laws, statutes, codes, ordinances, or regulations, that violate Constitutions of the United States are null and void, therefore, as a matter of jurisprudence, do not exist.

U.S. Constitution, Amendment 14, Section 1: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Maxim of Law: Void things are as no things.

Please take notice that it is not within the province of the state or its “agencies” to make significant decisions concerning children merely because it could make a ‘better’ decision. Parents have the right to limit visitation of their children with third persons; and between parents and the government, the parents should be the ones to choose whether to expose their children to certain people or ideas. No society in which these liberties are not respected is free, whatever its form of government.

---

Anne Russey  
Self  
Katy, TX

Please note my strong opposition to educational savings plans, vouchers, school choice programs of any and all kinds. Please fully fund public education now. Please decouple public education funding from future attempts to pass vouchers to see if the support is there for vouchers once public schools are adequately funded. Thank you.

---

Mandi Rome

Self, homeschooling mom

San Antonio, TX

?? Time to testify! ??

You have an opportunity to take action next week as the Texas House Committee on Public Education holds hearings on Aug. 12th and 13th.

During this time, the committee has plans to “evaluate the use of education savings accounts in other states and make recommendations for a Texas program, including suggestions on eligibility and prioritization of applicants.”

??Steps to Make Your Voice Heard:

•If you are able to travel to the Capitol to testify in person, read more information about witness registration here: <https://hwrspublicprofile.house.texas.gov/>

•The meeting is being held below the Capitol in the underground Extension. Read up on the instructions related to public access here: <https://house.texas.gov/committees/public-access-house-committee-meetings>

•If you are not able to travel to the Capitol, please submit a public comment electronically. Be sure to select "Educational Opportunity" as the issue you are commenting on: <https://comments.house.texas.gov/home?c=c400>

??Need Some Talking Points?

•With the committee’s stated goal of looking at ESAs in other states, we are concerned about some of the problems caused by voucher programs in other states – such as busted budgets, higher property taxes, and strings that have come with various programs

•Taxpayer-funded voucher programs essentially create a new welfare program, redistributing funds, creating administrative overhead, and shifting control away from parents and towards bureaucrats.

•We are concerned that voucher programs could jeopardize the unique freedoms currently enjoyed by homeschoolers in Texas. We believe that families should have the autonomy to educate their children according to their own values and beliefs, without government interference.

•Even though many Texas “school choice” advocates say that homeschoolers will “only” be subject to accountability measures – such as accreditation or standardized testing – if they opt into the ESA program, those are still government regulations that take autonomy away from families. We know that government programs never reduce in size or scope, and homeschoolers in other ESA states are already having to fight to differentiate themselves from those who do take the government money. Texas is unique in their current homeschooling freedoms, and we are not willing to risk those by acquiescing in the name of “accountability.” Thus far, “school choice” proposals in Texas have not been about freedom of education choices, but about funding of educational choices.

•We encourage the Texas legislature to explore alternatives to ESAs, such as tax exemptions that allow families to use their own money to choose the educational options that best suit their needs.

Robert Fait  
Self/Citizen-Public School Education  
Sealy, TX

There are great concerns regarding the implementation of vouchers in Texas. ACCOUNTABILITY!!!! Implementation should be prioritized for those with the greatest financial needs. Implementation rules and regulations should be WELL-DEFINED. As vouchers are implemented, the private institutions accepting public funds should adhere to standards and rules similar to those as defined for Texas public schools. The institutions accepting public moneys should be required to take ALL STUDENTS, including those with special needs. State leaders are ACCOUNTABLE and should first insure adequate funding for PUBLIC SCHOOLS (see Texas Constitution). ACCOUNTABILITY!!! Implement vouchers/ESAs on a VERY LIMITED scale with adequate monitoring.

---

April Travis  
Self  
Cypress, TX

I strongly oppose school vouchers.

---

Ebony Turner, Attorney  
Self/Attorney  
Mansfield, TX

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to testify AGAINST the State of Texas implementing any kind of Voucher or Education Savings Account ("ESA") program.

The State of Arizona has been the model for the implementation of vouchers for the country. Eleven states have followed suit. According to a Pro-Publica article, the implementation of vouchers has cost that state millions more dollars than projected and has contributed significantly to Arizona's budget deficit. This may be due to the inability to predict how many students would and will continue to use vouchers. It's likely difficult for a state to adequately fund a cost it can't predict. As you well know, the proposed allotted amounts of \$8-\$10,000 per kid for vouchers proposed by the Texas Legislature, would not ensure every student could afford private school because the costs to attend far exceed that amount. This voucher, or ESA allotment, only amounts to a coupon for those families who can already afford, or are already sending their kids to, private schools. According to the Pro-Publica article on Arizona, that state's poorer children were disproportionately harmed by the State's implementation of a voucher system.

Finally, I am the mother of a son with special needs, who lives in a school district with vast resources and a great public education system, and yet my son still doesn't receive all of the resources he needs. We have asked for a paraprofessional to be assigned to him ever since he entered kindergarten (he is going into 5th grade) and we have never received one due to one reason only: Funding. Siphoning off additional public funds from public schools will only exacerbate that problem. Not to mention, public schools are not required to accept any student who applies, nor are they required to provide the services and resources, such as speech or occupational therapy, that public schools must provide. Instead of creating what could result in an astronomical amount of spending to the point of a budget deficit, how about increasing the current per-student allotment for public school kids? How about fully funding public schools so that they can all be better, and thereby, decreasing the need or the desire to send kids to private schools? That would truly give ALL students in Texas a fighting chance at an adequate education, rather than just the few who can already afford to be educated in private schools, or elsewhere.

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Rachel Preston  
self, educator  
Austin, TX

Raise the basic allotment so the millions of students in Texas can have well-funded public schools that provide the supplies they need, smaller class sizes, and experienced teachers leading their learning.

Instead of starving the education system and forcing early- and mid-service teachers to flee so they can earn a living wage at one job, pass a school funding measure that doesn't force districts into deficits just to exist. Pass a funding measure that does more than keep up with inflation, but invests in the future of public schools that are accessible for all students in rural, suburban, and urban areas. Find a way to dismantle the inequitable "Robin Hood" recapture system and instead use money from other sources like the rainy day fund to begin to offset the inequities forced by tying school funding to local taxes.

In other words, fix the public education system.

Governor Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators.

Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students.

Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents.

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Daniel Horwitz, Rabbi  
self; rabbi  
Houston, TX

I believe that this bill is misnamed and misrepresents the intentions behind it. The true purpose is to further support private schools at the expense of the public education system. Our public system is drastically underfunded, and providing more funding for those already able to afford private education will do nothing to help anyone except those who need it the least. Texas has historically done far too little to support the public system--which, of course, is "majority minority"--and it is time for our legislators to do the right thing and stop making the rich richer at the expense of the poor. As a Jew, I wanted to provide a strong Jewish education for my children, and sent our children to Jewish day schools. But I didn't ask the government to pay for it and I didn't want the government to be involved in it. I didn't expect the government to provide the equivalent of a private road to my home. Why should the government provide special support for private schools, secular or religious, when it doesn't do enough to provide for the education of the majority of its children?

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Chau Pham  
Self  
Grand Prairie, TX

Again and again, Texans have told Greg Abbott and other politicians that we do not want school vouchers. We have seen the writing on the wall for a long time and are not surprised by how neatly the ESA would fit into the exclusivity of education laid out by Project 2025.

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Jeanette Flores  
IJ  
Harlingen, TX

ESA will help my children's educational future. I'm looking forward to discussing ESA funds, tutoring, school options and the benefits it will hold for our children's future

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Matthew Herzberg  
Self - project manager  
Mansfield, TX

I would like to register my opposition to any type of legislation that allows taxpayer dollars to be used for private or home school education. These schools do not have to adhere to the same rigorous standards that the legislature requires of public schools. I am concerned with the lack of oversight of this taxpayer money that will not have financial accountability. I would urge the committee to research other states, such as Arizona, on the fraud and abuse of taxpayer money that has happened under their educational savings accounts. These types of educational opportunity accounts are not good for the majority of Texas students and families. These are designed for the few and equate to a tax break for those that don't need another tax break.

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Kristi Dawson  
Self/Sales  
Mansfield, TX

Oppose the use of vouchers. Taking away from our public schools will leave children behind. If private school curriculum is what all children deserve, then let's invest in our public system to ensure ALL kids are served- not just the ones accepted by a voucher system.

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Cathy McAuliffe, Dr.  
self/college professor  
Rockport, TX

As a product of public schools, I am a proponent of public education and opposed to school vouchers. They undercut public education, are inequitable, stretch the boundaries of the separation of church and state, and run counter to the mandates of the Texas Constitution. Why shouldn't state funds be used for parents to send their kids to nonpublic schools? School vouchers threaten to weaken our education system – where most Texas students are educated – by siphoning much-needed funds away from public schools. Our public schools already struggle to provide children with adequate academic and support services because of budgetary constraints. When parents use state-funded vouchers to take their children out of public schools and send them to private schools, what happens to education funding for the rest of the state's students? Unless the Texas legislature suddenly steps up and adequately funds public education, the schools in our community will suffer. In 2021 Texas was ranked 42 out of 50 states in terms of a student's Chance for Success, School Finance, and K-12 Achievement. "A state's overall grade, published in September, is the average of its scores on the three separate indices tracked for the report card." (<https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/quality-counts-2021-educational-opportunities-and-performance-in-texas/2021/01#:~:text=State%20Overview,a%20grade%20of%20C%2Dminus.>)

Rather than pouring money into vouchers for private education, the state should increase funding for public education, allowing school districts to pay teachers a better salary; hire needed auxiliary personnel, such as school counselors; and provide sufficient instructional materials so teachers don't have to use their own money for classroom supplies and displays. Statewide school vouchers are inequitable. Most rural and smaller school districts do not have any quality private schools. Parents in rural areas will not have the option to send their children to private schools, even if they would prefer to do so. Money for school vouchers will be siphoned from smaller districts already dealing with low budgets, making it even more difficult for them to provide a quality education to their students.

Separation of church and state is a key element of our democracy and in our education system. Parents have every right to decide to send their children to religion-based private schools, but our taxes should not pay for them to do so. School vouchers run counter to the mandates of Texas' Constitution, which is clear that the state has the responsibility and duty to provide free education in public 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 fee schools. Free education is essential so that all the children can learn and grow."

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Meredith Bowman  
Citizen/teacher  
Fort Worth, TX

Educational Opportunity

Taxpayer-funded voucher programs essentially create a new welfare program, redistributing funds, creating administrative overhead, and shifting control away from parents and towards bureaucrats.

I am concerned that voucher programs could jeopardize the unique freedoms currently enjoyed by homeschoolers in Texas. I believe that families should have the autonomy to educate their children according to their own values and beliefs, without government interference.

Even though many Texas “school choice” advocates say that homeschoolers will “only” be subject to accountability measures – such as accreditation or standardized testing – if they opt into the ESA program, those are still government regulations that take autonomy away from families. We know that government programs never reduce in size or scope, and homeschoolers in other ESA states are already having to fight to differentiate themselves from those who do take the government money. Texas is unique in their current homeschooling freedoms, and we are not willing to risk those by acquiescing in the name of “accountability.” Thus far, “school choice” proposals in Texas have not been about freedom of education choices, but about funding of educational choices.

I encourage the Texas legislature to explore alternatives to ESAs, such as tax exemptions that allow families to use their own money to choose the educational options that best suit their needs.

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Laura Klein Plunkett  
Self-Retired Logistics Management  
Georgetown, TX

I am a long-time supporter of school choice. My parents sacrificed to provide me an alternative to public school for grades 1-4 because they knew the local schools could not meet my learning needs as an autistic child, and I have had a successful life and wonderful career as a result. Every child deserves what my parents gave me and they should not have to sacrifice as much as my parents did to make it happen. School choice--where the \$\$ follows the child--is the way, the only way, to ensure each child has the educational opportunities they need. It's a civil rights issue. I urge you to support school choice. Let parents decide. Mine did, and I will be eternally grateful to them for doing so.

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Christine Galus  
Self  
Corpus Christi, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers for private, charter or religious schools. My tax dollars are paid to provide public education to maintain a literate, thoughtful electorate. A body of citizens who are capable of critical thinking and reasoning. I will use my vote in November to elect representatives who share that same belief.

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Fallon Goulding  
Self  
Celina, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

Sincerely,  
Fallon Goulding

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Kayla Lain  
Families Engaged  
Godley, TX

hb 1 - vouchers - we are against any strings. Homeschool parents have the right to autonomy to educate their children as they see fit with NO government interference. We do not want your money if it comes with strings. Texas is one of the free est homeschool states and we want to keep it that way. Homeschoolers should not have to choose a woke accredited system, we should not have to do standardized tests, and we should not have to choose government approved curriculum. No strings

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Roberta Minchew  
Self  
Corpus Christi, TX

Public school funding

As a tax payer and a retired teacher, and grandparent of school age children, I adamantly oppose funding private school vouchers. The Texas school system is already struggling to meet the needs of its students, staff, and parents. Taking away much needed funds and giving them to private schools will be detrimental to our state as a whole.

While public schools are required to meet ever-increasing mandated testing, private schools are not held to the same standard. Public school teachers are also required, as they should be, to meet rigorous training and content specific licensing, private teachers are generally not even required to have certifications.

If parents desire to place their children in private schools, then of course they should have the option as they already do, but not at the expense of the vast majority of tax payers and their children enrolled in public schools.

Respectfully,  
Roberta Minchew

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Nicolin Neal  
Self  
HOUSTON, TX

I am writing to promote unwavering support for public education.

The option of "school choice" sounds wonderful in theory, but I fear, in reality will result in sub par educational opportunities and increase the divide between our wealthiest and poorest communities.

The desirable private schools near my home cost at least \$16k per year, and go all the way up to \$40k per year. A voucher system will not allow my family to access these great schools. Instead we will be obligated to choose between public education, that through "school choice" will begin to be severely defunded and compromised. Or we will have to settle for likely "pop-up" charters and private schools that will be within our price range. Schools that I believe will be mediocre at best.

Additionally, those who can already afford the \$40k per year tuitions at private schools will also get these school choice funds. It wouldn't be fair to deny them the stipend. So the wealthy will save money while the middle class and those struggling to make ends meet will wind up in sub par schools, or making big financial sacrifices to get their kids into the better schools.

Another problem that I see is the fact that many of the private schools have an application and interview process. Not everyone will be accepted, leaving those who can't get an ideal application together, for whatever the reason, unable to access these great private schools.

Due to the issues stated above, I am very opposed to starting a school choice program in Texas. Public schools should be built up to be the strongest schools in the state, allowing for great education to those in all demographics without the possibility of being turned away

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Mary Ellen Scribner, Ms.  
Self - Retired secondary school educator (classroom teacher & librarian)  
Austin, TX

I am writing to state my opinion regarding ESAs which is based on many years of firsthand experience and observation--my high school diploma and two college degrees all came from Texas public schools and universities. My pension comes from TRS. Our public schools have no problems that would not be solved or greatly reduced were the State to properly and adequately fund the system. Today's papers printed stories highlighting teacher retention issues, the need for teachers to buy many of the supplies needed in their classrooms, the hiring of uncertified educators reducing the quality of learning in many schools, closing of school libraries, and opposition to bonds due to lack of trust with state-appointed boards. ESAs would solve none of these problems or other similar ones, only exacerbate them by removing funds from the already underfunded system. ESAs are simply vouchers in disguise that wealthier parents who are already sending their children to more exclusive private school would take advantage of all the while destroying the public education system. What of the vast rural areas of Texas where there are no private school options available? What of the small towns where the school is the heartbeat of the community, quite literally the community center? Please recognize ESAs, vouchers, parental choice for what they are--a deliberate attempt to destroy a school system that has served the parents and students of Texas since 1854, to privatize it for the enrichment and special treatment of rich political donors. The consequences of increasing privatization of Texas prisons are excellent examples of how it benefits the corporate world and harms the general population. As mentioned earlier, I am speaking from lived experience, but if you prefer numbers and statistics, they are available from many reliable resources. For example, earlier this year it was reported, "Texas ranks in the bottom 10 states in the country for education spending by several measures, including the report by the Albert Shanker Institute, the University of Miami and Rutgers University."

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Daniella Lopez  
Brownsville Independent School District  
Brownsville, TX

My name is Daniella Lopez Valdez, and I am here to express concerns about Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) and their impact on South Texas.

While increasing educational opportunities is a worthy goal, ESAs would harm our community, especially in South Texas, where public schools are crucial to our most vulnerable families. It's important to recognize that Texas parents already have choices—public schools, private schools, and homeschooling. The argument that ESAs are needed for more choice is misleading. Instead, ESAs would divert critical funding from public schools, threatening the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on public education for their children's success. Public schools in our region provide stability, resources, and opportunities that many families wouldn't have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in Texas, and we must protect their children by ensuring access to a safe and effective public education.

ESAs would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students and are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This would reduce resources for public schools, worsening educational inequalities and limiting opportunities for most students. This isn't just unfair—it's unsafe for our children.

Moreover, South Texas lacks the infrastructure to support a large shift to private education. ESAs would likely benefit only a select few, while most students—especially those from low-income backgrounds—would face reduced resources and opportunities.

Public education is the foundation of our community. Weakening our public schools undermines the future of our entire region. We've seen in other states that ESAs lead to larger class sizes, reduced programs, and lower quality education. This is not the path we want for Texas, especially not for South Texas.

I urge you to oppose ESAs and instead invest in public schools to ensure every child has access to a high-quality and safe education.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Daniella Lopez Valdez

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Julie Hinaman  
self - elected/volunteer school board trustee  
Cypress, TX

In order to provide REAL educational opportunities to Texas children, the state of TX must first and foremost fulfill its responsibility under Article 7 of the Texas State Constitution. The state legislature should provide for the 5.5 million children attending their local public schools BEFORE consideration of subsidizing private school tuition. Public schools follow state-mandated requirements for academic and financial accountability and transparency while private schools do not. Any public funds going to private organizations MUST include the same academic accountability (STAAR/EOC exams, public reporting, A-F rating) and financial transparency (FIRST rating, public posting of all financial reports, salaries, check registers) as public schools. Texas already has "school choice"; ESAs are "schools' choice" where private schools select their students. Take care of Texas public schools FIRST by funding significantly underfunded areas like school safety, special education, teacher pay, and transportation.

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Ross Schumann, Mr  
Oil and Gas Workers Association  
Humble, TX

Thank you for your time. I am writing as the Chairman of the Policy Committee for the Oil and Gas Workers Association.

We are gravely concerned with the state of public education in Texas. Unfortunately, our public school system has not been successful at preparing our students to enter our workforce and be ready to be productive adults. We have seen as public schools have demanded and gotten massive funding increases, typically utilizing tax revenue derived from our workers and operations, yet have been unable to produce better results.

We are worried about how the teachers in our communities have been left out of the pay raises that have been afforded to superintendents, principals, and coaches in our state. We are concerned about how administrators have decreased the portion of their budgets going to teacher and classroom funding over the last two decades.

Texas is growing economically. The Oil and Gas industry in this state contributes massive amounts of tax revenue to this state, as well as the state profiting from the sale of oil and gas produced on state property. Yet, these funds never seem to go back into helping our industry and communities continue to operate.

We are in support of educational opportunity to increase the chances for our students to learn skills and trades that will help prepare them for high paid skilled labor jobs in our industry (welding, electrical, heavy equipment operation, construction, safety and environmental, etc) that are currently in high demand for workers right here in Texas.

This would allow these students to take coursework to enroll in programs to learn these skills while still in high school and help ensure a supply of local talent to our businesses and secure high paying jobs in the state for our citizens.

We know that some public schools do have programs for these trades, but most students do not have access to these programs and educational opportunity programs would allow all students, regardless of their zip code, access to programs such as these, whether at another public school in the region or at a private education provider.

Thank you for your time, and may God Bless Texas.

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Heather Golden  
Self Stay at Home Mom  
Houston, TX

I am a native Texan and a parent, and I oppose school vouchers. Vouchers are a handout to those who can already afford private school. Vouchers do not help rural communities that are struggling to keep the lights on due to the legislature's lack of investment in public schools. They do not help poor minority communities because private schools are not required to accept a voucher in place of the full cost of attending the school. Vouchers also don't pay for transportation, uniforms, meals, books, or the technology required to attend the school.

Our first priority must be to fully fund public education. Our schools are woefully lacking the resources they need to serve students well. According to the Kinder Institute for Urban Research, 73% of Texas school districts are underfunded. They also found that 17% of districts are considered "severely underfunded, with gaps exceeding 40% of their needs." That lack of resources is directly tied to student achievement, the research showed. When districts have smaller funding gaps, achievement is higher. Texas could improve achievement in our state by raising the basic allotment, something our leaders have not been willing to do cleanly. HISD has a 60% funding gap. Instead of providing us with the funds we need to create successful students, y'all installed a superintendent who is destroying the schools that are successful despite few resources.

I've also heard Republicans complaining about the curriculum taught in public schools. I find this odd since Republicans have been in charge of curriculum in the state for decades. Therefore, they have the power to change it if that is what they feel is needed in Texas. It is also important to me, and many others, that my tax dollars don't go toward funding religious institutions. Many of them are at odds with my values and I should not have to fund them.

If you insist on funding private schools with public money they must adhere to the same accountability standards as public schools. Not all private schools do a good job. I know of some that still don't teach the science of reading. Additionally, how will you know if a family taking the funds to homeschool actually uses the money as intended? What's to stop families from taking the money and sending their kids to work instead of educating them?

Finally, we can't afford vouchers. "Arizona, the model for voucher programs across the country, has spent so much money paying private schoolers' tuition that it's now facing hundreds of millions in budget cuts to critical state programs and projects," according to ProPublica. This is not conservative. Neither is handing over millions to ESA vendors who are the ones pushing this scheme and contributing mightily to Texas politicians. Vouchers reek of corruption and I don't want that stench in Texas. Thank you.

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Jeanne Spreier

Self

Dallas, TX

Richardson ISD is an urban district that maintains its small-town charm. The parents who put their kids in private schools, rather than RISD, are doing so for reasons other than educational quality. Vouchers will starve our scrappy school district of the funds it needs to provide education to all students. I know from personal conversations that some parents think their kids, in class with "those kids," won't learn as much. My 3 kids went K-12 to RISD which laid the foundation for their successful careers: An aerospace engineer (thanks to Texas A&M, another great public school); a USAF pilot and now USAF finance leader (again, thanks to Texas A&M); and a senior program manager at American Heart Assoc (kudos this time to Texas Woman's Univ, another outstanding public university). If the Texas legislature is in fact supporting military, they would be pouring funds into ISDs. Military leaders, including Adm Wm McRaven (UT graduate, another product of TX public schools), call the financial starvation of K-12 schools the single biggest security threat to our nation. You might call on McRaven for testimony. He's former chancellor of the UT System. He knows a thing or two about public education. I know Abbott/Patrick are trying to ram vouchers down the throats of Texans who want to protect their local schools (as evidence by the primary challenges of moderate GOPers statewide). Texas is now ranked DEAD LAST among 50 states as "best places to raise kids." Abbott has made us No. 1 in something: Worst place to raise a family. Vouchers would only add to this insult. In the past, we used to say thank god Louisiana and Mississippi could claim last place in rankings. Now it's Texas.

You know the facts, the stats, the sucking sound as parents see public schools as dumping grounds for students who private schools won't admit. You're grown-ups who know every other state that's instituted vouchers has seen costs explode and state budgets implode. I'm not going to convince any of you self-righteous Christians that this is not, in fact, a Christian nation (FWIW I'm Baptist) and you'll do as your donors tell you. It's a sorry state of affairs that after 20+ years of GOP control, we have to fight to preserve the bedrock principle of public education. You should be ashamed of yourselves. I know you're not but you should know you're reviled in the carpool pick-up lines of every public school in this state. Again, not that you care.

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James Walton, DO

Self - Health care Consulting

Dallas, TX

As a practicing Christian, with membership at Wilshire Baptist Church (Dallas), I would be opposed to any and all recommendations that propose to provide public taxpayer funds to private schools. Whether that money goes directly to the school itself or to the parents, it appears that the state is redistributing tax-payor monies that benefit private entrepreneurs, distorting the free-market principles of 'minimizing government fiscal interference in a marketplace'. The 'Education' marketplace could be especially sensitive to this interference. In this case, the state government will be facilitating the growth of market, that will become 'dependent' on tax-payer funds to maintain operations. This could lead to business failures in this new sector, disrupting the educational journey for children from ALL demographic sectors. Additionally, supporting private competitors to our tax-supported public schools would seem to be working against the overall community best-interest, given that there continues to be room for optimizing our local public schools.

We would be well served to perform a comparative analysis of the "Health" of the Education Systems impacted by vouchers, with specific focus on distinct geographic types (Ex. Rural, Ex-Urban; Suburban; Urban; etc.) measuring performance variables highlighting changes in quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and equity when Vouchers were introduced.

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Elisabeth Meyer  
Parents of students with disabilities  
Austin, TX

I am strongly opposed to school savings accounts. I have five children with various disabilities. Please consider how funding school savings accounts will impact students with disabilities. Private schools are often not accessible places for students with disabilities. I was a never public school mom until I realized our private Christian school could not meet the needs of my children with disabilities. Most private schools do not have the training they need to accommodate students with disabilities. They also do not have to follow the Federal laws meant to protect these students and increase educational outcomes . Our special educations system is already grossly underfunded. The job of the State is to provide for equitable public education of ALL students. I understand why families might want to chose private religious schools for their children, but the State has zero business subsidizing their tuition especially if the public schools have funding gaps already. Lastly due to a lack of transportation to and from private schools poor students and families with disabilities preventing them from driving done have the option to even use a school choice savings plan as they are depended on school buses. At the end of the day these programs sound like a good use, but after some thought they aren't really available to every student, and the strip funding for our most vulnerable populations.

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Amy Maddux  
Self/Attorney  
Houston, TX

Please, increase the "options" to attend a high quality school by increasing the funding for public education, NOT with vouchers. My children are 17 and 20 years old. They received a high quality education in Houston ISD. Yes, Houston ISD. But the lack of funding has taken more and more opportunities away. On a per pupil basis, Texas is funding at half the level that research indicates is needed to adequately educate a child. We are at the bottom of the nation in educational opportunities BECAUSE of insufficient funding. Vouchers do not solve that problem; they make the problem worse. Increase funding for public education.

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Debbie Gonzalez, Ms.

Self

McAllen, TX

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Debbie Gonzalez, and I am here to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities in Texas to ensure all students and families have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

It's important to recognize that Texas parents already have choices. Texas is known for our freedoms, particularly the freedom of choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on the public education system to give their children the tools they need to succeed. Public schools in our region are not just places of learning; they are the foundation of our community, offering stability, resources, and opportunities that many families would not have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in our state, and it is our duty to protect their children by ensuring they have access to a safe and effective public education system.

ESAs would divert critical funding from our already underfunded public schools. These vouchers would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students and are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This would reduce resources for public schools, worsen educational inequalities, and limit opportunities for the majority of students.

Sincerely,  
Debbie A. Gonzalez, M.Ed

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Helen Flores  
Mothers For Democracy RGV  
Brownsville, TX

Please reject a publicly funded voucher system. Please support our public school system and our public school teachers by keeping public funds for public schools only. NO to vouchers in Texas.

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Nadine Fisher  
Self  
Brownsville, TX

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nadine Fisher and I am here to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities in Texas to ensure all students and families have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

It's important to recognize that Texas parents already have choices. Texas is known for our freedoms, particularly the freedom of choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on the public education system to give their children the tools they need to succeed. Public schools in our region are not just places of learning; they are the foundation of our community, offering stability, resources, and opportunities that many families would not have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in our state, and it is our duty to protect their children by ensuring they have access to a safe and effective public education system.

ESAs would divert critical funding from our already underfunded public schools. These vouchers would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students and are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This would reduce resources for public schools, worsen educational inequalities, and limit opportunities for the majority of students who remain in the public system. This isn't just unfair—it's unsafe for our children.

Moreover, the infrastructure in South Texas is not equipped to support a large-scale shift to private education. Many areas lack access to quality private schools, and ESAs would not change this reality. Instead, they would likely benefit only a select few, while the majority—especially those from low-income backgrounds—would be left with fewer resources and diminished educational opportunities.

Public education is the foundation of a thriving community and is essential for the economic development of our region. By weakening our public schools, we are not just harming students; we are undermining the future of our entire community. We must protect our children by ensuring that the public education system remains strong, equitable, and safe.

In other states where ESAs have been implemented, public schools have struggled to maintain funding, leading to larger class sizes, reduced programs.

Nadine Fisher

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Ross Schumann  
Oil and Gas Workers Association  
Humble, TX

Thank you for your time. I am writing as a Member of the Policy Committee for the Oil & Gas Workers Association (OGWA).

We are gravely concerned with the state of public education in Texas. Unfortunately, our public school system has not been successful at preparing students to enter our workforce and be ready to be productive adults. We have seen diminishing results, as public schools have demanded and gotten massive funding increases - typically utilizing tax revenue derived from our workers and operations - yet have been unable to produce better results.

We are worried about how the teachers in our communities have largely been left out of the pay raises that have been afforded to superintendents, principals, and coaches in our state. We are concerned about how administrators have decreased the portion of their budgets going to teacher and classroom funding over the last two decades.

Texas is growing economically. The Texas oil and gas industry contributes massive amounts of tax revenue to this state, as well as the state profiting from the sale of oil and gas produced on state property. Yet, these funds never seem to go back into helping our industry and communities continue to operate.

We support educational opportunity to increase the chances for our students to learn skills and trades that will help prepare them for high-paid skilled labor jobs in our industry (welding, electrical, heavy equipment operation, construction, safety and environmental, etc) that are currently in high demand for workers right here in Texas.

This will allow these students to take coursework and enroll in programs to learn these skills while still in high school, helping to ensure a pipeline of local talent to our businesses and secure high-paying jobs in the state for our citizens.

We know that some public schools do have programs for these trades, but most students do not have access to these programs. Educational opportunity programs would allow all students- regardless of their zip code - access to programs such as these, whether at another public school in the region or at a private education provider.

Thank you for your time, and may God Bless Texas.

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Noe Gonzalez  
Self  
Brownsville, TX

We need our public education it's a foundation on which America was built on! Stop defunding our public schools! We need money for teachers, and new schools!

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Monica Gonzalez-Williams  
Retired Educator  
Laguna Vista, TX

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Monica Gonzalez-Williams, and I am here to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities in Texas to ensure all students and families have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

It's important to recognize that Texas parents already have choices. Texas is known for our freedoms, particularly the freedom of choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on the public education system to give their children the tools they need to succeed. Public schools in our region are not just places of learning; they are the foundation of our community, offering stability, resources, and opportunities that many families would not have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in our state, and it is our duty to protect their children by ensuring they have access to a safe and effective public education system.

ESAs would divert critical funding from our already underfunded public schools. These vouchers would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students and are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This would reduce resources for public schools, worsen educational inequalities, and limit opportunities for the majority of students who remain in the public system. This isn't just unfair—it's unsafe for our children.

Moreover, the infrastructure in South Texas is not equipped to support a large-scale shift to private education. Many areas lack access to quality private schools, and ESAs would not change this reality. Instead, they would likely benefit only a select few, while the majority—especially those from low-income backgrounds—would be left with fewer resources and diminished educational opportunities.

By weakening our public schools, we are not just harming students; we are undermining the future of our entire community. We must protect our children by ensuring that the public education system remains strong, equitable, and safe.

I respectfully ask that you oppose the implementation of Education Savings Accounts in Texas and instead support initiatives that will genuinely increase educational opportunities for all students.

Respectfully,

Monica Gonzalez-Williams

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Amanda Mure, Dr.

Self

McAllen, TX

My name is Dr. Amanda Mure, I am here to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities in Texas to ensure all students and families have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

It's important to recognize that Texas parents already have choices. Texas is known for our freedoms, particularly the freedom of choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on the public education system to give their children the tools they need to succeed. Public schools in our region are not just places of learning; they are the foundation of our community, offering stability, resources, and opportunities that many families would not have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in our state, and it is our duty to protect their children by ensuring they have access to a safe and effective public education system.

ESAs would divert critical funding from our already underfunded public schools. These vouchers would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students and are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This would reduce resources for public schools, worsen educational inequalities, and limit opportunities for the majority of students who remain in the public system. This isn't just unfair—it's unsafe for our children.

Moreover, the infrastructure in South Texas is not equipped to support a large-scale shift to private education. Many areas lack access to quality private schools, and ESAs would not change this reality. Instead, they would likely benefit only a select few, while the majority—especially those from low-income backgrounds—would be left with fewer resources and diminished educational opportunities.

Public education is the foundation of a thriving community and is essential for the economic development of our region. By weakening our public schools, we are not just harming students; we are undermining the future of our entire community. We must protect our children by ensuring that the public education system remains strong, equitable, and safe.

In other states where ESAs have been implemented, public schools have struggled to maintain funding, leading to larger class sizes, reduced programs, and a lower overall quality of education.

Dr. Amanda Mure

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Kate Castles

Self

Austin, TX

I am a parent and public-school educated adult and am strongly against the adoption of vouchers, education savings accounts, or any other scheme to divert funding from our public schools in Texas. I'm disappointed that we're still discussing this, given that multiple peer-reviewed studies have shown that state-wide voucher programs have no effect or a negative effect on student learning outcomes. Educational opportunity in Texas should be about opportunity for all students, not a select few. Vouchers and ESAs will only limit the future of educational opportunities for the majority of Texas students.

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Ana Garza  
Self  
Brownsville, TX

ESAS would be detrimental to our communities. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on the public education system to give their children the tools they need to succeed. Public schools in our region are not just places of learning; they are the foundation of our community, offering stability, resources, and opportunities that many families would not have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in our state, and it is our duty to protect their children by ensuring access to public education.

ESAs would divert critical funding from our already underfunded public schools. These vouchers would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students and are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This would reduce resources for public schools, worsen educational inequalities, and limit opportunities for the majority of students who remain in the public system.

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Matthew Howell  
Self-retired and Member of Wilshire Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas  
Richardson, TX

I testify to oppose HB 619. As a retired Texas banker with 43 years of experience, this 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 and church-sponsored schools that benefit only a privileged few. This bill would divert 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 a falsehood. 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.

My wife and I are both graduates of public high schools and public universities. Our two grown sons also had an excellent public education in Richardson, Texas. We are tremendous supporters of Texas public schools. In my opinion, the voucher program (HB 619) will destroy the public school system as we know it today that serves all Texas students, regardless of geography, ethnicity or economic status. Thank you for considering these facts. Matthew Howell

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Jane Oliver Stafford, Dr  
Self/retired physician  
Kerrville, TX

I am opposed to any voucher program in Texas. Your job is to appropriately fund public schools. Vouchers do not work; they benefit the wealthy and have cost way more than projected. Vouchers are inequitable for rural areas.

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Sandra Billescas-Ayala  
self  
Harlingen, TX

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sandra Billescas-Ayala, and I am here to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities in Texas to ensure all students and families have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

It's important to recognize that Texas parents already have choices. Texas is known for our freedoms, particularly the freedom of choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on the public education system to give their children the tools they need to succeed. Public schools in our region are not just places of learning; they are the foundation of our community, offering stability, resources, and opportunities that many families would not have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in our state, and it is our duty to protect their children by ensuring they have access to a safe and effective public education system.

ESAs would divert critical funding from our already underfunded public schools. These vouchers would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students and are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This would reduce resources for public schools, worsen educational inequalities, and limit opportunities for the majority of students who remain in the public system. This isn't just unfair—it's unsafe for our children.

Moreover, the infrastructure in South Texas is not equipped to support a large-scale shift to private education. Many areas lack access to quality private schools, and ESAs would not change this reality. Instead, they would likely benefit only a select few, while the majority—especially those from low-income backgrounds—would be left with fewer resources and diminished educational opportunities.

Public education is the foundation of a thriving community and is essential for the economic development of our region. By weakening our public schools, we are not just harming students; we are undermining the future of our entire community. We must protect our children by ensuring that the public education system remains strong, equitable, and safe.

In other states where ESAs have been implemented, public schools have struggled to maintain funding, leading to larger class sizes, and reduced programs.

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Donna Stevens  
Self  
N Richlnd Hls, TX

It is time for this state to decide to develop and expand educational opportunities by fully funding our Public Schools. There is No Need for vouchers, school choice, etc. if we demand excellence and fund our schools so that All students will excel! We can do this! We want the best public schools in Texas and we should be at the top with regards to funding because we know it is the right thing to do for All. Fund our public schools!

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Kelly Rasti  
Texas Association of School Boards  
Austin, TX

Chair Buckley, Vice Chair Allen, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on increasing educational opportunities in Texas. While we support this goal, TASB members believe Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) are not the most effective approach.

We have several concerns about ESAs, which we would be pleased to discuss further. For these brief comments, we will address issues surrounding financial and academic accountability and negative outcomes for vulnerable students.

**Financial Accountability:** ESAs divert public funds to private schools, which are not subject to the same rigorous standards as public schools. Public schools are held financially accountable through mechanisms such as the School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas, open meetings, and public records laws. Private schools lack similar oversight, reducing transparency and community influence.

**Academic Accountability:** Texas public schools are held to strict academic standards as measured by STAAR exams and reported through the A-F accountability system. Private schools are not bound by these standards, raising concerns about the consistency and transparency of educational outcomes.

**Vulnerable Students:** Public schools provide essential support for students with special needs, those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, foster youth, emergent bilingual students, and children experiencing homelessness. Unbound by most state and federal education laws, private schools may deny admission to students for nearly any reason, leaving vulnerable students without the services they are entitled to and deserve.

The experiences of other states with ESA programs highlight significant problems, including ballooning costs and exacerbated disparities in educational quality and access. These disparities often manifest in the form of diminished resources for public schools, reduced support for underserved communities, and uneven access to high-quality educational opportunities.

It is important to note that while ESAs have been touted as a means of providing "school choice," the reality is that they provide "school's choice," meaning the decision lies within the admissions office of a private school, not with students and their families. This distinction is crucial when considering the broader impact of ESAs.

We believe offering a broad array of academic and extracurricular options is key to providing an innovative and well-rounded learning experience for students. As such, we support prioritizing funding to schools that serve the vast majority of students to help deliver the high-quality programs and myriad choices students deserve. Bolstering funding for Texas public schools—consistent with our constitutional obligation to support public education—is a more effective way to expand educational opportunities than introducing an ESA program. We look forward to working with the committee to thoughtfully explore impactful solutions.

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Gretchen Otto  
self / book production editor  
Austin, TX

I am the parent of two children who currently attend Texas public schools. I am writing to urge you to say no vouchers, which will have a negative affect on many, if not most, of the students in Texas. Our school district does not have enough money to adequately teach my children as it is--because the legislature did not pass funding last session to keep up with inflation. 73% of Texas school districts are struggling financially right now and Texas's per-pupil spending is bottom 10 in the nation, despite having the 2nd largest GDP. Adding in vouchers WILL make that problem worse. It's fiscally irresponsible to fund another education stream when the state can't even fund appropriately the one that over 90% of our children depend on and we have a constitutional responsibility to support. Not to mention the potential for how this could negatively impact future state budgets. \$8B of the \$33B surplus last session came from property taxes Texans paid believing it was going to, if not their own schools, then someone else's children's school. Instead, it was kept to pad our surplus and only \$5B was offered to public schools in the budget, far below what was necessary to even keep up with inflation, let alone meet the true needs of our kids. Most states with Voucher programs have seen little or no growth in the number of students in private schools, despite ballooning state budgets, as a result of this investment. That's because as many as 90% of Voucher recipients are already in private schools - it's simply a coupon for them. Meanwhile many students, especially those from rural districts, will suffer under this split system. Please say no to vouchers, and fund our public schools!

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Klaudia Forgacova  
Self - Business Operations  
Mansfield, TX

I strongly oppose educational savings accounts. This would defund our public schools, which need more funding, not less. These types of programs failed the people of Arizona who tried something similar. So much of the funds went to families who were sending their kids to private school anyway. These private schools are not held to standards for transparency and Success like public schools. They can choose their students to handpick who is best for them, instead of allowing all kids equitable opportunities they deserve.

Instead of giving up on our schools like this, please use these funds to instead invest in improving them.

Please do NOT move this forward.

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Jordan Hunter  
Self  
Mansfield, TX

Education Savings Accounts are an expensive and unjust threat to our public schools in Texas. These programs would divert crucial funds away from public schools, which are already struggling with limited resources, and funnel that money into private and charter schools that don't face the same accountability. This isn't just unfair; it's a misuse of taxpayer dollars. Public schools are meant to provide every child with a quality education, but with ESAs, we're stripping them of the resources they need to do that.

Subsidizing private and charter schools through ESAs is incredibly costly, and it only benefits a tiny fraction of students. Families who can afford to supplement these vouchers are the ones who benefit, leaving the vast majority of students in underfunded public schools. This deepens the divide between wealthy and low-income families and undermines the promise of equal opportunity in education. The reality is, we're spending public money to create an education system that leaves the most vulnerable students behind.

Texas can't afford to let this happen. Our public schools are already facing significant challenges, and taking away their funding to subsidize private interests is the wrong move. We should be investing in our public schools, ensuring they have the resources to provide a high-quality education for all students—not just a select few. Rejecting ESAs is about standing up for fairness, responsible use of taxpayer money, and the future of every child in Texas.

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Daphne Hoffacker  
self  
Austin, TX

I'm a Texas mom and I'm truly frustrated with the shenanigans we're enduring in this state. First of all, stop trying to say ESA's aren't vouchers. It's like saying, "It's not a dog, it's a Poodle." Seriously, y'all. I understand why you're trying to distance yourself from the term Vouchers - born of Brown v. BoE and a catalyst for segregation and inequities ever since.

Also, this poll going around claiming most Texas families support Vouchers, is flawed. It only compares favorable vs unfavorable and doesn't include "I Don't Know" responses. That changes the math and it turns out fewer than half of Texan families actually support this idea, and even then, their understanding of the issue is incomplete (there's a lot of misinformation coming from elected officials, which is a problem for those seeking facts). For example, I am the parent of a Special Needs kid and it seems like a great idea - to be able to send him to a private school. But when I reached out to private schools, there wasn't room for him and most seemed dubious that they would ever accept a voucher. In addition, I found out he would lose his federal protections and we'd be on the road in traffic every morning getting to a school instead of being able to put him on a school bus. It makes no sense.

Under Governor Abbott, our schools are getting the same funding they were a decade ago, despite the needs of our children being more profound than ever after COVID. On average, 80% of our school funding goes to bodies in our schools so more funding means more support for our kids.

There are virtually no public schools in Texas, for example, that have the budget to meet recommended Student-to-Counselor Ratios. And, the few counselors we do have are spending the majority of their time on the STAAR and other administrative duties, instead of doing what our children desperately need, which is actual counseling and support.

When our state doesn't even have the competence to appropriately fund the public schools it has a constitutional responsibility to support, how does it make sense to invest in ANOTHER school funding scheme when you can't even support the one you're REQUIRED to take care of. It's unbelievable. And it's equally unbelievable that the adults in our state would let money budgeted for our schools sit undistributed while 73% of our school budgets have reached critical levels of neglect, bullied by Governor Abbott's efforts to Quid his Christian Nationalist billionaire donors' Pro Quo. And that's after keeping \$8B of our tax money that was supposed to be distributed to schools and then conveniently ignoring that it was a quarter of the budget surplus this session.

It's hard to know if we're looking at Incompetence or Corruption? In either case, I expect the adults in power in this state to stop the madness, fund our public schools appropriately so they work for everyone, everywhere.

Blaming teachers for your failures (looking at you Greg Abbott) is

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Terry Kosobud  
Grandparents for Public Schools  
Austin, TX

As a member of Grandparents for Public Schools, we are grandparents from across Texas who support Public Schools. Texas has one of the wealthiest economies on Earth; larger than 186 countries. In 2022 Texas' GDP = \$2.05 trillion with \$33 billion in government surplus in 2023. Yet we can't fund our public schools. In the US depending on the year, Texas ranks anywhere from 39th-44th compared to other states. Texas is definitely not showing a leadership role. Unless it's leadership to the bottom! Educational Saving Plans and school vouchers distract from the simple fact that Texas politicians are not funding our schools. Why?

In other words, vouchers and Educational Saving Plans are a great distraction and further underfund public schools. It is time to stop hurting our schools and provide adequate funding. Besides why are Texas politicians listening to out-of-state millionaires and accepting their millions of \$ to push vouchers? Just listen to the news to hear that millions of dollars are coming into Texas from out-of-state millionaires. Where is Texas grit?

Interestingly when public schools are properly funded, educational declines are reversed, and students thrive. We don't need vouchers to help students. We need to do the right thing and properly fund public schools.

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Sarah Gomez  
Self/Homemaker  
Seminole, TX

As a homeschooling parent, I am concerned that voucher programs will eventually put a risk on the freedoms we already enjoy as being homeschoolers in Texas. If homeschooling families choose to be a part of the ESA program because they are looking for funding to pay for their educational choices, they are then subject to government regulations that would strip them of the unique freedoms Texas offers to homeschoolers. Values and beliefs would no longer be the main motivations for homeschooling, but instead be replaced by standardized testing and accreditations.

Other states who currently participate in voucher programs have shown highly negative results. In Arizona, educators and community organizations were opposed to the ESA voucher program because they predicted the vouchers would serve private school families instead of the lower income ones, siphon funds from public schools, and disrupt and destabilize the state budget. All of these have come to pass across the state (<https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/no-accountability-vouchers-wreak-havoc-states>).

Taxpayer-funded voucher programs essentially create a new welfare program. Money that should be distributed to public schools - where there is a higher number of students - will be diminished due to having to share with the private schools who choose to participate in the voucher plans. In states that currently have voucher schools, children with special academic needs are rarely enrolled because special education children need more resources than vouchers provide. This can be an issue with public schools as well, but they are at least obligated under federal law to enroll and assist special needs children. Wisconsin is an example of how school vouchers have shown to largely be tax subsidies for existing private school families, and a tax bailout for struggling private schools. Washington, D.C., Indiana, Louisiana and Ohio all participate in voucher programs with test results showing to have the largest score drops seen in the research record. (Cowen, Joshua: <https://time.com/6272666/school-voucher-programs-hurt-students>).

I encourage the Texas legislature to explore alternatives to ESAs, such as tax exemptions that allow families to use their own money to choose the educational options that best suit their needs.

Thank you.

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Rosemary Martinez  
Self  
BROWNSVILLE, TX

Chair and Members of the Committee, my name is Rosemary.

I am here to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities to ensure all students have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

Texas parents already have choices. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

In the 2022-23 school year, 5,518,432 students were enrolled in Texas public schools, many from my community in South Texas. South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on the public education system to give their children the tools they need to succeed. Public schools in our region are not just places of learning; they are the foundation of our community, offering stability, resources, and opportunities that many families would not have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in our state, and it is our duty to protect their children by ensuring they have access to a safe and effective public education system. ESAs would divert critical funding from our already underfunded public schools. These vouchers would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students and are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This would reduce resources for public schools, worsen educational inequalities, and limit opportunities for the majority of students who remain in the public system. This isn't just unfair—it's unsafe for our children.

In other states where ESAs have been implemented, public schools have struggled to maintain funding, leading to larger class sizes, reduced programs, and a lower overall quality of education. This is not the path we want for Texas, especially not for South Texas, where the need for strong public education is most critical.

I urge this committee to consider the long-term impacts of ESAs on our community. Rather than diverting resources from public schools, we should be investing in them—strengthening the infrastructure that ensures every child, regardless of circumstance, has access to a high-quality and safe education.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully ask that you oppose the implementation of Education Savings Accounts in Texas and instead support initiatives that will genuinely increase educational opportunities for all students.

Respectfully,  
Rosemary Martinez

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Bill Jones, Mr.  
Pastors for Texas Children, Trustee  
Allen, TX

I am Bill Jones, a resident of Collin County for the past 37 years. My state representative is Jeff Leach. 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, and a member - since 2004 - of Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, where I serve on the Christian Advocacy Committee.

With respect to your August 12 hearing on "educational opportunity" proposals, I testify to oppose any 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. Any bill that would give public funds for the support of private schools 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 any bills that provide public taxpayer funds for the support of private schools.

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Christine Cracchiolo  
Self  
Euless, TX

I strongly oppose this. Our public schools need more resources. We do not need government money going to private schools. Quality public schools benefit everyone. Free and appropriate education is a pillar of our country and central freedom. Defunding it is abhorrent.

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Laura Francis  
Self - HR Advisor  
Katy, TX

Please fund public education and cease the voucher scheme.

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Mike McLamore  
Self/advocacy  
Del Valle, TX

Religious School and Home School Funding  
During the Interim and Ongoing Basis

During the 20th Century, U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) rulings errantly interpreted the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment free exercise clause by limiting diversity in America's public sector to a secular existence, discriminating against religious Americans by excluding them from seeking to live their lives accordingly, within the public sector domain.

It is past time for the Texas Legislature to retire this unconstitutional secularized legacy and support social diversity and tranquility by upholding both religious and secular Texans' equal access as consumers and equal participation as providers in the public sector. Funding support for 501(c)(3) religious schools and for homeschooling should be provisioned.

501(c)(3) religious schools are the only non-profit organizations being unconstitutionally discriminated against by Texas statutes, rules, and the Texas Constitution from being eligible for K-12 education funding. This discriminatory legacy only applies to instruction of the state's graduation requirements by religious schools. Nationwide in all states, 501(c)(3) K-12 religious schools are currently eligible to participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture school meal program for their students, may align student enrollment with their religious convictions, and are eligible to access funding for facility improvements.

Texas Education Commissioner Open Enrollment Charter School rule TAC 100.1015 (b)(2)(A) currently enforces the unconstitutional legacy by discriminating against 501(c)(3) religious schools. SCOTUS rulings outlined in Texas Attorney General Opinion No. KP-0439 clearly provide that Governor Abbott is within U.S. Constitutional bounds and judicial scrutiny to immediately issue an Executive Order or Governor's Directive to the Commissioner of Education to authorize 501(c)(3) religious schools for Open Enrollment Charter School status, free from the discriminatory and costly burden of creating secularized shell organizations. The Governor should be encouraged to issue a directive during the interim.

To ensure accountability, avoid academic and fiscal malfeasance of public funds experienced by some religious schools in another state, and as a condition of receiving funding, all 501(c)(3) religious schools and homeschools should be required to instruct the state's graduation curriculum requirements and participate in state student assessment programs.

SCOTUS rulings as referenced in AG Opinion KP-0439 provide no grounds to prohibit funding from Available School Fund (ASF) sources for funding 501(c)(3) religious schools or homeschooling. Establishing ASF funding methods for religious-sponsored schools and home schooling (or property tax credit), provides the most Constitutionally equitable education funding, more so than education vouchers and parent savings accounts.

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Tiffany Orosco  
Self  
Friendswood, TX

Vouchers do not provide real educational opportunity for most kids. Public schools are the lifeblood of small rural communities. Without a strong school to attract young families, towns either atrophy and die. Many small towns don't even have a private school as an option or have one in town where demand will just drive up tuition. \$8000 doesn't cover tuition at even lowest cost private schools which means many families still wouldn't be able to afford it. Private schools do not have to accept everyone so children with learning disabilities or special needs won't have an option. Instead they will have to attend a public school that has lost even more funding due to vouchers. I previously sent my children to a private religious school only to find out that despite being state accredited their curriculum did not match that of the public school and my children were behind. Private does not necessarily mean better. Now my children attend public school which is accountable to show student progress unlike private schools. Tax money should require accountability. Tax money in religious schools breaks down the barrier between church and state. Moving my students to a public school was the best parenting decision I have ever made. Our town has such a strong sense of community and pride in our local school. My kids are not only getting an excellent education they are learning what it means to be an active part of building a community. Say no to vouchers and fully fund our public schools. Keep communities strong.

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Savant Moore, Trustee  
Self HISD Trustee District 2  
Houston, TX

Expanding educational opportunities through scholarships, private institutions, or charter schools often becomes the default solution for issues in Texas's public education system. However, these measures wouldn't be necessary if we adequately funded and supported public school districts like Houston Independent School District (HISD). Proper investment in public education ensures every child receives a quality education, regardless of zip code.

Public education is the foundation of a functional society, preparing future generations for citizenship and the workforce. Yet, funding disparities in Texas are stark. Wealthy districts, fueled by higher property taxes, provide superior resources, while districts like HISD, which serve economically diverse populations, suffer from overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and insufficient support.

House Bill 1842, passed in 2015, allows the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to take over school districts with consecutive years of unacceptable ratings. While intended to enforce accountability, it often penalizes districts already struggling due to systemic inequities. TEA takeovers fail to address the root causes of underperformance, such as chronic underfunding and resource shortages. Instead, they remove local control and community input, often worsening issues.

Takeovers create instability, pressuring school leaders to implement short-term fixes that may boost test scores but fail to create lasting improvements. Teachers, demoralized by constant state intervention, may leave the profession, further degrading education quality. Students suffer most, as the focus shifts from fostering a love for learning to merely avoiding sanctions.

Texas needs equitable public education funding. The current reliance on property taxes favors affluent areas, leaving districts like HISD to struggle. Reforming the funding model to distribute resources based on need rather than wealth would allow underfunded districts to reduce class sizes, update facilities, and provide critical support.

Neighborhood schools are vital for community stability and engagement. When HISD schools are taken over or closed, it disrupts the community fabric, forcing students to travel long distances and making it difficult for parents to stay involved. School closures can lead to community decline, lowering property values and impacting local businesses.

To prevent further harm, Texas lawmakers must amend HB 1842. Instead of punitive takeovers, the state should offer targeted support to struggling districts, addressing systemic inequities and fostering collaboration with local communities. Additionally, imposing a moratorium on school closures in vulnerable communities would ensure neighborhood schools remain stable.

Legislative action is required to improve public education in Texas. By increasing funding, amending HB 1842, and supporting neighborhood schools, we can ensure every child in Texas has access to the quality education they deserve.

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Vance Ginn, Ph.D.  
Self, president of Ginn Economic Consulting  
Round Rock, TX

To Chairman Buckley and Members of the Texas House Committee on Public Education:

Here is my written testimony for your consideration. You can also find my research supporting the information in my testimony. I plan to testify in person at the hearing but wanted to provide this information beforehand for your benefit.

<https://www.vanceginn.com/letpeopleprosper/testimony-before-the-texas-house-committee-on-public-education-about-school-choice-and-school-finance>

Best regards,

Vance Ginn, PhD

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Denise Chavez  
self  
Brownsville, TX

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Denise Chavez and I am here to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities in Texas to ensure all students and families have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

It's important to recognize that Texas parents already have choices. Texas is known for our freedoms, particularly the freedom of choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on the public education system to give their children the tools they need to succeed. Public schools in our region are not just places of learning; they are the foundation of our community, offering stability, resources, and opportunities that many families would not have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in our state, and it is our duty to protect their children by ensuring they have access to a safe and effective public education system.

ESAs would divert critical funding from our already underfunded public schools. These vouchers would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students and are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This would reduce resources for public schools, worsen educational inequalities, and limit opportunities for the majority of students who remain in the public system. This isn't just unfair—it's unsafe for our children.

Moreover, the infrastructure in South Texas is not equipped to support a large-scale shift to private education. Many areas lack access to quality private schools, and ESAs would not change this reality. Instead, they would likely benefit only a select few, while the majority—especially those from low-income backgrounds—would be left with fewer resources and diminished educational opportunities.

Public education is the foundation of a thriving community and is essential for the economic development of our region. By weakening our public schools, we are not just harming students; we are undermining the future of our entire community. We must protect our children by ensuring that the public education system remains strong, equitable, and safe.

In other states where ESAs have been implemented, public schools have struggled to maintain funding, leading to larger class sizes, reduced and a lower overall quality of education. Please consider

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jandel crutchfield  
Self/mansfield isd school board  
Mansfield, TX

Mansfield ISD is fortunate to offer numerous educational choice programs for parents to select from in our district including STEM, fine arts, P-Tech, industry based certifications including automotive and CNA, dual language, early college high school, and more. In a district that already allows choice we can only continue to provide these options if public money stays in our public school system. If our public dollars leave our district, so too will many of our choice programs because costs to operate the programs remain even as we would lose per pupil funding with students leaving with voucher money. It's difficult to provide high quality choice options without adequate funding. It's difficult to improve struggling school districts without funding to increase support professionals and programs. Vouchers with public funds would prevent improvement for struggling school districts, so while some may get to choose a private school, those who remain have a system that is being defunded. Public schools are already asked to do more, vouchers would strangle the already cash strapped districts we have. Create more funding options within public schools for improvement, don't divest money away. Texas public schools are strong, we don't need to go the route of Arizona's failed voucher program.

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George Garner  
Self - Substitute Teacher for Katy Independent School District  
Katy, TX

I comment in opposition to Public Education Opportunity or School Choice/Vouchers. This initiative is, respectfully, a scam on the citizens of this state and a transfer of school funding to those already sending their children to private, often religious schools. The \$8000 vouchers do not cover the cost to send a child to private school for a year, thereby eliminating poor children from the program (those it was meant to help, allegedly). Further, there aren't enough seats in the private school industry in Texas for all students, which forces a shortage meaning that students will be turned away for arbitrary reasons. Private schools don't include in their mission statements the education of special needs students, whom they are free to refuse. Private schools aren't accountable to the public, thus they shouldn't receive any public funding. Sending tax dollars to a religious-based school violates the separation of church and state and isn't Constitutional. Public schools are in a funding crisis currently, and a voucher program would make this worse. It appears that the State of Texas is trying to under-fund its own education system for the purposes of watching it fail so that it can ultimately end it, much the same way that the US government is slowly destroying the US Postal Service. And, finally, much of Texas is rural, where many counties depend on their public school system as an educator for their children, and also as an economic driver, and a social hub for their communities. They don't even have private schools near them to exploit this so-called choice. They don't have any other choices. So, in summary, devote yourselves to the public school system you already have by giving it all the tools it needs to do its job.

---

Aletha Williams  
Self  
Spring, TX

I am a professor/ site coordinator and am strongly against adopting vouchers, education savings accounts, or any other scheme to divert funding from our public schools in Texas. I'm disappointed that we're still discussing this, given that:

- We need to focus on raising teacher pay, supporting college and career pathway development, and filling high-need shortages like special education and bilingual education. Time is ticking, and we're wasting it.
- \* When schools lose student enrollment, they still have fixed costs. Many districts have passed deficit budgets for multiple years, and others have begun cutting programs due to budget constraints.

For example, in my experience...

Due to insufficient funding, there was a lack of financial support for teacher residents this year. Consequently, the number of individuals aspiring to become educators has declined. The financial aid provided to teacher residents is critical in sustaining them before they transition into full-time classroom teachers.

---

Eva Malina  
self-retired teacher  
Bay City, TX

I want to register my opposition to school vouchers. As a retired public school teacher, I found schools to be under funded and overburdened by regulations both state and national. Public schools are already under financial strains because money is tied to attendance. This mandate does not take into account the situations that many students find themselves in-having to work to help support the family, being a teen parent, the necessity of helping with child care for younger siblings. Schools are punished for making accommodations for students' life circumstances. In order for schools to be effective, they must be adequately funded and teachers need to be adequately paid and given time to plan and collaborate with their peers. This bill is designed to make public school more like private school. Continuity is important in schooling and the voucher system would allow parents to move their student from school to school just because they could if they didn't like a teacher or a rule or books in the library. As it is, teaching is difficult when students come and go from year to year or in the middle of the year. I strongly urge you to vote no on this bill. Please don't make students pawns in a political game.

---

Shannon Petersen

Self

Katy, TX

Hello, I am the mother of a daughter with Angelman Syndrome and a typical child as well. I am writing to express my extreme concern over educational savings accounts or school vouchers. I am asking that we please protect public education and my daughter's rights. By allowing private schools to accept public dollars, we ARE moving tax money that could be for public education into the hands of profiteers in education that would exclude her from opportunities except at the expense of \$40,000+ a year. This is NOT educational opportunity. Similar will happen for other disabilities. We need to fund public education so more money can be allocated to educate children of all abilities. I am worried for their future if we move away from a universal opportunity system like public education.

As a public educator, I will admit there are flaws in public education. I truly believe these are due to our accountability system. We need to take a deeper look to evaluate it. Are we using it as a justification of public education failures or truly looking to see if we are accomplishing the purpose of public education? We need to look deep and think about the purpose. Is it for a productive class or workers? Is it to be the great equalizer of mean? Is it to provide an equal opportunity for people to have the knowledge they need to be successful adults? Stop looking for the flaws and look for the solutions.

As a conservative Republican, I also express my extreme concern over adding even more bureaucracy to our government in the form of a third party vendor like ClassWallet. Why do we need this to distribute vouchers? Why would we not grant tax rebates instead? This is NOT conservative. I challenge our conservative legislators to really question if they are practicing conservative principles or caving to our governor and his donors. I urge you to be men and women of integrity as God calls us to be. I have firsthand experience with ClassWallet and we used it to buy overpriced toys. I believe it opens the door for abuse of the system. I am concerned about the costs just as we have seen in Arizona. Florida also has dropping SAT scores since the adoption of universal vouchers. We should not be looking to these states as examples.

I urge our legislators to once again tell our governor that the people of Texas do NOT want educational savings accounts. We want investment in our public schools to ensure equal opportunity for all. Thank you.

---

Ann Bailey

Self, physician assistant

Houston, TX

My husband and I would like to voice our strong opposition to the proposed voucher program. We want our children to have the same high-quality public education that we did, which will not be possible if funds are diverted to private schools. Many districts are already laying off key staff members and cutting bus routes due to lack of increase in the basic allotment to keep up with inflation. We can't imagine what else will be cut when funds are further reduced.

What's more, these programs are wrought with fraud, waste, and lack of accountability; which has reduced educational outcomes and busted the budgets of states in which they have been implemented.

Importantly, I'd like to mention that on a philosophical basis, public dollars belong in public schools. It is a clear violation of Texans' rights to put their tax dollars toward religious instruction. Parents can pay for private religious school themselves if they choose.

Moreover, it's not the taxpayer's responsibility to subsidize private education for the wealthiest Texans. Vouchers will never provide enough funds to make private school affordable for poor students.

In summary, vouchers have failed everywhere they've been implemented and they are patently unfair. We don't want them here.

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Stacy Solis  
self  
McAllen, TX

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stacy Solis, and I am here to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities in Texas to ensure all students and families have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

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Moreover, the infrastructure in South Texas is not equipped to support a large-scale shift to private education. Many areas lack access to quality private schools, and ESAs would not change this reality. Instead, they would likely benefit only a select few, while the majority—especially those from low-income backgrounds—would be left with fewer resources and diminished educational opportunities.

Public education is the foundation of a thriving community and is essential for the economic development of our region. By weakening our public schools, we are not just harming students; we are undermining the future of our entire community. We must protect our children by ensuring that the public education system remains strong, equitable, and safe.

In other states where ESAs have been implemented, public schools have struggled to maintain funding, leading to larger class sizes, reduced programs, and a lower overall quality of education.

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Kelly Lujan  
Self  
Del Rio, TX

I am against taking money from already underfunded public schools and handing it over to private schools. Vouchers have been shown to only benefit the parents who can already afford private school. Vouchers have also been shown to cost taxpayers way more than they originally claimed they would. Our schools are under funded and over tested. If we want better public schools put them back in the hands of parents not politicians.

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Jan Demro  
Self— Educational Disgnostician  
Harlingen, TX

Implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

It's important to recognize that Texas parents already have choices. Texas is known for our freedoms, particularly the freedom of choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

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In other states where ESAs have been implemented, public schools have struggled to maintain funding, leading to larger class sizes, reduced programs, and a lower overall quality of education. This is not the path we want for Texas, especially not for South Texas, where the need for strong public education is most critical.

I urge this committee to consider the long-term impacts of ESAs on our community. Rather than diverting resources from public schools, we should be investing in them—strengthening the infrastructure that ensures every child, regardless of circumstance, has access to a high-quality and safe education.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully ask that you oppose the implementation of Education Savings Accounts in Texas and instead support initiatives that will genuinely increase educational opportunities for all students.

Respectfully,  
Jan Demro

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Mary Tiernan  
Public school parent  
Austin, TX

As the parent of a child with special needs, the only private school that can meet my kids needs in the greater Austin area is over \$40k a year. An \$8k voucher isn't going to make a difference. What would make a difference is fully funding (including adjustments for inflation) our public schools that are attempting to educate my child on hopes of him acquiring adequate skills to become a future tax payer and contributor to society.

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Kelly Davis, Ms.

Self

Houston, TX

A state that is unable and/or unwilling to fund public schools adequately should not be using public funds for private schools.

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Noelia Barrera

Self- Parent - Therapist for Lyra Health

SAN BENITO, TX

As a proud product of public education, I, Noelia Barrera, strongly oppose the implementation of school vouchers and the redirection of funds meant for public schools to private institutions. Such actions exacerbate social class disparities, particularly disadvantaging children from rural areas who lack equitable access to quality education.

Public schools serve as vital community hubs, offering essential services like healthcare from school nurses, counseling referrals, and nutritional support. Especially in regions like South Texas, families heavily rely on these provisions. Furthermore, evaluating teachers solely based on the STAAR exam is unjust. It sets them up for failure, especially when they're deprived of fundamental resources necessary for effective teaching.

School vouchers are not the solution. They undermine diversity and deny children, irrespective of their backgrounds, the education they rightfully deserve. If education is deemed the great equalizer, why are we offering financial incentives to families already capable of affording private schooling? Will private schools provide transportation, free meals, or access to social services during challenging times? Will they adhere to protocols when a child is in distress or accept all students, regardless of disabilities? The unfortunate answer is no.

Having served as a school counselor for a decade, I've witnessed firsthand scenarios where children are dropped off on the first day without their parents ever setting foot inside the school—not out of neglect, but due to systemic challenges. This trend points towards the dismantling of public education. We must not allow our school system to become another casualty of failed privatization, as seen in our prisons, hospitals, and foster care systems. Our children deserve better. Stand up for them by rejecting school vouchers.

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Carrie Delmare

Self

San Antonio, TX

My name is Carrie Delmare and I am a public school educator of students with disabilities. I have taught self-contained special education for 9 years. I love that my job allows students with moderate-severe disabilities to receive an education within a public school setting, instead of being institutionalized like they were not too long ago.

However, nothing concerns me more for the future of my students with disabilities than my tax dollars getting spent on vouchers for private schools. Vouchers will increase segregation within the school system because my students will not have a seat at the table of those private schools. Hundreds of millions of tax dollars getting diverted to vouchers alone is sure to reduce potential APPROPRIATE funding of public schools.

As a 6th generation Texan, I vehemently oppose my tax dollars subsidizing private school tuitions. I urge the House committee to continue to oppose school choice vouchers.

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Jennifer Rike  
Self retired  
Mansfield, TX

Where my education tax dollars go so to must all state mandated tests, laws, and mandates directed by TEA. Schools outside public education are not subjected to TEA rules and regulations. Aside from the detriment to funding of public expectation; it is this reason I am vehemently opposed to vouchers or Educational Savings Account.

Private or Charter schools are not required to accept all students or retain them once accepted. So some students are sent back to public education. Inconsistent funding will inhibit public school districts to properly budget. These schools are also not mandated to accept any and all students. So it is a disservice to parents to say they have "choice". Choice is an illusion. It is also a disservice to students services by Special Education. Dyslexia, emotional disorders, a vast and varied intellectual challenges, the. There are students with health or physical challenges. None of these students are served at Charter schools or most private schools (with a very few exceptions).

In no scenario presented by advocates of school vouchers or educational savings accounts does anyone address equity for all students. They tout "choice" without addressing choice is an illusion.

I do NOT support vouchers or educations saving accounts. My tax dollars are for public education serving all students across Texas.

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Cesario Perez, M.Ed/MHS  
Self  
Edinburg, TX

My question is, how is this even ip for a vote? It was already voted down by Texas citizens last time around ? How can the governor go against our wishes ?

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Linda Salazar, Ms.

Self, Entrepreneur and mom of two neurodivergent adults

San Antonio, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

As your constituent and a mother of two neurodivergent adults (one with autism and one with dyslexia), who attended both public and private Texas schools during K-12, I am in a unique position to offer insight in this matter.

The problem with the private school was that it was profit driven. While it did have some things that were valuable such as smaller classes and teachers who specialized in teaching neurodivergent students, the owner was so determined to turn a profit that he tried to do everything himself--marketing, new student intake, managing all the teachers/staff, IT, designing all courses and materials-- and refused to hire a full staff leading to dangerous situations including putting my 13-year old son (who is on the Autism spectrum) in charge of leading a class of other students who are all neurodivergent because the teacher was absent and there was no substitute.

In another instance, my son was bullied physically by another student. I had to pull my children out of the private school and moved them to a public charter school. Again, there were smaller classes than a regular public school, but the school was poorly run and there was very little communication from the school leaders. They had good ideas for education but poor execution. Both of my children complained of being bored and left with very little guidance to work on projects.

The ideal solution for both of my children would have been public schools with fully funded special education programs with small classes led by teachers who were specifically trained in teaching students with these common diagnoses.

Please keep in mind that the students who require special education will grow up to be adults. Every penny you invest in them as children will pay back ten-fold when they are able to live as independently as possible as adults--have jobs, pay taxes, buy homes, etc. Short-changing them now is a short-sighted move that will save money now but cost more in the long run.

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

Sincerely,

Linda Salazar

10138 Bricewood Run

SA, TX 78254

LSalazar25@yahoo.com

(210)347-2130

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Michelle Colvard

Self, director, research administration, academic medical center

Houston, TX

I am writing to express my opposition to using public funds for private school vouchers.

One has to look no further than the state of Arizona, which has blown a massive hole in their budget after they approved school vouchers. The original official estimated cost of under \$64M is now approximately \$332M and expected to climb further to \$429M. How is this fiscally responsible?

This unexpected spending means that Arizona now has to cut critical and basic state programs, like highway repairs and expansion and water scarcity.

It also has not led to improvements in education, because those who took advantage of the vouchers were already sending their kids to private schools – and is destroying the public school system that was set up to ensure an educated people regardless of income level.

As a person with a lifelong disability who grew up in the public school district, I'd also like to point out that kids with disabilities rely upon public schools because they can be legally turned away from private schools, unlike public schools. Because I used a wheelchair, my mother had to fight to get me into a private preschool program when I was a child – even though I have no mental deficits. Even today, a private school can turn away kids with disabilities, like my neighbor's little boy who now uses a wheelchair due to cancer.

Please do the right thing and say NO to destroying our state budget, NO to denying a decent education to our most vulnerable populations.

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Sylvia Sánchez Garza  
South Texas ISD  
Edinburg, TX

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sylvia Sanchez Garza, and I am here to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community. The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities in Texas to ensure all students and families have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families. It's important to recognize that Texas parents already have choices. Texas is known for our freedoms, particularly the freedom of choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system. South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on the public education system to give their children the tools they need to succeed. Public schools in our region are not just places of learning; they are the foundation of our community, offering stability, resources, and opportunities that many families would not have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in our state, and it is our duty to protect their children by ensuring they have access to a safe and effective public education system.

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Moreover, the infrastructure in South Texas is not equipped to support a large-scale shift to private education. Many areas lack access to quality private schools, and ESAs would not change this reality. Instead, they would likely benefit only a select few, while the majority—especially those from low-income backgrounds—would be left with fewer resources and diminished educational opportunities. Public education is the foundation of a thriving community and is essential for the economic development of our region. By weakening our public schools, we are not just harming students; we are undermining the future of our entire community. I respectfully ask that you oppose the implementation of Education Savings Accounts in Texas and instead support initiatives that will genuinely increase educational opportunities for all.

Respectfully,  
Sylvia Sanchez Garza

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Hector Valdez  
Self-emp consultant  
Brownsville, TX

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Hector Valdez, and I am here to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities in Texas to ensure all students and families have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

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In other states where ESAs have been implemented, public schools have struggled to maintain funding, leading to larger class sizes, reduced programs, and a lower overall quality of education. This is not the path we want for Texas, especially not for South Texas, where the need for strong public education is most critical.

I urge this committee to consider the long-term impacts of ESAs on our community.

Thanks,

Hector Valdez

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Marta Salinas-Hovar

Self

McAllen, TX

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Marta Salinas-Hovar and I have deep concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities in Texas to ensure all students and families have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

It's important to recognize that Texas parents already have choices. Texas is known for our freedoms, particularly the freedom of choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

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I implore you to oppose these ESA's. They are not what Texans need.

---

Matt Friess

self (my children), insurance

Argyle, TX

Stop holding up school funding for school vouchers.

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Laurie Pompa

Self / Parent

Austin, TX

Hello, I am writing to express my concern about the lack of funding for Texas public schools. My husband and I are products of Texas public schools, and my three children are enrolled in Texas public schools. We have a vested interest in Texas public schools, and we are disappointed that Texas' per-pupil spending is in the bottom 10 in the nation, despite the fact that Texas has the 2nd largest GDP and that we collect billions of our property tax dollars to fund our schools (and divert several billion to pad our surplus). Until we can be fiscally responsible enough to fund our current public school system to a level that does not rank in the bottom of quartile of all U.S. states, we cannot fund another education stream. We have a constitutional responsibility to fund our public schools, not a voucher program which sends money to private schools that are neither required to follow the same guidelines as public schools are in order to receive the same public funds or to even accept and educate all students (as public schools do). I appreciate your commitment to serving Texas, and I hope you prioritize funding Texas public schools, which over 90% of our children depend upon. They are our state's future. Thank you for your time.

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Allan Turner  
Self/ Insurance Agent  
Mansfield, TX

Educational Opportunities should be afforded to all kids in public schools, therefore you should fund them and not defund them. Vouchers will ruin our state budget just as they have ruined Arizona's state budget. Most importantly, you are hurting all students in the the state with special needs. They will not have a fighting chance in our defunded public schools. Private schools discriminate against students with special needs leaving public schools as the only option and vouchers will only make the matter worse. No to vouchers. Stop hurting the students in the state of Texas, especially the students with special needs...

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Ofelia Torres, Ms.  
Self, educator  
Pharr, TX

My name is Ofelia Torres, and I am here to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

The agenda calls for increasing educational opportunities in Texas to ensure all students and families have access to high-quality schools. While this goal is admirable, implementing ESAs would be detrimental, especially in regions like South Texas, where public schools are vital to our most vulnerable families.

It's important to recognize that Texas parents already have choices. Texas is known for our freedoms, particularly the freedom of choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on the public education system to give their children the tools they need to succeed. Public schools in our region are not just places of learning; they are the foundation of our community, offering stability, resources, and opportunities that many families would not have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in our state, and it is our duty to protect their children by ensuring they have access to a safe and effective public education system.

ESAs would divert critical funding from our already underfunded public schools. These vouchers would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students and are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This would reduce resources for public schools, worsen educational inequalities, and limit opportunities for the majority of students who remain in the public system.

Moreover, the infrastructure in South Texas is not equipped to support a large-scale shift to private education. Many areas lack access to quality private schools, and ESAs would not change this reality. Instead, they would likely benefit only a select few, while the majority—especially those from low-income backgrounds—would be left with fewer resources and diminished educational opportunities.

Public education is the foundation of a thriving community and is essential for the economic development of our region. By weakening our public schools, we are not just harming students; we are undermining the future of our entire community. We must protect our children by ensuring that the public education system remains strong, equitable, and safe.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully ask that you oppose the implementation of Education Savings Accounts in Texas and instead support initiatives that will genuinely increase educational opportunities for all students.

Respectfully,  
Ofelia Torres

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Lydia Tucker, Ms  
Self home maker, soccer mom  
Dallas, TX

Local public schools are important to neighborhoods, home values, community, and education of all Texas children. Please do not allow school vouchers into private education. I am a member of Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, Tx. I will pay attention to this issue; this is my number one issue.

Lydia Tucker  
Lake Highlands  
Dallas, Texas

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Laurie Pompa  
Self /Parent  
Austin, TX

Hello, I am writing to express my concern about the lack of funding for Texas public schools. My husband and I are products of Texas public schools, and my three children are enrolled in Texas public schools. We have a vested interest in Texas public schools, and we are disappointed that Texas' per-pupil spending is in the bottom 10 in the nation, despite the fact that Texas has the 2nd largest GDP and that billions of our property tax dollars collected to fund our schools went to pad our surplus instead. Until we can be fiscally responsible enough to fund our current public school system to a level that does not rank in the bottom quartile of all U.S. states, we cannot fund another education stream. We have a constitutional responsibility to fund our public schools, not a voucher program which sends money to private schools that are neither required to follow the same guidelines as public schools are in order to receive the same public funds or to even accept and educate all students (as public schools do). I appreciate your commitment to serving Texas, and I hope you prioritize funding Texas public schools, which over 90% of our children depend upon. They are our state's future. Thank you for your time.

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Michelle Murray

Self

Harlingen, TX

I want to express my concerns regarding the proposed implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas, particularly for the South Texas community.

Texas is known for our freedoms, particularly the freedom of choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public schools, private schools, or homeschool them. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide more choice is misleading. ESAs would simply divert essential public funds away from public schools, jeopardizing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on the public system.

South Texas is home to many economically disadvantaged families who depend on the public education system to give their children the tools they need to succeed. Public schools in our region are not just places of learning; they are the foundation of our community, offering stability, resources, and opportunities that many families would not have otherwise. These are some of the most vulnerable families in our state, and it is our duty to protect their children by ensuring they have access to a safe and effective public education system.

ESAs would divert critical funding from our already underfunded public schools. These vouchers would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students and are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. This would reduce resources for public schools, worsen educational inequalities, and limit opportunities for the majority of students who remain in the public system. This isn't just unfair—it's unsafe for our children.

Moreover, the infrastructure in South Texas is not equipped to support a large-scale shift to private education. Many areas lack access to quality private schools, and ESAs would not change this reality. Instead, they would likely benefit only a select few, while the majority—especially those from low-income backgrounds—would be left with fewer resources and diminished educational opportunities.

Public education is the **CRITICAL** to a thriving citizenry and is essential for the economic development of our region. By weakening our public schools, we are not just harming students; we are undermining the future of our entire community. We must protect our children by ensuring that the public education system remains strong, equitable, and safe.

I urge this committee to consider the long-term impacts of ESAs on our community. Rather than diverting resources from public schools, we should be investing in them—strengthening the infrastructure that ensures every child, regardless of circumstance, has access to a high-quality and safe education.

Thank you for your consideration. I respectfully ask that you **OPPOSE** the implementation of Education Savings Accounts in Texas and instead support initiatives that will genuinely increase educational opportunities for all students.

Respectfully,

Michelle Murray

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Darlene Breaux, Dr.  
Alief ISD Board President  
Houston, TX

As the Board President of Alief Independent School District, I am compelled to speak out against the implementation of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). While these accounts are often presented as a means to give parents more control over their child's education, the reality is that they would strip the public education system of valuable resources and disproportionately harm our most vulnerable students.

Public schools are the cornerstone of our democracy, ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, has access to a quality education. ESAs, by diverting public funds to private institutions, threaten the very foundation of this promise. These accounts would funnel taxpayer dollars away from public schools, which are already struggling with underfunding, to private entities that are not held to the same standards of accountability and transparency. This redirection of funds would exacerbate existing inequalities and create a two-tiered education system, where only those with the means to supplement the ESA funds could afford high-quality education.

The impact on our most vulnerable students cannot be overstated. Students from low-income families, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners rely heavily on the resources and programs that public schools provide. These are the very programs that would be most at risk if ESAs were implemented. Private schools are not required to offer the same services, and many may choose not to admit students who require additional support. This would leave our most vulnerable students with fewer options and less support, further widening the achievement gap.

Moreover, ESAs could lead to a reduction in the diversity of our schools. Public schools are a reflection of our communities, bringing together students from all walks of life. They play a crucial role in fostering understanding, empathy, and collaboration among students from diverse backgrounds. By encouraging a mass exodus to private institutions, ESAs would diminish this diversity, undermining one of the key strengths of our public education system.

We must also consider the long-term implications of diverting funds from public education. Public schools serve as community hubs, providing not just education, but also social services, extracurricular activities, and a safe environment for our children. Reducing their funding would weaken the fabric of our communities, leaving all of us worse off.

In conclusion, while the idea of Education Savings Accounts may seem appealing on the surface, the reality is that they would do far more harm than good. They would drain resources from our public schools, increase inequality, and harm our most vulnerable students. We must stand together to protect our public education system, ensuring that it remains a beacon of hope and opportunity for all students.

Thank you.

Dr. Darlene Breaux  
Alief ISD Board President

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Katy Rais

Self - mom

Houston, TX

I am writing to express my opposition to using public funds for private school vouchers.

A state that is unable and/or unwilling to fund public schools adequately should not be using public funds for private schools.

I am a parent of 2 bright students in a well-funded HISD school which is A-rated, and they thrive. When schools are well-funded, they have higher academic achievement. This is proven by the recent Rice Kinder Institute Study (August 2024) on Texas School District Funding Gaps. It reveals a \*direct\* and \*statistically significant\* correlation between lack of funding and poor TEA student achievement scores. Funding gaps exceeding 40% have C or below TEA student achievement scores. A more practical solution is to fund the schools properly to increase student achievement. It is unfortunate that a bipartisan effort cannot model good behavior and collaboration for our children.

What the wealthy fail to note, is that also Texas will have a demand problem for private and charter schools that will outpace supply exponentially. While their children are happy at their Private Schools of choice, new families will be coming in and competing by the droves for the same private school. Private schools will soon follow in doubling or tripling their costs, raising the costs for all consumers.

One has to look no further than the state of Arizona, which has blown a massive hole in their budget after they approved school vouchers. The original official estimated cost of under \$64M is now approximately \$332M and expected to climb further to \$429M. Exactly as predicted above.

Here's the math conundrum - Arizona has a much smaller population of approximately 7.1 million. Texas has more than 30.5 million and growing. Imagine the budget deficit for Texas in a failure to foresee simple economic consequences, or worse, turn a blind and stubborn eye to it.

This unexpected spending means that Arizona now has to cut critical and basic state programs, like highway repairs and expansion and water scarcity. Is TxDOT prepared to cut future highway funding at the expense of ESPs?

It also has not led to improvements in education, because those who took advantage of the vouchers were already sending their kids to private schools – and as I mentioned above, is driving costs of those private schools upward because not enough supply is there to exceed demand. I hope the top 1% knows the lower classes will be crowding out their schools, increasing competition with their kids for the same number of spots, all while driving costs through the roof. Perhaps they'll be able to outsource a great homeschool teacher looking for work outside of the public education system for a better bargain.

Instead, I urge you to work to find a mature, responsible, bipartisan solution such as reforming the funding model to distribute resources based on need rather than wealth. This prevents the decline in property values and future business closures of catastrophic proportion

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Don Macune  
Self - Electrical Engineer  
Houston, TX

Please accept this Testimony regarding Educational Opportunity. My comments share my experience with the ongoing takeover of Houston ISD (HISD) by a State-appointed Superintendent and Board.

I have lived in Houston since 1974. My children were enrolled in HISD for ~20 years, graduating from nationally ranked high schools and also highly ranked universities. My wife served as PTO president at our neighborhood HISD elementary school. My family and I know Houston and HISD well.

In addition to our experience as an HISD family, I have also volunteered for ~15 years at Port Houston Elementary (PHE), an HISD school in a low income, immigrant neighborhood on Houston's east side. I have volunteered at PHE via the non-profit Neighbors in Action ( <https://www.neighborsinaction.com/> ).

In June, 2023 the TEA appointed Mike Miles as Superintendent and also replaced the elected school board with an appointed Board of Managers. These appointees have acted without accountability to the residents of Houston or parents of HISD.

In 2024 these same appointees are putting forward a \$4.4B Bond issue, which will shape the district for decades to come. The appointed leadership has added a "Community Advisory Committee" (CAC) to advise on the Bond. Few people in the city are even aware of the existence of the CAC. To my knowledge the CAC has not visited the Port Houston neighborhood.

The recently released and approved Bond plan includes "co-location" of multiple campuses, including the "co-location" of Port Houston Elementary to a different neighborhood. The term "co-location" is completely misleading regarding PHE, so let's call this what it is: a school closing. Including school closings in a bond issue is deceptive, cruel and divisive.

The PH neighborhood has been neglected and overlooked by government for decades. During this period PHE has been the only functioning government institution serving the neighborhood. Closing PHE would rip out one of the few sources of hope for the residents - it is the heart of the neighborhood.

I do not believe that it was the intent of HB1842 passed in 2015, or any legislation enabling school takeovers, to empower a non-elected Board and state-appointed Superintendent to implement long term, irreversible changes in the district with significant harm to families and taxpayers. The Bond issue created by a non-elected Board will create a financial burden that must be borne by taxpayers for years. This is taxation without representation. Closing a neighborhood school will cause irreparable harm. The appointed Superintendent, Board and CAC have turned a deaf ear to the neighborhood. Citizens have no recourse at the ballot box.

I ask that you consider setting boundaries on the powers of appointed Superintendents, Boards, and other appointed governance regarding long term, irreversible obligations or changes to the districts they are appointed to. Please show respect for the will of the voters.

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Maria Redecop  
Self, homemaker  
Seagraves, TX

As a homeschool mom of over a decade, I am disappointed that we're even considering a so called "school choice" program. When it comes to homeschooling, the freedom we have right now in the great state of Texas is second to none. We don't have to spend countless unnecessary hours meeting with state officials, completing standardized tests, submitting learning plans, and checking off boxes for all the requirements the way states with voucher programs in place do. Some states have gone as far as requiring vaccinations. Deciding what injections belong in our bodies should never be up to the state. **THIS IS NOT FREEDOM.** You might say, simply don't take the money and you'll be exempt from all these. This doesn't seem to be the case in states that have these programs in place. Homeschoolers who pay out of pocket are already having to fight to differentiate from homeschoolers who do take the money. It's also important to note that, as with any government program, there will always be some level of fraud which will warrant still more regulations. I urge you to consider these issues. What we have now is school choice and educational freedom. We are free to choose which school our children go to and have the freedom to educate them in a way that allows each individual child to thrive because the education is specifically tailored to them. Government money always comes with strings attached. We want **LESS** government oversight and **MORE** freedom. **KEEP TEXAS FREE!**

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Ashley Evans  
Self  
Mansfield, TX

Thank you for taking the time to read my comment. I think it is important that those who say they "truly" care children who are attending public schools also share about their support for school vouchers. I come from a family who has received a public education and I currently work in public education. Public education has so far to go but it had made great strides within the last 20 to 25 years. We need to public education be at its finest. I'm not against a parent or guardian placing their child where they believe it is best for them , but public education should not be look down upon.

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Rebecca Seabrook  
Self, non-profit professional  
Houston, TX

A state that is unable and/or unwilling to fund public schools adequately should not be using public funds to boost private school revenue.

According to the Texas School District Funding Gaps report by the Kinder Institute, Texas has failed to fund its public schools at the level needed to ensure student success. To redirect taxpayer funds to private schools would only exacerbate the issue, as studies on the impact of vouchers have found that that the primary beneficiaries of vouchers are families that are already enrolled in private schools.

While Greg Abbott benefited handsomely from a record-breaking campaign donation from Jeff Yass to advance vouchers, it is the state's responsibility to ensure a vibrant public school system, not submit to the demands of billionaires on the East Coast.

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Louis Mascolo  
Self  
KINGWOOD, TX

Vouchers or equivalent have no place in the conversation until all education mandates are fully funded. It is not conservative to give a \$10,000 for 1 or \$20,000 for 2 student voucher when only \$4000 is collected in ISD taxes. This doesn't make fiscal sense.

---

Garrett Tatum  
Self/Baker  
San Antonio, TX

I strongly oppose educational savings accounts. This would defund our public schools, which need more funding, not less. These types of programs, failed the people of Arizona who tried something similar. So much of the funds went to families who were sending their kids to private school anyway. These private schools are not held to standards for transparency and success like public schools. They can choose their students to handpick who is best for them, instead of allowing all kids equitable opportunities they deserve. Instead of giving up on our schools like this, please use the funds to instead in improving them. Please do NOT move this forward.

---

Noe Gutierrez  
Self  
Round Rock, TX

Arizona's ESA program is the oldest in the country, having been around since 2011. Initially offered to a limited demographic, it was expanded over the years to include more and more student populations, and was finally made universal in 2022. How has it fared?

While public education enrollment in Arizona continued to see a steady increase through 2019 (1.07 to 1.15 million), charter school enrollment accounted for a greater and greater share, from about 11.6% to 18%. During this same period, recorded private school enrollment experienced a barely perceptible growth, remaining at about 4% of all enrolled students in the state. By 2022 the number was up to about 85,000 and has begun markedly growing.

From 2020 onwards, public school enrollment began dropping significantly as the nation became divided during the politicization of the Covid pandemic and the amplification of the "culture wars". Certain very wealthy and powerful individuals began moving to exploit this divide, widen it further, and advocate for private (religious based) schools and the financial tools to incentivize parents - vouchers and ESA's. They accelerated their nationwide effort to funnel millions upon millions of dollars into the privatization efforts.

By 2022 Arizona teacher salaries and graduation rates were ranked 49th in the country. The previous four annual academic evaluations showed students gradually doing WORSE after switching to private schools, and overall educational quality was ranked dead last. Private schools are increasingly being reported as exclusionary, rejecting students and families who don't fit in with what the administrators deem acceptable, essentially creating segregated schools. Further, the final expansion of ESA's to a universal program has ended up costing Arizona about ten times what was originally estimated, devastating the state budget and forcing cuts in other state programs to try to make up the differences. And (as planned?), school districts have had to begin closing schools due to increasing rates of student population and funding declines. The Paradise Valley Unified School District, for example, with not even 28,000 students enrolled, has had to close two elementary and one middle school this year. This is consistent with statewide data showing the K-3 grade cohort having peaked in 2014 at about 345,000 students and dropping ever since to about 310,000 today.

Legislators MUST put public good over their own. The privatization of the education system was NEVER the desire of the majority of parents, or even a large minority. It was the desire of extraordinarily wealthy individuals and families who wished to convert the American public education system into a vehicle for the conversion of students, and by extension the country, to THEIR own personal ideologies. This is supposed to be a nation where we the people get to decide through representation what we want, not for radical religious plutocrats to make those decisions for us.

---

Zelda Freeman

Self

GRAND PRAIRIE, TX

I am opposed to spending public funds on private school vouchers. The legislature must first provide adequate funding for public schools. 65% of current educators are considering leaving the profession. They are underpaid and overworked. 2019 was the last time the state increased funding for our public schools. Federal COVID aid is ending. Inflation is rampant l.it's time for the state to step up. The legislature is disregarding rural school districts. There are no private schools in most rural districts. What will be the oversight of how private schools are educating the students? Will private schools students have to take a state mandated tested? Will the state oversee how funds are spent? Our state is growing it is not the time to spend less on our public schools. The pandemic caused many children to fall behind now is not the time to spend less on public education. I am strongly against using public money for private school vouchers.

---

Shinara Morrison

Self

Port Arthur, TX

Hello

I am commenting today as voice for our future.. My child and even yours. A voice to ask you to support this Educational opportunity.. our 3 year journey through the Texas education system has not been an easy one. From being bullied from students and teachers to feeling as if no one understands that you learn in a different way. Everything is bigger in Texas right? So why can't our children's educational opportunities be? Every child deserves the chance to be the best version of an education despite race, religion or status whether they have challenges both educational or social .. they should have a choice. I have no agenda or political campaign that I am here to push.. I am just a mother who wants more of an educational opportunity for my child so that he can began to love learning again.

---

Jonnice Berns

Self

Dallas, TX

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators.  
Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students.  
Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5,000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9,000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents.

---

Casey Neal

Self

Austin, TX

How would vouchers help the families of children with disabilities or a minor disciplinary problem who have not been able to get accepted into private schools?

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Brian Hermann, Dr.  
Self, Faculty  
San Antonio, TX

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---

Nikki Nix, Dr.  
Self  
Godley, TX

Please release funds for public education and teacher pay raises. The basic allotment has not increased since 2019. We all know how inflation has impacted our personal budgets but the same happens for school budgets. Without funding increases that match inflation, schools are doing with less and students are suffering. Support public education, fund our schools appropriately and raise teacher pay!

---

Kristi Michener  
Self/Retired Educator  
Austin, TX

We should be fully and adequately funding our public schools in Texas-- not considering ways to pull even more funds from them in the form of vouchers. Our democracy's future hinges on the provision of a strong education provided to all students. In this great and diverse state, we need to be certain that we provide our public schools with adequate funds to compete at the national level. Currently, that means we have a shortfall of about \$5000 per pupil (and fall miserably below average in teacher pay)! By instituting vouchers, this shortfall will increase... leaving many students without the education they deserve! In addition, I am totally opposed to the idea of providing support to private schools who are not held accountable for accepting and educating all kinds of students with all kinds of abilities. In my 38 years as an educator, I was very proud of the education our public schools provided, and I'm convinced that this can continue to be the case with adequate state funding!

---

Estrellita Kidd  
Self  
Belton, TX

Texas public schools are already underfunded. They receive more than \$5,000 less per child than the national average, and Texas teachers are paid more than \$9,000 less on average than their counterparts in other states

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Jacy Grannis  
Self - software engineer  
Houston, TX

Please do not continue to try to push this forward. It will be to the great detriment of education in our state if we allow any money to be pulled from public education. Arizona provides a great example of how financially irresponsible this is. Greg Abbott is pushing this not for the betterment of Texas or Texas children, but to advance his own political career and agenda. Those goals are not the same, and they are not at all compatible on this issue. Texans deserve a strong, well funded public school system and this will severely damage that. Please stop this ideological nonsense that isn't align with students' needs or Texans' interests.

---

Maritza Wallace  
Self - Teacher  
Schertz, TX

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---

Stephanie Russell  
Self/Teacher/Parent  
Pflugerville, TX

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---

Sarah Southward  
Self and Child who uses service  
Garland, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,  
I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

---

Jeri Matthys  
Jeri Matthys  
LEXINGTON, TX

The State of Texas spent 11.5 Billion on operation Lone Star. If they spent half that much on improving our Public Schools people would not need Educational Savings Accounts. I live in Lee County where the community is centered on our Public Schools. Just because Tim Dunn and Greg Abbott want to live in a Theocracy does not mean we all want that. 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. Let's spend money on helping the poor with Healthcare, not helping rich people send their kids to private schools. Oh yeah this is Texas, let's make SURE we don't help the poor! That is the Christian thing to do. If Public Schools start teaching Sunday school lessons, THEN THE CHURCHES SHOULD START PAYING SCHOOL TAX AND PROPERTY TAX!!!!

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Juli Miller  
Self  
Freeport, TX

Vouchers are terrible and should not be a part of public education. States that have had vouchers have had terrible outcomes. Vouchers allow for our special needs students to be excluded and that is not acceptable. The premise of public education is to give everyone a quality education which vouchers do not do. Vouchers hurt students, teachers and communities.

---

Carol Berglund  
Self/sales  
Katy, TX

No vouchers! Public schools provide space for ALL children, removing funds because parents choose to reject that space is not ok. If public funds go to private schools, private schools should have to implement STAAR and accept a predetermined percentage of SPED kids. NO VOUCHERS!!

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MARY ANN REUTER  
SELF (teacher, retired)  
KATY, TX

I am opposed to using public tax dollars on vouchers to private schools. As a retired public school teacher of over 40 years, I have watched our Texas public schools become more and more underfunded, especially when compared to the national average for school funding. Increasing funding for vouchers is a MISGUIDED effort to improve the quality of education our children receive! Such funding for vouchers - if passed - will see a drastic DECREASE in public school funding in a matter of years. INCREASED PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING should be our priority in this state! I am a staunch Republican but INCREASED PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING is a NON-PARTISAN issue.

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Brady McCarley  
Self Public High School Teacher  
Florence, TX

It is imperative that public schools be fully funded, as constitutionally required. It is also necessary to start with the majority of students in Texas, and not the minority. Any bill that supports educational vouchers, or moving tax payer dollars to fund private schools, should be dismissed completely.

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Jeff Klose, Agriculture Science Teacher  
Self  
Canyon, TX

I implore the committee to not make any recommendation that direct public funds away from public schools UNLESS the schools utilizing those funds fall under all the same guidelines as public schools, including but not limited to:

Any school receiving public funds must:

1. Accept all students regardless of ability at the rate agreed upon by the state.
  2. Provide the same opportunities for all students educationally, co-curricular, and extracurricular as the closest public school.
  3. Provide meals in the same way as the closest public school including number of meals, price of meals and adhere to all free and reduced lunch policies.
  4. Provide all student supports (SPED, IEP, Resources, etc) as the closest public school.
  5. Require teachers and administrators be credentialed and compensated in the same way as public schools.
  6. All schools receiving public funds should be subject to the same financial restrictions and audits as a public school.
  7. Are subject to open records requests in the same way as public schools.
-

Tracey Cortez  
Self  
Austin, TX

I am writing to urge you to prioritize increased funding for Texas public schools and to reconsider the expansion of educational savings accounts (ESAs). As a concerned citizen, educator, and advocate for equitable education, I believe that bolstering public school funding is crucial for the well-being of our students and the future of our state.

#### Need for Increased Public School Funding

Public schools are the cornerstone of Texas education, serving the majority of students across diverse communities. Unfortunately, many of these schools are underfunded and struggling to meet students' needs. Increased funding is essential for several reasons:

**Teacher Support:** Adequate funding would allow for competitive salaries and professional development, helping to retain talented educators and improve student outcomes. Many teachers leave the profession due to inadequate pay and support, which impacts classroom stability and student learning.

**Classroom Resources:** Many public schools lack essential resources, such as up-to-date textbooks, technology, and adequate facilities. Increased funding would ensure that all students have access to the tools necessary for a quality education.

**Support Services:** Public schools provide crucial services, including counseling and special education. Additional funding would expand these services and ensure every student receives the support they need to succeed academically and personally.

**Equity:** Investing in public schools helps address disparities between affluent and under-resourced areas, ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, has access to high-quality education.

#### Concerns About Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs)

While ESAs are intended to offer educational choices, they often benefit a small, already privileged segment of the population and do not address the needs of the majority:

**Limited Impact:** ESAs mainly aid families who can navigate private schooling or homeschooling. They do not assist families in underserved communities who need help the most, leaving them without additional support.

**Resource Drain:** ESAs divert funds from public schools, potentially worsening resource shortages and diminishing the quality of education for the majority of students who rely on public schools.

**Equity Issues:** By favoring those who can afford supplemental educational options, ESAs can deepen existing disparities, leaving behind students who need more support and widening the achievement gap.

**Accountability:** Public schools are subject to strict accountability standards and state regulations. In contrast, private schools and other ESA options often lack similar oversight, affecting the quality of education provided.

In summary, while the intention behind ESAs is to provide choice, they do not address the critical need for enhanced funding in public schools. Investing in public education will ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed.

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Nathan Hindman  
Self/Ag Science Teacher  
Hawley, TX

I want funding for public schools as constitutionally required. Texas needs to start with the majority of students and not the minority. Texas ranks 42nd in the nation in per-student spending, trailing the national average by over \$4,000 per student. You have the opportunity to use funds wisely and financially support our constitutionally guaranteed public education institutions by increasing funding to meet the national standard. Now is the time to serve the majority of your constituents and their families.

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Erica McMurray  
Self, teacher  
Saint Hedwig, TX

Please keep public school money in public schools. Provide for the majority of Texas students, not the minority. Public education saves lives everyday.

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Natalie Neugent  
self, retired music teacher  
HURST, TX

I oppose vouchers for private schools. Public education in Texas should be fully funded!

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Travis Lange  
Self, Ag Teacher  
San Angelo, TX

I feel that the use of Educational Saving Accounts would not be beneficial to the majority of student in Texas, and in fact may be detrimental to them. The Legislature of Texas is constitutionally required to provide funding for public education in the state and creating ESAs that the state would provide money for would pull funding from public schools across the state. The creation of these ESAs would benefit only a small minority of students across the state while being detrimental to a vast majority of students. It is therefore my opinion that the State of Texas should not consider Educational Saving Accounts.

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James Marcuse, Mr.  
Ag-Science Teachers Association of Texas. / Self  
Hutto, TX

Education should be public and free. Our tax money goes to public education that is regulated by state agencies. It should not go to private education that is not upheld by the same standards! Why not bolster public education instead of always trying to take a way from it and add more hurdles?

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Cassie Webb  
Self  
Allen, TX

In consideration of all the education bills passed in the previous 5 years, why are we regulating public schools and not funding them, while proposing to fund private schools with no regulations? Is this type of fiscal behavior in line with conservative principles? My choice for my children has always been and will be our local public school district that we love. There has been no inflation correction in the funding formula. Our district is small and I feel empowered by that as a parent — it's easy to know everyone, get involved, and hold everyone accountable. These schools fall first. With budget deficits gutting these districts that have no economy of scale to mitigate losses, it's these small conservative districts that are hurting the most. We cannot raise enough foundation money to keep our beloved teachers from moving away to higher paying districts or from getting laid off. Texas Lege, what would you do if you loved your local school, moved your family across the state to attend there, just to see it implode from state neglect?

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Marybeth Wilkerson  
sepf  
Lucas, TX

Please make public school funding a priority. Public schools in Texas are closing and Texas school rankings are too low.

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Kasey Havens  
Self  
Lucas, TX

Educational opportunity? Give public schools back the money their tax payers paid for their school districts and you will be blown away at the opportunities kids in public schools can get! Discuss, fix and fund public schools now! One more district close to you was on the news yesterday discussing the crippling the State of Texas and elected officials like you have placed on public schools, the teachers and the students. Stop now and do what is right by all kids including those in public schools!

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Gary Briers  
Self--university professor/teacher educator and beef cattle producer  
College Station, TX

I strongly believe that public funds/taxpayer dollars should be used to fully fund our public schools and not be available to fund private schools. Education of our youth is a public good. Public education is available for all students, and local school boards, the state (Texas Education Agency), and federal oversight ensures that all students have opportunities to learn--without public funds going for private gain. If public education is fully funded, educational opportunities for all students will increase. Bottom line is that I do not support education savings accounts--taxpayer monies that can be used to fund private educational endeavors. Examination of the use in other states of public funds for private schools will show that the results are not positive. Education savings accounts will further exacerbate and contribute to a "have versus have not" situation. Disadvantaged children, children of poverty, many racial and ethnic minority students, rural students, and poor families will suffer from this plan as they will not be able to navigate the education savings account language and use of those accounts. These accounts will result in further demise of public schools. Funding will diminish for public schools.

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Odulia Ashby  
Self / U.S. Air Force Retired  
Cibolo, TX

As a life-long Texan I'm quite disappointed in the Texas School system's degradation as funding continues to be cut for a fully functioning and thriving public school system which accepts all students. Implementing school vouchers will not help public schools thrive. With a multitude of schools across Texas starting the school year in a deficit, I'm quite baffled that law makers still think funding private/religious/charter schools will be a way to sustain public education.

School choice, vouchers, ESAs fund education systems that can discriminate without accountability. My daughter's school district is under pressure as more charter schools are being built around us. We even tried a charter school for one year and the environment is different, the structure is different and my daughter was just not comfortable there with an uncertified teacher. We moved back to public school the following year.

As a former Parent Teacher Club President, I know that when the community invests more money into a school, not only do the teacher, students and staff thrive, the environment itself changes without all the pressure to do more with less. Parent Teacher Clubs supplementing state funded schools should not be the norm, public schools should be funded fully annually along with teacher's salaries, raises and retirements. This proposed bill will only restrict teaching freedoms, limit students learning and threaten teacher's who have a passion for teaching.

Our school systems will continue to break if you adopt this bribe bill. Save our public school system by fully funding all public schools across Texas. Vote no on this bill!

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Lucero Cazares  
Self  
Rowlett, TX

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators. Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students. Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5,000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9,000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents.

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Aubrey Stock  
Lovejoy ISD  
Allen, TX

Members of the House Public Education Committee, I am a parent of three children currently attending public school here in Lovejoy ISD. I am extremely disappointed with the fact that this committee would prioritize the discussion of an ESA program over the current public education funding crisis. Why is it completely appropriate to tie vouchers and public school funding together during the legislative session but now, it is fine to separate the two issues, and in fact, COMPLETELY DISREGARD FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION, for this hearing? Funding public schools should be prioritized over any discussion of an ESA program. FULLY FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS. I am also increasingly concerned with the mounting evidence that shows that implementing an ESA program is not fiscally responsible. I hope this committee will thoroughly review the evidence showing that other states' budgeted costs of this potential program were GROSSLY inaccurate and are now putting important state interests, i.e., essential maintenance initiatives, infrastructure projects, etc., at risk. I hope this committee will seriously consider the weight of their discussion and recommendations today and not let political loyalties or agendas sway their input. My children and the other \$5 million students and our dedicated teachers NEED your support and attention. Make funding public education part of the conversation today. Make it the focus. FULLY FUND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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Holly McNary  
Self  
Argyle, TX

Commenting on behalf of Argyle ISD in support of public education funding!!!

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Velma Ybarra  
Texas HOPE Joey Cardenas President; Texas LULAC Chapter 4383; self --retired educator  
Del Rio, Texas, TX

As an education leader for over 40 years, I declare strong opposition to any legislative bill that would allow for the direction of public money for school vouchers. We are once again in a critical situation whereby public monies could be wrongfully directed to support private education that does not safeguard the needs of all children and that will drain much needed money in our public schools. Vouchers will continue to drain the concept of public education for all by scavenging out public's money when used to direct it to charter, public or private schools that accept vouchers. That public money has always belonged to public schools until recent years that it has been wrongly redirected to private schools. High poverty levels make schooling so much more challenging in order to meet all and special needs of students. You are literally attacking children by depriving their schools of funds that are used to meet serious and difficult needs while in the classroom! Supporting vouchers is devastating services: this is about children's needs!! We oppose vouchers in every sense of the word!!

We are and should be in schooling together to meet the same needs. Vouchers simply minimize the quality of services for public school students. Private schooling should be funded only via private funds from those parents who enroll their children there, not by redirecting money that would be available if they stay within our public school system.

Let us all work together to avoid this separation of families who take different stands on support of vouchers funded by our public school monies. Texas: we cannot continue to be so separated on this issue. Let us come together for the good and well being of all children!

Submitted by Velma Vela Ybarra of Texas HOPE and Texas LULAC 8/12/24

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Amy Duncan  
Self  
Copperas Cove, TX

In the great state of Texas we already have school choice.

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Katy Townley  
Self; IT Sales  
Lubbock, TX

It is absolutely ludicrous to allow a few wealthy Texans to exert their power and change school funding in such a negative way. A voucher system equates to stealing from our public schools. Those most impacted will be special need programs and children. Using tax payer money to pay for private school and not requiring those schools to follow state and federal standards is not helpful in any way. Education is the #1 factor to impact and reverse the cycle of poverty, illiteracy, and crime. Saying vouchers increases access to education, is a euphemism and a lie. Saying that a "few thousand dollars" from a school has little impact, means that the legislators aren't looking at the full math or the full impact. Allowing private schools to use public funds while also allowing them to use discriminatory measures for acceptance, is absolutely unacceptable and sets us back decades! Look at states like Arizona where the impact has been detrimental and very little positive has been seen. PLEASE do not pass vouchers. The constituents have made their opinions known, yet our "public servants" aren't listening.

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Jessie Koerner  
Lovejoy ISD/self  
Allen, TX

The state of Texas cannot afford to allocate funds to voucher programs. Our public schools and educators need these funds desperately. We live in one of the top-performing school districts in the state, but due to a lack of funding we are unable to keep teachers employed (they leave our district for others that are able to pay more), we have to charge families for bus services (\$900 per academic year), and for other activities and services that would normally be covered by our schools, and we've had to make cuts in our academic class periods - so students are no longer able to participate in all of the classes they previously enjoyed. The state has the funds to solve this problem, and they need to be directed to the institutions that need them. Texas tax payers should NOT be funding private schools. The right to an education is foundational to our rights as American citizens and the way the state has handled the funds set aside for this purpose is irresponsible and appalling. It is time to put the money back where it belongs.

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John Singel, Father of 6th grader in Public school  
Self  
Lucas, TX

The TX house is spending more time debating Vochers while public education funding is being held hostage. The basic allotment sits at the 2019 level while inflation has reduced spending power by 20%. Public school districts are being starved of funds to ESA's. Shameful behavior by the legislators.

How about debating public school funding and ESA's separately?

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Molly Thornberg  
Self  
Lucas, TX

Keep tax money in public education. Creating opportunity for ESAs is not helping the greater good, only a select handful to fund education that isn't available to everyone. Keep tax dollars in supporting public schools. They have suffered long enough at the expense of private school lobbying. Enough is enough, all Texas public education students and teachers deserve better.

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Josh Stapleton  
Self  
DETROIT, TX

I feel that funding for public schools is constitutionally required and that we need to start with the majority of students in Texas and not the minority. I think that educational savings accounts is not the answer. This will siphon funds away from public school systems making it even harder to operate than it already is. Improving public education should be the priority. A better option would be to give teachers a much needed pay raise to make being a public educator a more desirable job in this state. Teachers are some of the most valuable influences in a child's life but yet it seems as though they are not appreciated at the state level.

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Kayla Bingham  
Homeschool parent  
Allen, TX

Taxpayer-funded voucher programs essentially create a new welfare program, redistributing funds, creating administrative overhead, and shifting control away from parents and towards bureaucrats.

- We are concerned that voucher programs could jeopardize the unique freedoms currently enjoyed by homeschoolers in Texas. We believe that families should have the autonomy to educate their children according to their own values and beliefs, without government interference.
- Even though many Texas “school choice” advocates say that homeschoolers will “only” be subject to accountability measures – such as accreditation or standardized testing – if they opt into the ESA program, those are still government regulations that take autonomy away from families. We know that government programs never reduce in size or scope, and homeschoolers in other ESA states are already having to fight to differentiate themselves from those who do take the government money. Texas is unique in their current homeschooling freedoms, and we are not willing to risk those by acquiescing in the name of “accountability.” Thus far, “school choice” proposals in Texas have not been about freedom of education choices, but about funding of educational choices.
- We encourage the Texas legislature to explore alternatives to ESAs, such as tax exemptions that allow families to use their own money to choose the educational options that best suit their needs.

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Melissa Sanders  
Self  
Hewitt, TX

NO TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS!! The public tax \$\$\$ need to stay in PUBLIC SCHOOLS!!! Unfair to have TAX \$ go to private schools. My special needs son and others like him NEED more resources in public schools.

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Vannie Monroe, Mrs.  
Self/ Retired Teacher  
Katy, TX

I oppose school vouchers because they divert essential funding away from public schools, undermining the quality of education for all students and disproportionately benefiting those who can already afford private education. The introduction of school vouchers can lead to a decline in the quality of public education by reducing funding, failing to improve academic outcomes, and increasing inequities among students. Please vote "no" to school vouchers.

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Orpha Berry  
My and family  
Midland, TX

How does this committee and legislation plan to protect homeschoolers and brick and mortar private schools from government interference via school choice vouchers? Texas homeschoolers have the utmost freedom and autonomy compared to other states. What is the plan to keep that in untouchable by the government? Why haven't there been other alternatives explored when it comes school vouchers such as a tax reform or tax exemptions?

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Marla Welch  
Self  
Houston, TX

How can the government who controls public education want to establish and fund private education? This is ludicrous. Instead, invest the money in public education and make it better?

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators.

Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students.

Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5,000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9,000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents.

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Rachelle Edwards  
Self  
Lucas, TX

I have three school aged children attending public school in a small north Texas district. I am extremely concerned about the effect an ESA/voucher program would have on our local schools. Texas schools are notoriously underfunded, and moving even more money away from them will certainly cause issues with things like teacher retention, safety, facility updates, and educational outcomes. I strongly oppose ESA programs and would ask the legislature spend time ensuring that our schools are fully funded and teachers are paid the kind of wages that encourage their continued investment in our communities. Texas is a large state with a lot of money, the way we are leaving students behind much of the country in education is a disgrace. Please focus on investing in the public education of all Texas children and stop attempting to spread a meager budget even thinner to benefit private entities.

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Gisele Schaefer  
Self          Renewal Specialist  
Round Rock, TX

I am not really in support of these types of accounts but if you can guarantee that the money given to parents would not take money from our public schools and that you are not using my tax dollars that I might support this, I also feel that whatever you might determine is the amount you would be giving for these types of accounts should match the dollar amount you allocate for each student in public schools. For example if you give \$8000 to attend a private school then the allocate for the public schools should be \$8000 per student as my thought is that you are saying that is what it takes to educate a student. I also am VERY upset that the money that is being taken from districts in the form of recapture is not being spent on Public Education. Recapture needs to stop and a better way to address school funding is for the state to guarantee allocations for each student based on the Cost of living in each of the districts. The TX Constitution states it is the state's responsibility to provide for a free Public Education for all students and also these types of accounts are technically not valid with our present Constitution. It is a shame that Texas is number 2 in GDP of all of the states but somewhere in the ranking of 40's in what we spend on education. This is not something to be proud of and it should be addressed as our students and teachers are paying the price for the state not taking care of the education system in this state. I would support vouchers/ESA's if and only if the same amount of dollars provide for the ESA's is what is given to districts for each of their students and also ESA's should be income driven not for people already in private schools.

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Kasey Naylor  
Self  
Telephone, TX

Giving to private schools will not help the students who need it the most. This is just going to help the students that need it the least. If you look at states like Arizona, this is not working for their state and continues to not work. As a public school teacher in a rural school district of less than 550 students total, I see all walks of life walk through my classroom doors and some need more help than others. I urge you to think about the over 5.4 million students across Texas that will be impacted by the Educational Savings Account in a negative way and rural schools that will have an enormous negative impact as well. ESA's will weaken students with disabilities rights, cut into already inadequate budgets (my small district is already having to make a \$450,000 budget deficient this year), and hurt an approximate than 50% of public schools as they are housed in rural school districts in Texas. Funding for public schools should be constitutionally required and we need to start with the majority of students in Texas and not the minority. This the future of our great state and nation is being tampered with and being held hostage. Please consider doing away with the Educational Savings Account in its entirety not just because it's for the future but because it is the right thing to do.

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Chris Cleveland  
Self-teacher/agricultural producer  
Plains, TX

We want funding for public schools as constitutionally required and that we need to start with the majority of students in Texas and not the minority. ESAs/vouchers are not the answer, do your job! These vouchers are not the solution, look to the states that have done this...what has happened?! Tuition has increased and the vast majority of students using the vouchers were already going to private schools. Fund public education appropriately!

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Ronnie Mushinski, Mr  
Self - Ag Science Teacher 31 years  
Richmond, TX

I want funding for public school as constitutionally required, focus needs to be put on the majority NOT the minority

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Robert Washington  
Public Education  
Yoakum, TX

Public school students, parents, and teachers want funding for public schools as constitutionally required and that we need to start with the majority of students in Texas and not the minority. All families in the state of Texas have a choice to send their children to any public, private or charter school. But, all public tax dollars should be provided in equally among public education districts. The per child funding has not been raised since 2019. It is past time to increase the per child allotment to public school districts. Private schools are funded by parents who can afford to pay tuition to those schools. Public tax dollars are not meant to be spent on private education. Please do the right thing and provide adequate funding for our public school children.

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Aaron Wilson  
ATAT - Agriculture Science Teachers  
EL CAMPO, TX

Funding for public schools is constitutionally required and does not need to continue to be held to try to push or persuade votes for one side or the other. Holding this necessary funds only hurt Texas schools, Texas students and teachers and will only set us all back more in the long run. We need to start with the majority of students in Texas and not the minority. Its time the squeaky wheel always gets the grease and we do the necessary required maintenance to keep what is working running and not let it get to the point it breaks. That means fund public schools like you should be before our education system turns into a joke and nothing more than a business ponzi scheme.

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Caitlin Landry  
Texans for Homeschool Freedom  
Midland, TX

Thank you for taking the time to read public comments from your constituents/the citizens of Texas. As a homeschooler, and as a conservative, I am very concerned about the push for "school choice." This is not actually about giving more choices; it is about FUNDING. We, in the private education sector, do not want to be subsidized by the government. Government programs have a terrible track record. Why would we want to expand that over the government-free, private educations we've carefully curated for our children? If you look at other states that have recently started "school choice programs" you can see that it is not all that it's cracked up to be. North Carolina is dealing with increases in private school tuition as a direct result of school choice policy being implemented. We've seen this in other states as well. It's an economic reality that when the government floods a market with money, there will be inflation. Arizona and Oklahoma are dealing with budget issues now, as a direct result of 'universal school choice.' Arizona's ESA bill started out free of strings. But we all know that intent of legislation and the way it actually plays out in reality are two very different things. They are now implementing more accountability strings and regulations, much to the shock and chagrin of the families who utilize it and were promised 'no strings.' Sound familiar? Maine parochial schools are realizing that they have to bend a knee to LGBTQ policies if they want to get school choice funds. The fact that what the government funds, the government runs is not a new concept or reality. I am baffled at why the Republicans who claim to want limited government and personal responsibility are looking to expand the welfare state. To the Republicans on the committee, I would like to ask you: Are you for Universal Basic Income? Are you for Universal Healthcare? Are you for student loan forgiveness? Were you for giving childcare facilities a tax break? I would wager that your answer to most, if not all of these, is "No." So what is so special about "school choice" that you think it's the exception to the government program rule? It will absolutely create more entitlement, and bring currently free schools and homeschoolers under the government umbrella. Texas is not immune to that. We are not special in that. Please. We beg of you to think about the REAL consequences of this. It will not "save kids from woke schools." It will not "create more competition for the public schools so they improve." Don't let the school choice lobby (Corey DeAngelis, et al.) gaslight you to not see the realities in the other states that have implemented this. Don't let their junk reports/surveys lie to you and tell you that school choice is helping states like Florida. Florida is NOT actually #1 in public education like they claim, and families there have stricter homeschool laws and hoops they have to jump through. Not in my Texas. Do the right thing. Thank you.

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Victoria Worlow  
Self tutor  
Spring, TX

I understand vouchers are a priority for the governor. I hope your committee will also be discussing teacher pay. Teacher pay must be raised in Texas and the schools must be better funded. Education is the pathway out of poverty. If the state won't fund education, Texas will fall further and further behind other states. We need to increase teacher base pay to \$70,000+. Teachers are having to work 3 to 4 jobs just to pay their bills. Teaching requires college degrees. Teachers should be able to make enough money to take care of their families. Also put Teachers back on the state employee insurance that is a quality insurance product. The insurance you allow for Teachers and their families is subpar. Do better.

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Lori Rapp, Superintendent  
Lewisville ISD  
Lewisville, TX

There is no consistent definition of high quality that is common between public, private, and homeschool educational options. Therefore comparisons cannot be made between these types of educational opportunities to determine that one is higher quality than another. How will this committee determine what educational choice constitutes “high quality” schooling? It is important that all rules and laws passed by the Texas Legislature for 88 sessions be required to apply to those receiving money from an educational choice program. If the legislature determines that these laws and rules should not be followed, then the same freedom for parents from these laws needs to be extended to public schools. Transparency and accountability of tax-payer dollars that are used to provide educational choice should be equal to what is expected of public schools. Research gathered from Raise Your Hand Texas indicated: Cheng & Peterson (2020) found an overall insignificant impact of voucher programs on students’ college enrollment and degree attainment; however, when disaggregating results by student socioeconomic status, race or ethnicity, and mothers’ educational level, they found disparate results indicating that, contrary to what voucher proponents claim, voucher programs did not help students who were in most need of support. Additionally, Jabbar et al. (2015) found that “effects of school vouchers on student outcomes generally are small or insignificant, and do not have the ability to close the racial achievement gap or generate large gains in student outcomes. In addition, even voucher programs that target low-income families or those attending failing schools have serious access and attrition challenges, calling into question the equity claims of voucher proponents. We conclude that the research on voucher effectiveness shows mixed results—some studies show small positive effects on student achievement, and some show no effects. Overall these results do not align with the strong claims of voucher proponents. In addition, the take-up and attrition patterns of voucher recipients suggest that such policies might not benefit the most disadvantaged students.” It is also important to consider how educational choice programs could increase student mobility from one provider to another. Increased student mobility has been shown to have negative effects on student achievement. The public schools of Texas are designed to create a future workforce by providing education to every child regardless of background, economics, or circumstances. It is time to fully fund public education by raising the Basic Allotment. How will legislators ensure that funds spent on choices that are not Texas public schools are operated by Texans and for Texans and that taxpayers dollars do not fund other state educational programs or private school entities outside of Texas? Texas public schools are the largest employer for the majority of counties in Texas and benefit Texas.

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Valerina Zarate  
Self  
Midland, TX

Thank you for taking the time to read public comments from your constituents/the citizens of Texas. As a homeschooler, and as a conservative, I am very concerned about the push for "school choice." This is not actually about giving more choices; it is about FUNDING. We, in the private education sector, do not want to be subsidized by the government. Government programs have a terrible track record. Why would we want to expand that over the government-free, private educations we've carefully curated for our children? If you look at other states that have recently started "school choice programs" you can see that it is not all that it's cracked up to be. North Carolina is dealing with increases in private school tuition as a direct result of school choice policy being implemented. We've seen this in other states as well. It's an economic reality that when the government floods a market with money, there will be inflation. Arizona and Oklahoma are dealing with budget issues now, as a direct result of 'universal school choice.' Arizona's ESA bill started out free of strings. But we all know that intent of legislation and the way it actually plays out in reality are two very different things. They are now implementing more accountability strings and regulations, much to the shock and chagrin of the families who utilize it and were promised 'no strings.' Sound familiar? Maine parochial schools are realizing that they have to bend a knee to LGBTQ policies if they want to get school choice funds. The fact that what the government funds, the government runs is not a new concept or reality. I am baffled at why the Republicans who claim to want limited government and personal responsibility are looking to expand the welfare state. To the Republicans on the committee, I would like to ask you: Are you for Universal Basic Income? Are you for Universal Healthcare? Are you for student loan forgiveness? Were you for giving childcare facilities a tax break? I would wager that your answer to most, if not all of these, is "No." So what is so special about "school choice" that you think it's the exception to the government program rule? It will absolutely create more entitlement, and bring currently free schools and homeschoolers under the government umbrella. Texas is not immune to that. We are not special in that. Please. We beg of you to think about the REAL consequences of this. It will not "save kids from woke schools." It will not "create more competition for the public schools so they improve." Don't let the school choice lobby (Corey DeAngelis, et al.) gaslight you to not see the realities in the other states that have implemented this. Don't let their junk reports/surveys lie to you and tell you that school choice is helping states like Florida. Florida is NOT actually #1 in public education like they claim, and families there have stricter homeschool laws and hoops they have to jump through. Not in my Texas. Do the right thing. Thank you

---

Anne Perry, Dr.  
self/retired  
Franklin, TX

Texas public schools are already disgracefully underfunded. They receive more than \$5,000 less per child than the national average, and Texas teachers are paid more than \$9,000 less on average than their counterparts in other states, even with state funding available through congressional action.

Vouchers, if enacted, would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. And the ultimate losers will be millions of Texas students.

I firmly believe that this would bring about a segregation of rich/poor and proliferation of for-profit, but poorly-planned, inadequate "educational" facilities with below-standard staffing.

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Debra Zamora  
Self, retired  
Houston, TX

From the information made public so far, the state of Texas cannot afford "educational opportunity" in the form of school vouchers. CPAs in this state should be sounding alarms. The programs in Arizona and Iowa are plagued with problems. Why create a big problem here?

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Mary Keller  
Self  
Dallas, TX

I am very much opposed to vouchers in public schools. Education is supposed to be provided as a public good for ALL children. Vouchers divert money from public schools to help fund private schools. Texas already has a school funding problem, and vouchers would remove funding from already under-funded schools (especially those in rural areas). Private schools can turn students away or kick them out, so they can discriminate. Public schools are required to educate ALL students. Tax money from all citizens should not be used to support any religion, and private schools can teach whatever religion they choose. This is a dangerous threat to our founders' insistence on separation of church and state. For these and many other reasons, I, as well as many members of my church, Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, strongly oppose vouchers in Texas.

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Albert Zarate  
Self  
MIDLAND, TX

Thank you for taking the time to read public comments from your constituents/the citizens of Texas. As a homeschooler, and as a conservative, I am very concerned about the push for "school choice." This is not actually about giving more choices; it is about FUNDING. We, in the private education sector, do not want to be subsidized by the government. Government programs have a terrible track record. Why would we want to expand that over the government-free, private educations we've carefully curated for our children? If you look at other states that have recently started "school choice programs" you can see that it is not all that it's cracked up to be. North Carolina is dealing with increases in private school tuition as a direct result of school choice policy being implemented. We've seen this in other states as well. It's an economic reality that when the government floods a market with money, there will be inflation. Arizona and Oklahoma are dealing with budget issues now, as a direct result of 'universal school choice.' Arizona's ESA bill started out free of strings. But we all know that intent of legislation and the way it actually plays out in reality are two very different things. They are now implementing more accountability strings and regulations, much to the shock and chagrin of the families who utilize it and were promised 'no strings.' Sound familiar? Maine parochial schools are realizing that they have to bend a knee to LGBTQ policies if they want to get school choice funds. The fact that what the government funds, the government runs is not a new concept or reality. I am baffled at why the Republicans who claim to want limited government and personal responsibility are looking to expand the welfare state. To the Republicans on the committee, I would like to ask you: Are you for Universal Basic Income? Are you for Universal Healthcare? Are you for student loan forgiveness? Were you for giving childcare facilities a tax break? I would wager that your answer to most, if not all of these, is "No." So what is so special about "school choice" that you think it's the exception to the government program rule? It will absolutely create more entitlement, and bring currently free schools and homeschoolers under the government umbrella. Texas is not immune to that. We are not special in that. Please. We beg of you to think about the REAL consequences of this. It will not "save kids from woke schools." It will not "create more competition for the public schools so they improve." Don't let the school choice lobby (Corey DeAngelis, et al.) gaslight you to not see the realities in the other states that have implemented this. Don't let their junk reports/surveys lie to you and tell you that school choice is helping states like Florida. Florida is NOT actually #1 in public education like they claim, and families there have stricter homeschool laws and hoops they have to jump through. Not in my Texas. Do the right thing. Thank you

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Rebecca Perry  
self, freelance writer and artist  
Milford, TX

Dear Members of the Committee on Public Education,

Thank you for allowing me to comment on the topic of educational opportunity. I am a longtime homeschooling mom, who has now graduated eight children. They have all been extremely successful in various institutions of higher learning and are now actively pursuing a wide variety of careers.

When the topic of education savings accounts has come up recently in the legislature, I have been leery of the possible negative consequences for home-educating families. My own family has benefited from the freedom to teach our children in the way we felt best. Regardless of any proposed ESA structure, I continue to believe that strings – such as curriculum alignment or standardized testing – imposed on some home educators is opening a door to increased regulation for all homeschoolers. Other states bear witness to this potential.

All that being said, it is the financial burden to every taxpayer that I would most like to address. The committee meeting notice mentions examining ESAs in other states. As I personally look at the reports from other states that have implemented voucher programs, I find numerous examples of financial red flags – skyrocketing costs in Ohio, an enormous budget shortfall in Arizona, and property tax increases in Wisconsin, as just a few examples of financial woes directly tied to ESA-type programs.

In short, the idea of vouchers or ESAs is not a conservative idea. Pursuing this path is fiscally irresponsible and will lead to an increase in government bureaucracy. I strongly encourage the committee to seek alternatives that do not include creating a whole new entangling layer of government.

We have educational freedom in Texas, but we need tax reform to help all families better serve their children. Tax exemptions that would allow families to use their own money to choose the educational options that best suit their needs seems a far better solution than creating a government program to administer their money back to them with government strings attached.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Perry

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Lidia Olguin

Self

Midland, TX

Thank you for taking the time to read public comments from your constituents/the citizens of Texas. As a homeschooler, and as a conservative, I am very concerned about the push for "school choice." This is not actually about giving more choices; it is about FUNDING. We, in the private education sector, do not want to be subsidized by the government. Government programs have a terrible track record. Why would we want to expand that over the government-free, private educations we've carefully curated for our children? If you look at other states that have recently started "school choice programs" you can see that it is not all that it's cracked up to be. North Carolina is dealing with increases in private school tuition as a direct result of school choice policy being implemented. We've seen this in other states as well. It's an economic reality that when the government floods a market with money, there will be inflation. Arizona and Oklahoma are dealing with budget issues now, as a direct result of 'universal school choice.' Arizona's ESA bill started out free of strings. But we all know that intent of legislation and the way it actually plays out in reality are two very different things. They are now implementing more accountability strings and regulations, much to the shock and chagrin of the families who utilize it and were promised 'no strings.' Sound familiar? Maine parochial schools are realizing that they have to bend a knee to LGBTQ policies if they want to get school choice funds. The fact that what the government funds, the government runs is not a new concept or reality. I am baffled at why the Republicans who claim to want limited government and personal responsibility are looking to expand the welfare state. To the Republicans on the committee, I would like to ask you: Are you for Universal Basic Income? Are you for Universal Healthcare? Are you for student loan forgiveness? Were you for giving childcare facilities a tax break? I would wager that your answer to most, if not all of these, is "No." So what is so special about "school choice" that you think it's the exception to the government program rule? It will absolutely create more entitlement, and bring currently free schools and homeschoolers under the government umbrella. Texas is not immune to that. We are not special in that. Please. We beg of you to think about the REAL consequences of this. It will not "save kids from woke schools." It will not "create more competition for the public schools so they improve." Don't let the school choice lobby (Corey DeAngelis, et al.) gaslight you to not see the realities in the other states that have implemented this. Don't let their junk reports/surveys lie to you and tell you that school choice is helping states like Florida. Florida is NOT actually #1 in public education like they claim, and families there have stricter homeschool laws and hoops they have to jump through. Not in my Texas. Do the right thing. Thank you

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Weldon Beard  
Texas Head Start Association  
Austin, TX

### Addressing Disparities in Early Childhood Education in Texas

Particular groups, including children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, African American and Latino families, Native American families, Migrant/Seasonal families, and rural-based families, are underrepresented in Texas Early Childhood Education (ECE) as it relates to additional funding and resources needed for services. To address these disparities, support from state and federal in the areas of funding, community involvement, and an inclusive early childhood education system is essential. Stakeholders have raised significant concerns about lengthy waiting lists, limited access to information about available services, language and cultural barriers, and the need to support kinship care and homeless families.

In response to these challenges, all stakeholders in Texas must partner to allocate resources to enhance community initiatives in early childhood services, bolster the skills and capacities of the existing staff, and unify communities and regional programs through a seamless collaborative state model for advocacy, community outreach, coaching, mentoring, and training.

The cost of living and the demand for ECE services have significantly increased in Texas and across the country. Many families now require extended full-day and wrap-around services. The noticeable difference in the cost of ECE services can be attributed to the need for more funding from both state and federal sources. It is crucial to acknowledge the impact of dependable support and funding on the outcomes of early childhood education for both children and their families, given the limited resources and the need for sustainable partnerships. Achieving quality in all types of childcare and early childhood services in Texas depends on establishing strong, unified approaches to providing high-quality ECE services to underserved communities and families. The essential elements crucial for ECE services in Texas include:

Low child-staff ratio

Child and family-focused staff training

Staff stability

Warm, predictable, responsive, and sensitive staff interactions

Small group sizes and programs with educational outcomes and family objectives

A stable group of peers

Safe, healthy, and perceptually stimulating physical settings

Specialized and individualized services to children with special needs, in foster care, and who are experiencing homelessness

Family access to staff and centers

Prenatal services to expectant families

Sensitivity to children's and family differences

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Elizabeth Goldberg, Ms  
Self, Professor  
Edinburg, TX

As a parent and educator I highly oppose vouchers. Public school funding should go to public schools, which are already severely underfunded. Using that money for vouchers will have a devastating impact on the children of Texas. Please fully fund public schools and NO vouchers.

David Christie  
self/public school teacher  
Huntsville, TX

I understand that Texas has a constitutional obligation to provide a free public education to its students, I also believe that when you take funding from public education to fund a smaller more select group you are in the wrong. Under parliamentary law the minority have the obligation to adhere to the majority decision. As legislators you have the obligation to represent your majority and to do it fairly for all parties concerned. Public education savings accounts and vouchers are nothing more than catering to the minority population and is not fair representation.

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Clinton Gill  
Self  
Lubbock, TX

There should be absolutely no state funding given to private schools that will not be held to the same accountability standards as public schools. As a committee, I strongly encourage you to fully fund public schools and lessen the burden teachers have so that they stay in the profession. Texas is on the verge of having public schools with no teachers because the state has clearly shown it does not value public school educators. Any voucher passed must require that the private school take that student even if they are low income, special ed, cuss the teacher out, tear a classroom apart, throw chairs at the teacher and other students, bite the teacher, and/or the parent comes up to the school and cusses out the teacher, principal, etc. All of these are things that happen in Texas public schools daily because public schools have to take all students, not just the select few that will act right.

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Tracy Schult  
Self homeschool parent  
Midland, TX

I am opposed to any measure which will infringe upon the autonomy and freedom of choice for homeschool families. Do not ruin the exceptional freedom currently offered by Texas. School choice vouchers come with strings attached. We do not want this program.

---

Sarah Stroup  
Self, homeschool mother  
Salado, TX

I am concerned that voucher programs will jeopardize our unique homeschool freedoms we homeschool families in Texas enjoy. I believe that families have the right to homeschool their children according to their own beliefs and values without government interference.

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Jennifer Garza

Self

Midland, TX

As a homeschooler, a former public school teacher, and as a conservative, I am very concerned about the push for "school choice." This is not actually about giving more choices; it is about FUNDING. We, in the private education sector, do not want to be subsidized by the government, which is why I have chosen to remove my children from that system. Why would we want to expand that over the government-free, private educations we've carefully curated for our family? If you look at other states that have recently started "school choice programs" you can see that it is not all that it's promised to be. It's an economic reality that when the government floods a market with money, there will be inflation. Arizona and Oklahoma are dealing with budget issues now, as a direct result of 'universal school choice.' Arizona's ESA bill started out free of strings, but is now beginning to look very different than what was originally promised. Arizona is now implementing more accountability strings and regulations, much to the shock and chagrin of the families who utilize it and were promised 'no strings.' Maine parochial schools are realizing that they have to bend a knee to LGBTQ policies if they want to get school choice funds. The fact that what the government funds, the government runs is nothing new. I can not understand why the Republicans who claim to want limited government. and personal responsibility are looking to expand the welfare state. To the Republicans on the committee, I would like to ask you: Are you for Universal Basic Income? Are you for Universal Healthcare? Are you for student loan forgiveness? Were you for giving childcare facilities a tax break? I would bet that your answer to most, if not all of these, is "No." So what is so special about "school choice" that you think it's the exception to the government program rule? It will absolutely create more entitlement, and bring currently free schools and homeschoolers under the government umbrella. Texas will not be any different. We beg of you to think about the REAL consequences of this. It will not "save kids from woke schools." As a former public school teacher, I used to think school choice would create more competition for the public schools so they improve, but that's not the way this will work, and other states have shown it will only lower all forms of education. Don't let the school choice lobbyists such as Corey DeAngelis, (et al.) gaslight you to not see the realities in the other states that have implemented this. Don't make every school option a public school, and create a monopoly in education where all children are dragged down. It will not help lower income students, studies have shown that those already in private schools take these offered funds to stay in private schools. No one talks about logistics- all the students can not go to the best schools in the city, there just isn't enough room. We do need an answer for failing schools, but it's not school choice.

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Kamie Herrera

self

Longview, TX

My son Rex has received special education services for the past two years. This year he is old enough to go to pre-k. He still qualifies for ECSE services and his IEP states he will be in a classroom with speech therapy. He is coded for a 00 instructional code and a 360 instructional minutes code. However, his IEP creates a gap in the funding for sped and pre-k. His least restrictive environment should be general education, in a specialized classroom that is not life skills. Because he is not economically disadvantaged his LRE has to change to a transition classroom and code for the school to get the funding to give him the services he needs to learn. He is not abled enough for walk-in services but does not need life skills. Our legislation needs to change so that if a child has an IEP, similar to my son's, it qualifies them for pre-k no matter what pre-k qualifiers need to be met. Texas is doing a huge disservice to our students who need the most help. We are way past the point of necessary to fully funding our public schools, and even farther behind in funding our special education students. Please fully fund and expand our special education services and our public schools.

---

Carol Saucedo  
Self - sub teacher for SpED  
Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,  
I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

---

Suzi Kennon  
Self  
Sachse, TX

I am opposed to education savings accounts, aka vouchers, because they divert funds away from the 5.4 million children being served by Texas public schools. I believe that public dollars should be directed toward public schools. Instead of diverting funds to private schools or private vendors, we should be continuing to bolster and empower our local public schools to meet their mission of meeting the needs of every child—to serve every student that comes through their doors. While the intent behind education savings account programs is to increase school choice for all, in reality many kids get left behind: including children with disabilities who aren't guaranteed access to private schools or afforded the same protections as in public schools, middle-income and lower-income students who still won't be able to afford private schools even with the ESA, and rural students who don't have access to private schools. Creating ESAs would be allowing private institutions to use public dollars without holding these schools to the same accountability standards that we hold our public schools to, such as the administration of the STAAR test or the A-F accountability system. Our public school system is facing unprecedented challenges, where teachers and students are feeling overburdened and under supported. We must get behind our public schools and support them in all ways—through funding, encouraging a positive work culture and environment, and ensuring our teachers and administrators feel valued. Allowing education savings account programs to be created would be diverting the state's support elsewhere, when its our local schools that need it the most. ESAs drain critical funding from an already underfunded system. Public funds should remain in the public school system that serves the vast majority of Texas students.

School funding is our most pressing issue, requiring an increase in the basic allotment with annual inflation adjustments. With over half of Texas districts, including my own district, facing deficit budgets, this should be a legislative priority. Raising the basic allotment will address many challenges, such as teacher retention and recruitment, school safety and mental health, and maintaining essential programs. The state of Texas must support our district to enable us to support teachers and students, ensuring our students become contributing members of society upon graduation.

---

Casey Magnuson  
Self, as a parent, and now grandparent, of students being educated in public schools.  
GARLAND, TX

This is a unique opportunity to let the actual voters decide on vouchers/esa's, etc., and not the government. Every Texas legislator should post and mail a survey with uniform information and way to reply to their legislator with results made publicly, about this issue. I would be very willing to help craft the language to be used. This is not the time to let a small number of people to dictate the path for all Texas parents, and certainly this should not be a politicized agenda. Public school dollars, without the txlege recapture and set aside for other projects, should stay in public schools. Since txlege refuses to fund Texas public education fully per the Texas Constitution, they should NOT be trying to diffuse more funding from the public schools.

---

Jane Levan  
D.H. Farms  
Lexington, TX

I farmed for 14 years in Texas, hiring young, local Lee County high school graduates and I was appalled at their lack of ability to write a simple report or do basic multiplication. I once walked to find three of our employees using their phones to determine how many bags of chicken we were shipping to local restaurant because no one had ever explained to them how to multiply by 10. None of the women involved were stupid, they just lacked proper education. 9,000 Texas teachers have retired since 2021 and their positions were filled by teachers lacking Texas certification.

If the school voucher bill is passed, even more money will drain out of our rural school districts to be funneled to families that can afford or have access to private schools. Currently there are only 3 private schools in Lee County, the most highly rated being St. Paul Lutheran Serbin School which currently provides education to 78 children between kindergarten through 8 grade and as there are 90,000 children currently enrolled in grades K-through 12 in the public school system, it is obvious that we do not have nearly enough private schools to accommodate them even if working class parents could afford tuition. School vouchers will drain resources from public schools, leaving more and more Texas public schools lacking the resources that are desperately needed to educate young Texans.

I implore you to vote NO on the school voucher bill. I don't want Texas to be known as the state where it is difficult to employ qualified workers because they lack the fundamentals of the basic education to succeed.

I farmed for 14 years in Texas, hiring young, local Lee County high school graduates and I was appalled at their lack of ability to write a simple report or do basic multiplication. I once walked to find three of our employees using their phones to determine how many bags of chicken we were shipping to local restaurant because no one had ever explained to them how to multiply by 10. None of the women involved were stupid, they just lacked proper education. 9,000 Texas teachers have retired since 2021 and their positions were filled by teachers lacking Texas certification.

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John Mckiernan-Gonzalez

self - I am a teacher and administrator

Austin, TX

Honored to participate in public dialogue about our public schools, and I am asking you - our representatives - to help keep public money supporting public schools, that are subject to public support, wide-ranging standards, due process and democratic dialogue. First vouchers or ESA plans will shift our public money to unaccountable private schools. 91% of the students receiving funds will already be attending private schools, and have already opted out of public accountability. The remaining 9% of new students have been shown to have educational outcomes worse than during the lockdown era and even Hurricane Katrina, perhaps stigmatized as poor unprepared voucher students (Cowen, *The Privateers*, 2024). This means we will be spending 9 cents on the public dollar to pursue outcomes that we expect will be worse than the education public school kids receive, without the public accountability and generations worth of knowledge, wisdom, policy and expertise that shape our public schools.

Instead I am asking that we invest substantial portions of the mythic 32 billion dollar surplus in our public schools - staff, faculty and infrastructure - to give kids more time and undivided attention. In the majority of counties in Texas, public schools are the largest consistent employers, their employees spend their time and money in their community and - thanks to that one person, one vote principle - participate in public discussion about how districts should try and shape children to become participating, publicly concerned adults. Our august governor just touched on how well public schools and their students are doing, especially given that his policies have aimed at cutting off public revenue streams, which leads to closing rural schools, closing schools in neighborhoods where parents and neighbors are working two jobs to making ends meet, and overcrowded classrooms and overstretched teachers and staff in the remaining schools. I want you all to imagine how much better our students, schools and communities would be if we met the national teacher salary average, if we lowered our student to staff ratio to allow students and teachers the time to learn. At the very least, we would have even more Texas graduates competing for Olympic medals, powering industries working with our skilled and educated residents and knowing how - through attending public schools - how to share in the fruits of a growing state and economy. Keep public schools and public funds public, just as our constitution mandates, a free quality education for all students.

thank you for your time. Gracias, John Mckiernan-Gonzalez

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Patrick Woodruff

Self Retired Texas Teacher (25 years)

Katy, TX

To Whom It May Concern

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators.

Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students.

Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5,000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9,000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents.

A Concerned Citizen and Retired Texas Teacher (25 years)

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PAMELA SUSMAN

self educator

Bellaire, TX

A state that is unable and/or unwilling to fund public schools adequately should not be using public funds for private schools. Taking money from already underfunded public schools (thanks to our terrible governor) is an illogical way to view public schools. **NO TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS!**

---

Tracy Fisher  
Self, retired and voter  
Coppell, TX

Our constitution article 7 does not say pay for parents to have Educational choices. It states you are to provide a free and efficient education. Vouchers are not free. They are extras that only help some kids. We already have charters that do that just fine. ?????  
Say no to vouchers, Texas parents want you to find their public neighborhood schools!

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Steve Forsythe, Dr.  
Self. UNIVERSITY STUDENT TEACHER SUPERVISOR AND ATAT MENTOR  
Lampasas, TX

I am opposed to any funding for private schools. I WANT and support funding for PUBLIC schools as constitutionally required. We need to start with the MAJORITY of students in Texas and not the minority.  
Thank you  
Steve Forsythe, ED.D.

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Joy Brandon  
Taxpayers  
Bedford, TX

Please, no vouchers! Public schools are the backbone of democracy so we need to keep them strong. Draining the public schools of need funds will weaken this. Public schools are what separates us from third-world countries.

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Eric Holguin  
Self  
Mission, TX

I fully support funding our public schools and do not support any public monies/taxpayer dollars/etc. going to funding of any school vouchers program (alternatively named educational savings opportunities (ESAs), empowerment scholarships, etc.). The Texas Legislature and Gov. Greg Abbott should focus on fully funding our public schools, giving teachers meaningful raises, and ensuring our students are set up for success -- not trying to give religious and private schools our taxpayer money. States like Arizona and Florida have implemented school voucher programs and the costs of them have skyrocketed putting extreme financial strains on the states and its public schools, thus harming other unrelated state programs. We do not support bankrupting Texas over a widely unpopular program that oligarchs Tim Dunn and brothers Farris and Dan Wilks are trying to shove down the publics' throats. We say NO to school voucher scams!

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Claudia Cortez  
Self  
Brownsville, TX

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COMMENTS FOR Educational Opportunity

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Robert Sager  
Self rancher  
Yorktown, TX

We need to fund the majority of students in education. NOT Subsidize Tuition to private school there will only affect 10% of the students in Texas.

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Claire Campos-O'Neal  
self  
Austin, TX

Members of the Texas House Committee on Public Education, my name is Claire Campos-O'Neal and I am a parent of a 1st grader in a local independent school district. Last year I researched and developed a podcast that took a thorough look at education vouchers. My co-creator and I titled the podcast 'The Voucher Scam' because we came to learn that education vouchers do not and cannot live up to their promise. There simply is not enough money allocated for public education in Texas to create a third tier of schooling (local ISDs, charter schools and vouchers). Many other states have experimented with vouchers and it has had devastating consequences on state budgets. Most of the families who enroll in voucher programs already send their children to private schools. It is not financially prudent to create an entitlement program that will disproportionately benefit the wealthy. Much of our Texas pride is fostered in our neighborhood schools and if vouchers were introduced, we'd lose that sense of communal spirit and camaraderie. Vouchers would take the public out of public education and erode our already fragile democracy. If you are on the fence about this issue and open to exploring the history and motivations behind the voucher movement, I encourage you to listen to The Voucher Scam podcast.

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Michelle Potter  
Self  
San Antonio, TX

What a misnomer this topic is. The school is who has the choice and the opportunity. Texans do not support vouchers. We want our public schools to be fully supported. We want our tax dollars going to public schools, the schools that belong to the public, not to private schools. I am a Texan who no longer has school-age children. I want a say in how my tax dollars are used. I get that say with my local school district. I can attend their school board meetings to comment on what they do with my tax dollars. I can contact our school board members to make my views known. I can help in school board elections and run for school board if I don't like how my tax dollars are being used. If parents can take my tax dollars anywhere they want, I don't have a say. I will lose my voice. I care deeply about our Texas children and our future, which is dependent on having a well-educated populace. No to vouchers. The state is starving our public schools intentionally. Put the money where it belong . . . in our public schools.

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Debbe France  
Private  
Coppell, TX

I can not support school vouchers. To take funds from public schools and send it to private schools when Texas schools are ranked 28th in the nation flies in the face of any common sense. Use my tax dollars to propel Texas schools to number 1 in the country and ask me again.

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Joseph Hootman, Mr.  
Family  
Austin, TX

Please give Texas parents the ability to choose schooling that aligns with their values. That opportunity shouldn't be restricted by your earnings or which zip code you live in. Every Texan should have the ability to choose schooling that's right for each individual kid.

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Vicki Partin  
Private citizen  
Spring Branch, TX

I am strongly opposed to vouchers which use public education tax money to fund private charter schools!

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Michelle Tish  
Self & Waco ISD d  
Belton, TX

I oppose private school vouchers that take tax dollars away from neighborhood public schools to pay back parents who are already sending their kids to private schools. Public schools all across the state are in budget deficit situations due to the blackmailing that is happening due to the voucher issue. Stop the madness and support Texas Public Schools!

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Sarah Fernandez  
Self - parent, ASL interpreter  
Houston, TX

Expanding educational opportunities through scholarships, private institutions, or charter schools often becomes the default solution for issues in Texas's public education system. However, these measures wouldn't be necessary if we adequately funded and supported public school districts like Houston Independent School District (HISD). Proper investment in public education ensures every child receives a quality education, regardless of zip code. Public education is the foundation of a functional society, preparing future generations for citizenship and the workforce. Yet, funding disparities in Texas are stark. Wealthy districts, fueled by higher property taxes, provide superior resources, while districts like HISD, which serve economically diverse populations, suffer from overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and insufficient support. House Bill 1842, passed in 2015, allows the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to take over school districts with consecutive years of unacceptable ratings. While intended to enforce accountability, it often penalizes districts already struggling due to systemic inequities. TEA takeovers fail to address the root causes of underperformance, such as chronic underfunding and resource shortages. Instead, they remove local control and community input, often worsening issues. Takeovers create instability, pressuring school leaders to implement short-term fixes that may boost test scores but fail to create lasting improvements. Teachers, demoralized by constant state intervention, may leave the profession, further degrading education quality. Students suffer most, as the focus shifts from fostering a love for learning to merely avoiding sanctions. Texas needs equitable public education funding. The current reliance on property taxes favors affluent areas, leaving districts like HISD to struggle. Reforming the funding model to distribute resources based on need rather than wealth would allow underfunded districts to reduce class sizes, update facilities, and provide critical support. Neighborhood schools are vital for community stability and engagement. When HISD schools are taken over or closed, it disrupts the community fabric, forcing students to travel long distances and making it difficult for parents to stay involved. School closures can lead to community decline, lowering property values and impacting local businesses. To prevent further harm, Texas lawmakers must amend HB 1842. Instead of punitive takeovers, the state should offer targeted support to struggling districts, addressing systemic inequities and fostering collaboration with local communities. Additionally, imposing a moratorium on school closures in vulnerable communities would ensure neighborhood schools remain stable. Legislative action is required to improve public education in Texas. By increasing funding, amending HB 1842, and supporting neighborhood schools, we can ensure every child in Texas has access to the quality education they deserve.

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Doris Curry, Teacher  
Self  
Richmond, TX

As a tax payer I whole heartedly disagree with the proposed voucher program. If parents want to send their students to a private school that's their choice and should be funded by the parent not the tax payer. In addition, many of the schools do not provide an adequate education. I have a nephew who attends one of the schools that would be funded by this proposal. He attends school two days a week for 5 hours a day. He is in the 6th grade yet has the vocabulary of an 6 year old and the speech communication of a 4 year old. This summer I have him a test my 2nd grade granddaughter took and he couldn't pass it. All this voucher will do is drive up the prices for these schools still making it unaffordable for those families with middle to poor incomes. It also makes me wonder why a governor would be so supportive of a measure that his constituents are so against. Kickbacks? I will say if this passes he and all who voted for it will no longer have my vote and I along with thousands of other long term educators will be leaving the profession. But that's probably what he wants. We all know these schools that are not public schools employ many uncertified educators. An uneducated voting pool means more votes for him.

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Mary Anne Weatherred  
Self  
Fort Worth, TX

As a taxpayer and parent in Texas, I oppose vouchers or education savings accounts. Please keep public funds in public schools. Fund our public schools by increasing basic allotment, fund by enrollment, and fund any mandates made by the legislature. Our schools are the heart of our communities and our future and need funding to stay that way.

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Karyn Holly, RN  
CITIZENS  
Dallas, TX

**DO NOT VOTE GOR VOUCHERS !!!  
FUND PUBLIC EDUCATION!!**

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Ileana Garza-Rojas  
Self  
Farmers Branch, TX

I am opposed to vouchers. It does not benefit all children - as a government, we should be in the interest of all students.

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Andrea Solka  
Self  
Coppell, TX

I oppose school vouchers. Fund our public schools.

---

Barbara Harless  
self  
Murphy, TX

Just like the “affordable” healthcare act wasn’t affordable; school “choice” is NOT about choice.

Government never fixes a problem that government creates (government funded education).

Why not try enforcing the Texas ED Code, first?...

Parental Choice [Sec. 29.201]  
Public Financing [Sec. 29.203]  
Student Transfers...

25.035. TRANSFERS BETWEEN DISTRICTS OR COUNTIES. [1995 –Sen Bill Ratliff, SB 1]

25.040. TRANSFER TO DISTRICT OF BORDERING STATE. [1995]

25.0341. TRANSFER OF STUDENTS INVOLVED IN SEXUAL ASSAULT [2005]

25.0342. TRANSFER OF STUDENTS WHO ARE VICTIMS OF OR HAVE ENGAGED IN BULLYING. [2005]

25.0343. TRANSFER OF STUDENTS RESIDING IN HOUSEHOLD OF STUDENT RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES [Added by Acts 2006, 79th Leg.]

Sec. 25.036. TRANSFER OF STUDENT. [1995]

25.037. TRANSFER OF STATE FUNDS. [1995]

25.038. TUITION FEE FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS. [1995]

25.039. CONTRACTS AND TUITION FOR EDUCATION OUTSIDE DISTRICT. [1995]

EVERY “choice” legislation requires funding to touch a government controlled account FIRST.

Government has a fiduciary DUTY to control how every public penny is spent. That means “strings attached”.

Do NOT create state legislation which expands government control of current private options are still available to Texans.

Thank you,  
Barbara Harless  
Murphy, TX  
HD 33

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Beverly Avila  
AFT  
McAllen, TX

Draft of comment:

I fully support funding our public schools and do not support any public monies/taxpayer dollars/etc. going to funding of any school vouchers program (alternatively named educational savings opportunities (ESAs), empowerment scholarships, etc.). The Texas Legislature and Gov. Greg Abbott should focus on fully funding our public schools, giving teachers meaningful raises, and ensuring our students are set up for success -- not trying to give religious and private schools our taxpayer money. States like Arizona and Florida have implemented school voucher programs and the costs of them have skyrocketed putting extreme financial strains on the states and its public schools, thus harming other unrelated state programs. We do not support bankrupting Texas over a widely unpopular program that oligarchs Tim Dunn and brothers Farris and Dan Wilks are trying to shove down the publics' throats. We say NO to school voucher scams!

---

Christi Thomas  
Self - public teacher  
Beaumont, TX

Please no vouchers!

Kathleen Burkhardt  
Self! Retired.  
Grapevine, TX

No voucher system! My family does not want to subsidize your family's substandard education at a "fancy" private school.

---

Natalie Juergens  
Self  
Houston, TX

Please support certified teachers and oppose school vouchers. Public education is a system that works and educates all children.

---

Virginia Flores  
Self  
Cypress, TX

To Whom It May Concern:

I am urging you to oppose any form of vouchers/ESAs that use taxpayer dollars to subsidize private schools and vendors. You must support school choice within the Texas public school system. Doing so means that you support our local, community driven public schools across the great state of Texas.

Public schools have been underfunded for too long and need continued investment to help students. Public schools, particularly in rural areas, are often the only source of educational opportunities, providing so much more to educate their kids and are often the central job hub for many.

Again, I urge you, support public schools with more funding, not by taking away opportunities through a voucher program.

---

Jessica Black  
Self  
Arlington, TX

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to any type of voucher program that would allocate taxpayer money to unaccountable private schools that are not answerable to local voters. I also wanted to voice my displeasure and disappointment that the House Committee on Public Education chose to hold a hearing on the day that many ISDs across that state are starting school in order to prevent public school teachers from being there in person to provide testimony. The way this hearing is being conducted is anti-democratic and Texans deserve better.

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Brandon Rothermel  
Self- Teacher  
San Antonio, TX

Support public schools with proper funding and listen to the voice of the people which declares that we do NOT want the voucher system.

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Brian Reed, DR.

Self (teacher), Anton ISD, Agricultural Teachers Association of Texas

Abernathy, TX

The idea of Educational Savings Accounts or "vouchers" is misguided and violates the Texas constitution. Private schools will raise their rates and a voucher will be meaningless because they will not be enough to pay the tuition. Individuals who are for the voucher system need to instead address the problems they see in their local public school and work with school officials and TEA to remedy those problems. Our greatest problem in public education is financial and emotional support. Public school teachers are not valued in today's society. Taking money away from the public school system just goes to prove this. It is also an elitist mentality and quite frankly discriminatory. School choice already exists, having vouchers doesn't do anything to change that. If someone wants to send their child to a public school, they already have that option. Giving an individual control over the use of state collected money is wrong. As a comparison, why don't we allow an individual to determine which roads get repaired or repaved? We all pay tax in our fuel that goes towards infrastructure.

There is also proven data that private school teachers are no more qualified to teach or experts in their field than their public school counterparts. If proponents are trying to get away from state mandated testing (because private schools are not required) then why don't we get rid of state mandated testing? Changes to the educational system need to be good for everyone, not just a select few. The cream of the crop will always rise to the top, no matter how bad their environment.

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Tracy Hanes  
Self  
Victoria, TX

Defending Texas Saving America!

What is educational opportunity?

Educational opportunities do not come from growing government! That's exactly what school choice voucher ESA's do. They grow government! Why would we look to flee the schools only to allow the same inept failures of government regulated school choice.

The majority of Texans want the government to stay out of their lives. Governor Abbott has already said he won't sign a bill that does not have accountability measures. You mean the same junk in the public schools which kids, parents and teachers hate! You mean the same junk that has driven parents to remove their kids from public school and teachers to leave the profession they love?!

HB1 & SB1 detailed how the state would implement administration through certified education assistance organizations. This is again government flexing its muscle through strings for more control.

"School choice" is littered with Big Government strings & just another government trap. It's a deception propagated by grifters like Corey DeAngelis and an elite establishment that targets children.

Please listen to the wise words of Charlotte Iserbyt who was senior policy advisor to the U.S. Department of Education: "THE TRUE GOAL OF SCHOOL CHOICE the destruction of private education as well since once an education institution, be it public, private, home school, Christian, or charter school, accepts one penny of tax money from the federal, state, or local level, it MUST abide by ALL federal regulations and MUST take the federal test which means it must TEACH TO THE TEST which is 50% attitudinal (politically correct). THIS EQUALS TOTAL GOVERNMENT/CORPORATE CONTROL OF YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION."

If we want to improve public education which is in our Texas Constitution we MUST truly once and for all repeal all the bad legislation that has been passed by the Txlege.

Repeal the bad bills—>Road map to fix public education in Texas!

- Remove Technology in K-8 —Screen Time is Stolen Time! Increase human interaction. Make Education Great Again! Let Teachers Teach!
- Repeal SB123 (87R), HB1026 (86R), Ch. 120 Character Traits & SEL
- Repeal HB 1842 (84R)/ DOI Districts of Innovation
- Repeal SB11 (86R)/ Texas Child Mental Health Consortium & HB18 (86R)/ Mental Health Training
- Repeal HB1605 (88R) Amplify Vendor Bill
- End Restorative Practices
- End Taxpayer Funding of Nonprofits/ TASB, TASA & Commit partnership
- Create Staff for SBOE members
- ABOLISH TEA! Fire Mike Morath!

End this insanity! Defend and protect local sovereignty. Say NO to government regulated school choice!

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Sandra Garcia, CPA  
Los Fresnos CISD, trustee  
BROWNSVILLE, TX

My name is Sandra Lee Garcia and I am here to express concerns regarding proposed implementation of ESAs in Texas, in particular my South Texas community.

The agenda item calling for increases in education opportunities in Texas to ensure high quality education would be detrimental to regions like South Texas where public school is vital to our families. The claim that ESAs are needed to provide choice is misleading. Our Texas parents already have choices. ESAs would simply take money from public education and jeopardize the quality of the education that the majority of our Texas student rely on.

Our south Texas families depend on public education to give their children the tools they need to succeed and change their world. Public schools are they pathway to learning, and also the foundation of our communities. Our public schools offer stability, resources and opportunities to families that are not provided anywhere else. It is our duty, and your duty, to protect our most vulnerable families and students and provide them with access to a safe and effective public education system. A sufficiently funded education. Our kids deserve that.

Our public schools are already underfunded. Vouchers would funnel taxpayer dollars into private institutions that are not required to accept all students, are not accessible to all students and who are not held accountable to the same standards that our public schools are held accountable to. Vouchers would reduce resources and worsen education inequalities and limit opportunity for the majority of Texas students who remain in the public system. This is not only unjust , it is unsafe for our kids.

Other states that have implemented ESAs have suffered with larger class sizes, reduced programs and lower overall quality of education. Please do not let that be our fate for Texas. Our teachers and our kids deserve better than that.

Public education is the foundation of our community and is essential for the economic development of our area. We train the future workforce and in many areas we are the largest employer. Weakening the public education system, harms our students and our entire community. Please stand with me to help protect our students by ensuring Texas Public Education is strong, safe and equitable.

Public education is in need of heroes - i urge you to be that hero and consider the long term implications of ESAs on our communities. I urge you to spend a full day with a teacher in one of our schools to see the needs they have, the needs of our kids, and the impact that less funding will have on each of them.

Thank you for your service and for your consideration. I respectfully ask that you oppose the implementation of Education Savings Accounts in Texas and instead support initiatives that increase the educational needs and opportunities for all public students.

Sincerely, Sandra L. Garcia, CPA, Los Fresnos CISD Broard Trustee

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Stacey Irish-Keffer  
Self  
Denton, TX

I oppose school vouchers because tax payer money should go to public schools not to private businesses. Vouchers give money to private schools and weaken our already struggling public education system. Tax payer dollars should be invested in public education so we can educate the most Texas students for the future of our state and country. Vouchers cost more money and benefit families who can already afford private school tuition. Private schools do not have to meet the same educational standards as public schools and can turn away any students they want for any reason. Vouchers reduce equitable access, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and potentially expose tax payers to fraud. Stop starving our public schools of much needed funds and vote against vouchers.

---

Kyle Norman  
Self - Teacher  
Dickinson, TX

Support certified teachers and public schools by keeping public dollars in public schools. Private schools have no accountability and can discriminate in their admissions - public schools take all students. Do your constitutionally mandated duty and fund the public schools. No to vouchers. No to educational savings accounts. Yes to public school schools, students, and teachers.

---

Vicky Rainwater, Ms.  
Self  
Spring Branch, TX

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators. Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students. Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5,000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9,000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents.

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Tina Barrientos, Ms  
Mothers for Democracy  
Allen, TX

Say No to School Vouchers/School Choice option. I do not want taxpayer money to be taken away from our already low funded public schools. Private schools are not regulated, held to same academic standards or held accountable, and I support Public Education for being regulated, being held to high academic standards and teach certifications to keep them accountable.

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Cynthia Helf  
Self - preschool teacher  
Fort Worth, TX

Please keep public school money in public schools! Vouchers are not effective and will ultimately hurt our students! And, please fund our schools and stop withholding tax dollars from our teachers and students!

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Jessica Zavala  
Self  
Farmers Branch, TX

Vouchers need to be for public schools not for private schools. They charge tuition for a reason. Please do not allow for our public schools to have more funding taken away from those that need it most.

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Karen McGuff, Mrs  
Texas Teacher  
Kerrville, TX

Until a plan is formulated for requiring private schools to service those with disabilities, Texas should not give vouchers to them.

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Gregg Scott  
Self  
Midlothian, TX

Please focus on funding public schools properly and stop the push for ESAs/vouchers. The State of Texas has no business sending public funds to private institutions that are free to teach whatever they want and without accountability. Every proposal so far has simply been an entitlement program for those that have already chosen private schools. If you want to fix failing schools, there are much better ways.

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Margie Turner  
Self  
San Antonio, TX

Texas public schools need our full support! Stop taking away their money! Vote NO to vouchers.

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Jenny Jones  
Self  
Diana, TX

Educational Savings Accounts will destroy public education in my community. We are a small rural school, and are already low on funding from the state. We are an unincorporated community so we cannot rely on city or local taxes. Vouchers would result in the closure of our school, which will force students to relocate to a new campus, teachers to lose their jobs, and the community will ultimately suffer as the school is a huge source of income and comradery. This will not be a benefit, only a hinderance. No one will win here. Please do not force the majority to suffer for the sake of the minority. Let people who can choose do so. Private education will not allow for the flourishment that CTE programs can offer. So many private schools do not have FFA programs, or CTE courses. Finding a good job as a teacher is hard enough as it is, and if schools are closing because they lose funding, I may be forced out of public education. The FFA is a powerful organization that develops students for their futures. If that is withheld from students, many will be further behind in their development. Things like public speaking, leadership and critical thinking skills will be lost in our society. Parents do not all have the availability to home school either. Being in a rural community, many of our students either come from two parent working households, or single parent households where the parent is forced to work more than one job. They do not have the time to home school, and the student will again be the one who suffers. Please vote No for vouchers and save public education.

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Marcia Jones  
Self  
Houston, TX

I am writing to express my opposition to using public funds for private school vouchers. Our children need public education. We need accountability for ALL children. Privatization will only lead to greater discrepancy for outcomes those that need it most. My son needs accommodations in school and a private school does not have to serve him or allow him the necessary accommodations to succeed. Public education is our most important tool for our states success. Texas schools have been dramatically underfunded for years and have not have an increase in per student allotment for over 6 years with increasing costs of supplies and teachers salaries. Money needs to be released to these students! Students education are above politics! Destroying public education will only hurt our state and business opportunities longterm. Do the right thing for all Texans and support public education with the tax dollars we have already paid and let go of those billions of dollars when our kids need it most.

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Jenifer Fuller  
Self  
Denton, TX

As a taxpayer in the state of Texas, I am 100% against the use of state funds for education voucher or opportunity credits. This is tantamount to welfare for the rich and has failed spectacularly in every state where it has been introduced. After a quick search of schools in my area, none of the previously proposed amounts for vouchers would cover tuition though it did come close with one elementary school. However if a student attending that school, needed any sort of dyslexia or SPED services they would have to pay for them out of pocket. I have to see a plan that would have any form of accountability or oversight, nor have I seen any plans that include the STAAR test as part of that accountability. While I think the STAAR test is a complete and utter waste of time, resources, and funds to begin with, I fail to see why it would not be appropriate for private schools using public funds when it is used for public schools. By same token, I do not understand why there are two different proposed funding methods - enrollment for vouchers at private schools vs. attendance at public schools? Public funds should be allocated with the same requirements. It is ridiculous that the public schools of Texas are having to create budgets based on 2019 levels when the legislature is required by the Texas Constitution to fund public education.

Even Governor Abbott knows that this will not help public schools and is welfare for wealthy. If he truly thought this would help ALL children in Texas, then maybe, just maybe he would have made some stops at public schools when he was touring the state last summer as he was trying to sell his plan.

To summarize- public schools in Texas should be funded by enrollment and not attendance, public funds should not be used for private schools without accountability or oversight, and public schools should be fully funded at 2024-25 levels as required by the Texas Constitution.

Thank you for your time.

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Kathryn O'Connor  
Self  
Farmers Branch, TX

Passing school vouchers would hurt our students and staff that are in the public school system. This would take funding away

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Adelita Ochoa  
Self  
Elgin, TX

I fully support funding our public schools and do not support any public monies/taxpayer dollars/etc. going to funding of any school vouchers program (alternatively named educational savings opportunities (ESAs), empowerment scholarships, etc.). The Texas Legislature and Gov. Greg Abbott should focus on fully funding our public schools, giving teachers meaningful raises, and ensuring our students are set up for success -- not trying to give religious and private schools our taxpayer money. States like Arizona and Florida have implemented school voucher programs and the costs of them have skyrocketed putting extreme financial strains on the states and its public schools, thus harming other unrelated state programs. We do not support bankrupting Texas over a widely unpopular program that oligarchs Tim Dunn and brothers Farris and Dan Wilks are trying to shove down the publics' throats. We say NO to school voucher scams!

---

LuAnn Engleman  
Self/retired teacher  
Garland, TX

Please keep funding in public education. Even if Median and low income parents have access to vouchers, they still cannot afford to send their kids to private school because they can't afford uniforms, transportation and participation in after school activities.

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Janie Brittain  
Self / Retired  
Garland, TX

There are many supporters of educational freedom in Texas who oppose the ESA/voucher legislation supported by Gov. Abbott. Our opposition is based on a belief in educational freedom, not the possibility of a reduction in public school funding. Our voices are often ignored as proponents of “school choice” declare that the only opponents are on the left. We were heard, however, when thousands of delegates to the Republican Party of Texas convention decided that “school choice” should \*not\* be in the top eight RPT Legislative Priorities for 2025. The intentionally misleading term “school choice” has nothing to do with choice of educational opportunities for children, but on how existing choices are funded. I have heard no legislator come up with a new option for how children are taught. Choices abound. Providing funds to private and home schoolers is the issue. Proponents of “school choice” claim there will be no strings attached for private and homeschoolers. That language is even codified in our Republican platform. Yet they insist on accountability, recognizing that “funds following the child” is taxpayer money, not parents’ private money. Gov. Abbott has stated publicly that accountability must be part of any “school choice” legislation. Make no mistake: ACCOUNTABILITY EQUALS STRINGS. Accountability includes requirements for standardized testing and accreditation. Homeschoolers in Texas have no requirements for standardized testing or accreditation now. Standardized tests can impact curricula. Accreditors can impact curricula. These are strings. STRINGS EQUAL LOSS OF PARENTAL CONTROL AND EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM. Proponents of Gov. Abbott’s “school choice” also argue that “private and homeschools don’t have to take the money!” True, for now, but that can change, as it has in West Virginia (google “The Great School Choice Double-Cross”). In addition, because of the great amount of public money flooding into a previously private market, those who don’t take the money will be forced to raise costs to compete with those who do. It’s already happening in Florida: (google “As Florida Floods Private Schools with Public Money, Schools Raise Tuition to Capitalize”). In addition, as with private schools, any homeschool cooperative that accepts even one child who is being funded by the state will be subject to strings (regulations) by the state. Review the history of Hillsdale College to see why that college refuses to accept students who receive any state or federal aid. Speaking of rising costs, Texas will likely see education costs skyrocket with a universal “school choice” program (google “Arizona governor vows to rein in skyrocketing school voucher program, update groundwater laws”). Do Texans really want the same government that has decimated our public schools to now infiltrate private and home schools? I think not. Always follow the money.

---

Jennifer Mollenkopf  
Self  
Allen, TX

I strongly oppose Education Savings Accounts/Vouchers. I’m very disappointed at the lack of support for public education, and how Governor Abbott has been withholding funds to get what HE and his wealthy friends want rather than providing much-needed funds to public schools across the state. I moved here more than 2 decades ago because I thought Great State of Texas cared more for their public schools than where I came from, but it’s obvious politicians are more interested in pleasing their “deep-pocketed” donors than investing in the students, teachers, and staff in public education.

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Melissa Muenzler  
self, Senior Research Associate  
Fort Worth, TX

Public funds belong in public schools. They do not belong in private schools that are allowed to discriminate in which students they admit, are not held to the same standards as public schools and are not required to provide services to every student who needs them. Vouchers will serve as a discount to wealthy families who are already able to afford private schools. Public schools serve every child in our community, not just the ones who can pay more.

---

Olga Jankowski  
Self  
Houston, TX

As a Catholic school teacher of 20 years and a parent of three children who went to Catholic schools K-12, I oppose the voucher system. Good public schools with adequate funding are important to all Texans. Please stop spending time discussing this issue and find the public schools.

---

Kyle Patterson  
Self  
Denton, TX

Educational opportunity is a great thing but what you mean is vouchers that only pay people who already have significant opportunity. These voucher steal money from public education which is most children in Texas only opportunity. Fund public schools!

---

Jennifer Jefferson  
Self, researcher  
Austin, TX

My child is a student in a public school, and I am frustrated with the Texas's funding approach. I can't understand why public school funding is so low while the state has such a surplus. Why are children being punished? Why is the legislature putting our future at risk by not fully funding schools to ensure that all Texas children have the opportunity to succeed and continue to ensure Texas's growth? Why do I pay ever-higher property taxes for that money to go to the state's funds rather than going to my community's schools, as it is supposed to? My child's district is in the midst of a budget crisis and will have to eliminate crucial components of the educational process to help meet the shortfall. Classes will be larger, positions will go unstaffed, and teachers will not receive the support and development that they need to stay in education and provide a high quality of education to all students, which is required by the Texas Constitution.

And all of this to support vouchers, which are shown to be ineffective and costly. The vast majority of students will not be better served by integrating vouchers, but the vast majority will continue to be harmed. This fiscally irresponsible approach will only serve a small elite percentage of students who already are in private schools, but will decimate the public education system.

As a proud public school graduate who sees public education as central to a strong community, a strong economy, and a strong state, I ask that you provide funding to public schools and end the quest for vouchers.

Respectfully,  
Jennifer Jefferson

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Krystal Higdon  
Self teacher  
Killeen, TX

As a teacher who has worked in education for over 25 years, I am dismayed that the state would use vouchers for private non inclusive schools. This action would put additional strain on already thin school budgets for the public schools. Public schools have a mandate to educate all while private schools do not.

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Andrew Jopling  
ClassWallet  
Fort Worth, TX

ClassWallet is the nation's premiere provider of ESA administration technology. A majority of ESA administrators across America – AZ, IN, MO, NH, NC, SC, and UT – trust ClassWallet to distribute and manage compliance for a combined \$800M in ESA scholarships to close to 100,000 students annually. Additionally, ClassWallet is privileged to serve thousands of Texas families participating in the Parent-Directed Special Education Services (PDSES) program. Since the inception of that program, ClassWallet has helped the Texas Education Agency securely distribute more than \$400M to more than 115,000 Texas students.

Leveraging our experience launching and administering ESA programs around the country, here we will outline legislative best practices for ESA programs for your consideration.

\*Require the use of digital wallets. Digital wallets empower families to direct their ESA funds without the need to ever spend out-of-pocket for those expenses first; reduce risk; and streamline program administration with spending guardrails, data transparency, and reporting tools. A digital wallet gives all stakeholders a high confidence of transparency and accountability. ESA programs that rely on, or even allow, reimbursement or debit cards open the door to misuse of spending and weaken data integrity. Legislation should require the State Agency administering the program to contract with a digital wallet provider through a public procurement process. Given the potential size and complexity of a potential Texas program, we recommend the digital wallet vendor demonstrate:

- At least 3 to 5 years of experience administering programs of similar size and scope.
- Third-party validation of its data security practices. A minimum of NIST and SOC 2 Type 2 is recommended.
- Third-party validation of its customer support experience by a globally recognized leader in consumer insights.
- Third-party validation of financial stability by submitting a balance sheet audited by an accounting firm.
- The vendor's ability to restrict participant purchases to only items allowed under program guidelines.
- The vendor's ability to provide real-time reporting of purchase order details and requests.

\*Provide sufficient program implementation time. ESA programs generally take a minimum of six months to launch successfully. If an ESA program is enacted by the Texas Legislature in 2025, the following considerations should be given to the launch date:

- The State Agency administering the program will need time to write an RFP to solicit vendors.
- Vendors will need at least four weeks to prepare and submit responses to the RFP.
- The State Agency will need at least four weeks to review RFP responses, interview vendors, and execute a contract.
- The selected vendor will need a minimum of 6 weeks to put the technology infrastructure in place.

It is not until all of the above is complete the families may begin applying for the program.

Thank you.

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James Hallamek  
Texas State Teachers Association  
Austin, TX

The Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA) vehemently opposes any school voucher scheme that diverts funding from our already underfunded Texas public school system. Lawmakers should work to increase appropriations to public schools, not divert taxpayer funds to private schools.

After the 88th legislative session, the Texas public school system finance outlook is bleak. This summer many Texas school districts faced a budget deficit and were forced to approve layoffs, cut programs, and close schools. Texas students are losing their extracurricular activities, librarians, teachers, and community schools, while being placed into larger class sizes. As teachers are starting the new school year, inadequate school funding has had a negative impact on morale. In a recent survey of Texas teachers, 65 percent of those surveyed said they were seriously considering leaving the teaching profession and 33 percent of surveyed teachers said they have had to take extra jobs during the school year to make financial ends meet for their families. These teachers spent an average of \$856 out of pocket a year for school supplies and \$405 a month on health insurance. Texas teachers work tirelessly for their students and deserve a state leadership that will invest in them and their districts, not a state leadership that wants to defund public schools in favor of taxpayer-funded private school vouchers.

Taxpayer-funded vouchers will not increase educational opportunities for all students, the voucher scheme will just serve as an entitlement for select wealthy and upper income families who will have their private school expenses subsidized at the expense of the taxpayers. While the previously proposed \$10,500 voucher will not cover the cost of popular private schools, it will incentivize the creation of fly-by-night schooling operations that will not provide a quality education to Texas students. The vouchers will not benefit every family, but every family's taxes will pay for them.

Taxpayer-funded vouchers do not increase school choice. Private schools have no legal requirement or obligation to enroll any student, including students with a voucher. Admission choices belong to the schools, not the parents. Private schools typically do not admit students with special education needs because they are not prepared to provide those services, and those that do charge extremely high tuition. Private schools are also reluctant to admit students with disciplinary issues and, if they do, often do not keep them. The Texas Legislature's constitutional responsibility is to fund and maintain quality public schools, not use tax dollars to promote and enrich private schools without public accountability. A taxpayer-funded voucher scheme will not improve school choice or provide private schooling to all, it will work to degrade the Texas public school system that our government is bound to protect and that Texas students rely on.

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Richard Yoder, Dr.  
Self-Teacher  
San Antonio, TX

I oppose the use of vouchers to strip public education funding that is used for private school tuition. This is a violation of separation of church and state since most private schools are religious-based.

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Jennifer Marberry  
Self  
Hull, TX

No vouchers! I vote republican but am an educator in Texas and this is the wrong path for Texas students and educators! Fully fund public education instead and let us teach our kids with the full monetary support of the great state of Texas behind us!

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Andrea Pavia  
Self/physician assistant  
Farmers branch, TX

School vouchers will divert resources from public schools and increase inequality. We need to focus on strengthening public education.

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Constance Buran  
Self - Retired  
Fort Worth, TX

I do not want my taxpayer money going to fund vouchers. Tax money is for Public education. Private schools are not open to everyone putting the learning disabled, rural communities and families living in poverty at a disadvantage. Please look at Arizona where vouchers are costing the state billions of dollars.

---

John Mitchell  
self  
Cypress, TX

Texas should no longer pursue vouchers. It has been defeated REPEATEDLY. ONLY the governer and Lt. governer keep voucher votes alive because the people of Texas do not want them. Our schools are funded much far national levels, yet hard working teachers keep graduation rates around 90%. Meaningful PERMANENT raises need to be given to teachers to retain them. Unfunded regulations need to be reduced. If a bill does not propose how to pay for a mandate, it should not be allowed to be implemented. The state of Texas deserves a top rated public education system, and vouchers have all shown that they are only detrimental to education.

---

Vickie RabbWiggins  
Self/retired teacher  
Forney, TX

I strongly believe educational savings accounts/vouchers should not be passed. They're expensive for tax payers and undermine public education as well as take away the already underfunded public schools. The \$8,000 per student would be better spent on teacher raises. Teachers are leaving schools for many reasons but one major reason is low pay but high demands & high stress. There is no accountability for how the \$8 is spent or for whether it is successful. Please do what's right for public education!! Fix a broken system instead of making it worse.

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Sarah Allen, Rev. Dr.  
Pastors for Texas Children, Texas PTA  
Austin, TX

I am Rev. Dr. Sarah Allen, a resident of Travis County for the past 20 years. My state representative is Vicki Goodwin. I have three children in Austin ISD and I am a Presbyterian minister who has served students in many public school districts. I am a clergy member of Pastors for Texas Children and am also a member of the school PTAs for all three of my children, Summitt Elementary, Murchison Middle School , and McCallum High School.

I write today with respect to the August 12 hearing on "educational opportunity proposals". I testify against any bill that intends to transfer public taxpayer funds to private entities. Public taxpayer funds belong only in public schools that benefit all children. Every Texas child deserves access to quality public education and this bill would be detrimental to our already drastically underfunded public schools. As a person of deep Christian faith, I believe wholeheartedly in the dignity and worth of every person and believe that funding our public schools is a way we live out the Great Commandment. I believe in the separation of church and state and this bill goes against that. Our public dollars need to remain in public schools. Every child, regardless of faith, color, need, culture, race, in our schools today is a beloved and gifted child and their education matters for our future as a country. Thank you.

---

Rebecca Ruiz  
Self- Homeschooling Mom  
Waco, TX

I am AGAINST any voucher (ESA) program of any kind. It is not an educational opportunity. It's another welfare program and a redistribution of wealth. It expands the government. If TX is so worried about how public schools are, why make private schools into those same public schools? That is what this bill will do. We should not be looking for ways to expand government. This will take away autonomy from parents and give control to government entities. In other states that have implemented similar programs, there have been issues of property taxes raising, the going extremely over budget, and regulations added on later. We have immense freedom in this state, as we should, for homeschoolers. This will jeopardize that freedom. Even with the wording of it only affecting those who "opt in" to this type of program, it is coming with regulations that take away freedom from those families. Homeschoolers in other states that have ESA programs and did not opt in, are having to fight now to differentiate themselves from those who did. That should not have to happen. If helping families is truly behind the impetus for this, then please consider other alternatives such as tax exemptions so that a family can use their own money and not give it over to the government to restrict them in their freedom. This would be the definition of true choice. All of the bills introduced have only been about money and funding, not about actual choice. It is not about actually helping families and making TX a landscape of true freedom.

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DeAnne Calverley, Ms.  
Public Education  
Rockwall, TX

I am against vouchers

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Cathleen Carroll  
Self  
North Richland Hills, TX

I am against school vouchers. There is no evidence this provides any opportunities to those who do not already have those opportunities. I want my tax dollars spent to bolster and support our public school system, to include increased wages, retirement benefits and better health insurance for our teachers. You've already screwed HISD with your self-serving manipulation. A vote for vouchers by any candidate will not have my vote.

---



Elizabeth Stockley  
Self  
Corpus Christi, TX

All children in Texas deserve a quality education. Put money into teacher pay, smaller class size. Vouch will take money away from deserving students. Vouchers help the wealthy households not the average student. They have been a financial drain on states like Arizona who have implemented them. Vote NO!

---

martha magee  
self  
abilene, TX

No to vouchers! Public taxes stay in public schools. I worked 30 years as a public school teacher and later school librarian. I've lived the constant struggle at the start of every school when Abilene ISD/State determine monies allocated to my school. The yearly average I spent on supplies, etc. was close to \$2000 dollars. Due to state funds being reduced each year, I can't imagine cutting more funds for private schools. Please be sensible and vote down vouchers. Thank you.

---

Melissa Aellos  
Self, Tutor  
Manor, TX

I tutor young adults with learning disabilities and am strongly against the adoption of vouchers, education savings accounts, or any other scheme to divert funding from our public schools in Texas. I'm disappointed that we're still discussing this, given that it is unjust to students with special needs and their families, who lose their rights to federally protected services. We need to focus our work on filling high-need shortage areas in our public schools like special education; even with public money, private schools don't have to provide the appropriate services in the student's education plan. Students of all abilities deserve high-quality public education where they can learn, grow, and thrive. We must continue to fund the public schools in our communities. Time is ticking and we're wasting it.

---

Norman Wilcox  
Self Retired  
Coppell, TX

I am strongly opposed to the continued underfunding of Texas public schools while using that to justify vouchers. Legislators know the majority use of vouchers will be by upper middle class and above while further damaging the funding of our public schools. Further, school vouchers are primarily a testimony to the continued racism behind the now banned DEI and CRT.

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Becky Lewis  
self / Executive Assistant  
Dallas, TX

No to targeted religion curriculum as we are now neglecting all students and their thoughts and not to mention the Constitutional right of Church vs State.

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Frederick Gay  
Self  
Fort Worth, TX

Our children deserve better than to have to deal with the fallout of public education funding being siphoned off to pay for private, unaccountable schools, in what is quite possibly the least fiscally conservative move imaginable by a so-called conservative government. Do your jobs. Do better. Or get out of the way so people who care can.

---

Elizabeth Wilcox

Self Retired teacher and mother of two public school teachers

Coppell, TX

I am strongly opposed to the continued underfunding of Texas public schools while using that to justify vouchers. Legislators know the majority use of vouchers will be by upper middle class and above while further damaging the funding of our public schools. Further, school vouchers are primarily a testimony to the continued racism behind the now banned DEI and CRT.

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Kristy Daniells

Self

Mineral Wells, TX

I fully support funding our public schools and do not support my taxpayer money going to fund Tim Dunn and Farris Wilks school voucher program. The religious teachings of these two individuals mimic that of Warren Jeffs and Buffalo Bill Hawkins (aka Yisrayl Hawkins). The filth these two individuals are attempting to indoctrinate precious minds with is heinous. It is absolutely appalling that Texas would entertain allowing these two individuals to dictate how a free state is ran.

---

Patricia McPherson

Self

Granbury, TX

I am very against any sort of voucher or financing of other entities beyond our public school which do not accept all students, require a state curriculum, and do not measure student progress on that curriculum. Our money should go to our public schools and charter schools held accountable by the State of Texas. I want my money applied to schools every child can attend. Our State does now and always has given children many areas of choice in education. If parents want religious affiliated schools, they should pay for that, not my tax money. If parents want home school, they should pay for that, not my tax money. I am thankful for our public schools, teachers, students and families. Say NO to vouchers.

---

Lori Kirkpatrick

self

Dallas, TX

I strongly OPPOSE any voucher-type legislation, including ESAs, etc. We should NOT send tax dollars to private entities that do not abide by the same standards as public schools and that are not governed by the people.

---

Michalyn Porter

Self

Austin, TX

School vouchers are a terrible idea, and a scam. It costs tax payers more for worse outcomes.

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Linzy Foster  
Self  
Austin, TX

Public dollars should be kept in public school. I oppose voucher programs AAs private schools are allowed to discriminate against students with special needs (I know personal instances of this happening). We should focus on increasing the per student allotment so that the state of Texas can uphold its constitutional obligation to properly fund Texas public schools. In small rural areas, and in large urban areas, public schools are an essential part of the local economy and people depend on these jobs. Our current funding has not kept up with inflation and the passage of vouchers would further decimate funding for public schools, in addition to impacting adult's jobs, salaries and benefits. We are a wealthy state and our funding per student is abysmal and embarrassing on a national level (various metrics show within the bottom 10 states nationally). Please oppose voucher and educational savings accounts and increase the per student allotment!

---

Mary Selby  
Self  
Austin, TX

I am a student of public education and now my child is a student in the public education system. I urge you to fun the PUBLIC education system, do not ring vouchers by any name to the state of Texas, and give parents true choice. I also want to stress that we have the funds to make this right and we are holding education hostage for political gain.  
--8B of the \$33B surplus last session came from property taxes Texans paid believing it was going to, if not their own schools, then someone else's children's school. Instead, it was kept to pad our surplus and only \$5B was offered to public schools in the budget, far below what was necessary to even keep up with inflation, let alone meet the true needs of our kids.  
--Most states with Voucher programs have seen little or no growth in the number of students in private schools, despite ballooning state budgets, as a result of this investment. That's because as many as 90% of Voucher recipients are already in private schools - it's simply a coupon for them.  
Special needs students lose their Federal protections when they accept Vouchers.  
Pay our teachers, keep our kids educated, and keep choice in the hands of public citizens and not the private sector. We are failing future Texans.  
Thank you for your time-Mary Selby

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Kelly Savoy  
Montgomery ISD  
Spring, TX

Fund public schools with public tax dollars. Not this nonsense of "school choice". Do better.

---

Simon Barnboym  
Self  
MCKINNEY, TX

I'm here to voice my strong opposition to vouchers. Use the taxpayer surplus to fund our schools without vouchers.

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Benjamin Jackson  
Our Vote Our Voice  
Dallas, TX

School Vouchers will further deplete public schools across Texas. Public schools already have several unfunded mandates by the states, and this will add another burden on school district by pulling public funds to send to private schools who do not have the same accountability standards  
. No to the private school voucher system

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Ann Potts  
Self  
Keller, TX

Public dollars belong in public schools. Do not allow outside business interests and religious extremists to rob our children of educational opportunities in their local neighborhood schools. Properly fund public education by increasing the basic allotment and funding by enrollment, don't destroy the system with vouchers. Look to the states who already implanted this plan - it hasn't worked anywhere and it has stolen money from students and enriched businesses who care about the bottom line, not educational outcomes.

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Dr. Pamela Grayson  
Collective Activism, Inc.  
Dallas, TX

It is absolutely asinine to attempt religiocize education as no one's religion supersedes another to include atheists, agnostics, and those that study religions from other countries. This completely flies in the face of the separation of church and state. If the god one serves doesn't force everyone to serve them, then who is man to do this ignorant act?? Stop it.

---

Dr. Lizzy Johnson, CEO of TransCend4  
Self and the 5.4 million students in the state of Texas  
Corinth, TX

It is past time that our state lawmakers correctly fund our Texas Public Schools and stop chasing vouchers/ESAs. Texas public school students need advocates to stand up for them and our lawmakers should be at the top of that list. Quit playing political theatre and do your job. Public education is the bedrock of our society and the great equalizer. Stop holding it hostage.

---

Marilyn Kepner  
self  
Fort Worth, TX

Vouchers are not the solution to quality education. Funding public schools with certified teachers and a robust curriculum is the answer. Vote no vouchers !

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Jessica Catrett  
Self  
Houston, TX

Public school funds should remain in public school. I parent who is completely opposed to vouchers for private schools.

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Kelly Blikre  
Self/parent  
Houston, TX

I am writing to voice my opposition against implementing a voucher system in Texas. School vouchers will only serve to take more money from our already chronically underfunded public schools. In addition, while voucher systems are often marketed as "school choice," the choice only goes one way. Private schools do not have to accept all students, including students with special needs, students who are unable to afford tuition even with the voucher money, students who are not performing at grade level... the list goes on. A voucher system would decimate our public school system, and hurt all of our students, and especially our most vulnerable students.

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Casey Magnuson

Self, as a parent, and now grandparent, of students being educated in public schools.

GARLAND, TX

There was a lot of great information given by the panel today, and I would be interested in getting more information on Utah and Indiana model for ESA's.

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Abigail Henson

self

Houston, TX

I am opposed to vouchers. This huge new expense for the state of Texas is a massive transfer of wealth from taxpaying Texans everywhere to a few wealthy families who ALREADY utilize and pay for private schooling. As a parent with a child enrolled in Houston ISD, I want my taxpaying dollars to benefit his education, which I value and which has been under-funded for far too long. I DO NOT support the voucher system, which will only exacerbate this under-funding issue.

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Rebecca Hughes

Self

Fort Worth, TX

With respect to the August 12 Hearing on "educational opportunity" proposals, I submit my testimony to oppose any Bill that would transfer Public taxpayer funds to private entities. I have lived in Tarrant County for 8 years. My two grandchildren are enrolled in the Spanish Immersion program at Liberty Elementary in the White Settlement ISD. My family believes that children should learn several languages and cultures. We believe in Public Education.

To honor our Texas Constitution,

Public taxpayer funds should go ONLY to public schools that benefit all, not to private schools that benefit only a privileged few. Any bill that would give public funds for the support of private schools will drain funds from our Texas children's and grandchildren's neighborhood public schools, which are already gravely underfunded. Our Texas Public School should be the finest in the Country. Unfortunately needed funds have been withheld in the latest attacks against Public Education across this Country.

Any claim by voucher proponents that vouchers benefit the underprivileged is lie. The vast majority of parents who would take advantage of vouchers 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. Other States are realizing the mistake of implementing Voucher programs. Texas should avoid the pitfalls of Vouchers.

Above all, I do 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. Public Taxpayers funds should never be allowed to pay for religious education.

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/School Choice plans are a bad policy. They hurt our children and grandchildren, and the dedicated public servants - schoolteachers, principals, superintendents, and other staff - who serve them. They deny everyone an opportunity for a quality education.

Please vote against any bills that provide public taxpayer funds for the support of private schools.

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Deidre Square  
Self  
Houston, TX

I am all for school choice. But, if your school of choice is private, then pay for it yourself; privately. I pay for public schools already. Use taxpayer money to make the schools that are free and accessible to everyone, better.

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Felicia Moralez  
Self  
Houston, TX

As a proud Texan and mother of three school-aged children, I cannot, in good conscience, support school vouchers. These vouchers can deepen educational inequality by redirecting public funds away from already underfunded public schools to private institutions. Since vouchers often only partially cover private school tuition, many families can't afford the additional costs. This leaves public schools, which serve the majority of students—especially those from low-income families—with even fewer resources and a diminished ability to provide quality education.

Moreover, private schools are not subject to the same standards and accountability measures as public schools, leading to less oversight on how taxpayer dollars are spent. This lack of accountability is unacceptable.

In the end, while school vouchers are marketed as a way to increase choice, they risk undermining the principle of equal access to education, resulting in a fragmented and unequal educational system.

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Sarah Rivlin, Ms.  
Self, organizer  
Houston, TX

Vote no on vouchers. Vouchers will further decimate our already starved public schools. They will enrich elite private schools at the expense of our public school students.

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Christi Brewster  
Self  
Houston, TX

I oppose the voucher program due to an opportunity to defer public education funds from public schools...period.

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Kristopher walsh  
Self  
Houston, TX

Public money should be spent on public schools not vouchers

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Joshua Irwin  
Self  
Fort Worth, TX

I'm opposed to "educational opportunity" bill.

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Lisa Robinson  
Self  
Houston, TX

As a longtime advocate for traditional public education, I am 100% opposed to vouchers in any form. Public funds need to stay with our public schools, not be diverted to private schools. Parents always have the choice to send their children to private schools—but that doesn't mean public dollars should pay for them to do so. Vote NO on vouchers and demand that the funds being held hostage by Governor Abbott be released ASAP to our school districts. Stop starving our schools. They are the bedrock of our Democracy and should be supported by all elected officials working in Austin regardless of political party. Funding and supporting our traditional public schools should be a nonpartisan priority. My two year old grandson and I thank you.

---

Anna Heinzemann, Dr  
Self / Professor  
Houston, TX

School vouchers are terrible for Texans. We should want every child to be able to get a good education and that means funding and supporting public schools. Use this money to further fund them and release the money being held up by the Governor for public schools. Improving public schools means everyone gets a better education. Vouchers are only going to benefit a certain subset of residents. They are discriminating in that aspect and costly. Ensuring the teachers of Texas get a better pay, the schools are better funded, and children are getting the wrap around services needed is much more equitable and financially responsible.

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Donna Gregory  
Self  
Dallas, TX

I oppose school vouchers. We need to fully fund our public schools—not splinter our system. I have read that vouchers are causing serious budget problems in Arizona. I have not seen data that shows they are beneficial in any state where they have been enacted.

There are not enough private schools to meet the needs of our students; plus a private school can choose to reject any applicant. Private schools are not subject to the State standards imposed on public schools. And I have learned some things about home schooling—it appears to completely lack meaningful oversight. If vouchers are approved, there will be a proliferation of questionable private schools and more people home schooling just to get voucher money.

Despite this representing a radical change to our education system in Texas, I have never seen a comprehensive plan to show how it would actually work. Schools are being starved right now, needed funding being withheld to extort votes for vouchers. It looks as if our government in Texas wants to destroy public schools and replace them with religious schools which seem to be preferred by two West Texas billionaires. All of this is hidden under the pleasant sounding phrase “school choice.” I wish everyone could know the truth and that our leaders would tell the truth.

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Diana Candida  
Self  
Houston, TX

I oppose school vouchers. They mostly benefit the wealthy and children who are already attending private schools. Vouchers fail to improve student achievement, reduce available funding for the public school system (which benefits all of society), and results in students with special needs or who are English learners to not be supported. Vote no on vouchers, please.

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Janet Montgomery  
SELF public school teacher, retired  
Bellville, TX

As a voter and a taxpayer, I implore you to go slow, gather information, and get this right. The mistakes made by other states are Texas's opportunity to learn. Public schools are currently underfunded. If you want Education Savings Accounts to pass, make it palatable to the public schools, by INCREASING the student allotment for public schools to EQUAL the amount determined for education savings accounts. Recipients of state funds must be held accountable, and funds should be released monthly or quarterly, to accommodate students who choose to leave their private school and return to public schools. Texas CAN get this RIGHT, by providing for the needs of the students who stay in PUBLIC schools as well as those who choose to attend PRIVATE schools.

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Nancy True  
Self  
Hickory Creek, TX

I oppose public funds directed as subsidy to private entities, clearly a violation of constitutional principles, regardless of which industry. Every violation of the sound policy within our nation's founding documents invite further deterioration of the constitutional republic form of government under which our nation enjoyed the unique benefits of optimal liberty and prosperity for the largest percentage of the population ever experienced in recorded history.

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Katherine Robinson  
Self/stay at home mom/ PTA Board Member  
Houston, TX

I am opposed to vouchers. I believe every person has a right to public education. I do not believe that vouchers and charter schools will better our children but rather line the pockets of private companies. As a parent with two children enrolled in Houston ISD, I want my taxpaying dollars to benefit his and her education, which I value. The public school system has been under-funded for far too long. I DO NOT support the voucher system, which will only exacerbate this under-funding issue.

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Michelle Williams  
Houston Education Association  
Spring, TX

I attended private school until my junior year of high school. Private doesn't necessarily mean better. I work in Houston ISD and one misguided decision to hire a particular superintendent set Houston ISD's most vulnerable population on path to declining test score.

This superintendent was allowed to ignore the needs of its most challenging students.

Fifty-three percent of Texas' public school students are Latino. If Vouchers are allowed to pass the state of Texas will be set on the same path as Houston ISD. Vouchers will not benefit Latino on Black students. What they will do is create a system of haves and have not which will ultimately lead to failure. What the HISD community has learned is what affects one school will ultimately affect all schools.

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Ruth Hoffman Lach, Ph.D.  
self School Psychologist  
Houston, TX

As a school psychologist, I cannot emphasize enough how removing tax dollars from public schools and sending them to private schools has disproportionately negative impacts on students who need the most support. Private schools are not only not required to provide services to students with special education needs, they also are not required to participate in Child Find, which means that students who may need special education services may never even have their needs identified. In addition, because private schools are allowed to hire uncertified teachers, there is no guarantee that teachers have even undergone the training to recognize when a student's struggles may warrant referral and assessment. Thus, a child with dyslexia who attends private school from day one may never be diagnosed, and may instead struggle for all 12 years, never reaching her potential, and suffering real harm. Furthermore, private schools do not offer the same opportunities for students to explore fine arts - particularly not instrumental music or advanced graphic arts, which tragically precludes many from ever developing skills for which they could earn college scholarships. Indeed, my own son was introduced to French Horn in 6th grade because he was "put into" band when the art class he wanted was full. Within two days, the band director became his favorite teacher. He earned a spot at the performing arts magnet high school, and could have easily earned a scholarship to college. Without that opportunity, he would never have considered playing horn, and I certainly would not have been able to afford to buy him a horn, if he had. The vast majority of students who become involved in band, orchestra, theater, or graphic arts do so because they are given the opportunity through public schools. Private schools simply do not have the funding to pay for an entire band or orchestra worth of instruments, pottery wheels, silk screens, photography equipment, theater sets, costumes, etc. Those opportunities are only available in public schools. Texas is already ranked in the very bottom of the nation for public education. Sending our public education dollars to private schools will put us in competition with Mississippi and Alabama for dead last. That's shameful.

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Tiffany Clark  
Self  
DeSoto, TX

No to vouchers! Public education is already under attack and working with school districts 75% of them had to do budget cuts or adopt deficit budgets. Put more money into the public schools and give our students equal opportunity.

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Andrea Kline  
Self; Social Studies curriculum coordinator  
Waxahachie, TX

I oppose the movement of tax dollars to reimburse parents who choose to send their student to private school. Private schools are not held accountable in the same way public schools are, creating a lack of transparency on how public dollars are spent to educate children.

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Sherry Douglas  
Self  
LaRue, TX

No to vouchers!

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Rebecca Danforth, Dr.

Self

Houston, TX

I oppose any type of school Vouchers. Vouchers are designed to move tax payer money into private hands. Moreover, while presented as improving opportunity to families, vouchers do nothing to expand school options. Small towns and big cities alike won't suddenly have access to private schools - many of which are already at capacity anyway. Charter schools may move in, but so many of them are profit driven and lack any sort of accountability to students or tax payers. A voucher program would take money away from public schools and widen the gaps between those who have additional resources and those who do not.

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Juan H Flores

Latino Texas Policy Center

San Antonio, TX

The Latino Texas Policy Center (LTPC) is a newly established state organization developing as a policy research think tank to inform and address barriers to Latino families' social and economic mobility. Education is a critical human resource with a recognized positive impact on social and economic mobility.

LTPC strongly opposes legislation that takes public money away from public schools, such as any potential school voucher legislation, including the education savings account (ESA) program or tax credit scholarship. Such programs simply add to the states' history of inequitable public-school funding and wasteful tax-payer investments, as highlighted below.

Texas presents a complex, inequitable education landscape resulting from a history of underfunding in this critical human capital investment resource. Although education funding has increased, public school funding has not kept pace with inflation and student population growth. The state ranked 43rd in public spending per K-12 students and 42nd in overall educational opportunities and performance in 2021. The state also received an 'F' grade in support of teachers. The state ranks 42nd in overall public-school funding and demonstrates low performance in significant areas of early childhood education enrollment (41st), 8th-grade reading (47th), and math (35th) proficiency.

Further, Early Head Start, which has proven to promote social-emotional and language development in children before they reach pre-k, ranks 49th. Based on the available slots, only 4.5 percent of eligible Texas children have access, whereas the U.S. average is significantly higher at 8%. The preceding indicators all contribute to the state's rank of 43rd in overall educational attainment.

Texas continues to not equitably fund its public schools despite several decades of legal battles and advocacy by Latinos and its allies. In the 2021-22 school year, 5.4 million children were enrolled in Texas public schools. The Fall 2021 enrollment headcount in higher education was 1,551,000. Students of color comprised 72.2% and 59.9% of public school and higher education enrollment, respectively. Latino enrollment was 52.7% and 40%, respectively.

Over 75% of Latino public-school students are identified as economically disadvantaged compared to 30% of White. Of over 1 million English Language Learners (ESL) enrolled, 87% are Latino, who continue to have inadequate access to a quality education because of underfunding.

In summary, we urge the legislature to focus on strengthening our public schools by:

- ? increasing the basic allotment by at least \$1,000, with automatic adjustments for inflation;
  - ? increasing targeted funding for students in bilingual education and special education;
  - ? investing in evidence-based in-school programs, including Early College High Schools and high-impact intervention programs;
  - ? fund full pre-kindergarten education for all children.
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Thelma Clardy  
self- attorney  
DeSoto TX, TX

I am writing to express my total opposition to vouchers, as I believe that they are discriminatory, violate the tenets of church and state, and are nothing more than a ploy to weaken public education. As a black professional who attended both private and public schools during my elementary and secondary years, I know that public schools can be just as strong if the right funding is provided. We need to stop withholding public funds from our public school system and release some of the billion dollar plus fund we have now to support teachers and staff, administrators, math and science programs, technology, etc. Stop playing politics and let's do the right thing.

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Bridgette Murray  
Self  
Houston, TX

As a product of Public education and a taxpayer, I do not support school vouchers. This approach DOES NOT EQUITABLY provide education access. Public education is underfunded. Correct Public education first

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HAZEL LUNDY  
Self  
Missouri City, TX

I oppose the initiative of vouchers. This act will severely cripple our public school system. Education is a right not a privilege and each and every child should be affordrd

---

Jenny Bridges

Self, public relations practitioner

Waxahachie, TX

Vouchers represent an inverse Robin Hood — taking opportunities from the poor to further fund the rich. Poor children have limited means of transportation to get to private schools, no means to make up the difference between a voucher and private school tuition totals, and so many more barriers to entering private schools. Poor children will NOT be the ones who benefit from vouchers. Instead, they will be adversely impacted when funding is pulled from public schools which are already facing a state-made budget crisis. Furthermore, private schools can effectively cherry pick only the students they want to enroll — they do not have to take students with special needs, behavioral issues, learning disabilities. Public schools must — and happily do — take ALL students.

Why would a voucher need to be \$10,000 when the state provides only about 65 percent of that amount in funding per public school student? If the state believes \$10,000 is an appropriate amount to subsidize private school for the wealthy, then that amount should also be appropriate for per-student funding in a public school setting.

Rather than focusing on vouchers, what the legislature should be doing is focusing on the \$60 billion dollars it is sitting on and withholding from public schools, who have not seen any new money from the state in a time when households are seeing 20 percent inflation. Teachers are effectively taking a pay cut every year they work in public schools. Beyond inflation, the insurance options provided for public school staff provide fewer services and cost more every year. This is unsustainable.

If vouchers are truly a make-or-break program for this legislature, then I propose the following:

1. Any voucher amount should be equal to or less than the per-pupil amount allotted to public school districts by the state.
2. There should be NO vouchers of any kind for homeschooling. This is ripe for rampant abuse of the system and of children.
3. The state MUST appropriately fund public schools and allow us to pay teachers a living wage.
4. All public school staff members should have the option to enroll in the same insurance programs that state employees have access to.
5. Any private school that accepts vouchers must be subject to all of the same accountability measures as public schools — what is good for one taxpayer-funded entity must be good for all entities that accept taxpayer funds.
6. Public schools in Texas should be funded based on enrollment, not attendance. 46 of 50 states currently fund based on enrollment. Texas should be no different.

Texas should be leading the way in funding per student, teacher recruitment and retention, and overall quality of our educational programs. Unfortunately, the legislature has continued to provide unfunded mandates and withhold funding from schools to make wealthy donors happy. It has to stop. I implore you to be the legislature that becomes known for making Texas public schools all they can be.

---

Allison Fond

self

Keller, TX

Stop holding the educational funds hostage and release the money for education. We DO NOT want vouchers in Texas as this will hurt the majority of students who receive public education. Vouchers will only help the students who already attend private education or can afford to attend private education. Public education is hurting for adequate funding and desperately needs funding to educate students appropriately. Stop holding this money hostage.

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COMMENTS FOR Educational Opportunity

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Suzanne Mabe  
Self. Retired  
Fort Worth, TX

I'm against my tax money being given for public school vouchers. Please defeat this bill. I want the money set aside that for public schools that is being held hostage by Gov Abbott. We need to support our public school and not give public money to private or religious schools.

---

Amanda Wilder  
Self  
Houston, TX

Please vote NO to school vouchers and keep public dollars with public schools that DESPERATELY need the funding for infrastructure updates to schools. Please protect educational opportunities for all socioeconomic levels by keeping public dollars where all can benefit.

---

Ruth Irwin  
Self  
Dallas, TX

No to vouchers!

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Jeremy Eugene  
Community Voices for Public Education  
Missouri City, TX

I am a teacher of special education, English, and Reading at a public school in Texas, and I represent the Houston advocacy group Community Voices for Public Education. I am against vouchers and the governor's plan to set them up in the state. They take away funding that is severely needed in the public school system and negatively impact students and teachers in the process. See "The Impact of Charter School Competition on Student Achievement of Traditional Public Schools" by Eunice Han and Jeffrey Keefe.

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Donna Kearley  
None  
Highland Vlg, TX

I would like to register my opposition to any vouchers, Educational Savings Accounts. Research shows students do less poorly on tests, and don't serve all students. Research in Arizona shows the costs continue to rise until it eliminates any state surplus and requires massive cuts.

---

Jennifer Coke  
Self  
Woodway, TX

As a TRS retiree of 34 years in Waco, I strongly oppose any tax money going to vouchers unless:  
Private schools must follow the same mandates as public ed, especially regarding testing.  
Public Ed is fully funded based on enrollment before a penny is spent on vouchers.  
If a student leaves private for public ed, private school refunds the money for the remainder of the school year to the public school.  
Private schools must provide transportation for students who live more than 2 miles away and meet low income requirements.  
If a private school accepts vouchers, their teachers and school must pay into TRS

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Tanequa Williams  
Precinct Chair 3073  
Dallas, TX

No

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Leslie Santamaria  
Self, Talent Advisor  
Houston, TX

I am a 4th generation Texan and opposed to any voucher scheme. Vouchers divert much needed public funds to private institutions that can discriminate against vulnerable Texans.

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Nissa Lind  
Self  
Austin, TX

Do not use public tax prayer dollars for private schools! First, increase PUBLIC school funding for inflation to the current year 2024. Then you need to revamp Robin hood law because you are stealing money from schools and just putting it into the general budget. 70% of you are crooks just playing the wealthy and special interests that put you into office. Public education should be a right for everyone. If the wealthy want to put their kids in private schools, they don't need tax breaks to pay for it, they can already afford it just fine. Bottom line is no vouchers for unaccountable private schools. That includes no ESAs or whatever other creative name you come up with. Stand up to the governor and his wealthy donor cabal.

---

Dorcas Hand, Ms  
Self  
Houston, TX

In a state where education has hardly been funded for a decade or more, the idea that vouchers will help anything is unrealistic. First, the voucher \$ will not fund a private school education. It does effectively offer wealthy families whose kids already attend private schools an effective scholarship while hurting kids from under resourced families who can't really move in the ways state leaders funded by billionaires try to suggest. Meanwhile our traditional private schools have less and less \$\$ to educate the kids without other options. Texas will need all of our children to be able to think, do math, hold jobs that require them to read. We the citizens of TX need cashiers and AC repair people we can rely on. Vouchers hurt that pipeline. NO VOUCHERS. None! It's a bad idea from the start.

---

Michelle Sammon  
Penelope ISD  
Dawson, TX

As a high school CTE teacher in a public school district with a nephew who attends a private school and therefore has vested interests in both sides of this argument, I would like to urge you to vote against ESAs, or as it is commonly referred, voucher systems. It does not matter which name you prefer, funding would have to be removed from historically underfunded public schools in Texas to provide this opportunity to those who prefer to attend private school districts. In rural areas such as ours, students of low economic status would be unable to travel to the nearest private schools on a daily basis even if this is what they would "prefer". Therefore, I am asking that you remember not every child has a "school choice" and these students do not deserve to have limits to those opportunities they currently have in order to serve those who do. We are constitutionally required to provide funding for public schools serving the majority, not to provide private school funding for the minority.

---

Jennifer Furlough  
Self  
Garland, TX

Texans deserve a vote before vouchers. This is not a great idea for a majority of Texans.

---

Jennifer Virdell  
Self, Flight Attendant for Major US Airline  
Marble Falls, TX

My child was enrolled in a private school for two years (8th thru 9th grade) and when she returned to public school, she had to get remedial assistance. There is a general lack of rigor in private schools. Our taxpayer dollars support a free and appropriate public education, not a selective, private education with no accountability.

---

Tiffany Stafford  
Self, nonprofit executive  
Porter, TX

Fully fund Texas public schools! No vouchers!

---

Marcus Glenn  
Self  
Houston, TX

My support is for FUNDING PUBLIC EDUCATION, I oppose school vouchers. This is a scheme to destroy public education in Texas and makes our state less competitive.

---

Rhiannon Jones  
Self. Retired Texas Classroom Teacher  
Burlleson, TX

I am opposed to vouchers in the State of Texas. Public money should not be used for private education, period. Especially when the intent is to support private religious instruction that is not subject to Title IX requirements.

---

Jennifer Hunter  
Self- public school employee  
Edna, TX

Parents already have a choice. Vouchers pull public money from public schools and are not a viable solution. Say no to vouchers (by any name or description!).

---

Jo Ann Duman, Ms  
Self  
Texarkana, TX

Public schools have been the foundation of increasing democracy in our nation. Public schools are also the heart of our rural communities. Texas Constitution guarantees system of efficient free education system. That constitution does not support private non-public schools especially religious schools that should pay for themselves. The voucher effort is meant to destroy public schools in favor of extremist religious views. Parents with those views may send children to those schools but at their own expense. I completely oppose vouchers or any use of taxpayer funds for private schools especially religious schools. Increase funding for public schools and pay our teachers more money and increase their retirement and insurance benefits. Do not use taxpayer money for wealthy families who want to use segregated schools for their own benefit not the benefit of knowledge of citizenship responsibilities taught in public schools.

---

TyBresheya Turner, Ms.  
Self  
Desoto, TX

I don't support scripted religion in public schools because it takes away from all students being represented.

---

Daisy chavez  
Self  
Hockley, TX

Parents should have a right to chose private education at their own cost, not at the cost of the state. State funds should stay for public education only. Public schools are already severely underfunded which is detrimental to all students.

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Lorna Lawrence  
Self  
FORT WORTH, TX

No to school vouchers! Fund public schools. Don't get rich people welfare.

---

Robert Woodhouse  
Self  
Waxahachie, TX

Stop the unfair funding for districts because of vouchers! Not until ALL requirements are equal would I even consider. You want to fund rich people not the poor!

---



David Wolf  
Self, AP World History Teacher  
Ft. Worth, TX

I am a proud public school teacher, coming from a long line of educators. When you combine the years of service my family has contributed to public education, it exceeds 100 years. I can confidently speak on behalf of my family when I say that vouchers, in any form, are a harmful scam that will negatively impact public education in Texas.

Today, Texas teachers are unable to advocate for ourselves in person as we prepare to welcome students back to the classroom. This committee has scheduled this hearing at a time they knew would limit our visible presence, which I find to be cowardly and shameful.

Vouchers will have a negative impact on public education in Texas. Vouchers redirect vital funding from public schools, which cater to the majority of our students, including those with the greatest needs. This loss of resources leads to larger class sizes, fewer support services, and reduced opportunities for students. Public education aims to offer every child, regardless of their background, a quality education. By diverting funds, vouchers jeopardize this mission and create a system where only a few benefit while many suffer.

Currently my district, like so many others, is running a massive budget deficit because of the funding currently being held hostage for vouchers in Texas. You have a constitutional duty to provide and fund public education in Texas....a job you currently neglecting.

---

Lindsey Ballinas  
Self  
Houston, TX

I do not support taxes going towards the funding of private school vouchers. Public education is the already so underfunded. Instead of giving vouchers to parents , public schools need to be invested in more! Support public education and help us help ALL students.

---

Ruth Pilarte  
Self  
Houston, TX

I oppose tax-payer funded school vouchers. Fund our public schools!

---

Nancy Sharp  
self  
Lubbock, TX

I oppose any "educational opportunity program" that provides public funds for private, home, virtual or charter schools which does not have identical accountability testing and standards. It is fundamental that any expenditure of public funds for the education of children should require the same accountability standards be met to receive funding, which can only be measured by the same test, accountability standards and consequences.

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Cleo Johnson, Mrs  
Self  
Houston, TX

opposition to vouchers

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Mary Woodard  
self  
DeSoto, TX

I find it interesting that the Committee on Public Education invited only positive testimony today regarding vouchers/ESAs from a state that is much smaller than Texas and has only had an ESA program in operation for one year. Vouchers/ESAs are not the way to improved education in Texas. It's terrible that our legislators are allowing Texas students to be used as political pawns in this way.

---

Cynthia White  
Self, Retired  
Dallas, TX

No to VOUCHERS, as we are taking money from public education.

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Joni Fincham  
Self  
Houston, TX

School vouchers will only hurt our public school without giving greater access to private education. Private schools cost well over \$10k per year and they don't provide special education. Vouchers also take important funds from rural schools. I implore you to end this fight for others and start funding our public schools who can best serve our children if you would only fund them!

---

Claire Robinson  
Self  
Houston, TX

No vouchers ever! I am opposed to vouchers because they take money from all of our public schools, are an expensive program with no proven improvement in student outcomes, and most importantly violate the separation of church and state.

---

Rowland Steptoe  
Selfishness  
Houston, TX

I'm against school vouchers

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Kevin Tinker, Mr.  
Self  
Grand Prairie, TX

No to vouchers. My tax money must go to improve public schools.

---

James Michael Robinson  
Self  
Houston, TX

I oppose vouchers and ESAs because it divert money from public to private schools. Another reason is they primarily benefit higher income families.

---

Rachel Mitchell

Self

Allen, TX

Do not fund education savings accounts!

Any government funds must include accountability for use of those funds

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Deborah Pankow

Self / Clerk El Paso ISD

El Paso, TX

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators.

Abbott's refusal to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students.

Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5,000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9,000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents.

---

Jarred Burton

self

Katy, TX

Good afternoon Chairman Buckley, and members of the committee. I come to you today as a high school student from the Houston area, and a primary stakeholder in what is being discussed in this room today.

It is no secret that Texas has the second most K-12 students in the country, yet ranks 43rd in funding. Each public school across the state receives a base rate of about \$6,160 per enrolled student, but I'm sure you already know all the numbers.

As a student advocate who has visited many districts in my area, there are two words that have seemingly followed me wherever I go. "Budget deficit." Some big, some small, but nevertheless, it has had a grip on each district I've been to. For example, a lack of sufficient funding in CFISD, the third largest district in the state, has led to the amount of librarians being cut in half, stripping many children of an extremely valuable resource.

Private schools are not federally funded, and therefore are not subject to some federal laws in the same way public schools are. Students with disabilities will suffer due to minimal compliance with the ADA. Female students may face lesser opportunities due to minimal compliance with Title IX. Religious private schools will very easily get away with mistreating their students and promoting harmful beliefs. Those in support of vouchers say it gives parents the choice for their child when public school is not working out, but by that logic it makes no sense to refuse to increase public school funding to help fix some of those very problems driving families away in the first place.

Our education is being compromised, and what are we doing? We're sitting here in a room debating about diverting money that could go towards public education, to families to give to private schools who may not even be legally obligated or willing to support their specific needs. Governor Abbott has refused to consider increasing public education funds until vouchers were passed, and there are some on this committee who are in agreement with his actions. I ask that you look at me. Look at the students. You are holding our future hostage.

Thank you for your time.

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Hayden Cohen  
Self, Students Engaged in Advancing Texas (SEAT)  
Houston, TX

Chair Buckley and Committee Members,  
Students Engaged in Advancing Texas is a movement of young people developing transferable skills and demonstrating youth visibility in policymaking. As a student-led movement, we recognize that students are the primary stakeholders in education and are most directly impacted by educational policymaking decisions, which typically leave students out of the conversation. To center students in the narrative, we demand a SEAT at the Table.

School voucher programs are a scam to redirect public funds from taxpayers towards private institutions, often with limited oversight, accountability, and without obligation to follow many state regulations and civil rights protections to prevent discrimination against everyday Texans. As a result, they can lead to a myriad of issues that further harm the educational system of most Texans – that’s roughly 95% of Texas students in fact.

The misleading concept of parental empowerment overlooks the structural barriers many marginalized families face. Institutionalized racism, which has plagued our society for centuries, continues to create disparities in access to quality education, visible among communities historically redlined with oppression. Voucher programs inadvertently perpetuate this injustice by leaving behind those who are unable to navigate the complexities of admittance, enrollment, or transportation to private institutions.

Drawing funds away from public schools would ultimately harm class sizes, extracurricular activities, mental health services, special education, disability accommodations, environmental sustainability, programs to support individual student needs, and teacher welfare. Forcing public schools to eliminate these programs because of lost funds from vouchers would harmfully impact the student achievement gap. Students deserve better.

Families should not be even considering the “best schools” to send our students to if they were all equitably funded and serving all students. To achieve that, we need investment into our public education system, not divestment with vouchers. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that every student has access to a high-quality education. Thank you.

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SHERON BRUNO  
SELF  
Houston, TX

I would like to officially state that, as a citizen of Texas, I am opposed to school vouchers and believe that they will further hurt the public educational system that needs support. I am highly opposed to school vouchers because it is very limiting and does not provide equal opportunity to all students and taxpayers that fund education. Please accept this notice as my official notice of opposition to vouchers to the Texas Public Education Committee.

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Mardie Paige  
Super Neighborhood #13  
Houston, TX

Let it be known we in Independence Heights are fully opposed to school vouchers Schools included Burrus Elementary /Booker T Washington HS/Kennedy Elementary and High School Ahead

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Ruben Salazar  
Self  
Houston, TX

Good Morning Committee Members,  
My name is Ruben Salazar, I am a community organizer and public servant from Houston, Texas and a Senior at the University of Houston-Downtown. I am here today to give my opinion on a pressing issue that threatens the very foundation of our public education system and that is the proposed implementation of education savings accounts. While proponents argue that this system offers parents more choices for their children's education, the reality is that it could have devastating effects on our public schools and, ultimately, on the future of Texas. At its core, education savings accounts divert public funds away from our public schools to subsidize private education. This means that taxpayer dollars, which are meant to improve public schools, will instead be used to cover tuition for private institutions. This siphoning of resources will disproportionately affect rural and low-income communities, such as my community of East Aldine, where public schools are often the only option. With less funding, our public schools will struggle to maintain essential programs, pay qualified teachers, and provide the quality education that every child deserves. Moreover, private schools are not held to the same standards as public schools. They are not required to accept all students, and they are not subject to the same accountability measures. This could lead to a system where only certain students benefit from these education savings accounts, while others—particularly those with special needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds—are left behind in underfunded and overcrowded public schools. Education savings accounts also risk deepening the divide between different socioeconomic groups here in Texas. By allowing those who can already afford private education to use public funds, this system would effectively prioritize the needs of the few over the many. Public schools are the great equalizer in our society; they bring together students from all walks of life, teaching them not just academics, but also the values of diversity, inclusion, and community. By weakening our public schools, we risk undermining the very principles that make our society strong and cohesive. While school choice may sound appealing in theory, education savings accounts are a step in the wrong direction. They threaten to weaken our public schools, exacerbate inequality, and create a two-tiered education system that benefits the few at the expense of the many. I urge you to stand up for our public schools, support our teachers, and ensure that every child in Texas has access to a high-quality education—regardless of where they live or how much money their parents make.  
Thank you.

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Bonnie Foss  
None  
Coppell, TX

No school vouchers! We need strong public schools! Vouchers will be devastating and only benefit the wealthy.

---

Jasmine Milligan  
Self  
Tomball, TX

No vouchers

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Karen Brannan  
Self. Retired  
Whitesboro, TX

I believe the Bible should be taught in every school in Texas!!

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LaQuisha Peavy-Samuel  
Self  
Spring, TX

I oppose vouchers.

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Asleane Mccowin, Retired teacher  
Self  
Houston, TX

We need all funds to go to public education. Those families needing public education should be supported by the funds provided by the state. If you send your child to a PRIVATE school YOU THE PARENT PAY FOR IT!

---

Beverly Ashley, Dr  
Self  
Edinburg, TX

I do not agree with having charter schools

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lee latham  
self, software developer  
houston, TX

we all know school vouchers are a state money giveaway to rich donors in the process of destroying public education. we won't let you get away with it.

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Linden Urquieta  
Self and children  
Farmers Branch, TX

Vouchers need to be for public schools not for private schools. They charge tuition for a reason. Please do not allow for our public schools to have more funding taken away from those that need it most.

---

Hannah Friedman  
Educators In Solidarity  
Austin, TX

I am an instructional coach in central Texas at a large suburban district where I have worked for 13 years. I am strongly against the adoption of vouchers, education savings accounts, or any other scheme to divert funding from our public schools in Texas. I'm disappointed that we're still discussing this, given that it is incredibly fiscally irresponsible. Research shows vouchers will be used more by wealthy families already homeschooling or attending private schools, ultimately adding to the state's roster of students we're paying to educate instead of sending more funding to the schools that need it most. Also, it's not a choice for the parents and students, but is a choice for the private schools! Even if a family wants to use a voucher to attend, private schools can still deny them. Private schools often deny entry to students who receive special education services as they do not have the proper resources to service these students. The amount families would be provided through a voucher is nowhere near the cost of private school tuition. Families that live in rural districts, which is a large amount in Texas do not have private school options in their towns to send their children too. This bill would only benefit families who live near a larger city area.

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Ramona Thompson  
Self, retired  
Frisco, TX

No to vouchers and no to scripted curriculum

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Juanita Jones-Royal  
Self IT professional  
Richardson, TX

I am opposed to school vouchers, it's bad for public schools. I will vote against it if it appears on the ballot.

---

Cheryle Simmans, Retired teacher  
Self  
Victoria, TX

As a former educator, I am opposed to school vouchers, dubiously known as educational savings accounts. The only people saving any money are those who already have children in private schools. The amounts being floated that are supposed to follow the student are not enough to cover a semester for a student, not including the uniform and transportation costs parents will be required to bear.

Therefore, the only ones benefitting are the parents of students in private schools already.

Secondly, money channelled to private schools does not require the same accountability standards that money to public schools must meet. If standards and requirements are demanded of one, the same should be demanded of the other. The people of Texas expect to know how and where their money is spent. It is accounted for with our public schools, but private schools have no such requirement.

Thirdly, school vouchers will create discrimination against students of different racial backgrounds and against students with mental, physical and learning disabilities. Private schools can deny admission to anyone they choose; whereas, the public schools must accept all students. That is why the Texas Constitution mandated a free public education and a plan to fund those schools. Governor Abbott has been holding public schools hostage by refusing to fund them. His bully tactic is purposely hurting public schools, especially the rural schools. His raising money to oust those who oppose him shows that he is trying to force his pet project on Texans who do not want school vouchers. He needs to remember who elected him and that he represents the electorate.

---

Darelle Robbins  
Self/ Retired Clinical Nurse Specialist  
Houston, TX

I oppose school vouchers. I came from a family of teachers, professors and coaches, and I became a nursing educator myself. We need to rebuild the good public school system that we had here for years. School Vouchers are not the in the community's best interest.

---

Juan Goenaga  
Self--attorney  
Houston, TX

Reject vouchers. Every state that has implemented them has increased costs for the state with no improvement in outcomes. Vouchers are fiscally irresponsible. The best example is Arizona which has seen costs for the state skyrocket while test scores remain stagnant. The groups that benefit from vouchers are those who run charter schools and parents who already have the means to pay for private school. Why are we using tax dollars to subsidize private school for families that are in good financial state?

Studies show that vouchers replace public schools with mediocre charter schools. Once the public school in a community disappears, parents have no choice but to use the charter school. That's the perverse outcome of so-called school choice--parents end up with no choice. And of the company running the charter school goes out.of business, kids lives and educational opportunities are disrupted. The marketplace that vouchers create doesn't care about education the way even an underperforming ISD does.

Don't fall for fool's gold. Vouchers are expensive and do not improve educational outcomes.

---

Shea Nagel  
self/NA  
Houston, TX

Vouchers do not help parents make "choices" for their students. The amount of money is not enough to cover tuition at a private school. Additionally, private schools could simply raise their tuition by the voucher amount. Studies show that the vast majority of parents who accept school voucher money are those whose students are already enrolled in a private school. Vouchers would simply pull money out of our already financially under supported public school system.

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Jordan Lopez  
Self  
Houston, TX

We already have plenty of existing educational opportunities to attend high quality schools in this state. Adequately and fully fund existing public schools with our tax dollars that are already earmarked. Do not disenfranchise current tax payers of our state who want a diverse public education for our children for the few. Education is not meant to be a business. Decisions impacting our public school system and the lack of fully funding will begin to impact our state higher Ed universities which were founded on serving our state citizens.

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Virginia Gustin  
self  
Round Rock, TX

Regarding the assessment of an ESA program in Texas, there are some questions that need answering:

Why has the effort to create ESA or voucher programs only seemingly accelerated since 2020, when politicians and special interests successfully divided the people of this country against each other by politicizing the Covid pandemic and touching off the powderkeg of the "culture wars"?

Why have the Walton Family Foundation and the DeVos family been contributing millions of dollars to this effort?

Why have Tim Dunn and the Wilks brothers and Jeff Yass been investing tens of millions of dollars in this effort, either directly or through their funding organizations?

How many representatives on this committee have received donations from one or more of those organizations or other similar entities, in exchange for voting as "recommended"?

Why is the hate group Alliance Defending Freedom working so hard to force Christian nationalist indoctrination into education systems or create their own ideologically inclined private systems (as well as trying to completely invert the government/religion relationship)?

Why has Peter Bohlinger, the Education Chairman of the notorious Ziklag organization (which works hand in hand with ADF), publicly stated "Our goal is to take down the education system as we know it today," and been recorded saying, "And the fundamental change is to force, via a Supreme Court decision, a constitutionally mandated school voucher system ... For an investment of a few million dollars, we can literally and potentially shift the flow of approximately \$750 billion in education funds."

Besides the apparent goal of imposing their religious, social, and political ideologies on as many students as possible, their other largest motivator appears to be to assist like-minded investors in reaping huge potential profits in an industry they are nurturing by whipping up fears and concerns of parents over either routine issues that have been around for years, or even non-existent threats.

Who do our governments work for? Who do they represent? Do our legislators represent us, your constituents, or your largest donors? Last year you and the governor hung public education out to dry. You used over 5 million public education students as pawns in a game where the only real winners would have been the the immensely wealthy and radically religious individuals and organizations previously mentioned. As a result, 80% of school districts are facing budget deficits. How is that supposed to be responsible governance?

Committee members, you **MUST** do the right thing next year. You **MUST** advocate for the public education system that has been the foundation our society has been built on. Properly fund public education **FIRST**, then talk about ESA's after. Let it be said you put the welfare of kids first. Let it not be said you were "only following the orders" of your donors.

---

James Phillips, Mr  
Self  
Housotn, TX

I oppose vouchers.

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Nancy Greig, Dr.  
self  
Houston, TX

Say NO to vouchers! We need to support our public school system, not allow for circumventing it. A good, strong public school system is the basis of our democracy and it is the American Way. Please vote "NO" on vouchers.

---

Christine Hurley  
Self  
Houston, TX

Vouchers will steal money from rural communities and offer them no "school choice." Vouchers are a scam, universally proven not to benefit students or families, and are simply a coupon for the wealthy.

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Oliver Black  
Self  
Dallas, TX

Please, no vouchers. I'm writing to express my objection to school vouchers.

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Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo  
The Arc of Texas  
Austin, TX

Chair Buckley and members of the Committee,

My name is Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo, and I'm the Interim Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at The Arc of Texas. We are a statewide advocacy organization dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Arc of Texas, along with other major disability rights organizations in our state, have opposed the establishment of an Educational Savings Account program because it would negatively impact students with disabilities. Our primary concerns are the loss of legal protections, lack of academic and outcome accountability in private schools, and the potential for increased segregation. Private schools are not required to enroll students with disabilities or provide the services and protections mandated under federal laws like IDEA, Section 504, or the ADA. This would result in students losing access to a free and appropriate public education, inclusive environments, and access to essential supports and therapies.

Special education is egregiously underfunded, with school districts spending over \$2.1 billion annually beyond their allocated funds to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The funding formula hasn't been reformed in over 25 years, placing an unfair burden on districts and limiting student success. We urge this Committee to oppose an ESA program and instead prioritize reforming the special education funding formula as recommended by the Special Education Funding Commission to ensure all students receive the opportunities they are entitled to under the law in their public school. Thank you.

Best Regards,  
Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo  
Interim Director of Public Policy & Advocacy  
The Arc of Texas

---

Julie Dickinson  
Self  
Houston, TX

Vouchers do not help middle and low income families. Public dollars should stay in public schools. No matter the name, vouchers or ESAs do not belong in Texas. Instead, please pass legislation mandating recapture dollars be spent upon Texas public schools. Thank you for your time.

---

Robert sheaks, Mr.  
Self. Lab tech  
Irving, TX

School board elections are an important part of our democracy. Let's not delegate school governance to the private sector.

---

Lynn Boswell, Ms.  
self - documentary filmmaker  
Austin, TX

I am writing to share strong opposition to vouchers, ESAs, and any other programs that will use public tax dollars to pay for private education. I write as a longtime Texas taxpayer and Texas voter, and also as a Texas public school graduate and mom of two students who graduated from our state's public schools.

Our state has spoken loudly for many years to say that vouchers are not the answer for our state. Texas voters value public schools – schools that serve as the heart of so many Texas communities.

The efforts of some to send public funds to private schools have become increasingly aggressive. And that is happening at a time when Texas is falling increasingly behind in the way we choose to fund our public schools.

As a state that has not yet passed vouchers, we have an opportunity to look at the experience of other states. In Arizona, the cost has become crushing. In state after state, public schools suffer as voucher programs grow. Promises of improved outcomes too often fail to come true. Small programs balloon into vast entitlements. Budgets grow as funds go to students who had never before been part of the public school system. And in state after state, data show that the people who benefit most are relatively wealthy families who already had children in private schools.

Our state has been wise on this issue – standing up again and again to support the schools that at the center of so many Texas communities. We can do better – by saying no once again to vouchers, and by finally saying yes to ensuring our schools and students have the funding the future of Texas deserves.

---

Cassandra Hatfield  
self, research project manager  
Carrollton, TX

The Texas Education Code Subchapter G "Public Education Grant" under section 29 clearly states that a student is eligible to attend another school or school district if the school the student attends a school that has an unacceptable performance rating. Because of the provision already in place, I strongly oppose school vouchers which are open to use public dollars to fund private schools. We must continue to strengthen our public schools by properly funding them and providing teachers with a livable wage so they can support educational opportunities for our students.

---

Katie Morgan  
Self - Chevron Talent Manager  
Houston, TX

No vouchers. Please protect our public schools. I have a 5th grader.

---

Celeste Peterson  
Self  
Houston, TX

No vouchers, protect public education! I have a 2nd grader in Houston TX.

---

Robert Norris  
Self  
Austin, TX

Grandparents for Public Schools is a network of grandparents and others who stand for public schools and strongly opposed to vouchers. We're opposed to them they take money away from our grandchildren's schools most of which are financially struggling and give them to unaccountable private schools. Solid education research shows voucher schemes represent an entitlement program for affluent families, a big subsidy for private school and often a financial hit to public schools that are the cornerstone of our democracy. Public schools are the ultimate public good and a voucher program would damage them in pursuit of benefiting private schools supported by wealthy donors. With the over 1000 postcards grandparents delivered to you, they are telling you it's time to provide adequate funding for public schools and do not use billions of state dollars to subsidize private schools. Do not impose a voucher program on our amazing public schools!!

---

Doris Jones, Mrs  
Retired Teachers Association  
Houston, TX

Waste of tax payers money. No school vouchers. We're already paying for neighborhood schools. If you want to send your kid to a private school, pay for it.

---

Keisha Nixon  
Self  
Desoto, TX

I oppose vouchers as it takes funding away from public schools.  
I am against targeted religious curriculum.

---

Ivonne Martinez  
Self  
Houston, TX

**NO VOUCHERS!**

---

Tim Sinyak  
self, sales  
HOUSTON, TX

No vouchers. Please protect our public schools. I have a 5th grader and a 6th grader

---

Stephanie Meads  
Self  
Houston, TX

I am opposed to vouchers with the state legislative committee

---

Marcy Bannor  
Self  
Richmond, TX

I am totally opposed to a voucher system; money should be spent for the public schools that are there for all children regardless of race, gender, place of birth, changes in gender, etc!!!!

---

Leslie Kiefer Amann  
Self - attorney  
Houston, TX

I oppose vouchers. Strongly. If someone wants to send their children to private or parochial schools, I encourage them to do so but not with a single penny of my tax dollars. Private schools getting a tax exemption and receiving voucher money would be double dipping. Taking away funds from the public schools in two ways. Unacceptable. I sent my own children to private school while cheerfully paying my property taxes because that is the duty of government - to provide a solid, unbiased education to all children. All children. White, black, rich, poor, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, or Druids. All children. Not separate but equal. All children. Citizens or guests or refugees. All children. And they will grow up to be healthy, well educated, responsible voters. If that isn't how education is handled, we will pay the price for generations.

---

Tracie DeJarnette-Holly, Dr  
Self  
Sugar Land, TX

Oppose vouchers

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Joyce Foreman, DallasISD Trustee  
My own interest  
Dallas, TX

Please know that I am opposed to individual education accounts. It is without any doubt that our public schools are under attack. We have struggled with the inequities of Carter schools and now there is another attack on the education of all children.

I would strongly suggest that a survey of educators and locally elected officials be offered before we start down a path of no return losing many of our children in the process.

In today's environment, we have many students that are struggling and need the assistance of public education. Do you just leave the out? That's inhumane.

Stand ready for a conversation at anytime. Please know this is not right for our students, parents nor state.

---

Anna Biggs  
Self retired educator  
Mesquite, TX

I am a retired educator against vouchers/ESAs. This will take away money from public education and public education is already lacking funds. If there is money to give for vouchers, then there is money to send to public schools. Our Constitution guarantees a free and public education and we need to keep it that way. However, if these vouchers are passed then everyone (every school that accepts them) need to follow the same rules and laws as public education. It is a shame that public education doesn't have the support of our state legislators. The majority if our school districts do a fabulous job and it needs to remain that way!

---

Nancy Poetsch  
Self  
Houston, TX

No vouchers. Please protect our public schools and properly fund them. I have a kindergartener and a third grader.

---

Debra Harris  
self  
Houston, TX

I am 100% opposed to vouchers as an educator a parent and now a grandparent. My mother was a teacher and every one of us has attended public schools and State Universities. Vouchers continue the separate and unequal system of education. Vouchers also blur the separation of Church and State as honored by our constitution.

---

Angela Abram  
Self- Analyst  
Cedar Hill, TX

No scripted curriculum

---

Paula Kehr  
Self  
Houston, TX

As a parent of a 7th grader who has been in Texas public schools since kindergarten, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the implementation of school vouchers. Vouchers divert crucial public funds away from already underfunded public schools and send them to private institutions that often lack the same accountability standards as public schools. Vouchers exacerbate inequality by concentrating resources in select schools, leaving many public schools with even fewer resources to support their students. It is essential that we focus on strengthening and equitably funding our public education system to ensure that every student has access to a high-quality education, regardless of their background or financial status. Please oppose vouchers and instead FUND our public schools.

---

Eva Guzman  
Self  
San Antonio, TX

Public Schools should get our Taxes not private education.

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COMMENTS FOR Educational Opportunity

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Pamela Livanec  
Public school teacher  
Wharton, TX

I don't have children. I would like to use my tax dollars for a horse trainer. \$8000 a year for my horse please. That's what vouchers are. I also don't want to pay for public parks. I will keep that to use on my ranch. That is my own private public park. Are you getting it yet?

---

Melissa Yarborough  
self  
Houston, TX

Do not allow vouchers. Vouchers bleed funding from public schools, subsidize wealthy people who already attend private school, and subsidize low-quality private schools that profit off of vouchers without providing students with a decent education. It's just another way for the rich to steal from the poor. It's immoral. Just say no to vouchers. Invest in our public schools instead.

---

Lashawn Campbell, Mrs  
Self  
Desoto, TX

My position

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Kim Crane  
Self/Homemaker  
Houston, TX

Educational Opportunity- First off let me say that withholding \$4.5 billion of appropriated funds from Texas public schools due to a dispute over voucher funding by the Republican administration is wrong at its core. After witnessing the TEA takeover of HISD, the TEA "bully pulpit" implementation of the unproven and highly unpopular NES system, the basic layoffs/firing of talented principals and teachers by the TEA-appointed Board, the disrespect shown those principals and teachers by Mike Miles and the HISD Board, and then the hiring of so many un-certified people to fill those positions, I am against using any public school money for private vouchers.

---

Deanne Vance  
Self, retired educator  
Wimberley, TX

School vouchers are not right for Texas. As a retired educator and long time Republican, I must say that the current obsession of the governor and Lt. governor is not motivated by what is best for all students in this state. As a Christian and true Republican, I will continue to fight against vouchers that take away funds from public schools and leaders who twist the truth about vouchers. What a travesty they will bring upon the educational future of this state if they follow the misguided folks who are funding their attack on public schools.

---

Susan Scott  
Self. Retired teacher. Mother of 3 teachers.  
Snyder, TX

I am totally against ant "school choice"/voucher bill. I want my tax money going to public school students only. We already have school choice. You are being deceptive using that term. People can choose private school, but they should not use other people's tax money to pay for it. Public schools are for the public good.

---

Louis Luckhardt  
SELF/ Union Officer Dallas AFL-CIO CLC  
Ennis, TX

I am opposed to use of Public Funds to support private schools. I also feel the State of Texas needs to investigate the use of Texas tax- payer's money ending up another State.

---

S Allen  
Self  
Desoto, TX

No to school vouchers. The voucher program is a blatant attempt to defund public school districts / education...serving the interest of the minority.

---

Laura Gonzalez, Mrs.  
Self  
Houston, TX

I strongly oppose the state vouches!!

---

Anna Ramsey  
Self  
Hollywood Park, TX

I would like to take this opportunity to ask for an increase in the per student allotment to fully fund our schools. We need at least \$1000 per student increase.

I would like to take this opportunity to repeat that vouchers are not going to help our educational system and other States have proven that it will make things worse. Public education parents do not support vouchers.

Once schools are fully funded and public school staff are adequately paid THEN we can have a conversation about vouchers. Thank you for your time.

---

Katie Rushin  
Self  
Houston, TX

As a constituent of yours, I'm writing to ask you to support public schools.

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

Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

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

---



Barbara Diehl, Ms  
Self  
Fort worth, TX

I do not wish to use my tax payer. Money to fund children to go to private schools. This is not equitable and I think it's a horrible idea. Legislation should not take money from public schools. This voucher idea is not a good one. Please reconsider.

---

Rebecca Henson  
Self  
Willis, TX

I am AGAINST School Vouchers in any form. Texas parents have always had school choice.

---

Lashawn Campbell, .  
Self  
Desoto, TX

I am saying no to vouchers. I do not support vouchers because it takes funding away from public schools, and promotes segregation.

---

Christopher Rushin  
Self  
Houston, TX

As a constituent of yours, I'm writing to ask you to support public schools.

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

Vouchers would weaken Texas public schools by sending public dollars to private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers.

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

---

Pamela Boveland  
Community Voices in Public Education  
Houston, TX

As a Texan, I have watched for decades, the State Legislature violate the Texas Constitution by not providing a well-funded public education system for all children. School financing is supplemented by hundreds of millions of dollars from 'richer' school districts. The State has consistently unfunded schools based on both a snapshot and low per-student allotment. Per-student allotment should be at least \$12,000 and based on enrollment. Starving schools of proper funding, pitting rural districts against urban districts, incentivizing charter schools and using race-biased testing/accountability are all a part of the destruction of public education in Texas. It is unconstitutional for the State to continue to wage war on public schools by using school vouchers to support private or religious schools. My tax dollars should be directed at the school district in my area. The Texas Constitution is clear that the State legislature should be incentivizing and supporting public education for all Texas children regardless of their specific tax base. Rural schools should receive increased funding without taking funding from districts that have a larger tax base. School districts should not be penalized by the State because it may have a wealthier tax base. Please stop violating the State Constitution and properly fund public education in Texas. End the ability of the State to takeover school districts based on a racially biased testing system. Support increasing teacher salaries, incentivize teacher certifications, educational testing that is diagnostic and eliminate uncertified school/district administrators. The path to destroy public education is both shameful and unconstitutional. Public education is a right for all children and families in Texas.

---

Joseph Gorman  
Self  
Houston, TX

No vouchers!!! Please protect our PUBLIC schools. I am a proud parent of a new fourth grader.

---

J. Alison Chapin  
Self  
Houston, TX

I oppose voucher/ESAs. No to vouchers or anything that is similar.

---

Kelley Thomas  
self  
Richardson, TX

In discussing educational opportunity, it is important to highlight the diverse range of programs available to students within Independent School Districts (ISDs). During the hearing, many of these opportunities were likely mentioned, including magnet schools with specialized focus areas such as advanced science, mathematics, and fine arts, the comprehensive International Baccalaureate program, project-based learning models, and career-focused academies. Within the traditional school framework, students can explore various interests through electives, extracurricular activities, and leveled coursework. All these programs are offered through our public schools.

To achieve true educational opportunity, it is imperative that public schools, including ISDs and charter schools, receive full funding. Currently, schools often have to stretch funds allocated for specific purposes to cover mandates that lack direct funding streams. Even the Commissioner has acknowledged that additional funding is required to support special education needs beyond the initial allocation. Therefore, rather than introducing additional educational systems, we should focus on enhancing the quality of education provided by our existing public schools, which serve 90% of the 5.5 million school-aged children in our state today.

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COMMENTS FOR Educational Opportunity

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Larry Scott

Self; retired teacher/administrator; parent of teachers

Snyder, TX

I am against school vouchers. I think Governor Abbott is not being truthful with the voters as to what effect passage of the school voucher law will have on public education. The money, time, and effort that is being spent on putting out false information and trying to defeat legislators who are against school values is ridiculous. Please vote against school vouchers.

---

Sheila Powers

Self

Houston, TX

No vouchers!!!

---

Angela Bly

Self/Teacher

Crowley, TX

NO vouchers for educational opportunity.

---

Brianna Van Borssum, Mrs.

Self

Houston, TX

Vouchers will hurt the already hurting public school system. Specifically in rural areas where they have so few options and funds to start with. Vouchers are being pushed by those that want to misuse them, someone that can afford any choice available. The vast majority of Texas families do not have that luxury and depend on properly funded public schools for their children.

---

Daniel Fields

Swlf

Waxahachie, TX

As a career educator, a parent of students in public high school, and a product of public education, I am pleading that you vote no to vouchers. Voting yes to vouchers will be the death of FAPE.

---

Jeff Powers

Self

Houston, TX

Against vouchers!!!

---

Laura Henry  
self, parent  
Houston, TX

According to the Kinder Institute, 91% of students in Texas are in underfunded school districts. In Harris County, all but one district is underfunded. If we can't afford to fund our public schools, we absolutely can not afford to add a third educational model to our current system. Please do not use public taxpayer dollars to fund private education. Our state needs to do a better job funding public schools. To burden public schools with all of the mandates, the testing, the special education costs and then to allow tax dollars to fund private schools that have none of those burdens and no transparency increases the heavy lifting that public schools have to do with fewer dollars when they are already hurting. We need more funding for public schools, not less.

---

Peter Miller  
Self  
Fort Worth, TX

The voucher idea will weaken our public schools not enhance our school children education for all.

---

Patti Everitt  
Self - Research consultant  
Austin, TX

AGAIN – NO ON TAXPAYER FUNDED VOUCHERS OR ESA'S - PERIOD.  
It's bad public policy and leads to resegregation of our schools.  
No fiscal accountability. No reporting on educational outcomes or student demographics.  
No responsibility to serve special education students and don't accept all students.  
Higher income families benefit the most in states that have universal vouchers.  
Tuition higher than a voucher payment making many private schools out-of-reach for most families  
Private schools choose the students – parents and students don't get to choose the school.  
We should not send billions in taxpayer dollars to private interests without any accountability.

---

Steven Walker  
Self  
Houston, TX

I oppose Vouchers

---

anita wadhwa, Dr.  
Self  
Houston, TX

I want to make clear my opposition to vouchers and employ you to please release funds to public schools where we are begging our school board for libraries and the ability to read books.

---

Lydia Hiatt  
Self, retired teacher  
FT Worth, TX

I oppose.

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COMMENTS FOR Educational Opportunity

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Jessica Davis  
self, Professional Services Senior Manager  
Houston, TX

I am against school vouchers. Public dollars should remain in public schools.

---

Stephanie Holdren  
Self  
Austin, TX

Please say No to vouchers! It hurts the public education that TX is required to provide. Please support ALL children!

---

Hesper Derrick  
Parent  
Dallas, TX

Public funds for public education. Tuition is for private schools.

---

Casey Andrus  
Self  
Mckinney, TX

No to vouchers

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Widad Kinard, Dr.  
Self  
Corinth, TX

Please fully fund our public schools and say no to vouchers. Public schools are created to serve all students. Vouchers take money away from public schools and decrease the services available to public school children.

---

Elizabeth Paulette  
self  
New Braunfels, TX

As a parent of two adult children that went to public school and charter schools in Texas, I want to share the importance of having school choice for all Texas children. I am a retired Texas teacher that strongly believes that parents are the care takers of their children and are ultimately responsible for their education. Please, as you are having public hearings today about vouchers/ESA, think about the children that will greatly benefit if our Texas Congress passes laws that will allow for more choices for parents. My daughter attended a charter school (which I wish would've gotten more state funding) and she excelled! While our local public school wanted to place her in remedial courses because she didn't perform well on her state exams in 8th grade, the charter school we enrolled her in didn't even consider that and she was able to take her grade level biology course and pass her EOC that same semester. I am thankful for your dedication to Texas families.

---

Amy Harp  
Self, public schoolteacher  
North Richland Hills, TX

We need to fund public education, not send those funds to private schools with vouchers!

---

Sandra Hicks  
Self- Retired Public School Teacher  
Lumberton, TX

Please protect and improve our education in public schools by saying NO VOUCHERS!

---

Amy Gatlin  
Self  
Allen, TX

Vote no to vouchers! Listen to those that you represent. Vouchers will cost Texas more and hurt our kids and schools. Your responsibility is to public schools. Not private or charter.

---

Roosevelt Stacy  
Self  
Meadows Place, TX

Oppose vouchers

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Joe Tave  
Self Retired Teacher  
Dallas, TX

I am personally and professionally opposed to this voucher bill because it is fundamentally unfair and further burdens financially strapped public schools around the state of Texas

---

Chad Gatlin  
Self  
Allen, TX

No vouchers!!! Fund our public schools.

---

Jo Ann Burbridge, Ms.  
Sunnyside Community Redevelopment Org.  
Houston, TX

I oppose educational vouchers.

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Teresa Brewer  
self  
Humble, TX

oppose vouchers  
Every child deserves to have a public education at the least. Those who desire more can purchase more options but do not take away the basic education system for private businesses to make money off of.

---

Mary Hinton, Self  
Self  
Houston, TX

Keep public money with public schools. Underfunding impacts the public schools in so many negative ways.

---

Elena Trapp  
Self - manager  
Houston, TX

I am firmly against vouchers and for public education. Texas needs to do its job and properly fund our schools with our tax payer money and stop amassing it in surplus. Vouchers only benefit the wealthy kids families who already in are in private school. Other states have shown this model fails and it goes against the foundation our country was built on.

---

Jolene Sanders, Advocacy Director  
CTD  
Austin, TX

Our organizations are committed to supporting access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all eligible Texas students with disabilities. To that end, the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD) and the Autism Society of Texas (AST) focuses on policies that give community public schools the resources they need to provide the full array of services and supports based on each student's individual academic and functional strengths and needs.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) The federal IDEA ensures that students with disabilities are provided access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) based on individual strengths and needs, and that services are provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Additionally, parents and adult students participate in the development of the Individualized Education Program (IEP), and have due process protections when the IEP team can not reach agreement. These educational rights and protections do not extend to private schools or vendors. Additionally, Section 504 prohibits any recipient of federal funding from discriminating against an individual based on disability. Finally, the ADA, with limited exemptions, provides additional protections from discrimination regardless of whether the entity receives federal funding. One of those exemptions is for religious entities, which include religious private schools or service providers. Unfortunately, many families are unaware that they relinquish these important rights by accessing an ESA.

CTD and AST oppose any initiative that would diminish or completely eliminate the protections for students with disabilities. In addition to the concerns above, we implore the legislature to prioritize the glaring teacher shortage crisis, the historic underfunding of public education on the most basic level, and the additional financial impact local districts are now feeling from the loss of an important funding stream: reimbursement for School Health and Related Services (SHARS) through Medicaid . We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the committee. Please reach out to us for any additional questions or clarification.

Jacque Benestante  
Executive Director  
Autism Society of Texas  
jacque@texasautismsociety.org  
(512) 479-4199, Ext. 4

Jolene Sanders  
Advocacy Director  
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities  
jsanders@txdisabilities.org  
(512) 478-3366, Ext. 312

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Missie Carra  
Self-Marketing  
Fort Worth, TX

I am a conservative taxpayer and voter, who is against all forms of Educational Opportunity, whether Tax Credit, Tax Deduction, Tax Scholarship, Education Savings Account, or Voucher.

I believe that parents and guardians are the primary decision makers for their child's educational and healthcare, and should have the right to decide the best educational opportunities and settings for their student, and ideally, able to spend their money as they deem fit.

That said, I do not see any path forward for TX lawmakers to create a bill that can support the ability for any form of 'Educational Opportunity' or 'School Choice' to be free from the strings that will be attached, particularly, the assessments for each student and family who participate in any of these programs above.

I read each version of the bills filed during the 88th session, and found that they all contained concerning language that strengthened government oversight and overreach, and weakened individual autonomy.

School Choice is not Educational Freedom, it is merely an illusion of choice, that is promised to hopeful parents and guardians who are desperately seeking alternatives for their children to escape the failing public school system.

I concur that the Public School System is in desperate need of an overhaul, but do not support utilizing School Choice as the mechanism to do this. I am deeply concerned about the public private partnerships that will be involved in the inevitable 'Reimagining' of Education, and foresee that as these Partnerships develop, along with incoming Charter Schools, the resulting erosion of local governance will be the complete undoing of our personal, local, and state autonomy.

It is evident that the aim of this Globalist transition is to ultimately transform the landscape of our country.

Committee Members, I ask you to please consider carefully your oath of office to the best of your ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States and of this State.

What data supports long term success from Choice Legislation?

Who decided what qualified as success? Do they have a financial interest in implementing it in Texas, the 2nd largest population of public students in the US?

What benefit will NGO's, Public Private Partnerships, Charters, Tech Companies, and Investors gain from such a bill?

What assurance can you give that such a bill will support individual liberties?

Who will decide what qualifies as 'education' of students? Will it be the elected SBOE or will it be UNESCO?

Who will decide what is measured to verify that a student has been educated?

Who will decide what is measured to verify that a student has been educated? Will it be the SBOE or the UN?

These are critical things to consider as our Lone Star State is a beacon for the nation.

Please, do not proceed forward with any version of Educational Opportunity. It will not and cannot co-exist with Sovereignty in our state or nation.

---

George-Anna McCabe  
Self, Retired teacher  
New Braunfels, TX

I taught in the public school system for 30 years. Parents already have a choice on where to send their children to school. Vouchers will send public school funds to private schools. In my opinion, public school funds need to remain with public schools. I don't want my 3 year old granddaughter to start public school in 2 years with an uncertified teacher. Governor Abbott needs to start thinking about what's best for all of the children who are in the public school system and stop the quid pro quo's to the billionaires who are pushing this voucher scheme.

---

Sara Eakens  
Self  
Houston, TX

I oppose vouchers. The voucher effort is not in the best interest of Texas children. More funding should be allocated for public schools, not less.

---



Jackie Besinger  
National Alliance for Education Freedom  
Austin, TX

When advocating for policies like school choice (educational opportunities), ESAs, it's essential for parents to fully understand the potential repercussions and consider the impacts of relinquishing constitutional rights and freedoms. Are the immediate cash benefits truly worth exchanging fundamental rights? What is the immense and irreplaceable value that we hold for shaping our children's future? These are crucial questions that demand thoughtful consideration and open discussion for the well-being of our families and society.

The need for transparency and accountability in evaluating the effectiveness of education policies and initiatives cannot be overstated, as the damage is long-lasting. It is essential for the public to have access to the evidence base and data supporting claims made by "experts" and political organizations about the success of this government program. Whether it is the success of certain policies or the demand for specific initiatives, the availability of concrete evidence is crucial. In the context of the public school system, it is evident that ending ineffective policies and establishing accountability through well-informed, evidence-based measures is paramount.

However, the true challenge lies in implementing effective legislative policies, which has been hindered by decades of corrupt legislation in Texas, spanning across both political parties.

Without clear data and transparent accountability, claims of success and pledges of progress, particularly in the realm of school choice, should raise serious concerns about the motivations behind them. This raises questions about whether parents have enough evidence and knowledge to evaluate the effectiveness of the voucher-based school choice. Ultimately, the push for measures that do not align with the will of the people highlights the critical need for transparency, evidence, and a comprehensive understanding of the data and true intentions driving such decisions.

It is imperative that we demand transparency and evidence-based decision-making in order to ensure the well-being of our children and the integrity of our educational system. The legislature needs to stop making decisions that will hinder the future of all children in this state. The continues misallocation of financial funding away from traditional methods of education is the reason why this legislature is promoting the voucher rhetoric.

The solutions are simple: remove every piece of bad legislation currently under your jurisdiction, repeal the inadequate legislation supporting globalist ideologies HB1605, make new legislation accountable and reliable for the districts to follow.

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Morgan Leal  
Self-teacher  
Fort Worth, TX

ESA's are stealing funding from where it desperately needs to go. Public schools are the only schools that should receive public funds.

There's no accountability in private schools. There's no plan for what happens to the money when a student transfers. NOTHING has been said about UIL not allowing students to move for competitive advantage. Politicians are making sure public schools fail so they can pretend this will fix the issue. There's not enough funding for this horrible idea. Nothing will be fixed, but education in Texas will get worse.

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Larry Toenjes

Self, retired

Clear Lake Shores, TX

#### Poverty, School Grades, and Vouchers in Texas

Low-income children perform academically less well if enrolled in schools with higher percentages of other low-income children. Similarly, students not classified as low-income also do less well in such schools. That part of the Texas school funding formula that allocates additional grants for the remediation of low-income children does not acknowledge either of the above observations. The state's school funding formula provides approximately the same additional amount for each low-income student regardless of the concentration of such students in individual schools. In spite of its failure to address this fundamental flaw in the funding system, the Texas Education Agency intends to continue to assign letter grades of D or F to scores of schools comprised primarily of low-income students. Though the low grades basically reflect the unmet needs of students in schools where 80% or more of the students are classified as low-income, the practical effect is to diminish confidence in public schools. Such schools are referred to as "failing schools" which lends support to those who promote a school voucher program in Texas. It is the state's economic system that determines socioeconomic disparities. Those disparities, in turn, result in widespread differences in school readiness among students from different income and parental-education groups. Using the poor performance of children from families with low incomes and low levels of parental education as reasons to abandon the public school system is counter productive.

If the Texas legislature instead spends its time on passing a school voucher system it will not be addressing the more fundamental problems of K-12 education. This will be especially true if the voucher legislation permits private schools to reject students based on prior academic performance or based on the economic status of parents.

The Legislature should not pass a school voucher bill, but should instead focus on the existing problems of properly funding and educating children from all economic sectors now.

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Arshia Papari  
Self  
Austin, TX

Testimony of Arshia Papari to the Texas House of Representatives Public Education Committee - 08/12/2024

Good afternoon, Chair Buckley and members of the committee. My name is Arshia Papari, and as a public school educated Texan, I'm here today to express my deep concerns about the proposed school voucher program and its impact on students with disabilities.

For decades, public education in Texas has been a cornerstone of opportunity, ensuring that every child, regardless of background or ability, has access to a quality education. However, the introduction of a school voucher system threatens to undermine this foundational principle by diverting essential resources away from public schools and into private institutions that are not held to the same standards of accountability.

Supporters of voucher programs often claim they provide parents with more choices, especially for students with disabilities. But the reality is far from this ideal. In states like Arizona, where vouchers have been widely implemented, we've seen that the wealthiest families disproportionately benefit, while students with disabilities are left with fewer options. Private schools are not required to offer the same level of support and services as public schools, nor are they obligated to accept all students. This creates a system where only a privileged few can truly benefit from these vouchers, leaving the majority of students, particularly those with disabilities, at a significant disadvantage.

In Texas, the situation would be even worse. Currently, only a small number of private schools in our state provide specialized services for students with disabilities, and most of these are located in urban areas. For families in rural communities, the options are even more limited, if they exist at all. Moreover, the high cost of private education, which can reach up to \$40,000 per year, puts these schools out of reach for most families, even with a voucher.

The fact is, public schools are already facing a funding crisis. Texas ranks 43rd in the nation for per-student funding, and our teachers are underpaid by an average of \$7,500 compared to their peers nationally. Introducing a voucher system will only exacerbate these problems, leading to larger class sizes, lower teacher pay, and worse outcomes for the 96% of Texas children who rely on public schools.

We cannot afford to experiment with the education of our most vulnerable students. Instead of diverting funds away from public schools, we should be investing in them—ensuring they have the resources necessary to serve all students, especially those with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to reject the voucher system and focus on strengthening our public schools for the benefit of every Texas child.

---

Stacy Roberts  
Self, teacher  
Cedar park, TX

Enough with the voucher scheme. Release the tax funds to the public schools as it was intended. Texans already have school choice and this voucher scheme will only line the pockets of wealthy families and wealthy schools. Unacceptable Geg Abbott. Stop with the temper tantrum and let the public schools have the funds they deserve to do the job of educating the entire population.

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Mardie Hawkins  
Self  
Houston, TX

Against voucher programs

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Sarah Beebe  
Self  
Houston, TX

Please oppose school vouchers. They siphon off important funding for public schools leaving insufficient support for economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. In the case of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, vouchers don't provide enough money to cover the cost of tuition, uniforms, and the other expenses of private school. For students with disabilities, private schools aren't required to provide accommodations so most can't meet their needs and won't accept them. Vouchers only benefit those who already have some money to spend toward private school, or those who can already afford the cost. The voucher system is completely inequitable and not what Texas students and families need. Instead, we need to invest more money and resources into our public school system including increasing teacher pay and funding for students with disabilities.

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Laura McWhorter  
Self  
Midlothian, TX

I do not want my tax dollars going to fund private schools that have religious teachings I do not agree with. Keep public schools whole and religion free!

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David Greer, Dr.  
self  
Celina, TX

Vouchers have proven to improve ALL methods and forms of education in every state where they have been approved. It is time for Texas to move into the 21st century of educating our children. I am a third generation Texas educator and a retired teacher of 38 years in the public schools of Texas. Today's educational system is not a 10th as good as the system I entered in 1966. There focus is no longer on educating the children entrusted to them but indoctrinating them. I blame the NEA and TSTA for this and I became a life member of both organizations in 1966. It is time to give the parents of Texas the educational options they deserve.  
**VOTE FOR VOUCHERS**

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Lisa Rayburn  
self  
Alpine, TX

Just a last minute note to keep Texas' public education constitutional! "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." This veteran teacher is begging y'all to not fund private entities with our public tax dollars. The voucher/ESA/educational opportunity scheme is just that. It's a scam on the public and Texas deserves better. See <https://www.propublica.org/article/arizona-school-vouchers-budget-meltdown> for a preview of what Texas would deal with if Greg Abbott get his way. The recent polls showing Texans being supportive of such things are not true/honest. Public ed has been chronically underfunded, understaffed, overworked, and over-culture-warred in an effort to make it look bad. Vouchers are not the fix! More and more money given to private corps is not the fix! Getting ride of Greg Abbott and his fraud-friends IS THE FIX. Let teachers teach and let students learn again! We can be an amazing example of how education should look. We want to be able to do our jobs without super stress and mega depression. Help us!!!

---

Tammy Conrad, Educator  
Sekf  
Round Rock, TX

I have been an educator in the public school system for 17+ years. We provide abundant educational opportunities for every student who walks into our doors. We can't turn anyone away and wouldn't want to. Our goal is to provide the best opportunity possible for each and every student. It isn't easy to do this when the state hasn't increased the per student allotment in many, many years.

The idea of taking state money that is intended for public education and giving it to private schools is abhorrent. Private schools don't have the same accountability that public schools do. They don't have to accept all students and they don't have to provide all the same services. It makes no sense to give them our students' money.

Increasing public school funding is the best way to support the majority of students in Texas. It is a requirement of the Texas Constitution and I implore you to take a stand for our public school students.

Thank you.

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Marisela Jimenez  
None / Self  
Spring, TX

Here are my concerns about "Education Opportunity" and why you should carefully consider this idea.

**Quality Control:** Voucher programs lack the same level of oversight and accountability as public schools. Some private schools accepting vouchers may not meet academic standards or provide quality education.

**Segregation:** Vouchers can lead to increased segregation. When students leave public schools for private ones, it can exacerbate racial and socioeconomic divisions.

**Cherry-Picking:** Private schools may selectively admit students, leaving behind those with greater needs (e.g., disabilities or language barriers). Public schools must accept all students, regardless of their circumstances.

**Funding Shift:** Vouchers divert public funds away from public schools, potentially weakening their resources and programs.

**Inequitable Access:** Vouchers may not cover the full cost of private education, limiting access for low-income families. Transportation and other expenses can also pose barriers.

**Negative Impact on Public Schools:** As students leave public schools, they take funding with them. This can harm remaining students and reduce resources for extracurricular activities and support services.

**Lack of Evidence:** Despite decades of voucher programs, research remains inconclusive about their impact on student achievement. Some studies show no significant improvement, while others indicate negative effects.

Please carefully consider the harm that "Educational Opportunity" will have for every student.

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Lindsay Gregory  
Plano ISD/ teacher  
Plano, TX

I'm a Special Education who spends thousands of dollars a year on my students, because you want to take many away from my personal children and my students for vouchers for the 1%. The budget cuts my district has had to make because you will not release funds that are due to the 99% of the tax paying citizens. Teachers are not leaving the profession, due to not wanting to teach. We're leaving the profession because we are overworked and spending our money to meet our students needs, which financially you have withheld. You cannot do anything without a basic education. You taking away from public schools will only create a majority of Texas population behind other states and countries. Teachers are asked to do more with less. I want and demand my tax dollars to go to public education where it belongs. You want to say to be here for the students and how you want to do right by the students, having districts that are fully funded and have their needs met, is doing right by the students. I implore you to start listening to the people who voted you into office, that you look at other countries who revere their teachers as community leaders and see how they are so much farther ahead than us. We need to remember the education is the most important thing next to health care. Thank you

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Brenda Duncan, Ms.  
Public School Music Teacher  
San Antonio, TX

school vouchers:

Fail to raise student achievement.  
Impact public transparency and accountability.  
Drain crucial dollars away from public schools.  
Fail to meet the needs of students in schools that cannot accommodate English language learners or special needs.  
Deny those students with special education needs the services at private schools because they can just claim that they don't have a specialist to serve their child's needs.  
Siphons money away from public schools who cannot turn away those students who are "expensive" to educate, needing specialist teachers and teachers aids to work with students with learning disabilities, however those private schools taking the public tax dollars can simply turn away these students with learning disabilities who are "expensive" to serve.  
Parents have told us public school teachers that Kipp, Idea and other private schools have told them, "We will take your Gifted and Talented daughter but we cannot enroll your Autistic (fill in the blank special education situation) son because we don't have a specialist for that. Public schools cannot deny students access to an education, but private schools can pick and choose their students. These are just some, but not all the reasons that using public tax dollars to fund private schools is an illegal rerouting of public tax funding into a private institution that doesn't provide the public education access to ALL students' rights to a free, equitable and fair education.

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Kegin Nesmith  
Self  
Palestine, TX

No to school vouchers. We don't want to refund public education to support private schools with lower standards.

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Sabrina Ball  
My family  
Fort Worth, TX

As a PTO/PTA mom, I have been tasked with fundraising for my children's schools because the state refuses to fund our public schools adequately. Now you want to pull MORE out of our system to give a coupon to rich families. That is UNACCEPTABLE. Additionally, states that have adopted such a system have found significant budget shortfalls with few low income families being served. SAY NO to educational savings accounts or vouchers. IT'S A SCAM

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Debbie Bolton  
self  
Palestine, TX

Why are you asking for taxpayer funds to give to private schools when you can't even fully fund public schools? Vouchers will have a detrimental effect on our education system, especially in rural districts. Voucher programs have failed in many states already. Why would we go down a path that is already proven to be disastrous? Instead of vouchers, why don't we invest in and strengthen our public education system? Every child deserves access to a high-quality education regardless of background or socioeconomic status. Our Texas Constitution, Article 7 says Texas is to provide a free, efficient education to children. It does NOT say Texas will provide for parents to send their students to private school.

---

Elizabeth Dill  
Self - Public School Teacher  
San Antonio, TX

I am a public school teacher in the city of San Antonio. This year, our school board could not even afford a 1% raise for certified staff due to a budget emergency. Public schools in my city and around the state of Texas are drastically underfunded. Staff compensations are not keeping up with the cost of living, forcing my colleagues out of public education to a job that can pay their bills. These are excellent and experienced teachers we are losing. If public education is in such a financial crisis, it is unacceptable to consider dividing the money allocated for public education to fund educational opportunities outside of the public education system. Allowing for this divestment will only exacerbate this present crisis! The solution is clear: Do not siphon our public tax dollars away! Protect and fund our public schools for our families and our future.

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Carolyn Salter, MD  
self, physician  
Palestine, TX

Vote no on school vouchers and educational savings accounts! School vouchers and education savings accounts (ESAs) pose significant challenges to the integrity and effectiveness of public education. These programs divert essential funding away from public schools, which serve the majority of students, to private institutions that lack accountability and oversight[1][4]. This reallocation of resources can lead to larger class sizes, reduced access to educational materials, and diminished extracurricular opportunities for public school students [4]. Moreover, there is no conclusive evidence that vouchers improve student achievement, and in some cases, they have been shown to negatively impact educational outcomes [4]. Vouchers can also exacerbate educational inequality by enabling private schools to select students based on criteria that may exclude those from marginalized communities [4]. Instead of investing in vouchers, we should focus on strengthening public schools to ensure that every child receives a quality education by fully funding public schools, properly paying teachers salaries and benefits that encourage them to stay in the field they have chosen, and stop micromanaging teachers with unnecessary intrusion by state lawmakers simply to try to undermine classroom teaching with the intent to transform schools into something that will not engage students or prepare them for the future. Vouchers appear to me to have the long-term goal of ending public school systems. This would devastate rural communities where the school systems are the heart of the community because that is where the children are. Breaking down this system will undermine local economic development, the rural employment base, local spending, community fellowship, quality of life, workforce development, and student preparation for community participation and leadership. I was shaped by a small rural school. My mother taught for many years in East Texas school districts. It saddens me to see rich West Texas billionaires manipulate Texas legislators to slowly disassemble East Texas heritage of community schools.

#### Sources

- [1] State Policymakers Should Reject K-12 School Voucher Plans <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/state-policymakers-should-reject-k-12-school-voucher-plans>
- [2] 5 Disadvantages Of A 529 College Savings Plan | Bankrate <https://www.bankrate.com/investing/529-plan-disadvantages/>
- [3] School voucher hearing underway in Austin, Texas as lawmakers ... <https://abc13.com/post/school-voucher-hearing-underway-austin-texas-lawmakers-take-another-look-program-aimed-support-private-schooling/15177706/>
- [4] Vouchers | NEA - National Education Association <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/action-center/our-issues/vouchers>
- [5] Six Big Problems With Education Savings Accounts - Forbes <https://www.forbes.com/sites/petergreene/2021/02/01/six-big-problems-with-education-savings-accounts/>

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Jo Sugg, Retired Educator/Community Volunteer  
Self  
Gatesville, TX

Educational opportunities best service by state funds going directly to public schools. Texas is well equipped with enough intelligence to prove to the nation that we can make public education great. We don't need money from outside Texas borders to determine the education that is best for our children.

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Anne-Marie Faul  
Self/ teaching  
Katy, TX

This is not an opportunity. As someone who went to private school this money will not afford opportunities to attend elite schools. It's a coupon for those parents who can already afford it. We already have charter schools that are free. It will take need funds needed in public education. I am a master level teacher and my salary is less than 10000 more than a brand new teacher. My district can barely afford a raise.

---



Melanie Willett  
Self  
Mckinney, TX

I am a 30 year veteran teacher. I have a lot to offer legislatures about what's in the best interest of our most valuable asset....students.

If you really want to make a positive difference in public or private education, ban cell phones from being accessible during school hours.

Secondly, you will most likely vote for vouchers this year. Please know this will absolutely lead to segregation again in our state. The least you can do is give the same amount of money for each child to public schools as well. Why should private schools receive more money per child than public schools. How can you say public school children are valued less than private school children?

Have some guts and do what's right for kids!

---

Amanda Hernandez  
Self/ teacher  
Schertz, TX

As a resident, parent, and educator, I appose vouchers. Greg Abbot's voucher pushing agenda is self serving. He does not care about the regular working class or middle class Texan. Say no to vouchers!!!

---

Bill Sanders, Mr.  
Self  
Arlington, TX

Please vote AGAINST VOUCHERS for Public Schools of Texas. Their are several issues that make this a very poor idea;;

Lower test scores

Re- segregation of the public schools

Lower salaries for everyone! ( never enough to fund all the programs)

Athletic programs will be weakened

Teacher certification has already been weakened by training and educations ( not enough teachers now to fill the classrooms

Test scores are low now; wait until these private and religious schools have to be held to the same standards!

Think seriously about what this could do to the whole Educational System!

VOTE against VOUCHERS!!!

---

Caroline Pinkston  
self - teacher with Austin ISD  
Austin, TX

As a Texas public school teacher, I am honestly stunned that my state government is continuing to debate vouchers instead of providing additional funding to our public schools. The state's failure to provide additional funding to public schools during the last legislative session - especially given the surplus funds available -- was outrageous enough. Our public schools are woefully underfunded, and we are facing a crisis of retention among educators. These are well-documented issues. But instead of doing something - anything - to alleviate the problem, Governor Abbott is instead continuing to pick a fight no one asked for and no one wants about vouchers, which will only make our funding crisis worse. I love my job -- but I have 170 students and my AC only works sporadically. Since the close of the last legislative session, I cannot tell you how many emails I have received from the district explaining that "due to financial constraints," budgets have to be further tightened, further cuts are coming, programs cannot be renewed, materials cannot be supplied. And while I worry about how I can serve my students effectively under these conditions, while I stress about the future of my profession, my governor is doubling down on his own political games. Please turn your attention back to the issues that actually matter. Our schools and our teachers need funding and support.

---

Judith Wyble, Retired educator

Self

Klein, TX

Vouchers steal public money and give to those who can afford private schools. Will the private schools take STAAR? Will they have any monitoring to see where they spend the money? Any accountability? Will they accept students with special needs? The answer to all that is no! Fund public education NOT vouchers for the rich!!

---

Ruth York

Self; Tea Party Patriots of Eastland County-VP; Texas Family Defense Committee-Interim Chair

Cisco, TX

We oppose ESAs ("school choice") because:

1. Texans already have school choice. Students may choose home, private, charter or public, including which public school to attend. Texas home schoolers are especially free to choose the curriculum and mode that's best for their child, but they're also free from government oversight – unlike any other state. They can also participate in public school classes and UIL, if approved at the local level.
2. ESAs are socialist-style redistribution of wealth. It is marketed (falsely) with "It's not fair that only the wealthy can afford charter, private or home school." Reality check #1: Success brings benefits! – in clothing, college, healthcare, housing, transportation and a host of other things. Reality check #2: Families who have sacrificed to provide alternative educations for their children prove this Bernie Sanders-style argument is NOT true.
3. Government programs don't produce "competition" and "free market." Proponents say it will end a government monopoly and create competition benefitting public, charter and private schools. Note, however, that these funds can only go to accredited private schools or be spent on approved curricula and materials. This is not free market. Competition will actually be reduced.
4. Calling this an "education savings account" is deceptive. We're all familiar with bank savings accounts, where we save our money. We also know about medical savings accounts, Coverdell Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), and 529 College Savings Plans. In these also we put aside OUR money, tax-protected, for specific purposes later. Unlike those, however, "education savings accounts" divert public funds into an account for the student, and the unused balance returns to the State. This terminology is misleading at best.
5. Public funds require public oversight. Bills have charged the Comptroller with ESA fiscal integrity. Someone, either the comptroller or the Texas Education Agency, must approve purchases. (If the TEA, that's ironic, since TEA is the agency in charge of the "failing" public schools.) Parents would thus be accountable to agencies.
6. This program will grow another arm of government. A new agency in the Comptroller's office would administer this program, with authority to contract parts of it to private companies. The legislative fiscal note sets the initial two-year price tag at \$500 million dollars – climbing each year. That means opportunity for fraud, special interests, and burgeoning expense.
7. Increased oversight/regulation of home and private schools. Recent bills would introduce new regulation on private and home schools that participate.

Supporters say other states that adopted school choice did not increase oversight or regulation of independent educators, but this ignores a little-known reality: Texas is virtually unique in historically allowing unregulated homeschooling. Government money will burden private and home schools with NEW regulations--"strings."

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Erin Dempsey  
Self and I am an attorney  
Austin, TX

I am terrified to think what will happen if the school vouchers program passes in Texas. I have so many concerns to address, but my main concern is that school vouchers are just **WRONG**. Vouchers divert critical funds away from our public schools and you **ALL** know that poor people and people that live in areas with no private school options will never be able to take such funds and attend a private school. Vouchers would make our public schools suffer even more than they already have been under Abbott and it is a terrifying thought to think that our teachers/staff/children would suffer infinitely more under a voucher system. You would be giving people who already send their kids to public schools a coupon and you know it. The fact that you want kids to suffer more than they already do is absolutely mind blowing to me.

Our tax money is meant to fund public schools. Public schools need money to survive and to properly pay for teachers, staff, specialists and coaches, not to mention they need money for their buildings, fields, art and music classes, food, etc. It is not, and it never should be, used to help fund private schools that have their own payment structures and endowments to support their students and their teachers. Public schools need every single tax dollar to educate **ALL** students while also having accountability to the state and federal government. Private schools have **NO SUCH** accountability as to what they teach or even who they teach. Private schools have the option to refuse to accept children with special circumstances/ needs/ learning disabilities/ physical disabilities, all of it. Where will these children go? Where will they get the education and the care that they need and deserve if our public schools do not have the funds to provide the education and services that they are required by the government to provide?

School vouchers make no sense and if this bill passes it will devastate our schools, our communities and our children's educational lives. Look at Arizona for goodness sake! Their state budget is in complete disarray because of vouchers and I know that Texas is in no better position than Arizona.

It is clear to me that the Texas government does not care about anyone who is not white, male and rich. You have already decimated voting rights, destroyed women's rights and access to healthcare, terrorized immigrants and let guns overtake our society. And now this? Texas is already a hellscape where major metropolitan areas, other than Austin, are some of the most **UNeducated** in the **ENTIRE NATION**. **HOW CAN THIS BE A GOOD THING?** Vouchers would destroy the little hope that we have left in Texas. Think of the families that rely on their public schools not only for education but for childcare, meals, healthcare, community support and extracurricular activities. Please, please, please think of what is good for the whole and not just for yourselves. Please do the right thing and vote against school vouchers.

---

Patrick Smith, Dr.  
self/Professor  
Kingsbury, TX

I strongly oppose Governor Abbott's proposal to use public funds to provide "vouchers" for children to attend private schools. We need to increase state funding for our public schools because it has not kept up with inflation. The Covid pandemic exposed and worsened many inequities in the Texas education system, and showed us how many needed services are currently **NOT** being funded. Nearly all of the school districts in my region (Central Texas) are running a deficit. Taking money away from public schools to give to private schools is a big step in the wrong direction. Texas kids, families, and teachers deserve better.

---

Sara Calderon  
Self  
Buda, TX

School vouchers are a scam that is bankrupting other states and I've never met a single parent or student who wants them. That the legislature continues to pursue such an unpopular policy against the will of the voters is a testament to how morally bankrupt the lot of you are.

---

Travis Horne  
Self, teacher  
Austin, TX

First of all, the fact that this hearing is on the first week of classes for educators shows us just how little respect this committee has for educators. The Chair should know that teachers will not forget this.

The main thrust of my comment has to do with two topics: first, budget and second, educational spending. Vouchers are a budget buster in states that have attempted it (Arizona specifically). Are you not fiscally conservative? If you are, you should know better and end this voucher proposition simply based on the budget shortfall this will make for Texas.

Secondly, education funding should not be tied to vouchers. Clearly that failed in 2023- and will fail in 2025 for the same reason- educational funding is one of the greatest responsibilities of this state, written into our constitution as a requirement. This committee and the state legislature is complicit in breaking the constitutional promise of appropriate funding for our schools.

Stop the false promises of vouchers and fully fund public schools for ALL our kids.

---

Katherine Johanns  
Self / Marketing Director  
Austin, TX

As a voter and public education advocate, I am firmly against diverting public tax dollars to any private institution or to parents for use to pay for their child to go to a private institution. In other states, we have seen that these dollars tend to go to families who are already paying for private school, so the program ends up constituting a coupon, not expanded "opportunity" for students. Let's put our dollars into our public schools that are required to serve every student.

---

James Ellis  
Self/Semi-retired educator  
Humble, TX

Ensuring equitable opportunity in education requires the state to fund fully all of its own mandates. Local property taxes should never be required to pay for anything that is not optional for the local districts. We are not serious about quality education and high standards unless both funding and accreditation standards are uniform for all public schools and any private schools given access to taxpayer dollars.

---

Jennifer Goedken  
self/teacher  
Spring, TX

As a voter and a certified teacher in Texas for the last 26 years I feel that the voucher system is a big mistake. I also feel that labeling it as "educational opportunity" is very misleading to the public. First of all, the way you are presenting vouchers is completely unfair. An \$8k voucher is not equal to \$6160 per student. Also, if the public school system has to follow so many guidelines and regulations imposed by our state, the private school system should have to follow them as well. Level the "playing system." One student is not financially worth more than another. If any student should receive more money, it should be our SPED students.

---

david kaminski  
self  
Hockley, TX

It seems some sort of voucher bill passage is imminent. To that end, I respectfully request that when such bill is passed it also includes language that will release all requirements of public education that are not included in private schools. There is no reason for public schools to face more stringent requirements than private schools. If everyone receives tax dollars everyone should receive the same rules.

---

Judy Durland, Mrs  
Self  
Troup, TX

I think all of us saw the devastation closing public schools had during Covid. It's important that our children attend public schools together. When they go into the workforce in 25 years, they need to know people from other religions are normal people as well. Why would we want to separate them as youth then expect them to get along later? Shall we become like the warring Middle East?

Another the legislature needs to be aware of, it appears they do not want to educate the poor children or the immigrant. Nationally this is so wrong and so embarrassing.

Texas is the 9th largest economy in the world but we can't educate a decent workforce? We are 29th in education. It is truly shameful. You haven't increased funding since 2019.

Please fund our public schools appropriately and do not give our money to private interest. We are tired of the Texas legislature making decisions that belong in the hands of the people.

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yarsi lawrencia  
rules of the game  
Washington DC, TX

Your voucher program is taking so much money from public schools. If you really cared about good teachers (is that not what the teacher certification discussion is for?), if you really cared about children's lives (you DID put suicide hotline numbers on our IDs, was that just a PR stunt?) you wouldn't allow the education system to lose this community support. The system is stretched thin enough as it is, there's a shortage of teachers, and you could solve ALL of this by paying teachers much more. But you're trying to cut the our kids' funding... for what? You're okay with taxes paying your salary but not paying for bright futures for our children? Are you really, REALLY so willing to take away the education of so many innocent kids in exchange for some extra cash? The few who can afford to send their kids to private schools do because they KNOW public schools are severely underfunded. We're aware of the problem and can help our neighbors. Please. Do NOT pass the voucher bill. Public education desperately needs to money. Don't you have a sense of community? It's so easy to care about others. Just make people pay their taxes for the benefit of all the children whose lives are in your hands right now.

---

Ashley Robinson  
Self  
Jarrell, TX

Texas implementing Educational Savings Accounts for families would benefit us so much. Our property taxes already go to the public school system. We have opted to sacrifice mor financially to put our kids into private school. Both for religious and educational reasons. The public school system has missed the mark too much over the years academically and with implementing non-educational ideologies such as SEL and CRT. Though Texas has protected against some of this it is still there and we take no chances. The financial sacrific of putting 3 kids through private school is immense. Not one of the \$\$ we pay in property tax goes towards this sector. We do not want government oversight of private schools. So and ESA would help us to afford to continue to pay our school and still afford our house payment and food. Right now it is a very very tight budget. Please help by passing and ESA. Thank you!

---

Martha DeVarenes, Ms

Self

Arlington, TX

I want to reiterate my opposition to any sort of state funded voucher program that directs taxpayer funds to private schools. One only has to study what is happening in states like Arizona, where the voucher program has become a drastic drain on state coffers. Vouchers will do nothing to advance "school choice" for the majority of Texas families, especially those in rural districts as well as the working poor and middle class families already struggling to make ends meet. School vouchers are a bad idea that needs to be put to rest.

---

Maria Cardona

Hogar

Houston, TX

Mi comentario es para manifestar que estoy en desacuerdo en querer reubicar a los Alumnos de Port Houston a otra ubicación, ya que solo de una Comunidad de bajos recursos en los que esta escuela es nuestra mejor opción para que nuestros hijos estudien, muchas Mamás van caminado a dejar a sus hijos ya que no cuentan con medio de transporte, la escuela Port Houston es el Alma de esta Comunidad sin esta escuela es cerrada nuestra juventud estará en riesgo de no asistir a estudiar, así como expuestos a otro tipo de actividades que no les ayudarán a ser buenos ciudadanos, ellos dependen de esta escuela, hemos luchado varias veces en manifestaciones y marchas exigiendo nuestros derechos para el estudio de nuestros jóvenes, en esta ocasión no será la excepción haremos lo que esté en nuestro alcance para manifestarnos pasíficamente en que sean escuchados nuestros derechos, esta Escuela necesita mucho de mantenimiento el cual se ha dejado pasar por años por el HISD y en lugar de buscar una solución optan por la salida más rápida que es querer cerrar la escuela, no es justo y merecemos atención por parte del Superintendente y el mismo Distrito Escolar.

---

Wesley Orr

Self, teacher

Lubbock, TX

Schools need to be supported as they already exist in necessary neighborhoods and communities. Parents already have the option to enroll their students in any school they choose. If funding is in any way removed or redistributed from currently existing public schools, many students in the most fragile populations will be the most negatively affected by these new measures. Transportation, Special Education Services, and Food Access are not as readily available in private school or charter school settings.

---

Sarah Whitfield, Mrs.

self - junior college professor; former public school teacher

Kilgore, TX

I am writing in favor of school vouchers. Opening education to the free market system will improve the schools. Competition is a good thing! Standardized test scores have gone up in other states that already allow school vouchers.

---

Kent Reynolds

Self

Belton, TX

Top 10 reasons to oppose school vouchers

1. Vouchers are an egregious violation of the separation of church and state, because tax dollars collected from people of various religions are used to support students at private schools of other religions.
  2. Vouchers take much-needed funding away from public schools.
  3. Public schools in smaller communities will be harmed the most when public school dollars are divided between public and private schools.
  4. Private schools do not have to meet the same accountability requirements as public schools.
  5. The overall quality of primary and secondary schools in Texas will decline since private schools do not even have to hire teachers with teaching certificates.
  6. Vouchers will result in large private schools starting satellite campuses in smaller communities.
  7. Vouchers will result in for-profit companies starting private schools driven solely by a profit motive.
  8. As seen in other states, a voucher program will become a universal program within a few years, and most of the students receiving vouchers will be students who were already in private schools.
  9. Texas legislators should be providing significantly more funding to support public schools rather than reducing funding through vouchers.
  10. Vouchers are a highly divisive issue, and many otherwise conservative legislators in Texas have been voted out simply because they would not go along with the voucher scheme.
- 

Stacy Hanson

self - homemaker

Houston, TX

Families should not be shackled to their zip code for their children's education. They should have tools available to them to more easily save and afford to educate their children in the best way possible for each child. Creating an ESA program would open opportunities for countless Texans.

---

Karla Holloway  
self  
Cedar Park, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

As the mother of a disabled son, I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

Sincerely,  
Karla Holloway  
1024 Silverstone Ln.  
Cedar Park, TX 78613  
512-922-3740  
karlaholloway@yahoo.com

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Elizabeth Yturri, Ms.  
Self, Communications Specialist  
Garland, TX

According to the laws of our State as outlined in the Education Code, public education in Texas is tasked with ensuring that every child has access to a high-quality education, enabling them to realize their full potential and participate fully in societal, economic, and educational opportunities now and in the future. It emphasizes that a dissemination of knowledge is crucial for the state's welfare and the protection of Texas citizens' liberties and rights. Private schools, however, are not required to offer Special Education Services mandated by law nor to employ certified, experienced educators. This lack of requirements suggests that vouchers do not facilitate educational opportunity or genuine choice for parents seeking high-quality education as touted by our governor and his small pool of billionaire donors, but rather create an environment where schools can selectively admit students with minimal accountability and transparency regarding their actual student outcomes and expenditures. This undermines public schools by diverting essential funds at a time when school finance is already insufficient, at best. Moreover, a recent poll by THPF reveals that only 35% of Texans support vouchers, while nearly 60% oppose them, with the opposition rate equally spanning across rural, suburban, and urban districts alike. In many rural communities, not only are there very few to no other options for schooling, but also public districts are the main employers to residents and central to most all community activities. By supporting vouchers, the Texas legislature risks undermining not only the success of our students but also the economic vitality and prosperity of our towns and cities. As a former K-12 educator, I strongly oppose ESA's/Voucher programs as does the majority of your constituents. Public Schools, now more than ever, are responding to the unique needs of their community and providing high quality learning opportunities that prepare ALL students for the workforce and personal success through comprehensive programs like CTE, advanced academic programs, and world-class athletic and fine arts education. Public schools are hubs for innovation that ensure the welfare of our state, and public dollars should remain public. I urge our legislators to fulfil their sworn duty of ensuring the welfare of our state and protecting our citizens rights and liberties, including those with disabilities and at-risk populations, by investing in the future of ALL children as prescribed in the mission set forth by our Texas Education Code, and not just for a select demographic of students and families. Thank you.

---

Dante Moten  
Self  
Houston, TX

Oppose School Vouchers; Fund Special Ed in Public Schools

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Felicia Moten  
Self  
Houston, TX

Oppose School Vouchers; Fund Special Ed in Public Schools

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John Welch  
Self/Retired  
Katy, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

---

Kristy White  
self/public school educator  
Farwe, TX

I am writing to express my strong opposition to school voucher programs and to highlight their detrimental effects on students with special needs. While proponents claim vouchers offer "school choice," the reality is that these programs divert crucial funding from public schools and leave our most vulnerable students behind.

Here are several key reasons why school vouchers are particularly harmful to special education students:

1. Lack of accountability: Private schools accepting vouchers are not held to the same standards as public schools regarding special education services. They are not required to follow Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or provide the full range of services mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
2. Discrimination: Many private schools can and do refuse admission to students with disabilities or those requiring extensive accommodations. This leaves these students with fewer educational options, not more.
3. Inadequate funding: Vouchers typically do not cover the full cost of private school tuition, especially for students with special needs who often require additional support services. This creates a financial burden that many families cannot bear.
4. Dilution of resources: As funding is diverted to voucher programs, public schools are left with fewer resources to support their special education programs, potentially diminishing the quality of services for those students who remain.
5. Loss of legal protections: Students in private schools do not have the same legal protections and due process rights as those in public schools, making it harder for families to advocate for appropriate services.
6. Segregation: Voucher programs can lead to increased segregation of students with disabilities, undermining decades of progress in inclusive education practices.

Instead of implementing voucher programs, we should focus on strengthening our public education system to better serve all students, including those with special needs. This could include:

- Increasing funding for special education programs in public schools
- Improving teacher training in special education practices
- Enhancing early intervention services
- Promoting inclusive education models

I urge you to oppose any legislation supporting school voucher programs and instead advocate for policies that will truly benefit all students, particularly those with special needs. Our public education system, while not perfect, is founded on the principle of providing quality education to every child. Let's work to improve it rather than undermine it through misguided voucher schemes.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

---

Geneva Bill  
Self  
Pearland, TX

Please oppose this bill and think about the kids who this will affect. Unfortunately private schools don't do SPED services that are vital. Everyone will be affected by this. My son was fortunate that we had him in an ABA school before he started public school and continued in sped classes that helped him w growing. The SPED staff are understaffed and don't have as much support as they should to help our children

Please keep our kids in mind  
Thank you.

---

Carmen Macias  
self - pharmacist  
Austin, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities. Additionally, charter schools have a poor record of providing services and bilingual education to emergent bilinguals.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, and emergent bilinguals the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities as well as emergent bilingual students of Texas.

Sincerely,  
Carmen G. Macias

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Cynthia Curtis, Ms  
Arc of Texas  
Garland, TX

Public Education is a right and the proposed efforts such as Vouchers will harm and dismantle the existing schools that deserve to be serving the public without regard to their status, my adult daughters both graduated from the public school system and have successfully succeeded

---

Kelly Waterman  
self  
Dallas, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools. As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

Kelly Waterman

[Your Address]

[City, State, ZIP Code]

[Your Email Address]

[Your Phone Number]

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[City, State, ZIP Code]

[Your Email Address]

[YDear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special our Phone Number]

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Elizabeth Irwin  
self  
Garland, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities. As one of five children I had the privilege to attend private school, however; my younger brother who was diagnosed with Prader-Willi Syndrome at birth was not admitted to this same private school due to the school's inability to meet his educational needs. He and, thus our family benefitted greatly from our local public school. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Irwin  
2422 Creekdale Dr.  
Garland, TX  
hungerfordea@gmail.com  
(469) 995-5017

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Christina Stock  
Self, music therapist  
Richardson, TX

I am against vouchers and education savings accounts under any name. Public schools need to be FULLY FUNDED, the state needs to increase the basic allotment, and legislators must pass legislation that requires all monies collected as part of recapture be spent on PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

---

Abby Olsen  
Self  
San Antonio, TX

Public education is vital for a fair and democratic society. Fully funding public schools ensures that all students, regardless of their background, have access to quality education and resources. When schools are well-funded, they can offer better facilities, smaller class sizes, and more programs, helping all students succeed.

I do not support vouchers or educational savings accounts (ESAs) because they divert money away from public schools! Vouchers let students use public funds to attend private schools, which do not follow the same standards as public schools. ESAs allow parents to spend public money on private education expenses, further draining resources from public schools.

These alternatives often lead to greater inequality, where only those who can afford additional costs benefit from better education. Research shows that privatizing education does NOT improve outcomes and weakens public schools by taking away their funding.

To ensure every child in Texas has a fair chance, we must focus on fully funding public education and stop trying to shift funds to private options. Invest in public schools TODAY!!

---

Jennifer Perry  
Self/attorney  
Dallas, TX

I am a parent of two children in Texas public schools, and my mom was a Texas public school teacher. We love our public school! However, lack of funding has been impacting the district. Last year the district cut funding to an organization my kids participate in, Destination Imagination, which provides supplemental STEAM education and 21st century skills. I am against school vouchers because they will take more funding from our public schools. Any parent has the right to choose to opt out of public school; however, we as taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for that choice. Please stop vouchers in Texas.

---

Ryan Higgins  
Self. Adjunct Professor, Former Teacher, US Army Reserve Officer.  
Fort Worth, TX

As an educator and US Army Reserve Officer, I want to emphasize that, as a person, I have explored the connection between public education and the military. Texas is home to a significant amount of military members, and the quality of life soldiers have while stationed here is directly tied to the quality of public schools and the resources that public schools can offer. By increasing funding for public schools, which accept children of military members who often move at irregular times in the year, we are directly supporting our military members.

Further, for the US to remain a global leader, it is imperative that K-12 public schools have the resources they need to teach math, science, social studies, and physical education to all students. We are seeing significant challenges with new soldiers not being academically or physically prepared for the military, and having worked as a teacher, I can say that public schools are often doing their best with limited resources. In the face of increased global competition, the ability of Texas public schools to serve current servicemembers as well as educate future NCOs and Officers will play a vital role in increasing the readiness and capabilities of our military.

---

Kathy Armstrong, Mrs  
Myself housewife  
Plano, TX

I am against vouchers and education accounts under any name. Public schools need to be FULLY FUNDED, the state needs to increase the basic allotment, and legislators must pass legislation that requires all monies collected as part of recapture be spent on PUBLIC SCHOOLS. I also want teachers to get a pay raise. If you don't give them a raise I'm very concerned we will lose a lot of our amazing Texas teachers.

---

Stephanie Ercolani  
Self  
Spring, TX

I am against all vouchers & education savings accounts under any name. Public schools must be fully funded. The state needs to increase the basic allotment & legislators must pass legislation that requires all monies collected as part of recapture be spent on public schools. Vouchers only mean less school choice for all kids. Those who want private education can do so if they wish but not from government funding. Keep public schools public & increase funding especially for low income schools & pay teachers more.

---

Valari Mancha  
Self/Registered Nurse  
Fort Worth, TX

Arizona is now millions in debt after passing their voucher programs. Texas do not need vouchers- our tax payer money should fund public education and students. We are underfunded as it is. And more parents are finding out this- all the while Greg Abbott continues to criticize his underfunded public school system. There are not enough private schools for vouchers to make a substantial difference in the lives of most Texans and therefore most voucher funding if passed would go to families who are already affording private school. Do the right thing and fund the public schools fully before pushing to spend more money for private school use.

---

Jennifer Morrison, Mrs.  
Self  
Carrollton, TX

The reality is that our family had the resources to access private education and did for kindergarten through high school for our oldest child. Our youngest child was also in private education until the middle of 4th grade. At that point in her academic career she was significantly behind in math and reading due to her ADHD. Even though she had medication the reality was that the private school did not have the band width to provide her with an education that would allow her to be academically successful. After 18 month in the local public school she is almost to grade level reading but still behind - BUT - she is confident in her ability and she has gained academic skills that moved her reading from a 1st grade level to a low 4th grade level - 3 grade jumps in one year! Her math rose from a 1st grade level to mid 4th grade level in that same year. The biggest improvement - she choses to read aloud in her class now, something she would never do before.

Vouchers would have put her further behind in the private school. But vouchers could hurt her even more in the public school if funds are diverted from the public schools, thus limiting the public schools' ability to meet her needs.

Please do not allow school vouchers in Texas!

---



Mary S Storemski  
Self/retired IT professional  
Houston, TX

The state must oppose any form of education savings account, school choice, or voucher program. Public schools should be fully funded, student allotments should be increased, and recapture monies must be spent on public schools. It is our interest as a state, and within our individual communities, to advocate for quality education for students of all means. As a parent who 'chose' to send one child to private school and another to public, I know what 'school choice' means, and my tax dollars should have no part in supporting private schools.

---

Kaylen Burke  
Self / insurance underwriter  
Houston, TX

I am against vouchers and educational savings accounts. Public schools should be FULLY FUNDED. The state should increase their basic allotment. If we want Texas future to thrive, we need to educate ALL our children and the best way to do so is through public schools! Legislators must pass legislation that all money collected as part of recapture be spent on public schools!!!

---

Paul Zoch  
Self  
Bridge City, TX

I believe that all tax money raised should be use to support and enhance public education. It seems that using public money for private programs would be a disservice to our taxpayers and most of the students of the great state of Texas. Public education is a great equalizer that gives all the opportunities to advance and achieve so much in our society. If Texas wants to be the leader in economic development and one of the largest economies in the world, we must invest in all students. I have always been a staunch Republican believing that government involvement should be minimal. So let's invest in Public Education and make it the best in the world before we add other options that will most likely only create less diversity and unforeseen consequences.

Thank you. Rev. Paul Zoch

---

Sandra Hinsley, School Board of Trustees Member  
Self and S&S Board of Trustees/retired educator  
Sherman, TX

I am adamantly opposed to school vouchers. Implementation of such a program will inevitably lead to misuse of tax payer money, watered down education for students, inequity in accountability, and total disruption of the public school model as a whole...for students and teachers alike. I beg you, please save our public school system...PLEASE put these kids' futures ahead of any political agenda.

---

Sandra Palacios  
Self  
Austin, TX

Support

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Julie Girards  
Pastors for Texas Children  
Dallas, TX

School vouchers in theory sound like a good idea giving families options, but in reality it discriminates against families in low socioeconomic conditions and children with deficient parents. Families without financial means who could theoretically choose a private school for their child do not have the financial means to provide all the supplemental materials that are required to be successful in a private school setting including transportation, books, supplies, extracurricular enrollment and equipment, meals, etc. The money for school vouchers would also decrease the amount spent on public schools which discriminates against children whose parents are not capable of applying for vouchers. Well educated citizens make better citizens and better communities, so ensuring quality education for all helps us all to live better lives.

---

Gayle Lawson  
Self - retired  
Dallas, TX

PLEASE do everything you can to defeat any school voucher program in Texas. It is unfair to use our tax dollars to pay toward private school for anyone, especially those who can already afford it. Also the amount suggested to be paid per student is a LOT more than is paid per student in the public schools. And paying for religious schools obviously goes against separation of church and state and will probably be tied up in court for a long time, costing the taxpayers lots of money. Texas is not known for good oversight in its programs so I can imagine how much money will be wasted trying to keep up with what child is in public vs private school and moving the tax money back and forth. And the state will have no authority over the private school. It will just be washing its hands from education because few resources will then be allocated to public schools. Our state officials will probably say different but they lie all the time.

---

Kimberley Santos  
Self  
Long Branch, TX

ESA would benefit our family by allowing us to have the funding that the schools get on our behalf to purchase school curriculum, take the kids on field trips and sign them up for music, etc...as to further our child's education.

---

Jose Lopez  
myself  
Dallas, TX

Please say no to school vouchers, public education should be the bed rock of society. Also please stop making unfunded amendments, if the state leaders are going to create new regulations fund them otherwise don't pass new rules.

---

Carlotta Baird  
self - artist  
Sugar Land, TX

Public schools cannot successfully implement or sustain programs for which they do not receive funding. Districts are currently starving for resources and investment that will help students and teachers to experience success. The Legislature failed to provide additional funding to public schools this session, and districts are struggling with hiring and retaining experienced and qualified teachers under these dismal conditions. The best way to invest in the future of our state and our workforce is to prioritize investing in our public school educators.

I am against vouchers and education savings accounts under any name. I am against forcing any schools to use a specific curriculum in order to receive a stipend because they risk losing out on the limited options for funding. Public schools need to be fully funded, the state needs to increase the basic allotment, and legislatures must pass legislation that requires all monies collected as part of recapture be spent on PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Vouchers are not a fiscally responsible plan for the state of Texas. Let us examine and learn from the failures of the state of Arizona who embraced voucher programs before we repeat their mistakes.

---

Mary Jackman  
Self  
Dallas, TX

Our democratic republic depends on a well educated citizenry. Schools

Our democratic republic depends on a well-educated citizenry. All people in our country must be able to attend well-funded Public schools with excellent teachers. Our founding fathers visualized a free public education for all citizens.

---

Wilson Windle  
Self. Retired Civil Engineer  
HOUSTON, TX

Dear Members of the House Public Education Committee,

I strongly oppose the establishment of an educational savings account program as this would have detrimental impacts on students with disabilities, including a loss of legal protections for students and their families, lowered educational accountability and oversight standards, and increased segregation of students with disabilities.

Alternatively, to increase educational opportunity for students with disabilities, the Texas legislature must address the existing crisis of underfunded special education services in public schools. Texas currently underfunds special education by \$2.1 billion annually. I urge the legislature to adopt the formula-based funding recommendations in the Special Education Funding Commission's final report, which would ensure appropriate services for students with disabilities in Texas public schools.

As your constituent, and in solidarity with recommendations from The Arc of Texas, I ask you to do everything in your power to protect Texas children with disabilities.

---

Brian Bloss, Teacher  
Self / Other Public Educators  
Grapevine, TX

To the esteemed members of the education committee, I submit this testimony in absence since I am preparing to serve the students of my public school district.

As you prepare for the next legislative session, please do your constitutional duty and fully fund our PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Education savings accounts like those being pressed on this committee by groups external of the legislature including Governor Abbott and Lieutenant Governor Paxton who have kept needed funds from reaching schools in the name of creating a new entitlement program in the form of education savings accounts.

All proposed legislation that these parties say they will support appear to be modeled after Arizona's universal education savings account system. In just 1 year of these accounts being universal it ran up a state budget deficit of over \$1 billion dollars. That means the state is having to choose whether to fund these accounts or cut other programs. Moreover, a majority of those accounts were being used by families who already were enrolled in private schools. It didn't improve access to education quality for most families.

There is no need to follow in Arizona's footsteps. Fund the public schools fully, adjusted for inflation. Our public schools are major geographic pull factors helping to fuel the Texas economic miracle.

I want to provide what this failure to keep our schools funded because of politics to try and get educational savings accounts I have personally witnessed. I have seen school libraries close, I have seen programs meant to help close the achievement gap get cut because districts can't afford them. This year I am slated to serve class sizes of 35 and 38 students in 6th grade social studies. Ask yourself if you would have a high quality education in middle school if you had class numbers of that size.

Since 2019, the public schools of Texas have performed valiantly, recreating education during the COVID Pandemic and taking on unfounded mandates from the legislature with less and less. The wonderful news is there is no need for this. The money exists and should be released. If educational savings accounts are so good and popular then there is no reason a clean bill could be considered AFTER our public schools are fully funded.

God bless you for your public service. However, please do your duty and fully fund our public schools.

---

Kelvin Doe  
self  
San Antonio, TX

Our public schools and teachers are forced to work with a rapidly declining pool of money against an increasingly difficult set of standards. Vouchers funnel money from the education of all of our students to the education of a few of them

---

Erika Buentello

Self

Laredo, TX

I am a public school teacher, a product of public school, a parent of a public school student and an advocate for public schools. We are already struggling so much and cannot afford to take from our depleted funds to subsidize private schools for the rich. Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators.

Abbott's refusal to to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students.

Texas public schools are underfunded. Just to match the national average, they would have to receive more than \$5000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents.

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Amanda Martin

Self

Austin, TX

Governor Greg Abbott has already made vouchers — the pet project of his billionaire donors — his top education priority for the next legislative session, not millions of Texas students and their educators. I'm ashamed that my state's leadership refuses to take care of its own future by investing money in service of public and accessible educational institutions.

Abbott's refusal to to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students. My district, Austin ISD, has a 60 million dollar deficit. This year, teachers are not getting pay raises to incentivize experienced staff to stay nor is the district keeping up with the cost of living.

Texas public schools are already underfunded, and Special Education services in particular are egregiously neglected. Just to match the national average, Texas schools would have to receive more than \$5000 more per child, and our teachers would have to receive more than \$9000 more. Vouchers, if enacted would take billions of tax dollars from our public schools within a few years, digging even deeper holes in their budgets. The ultimate losers would be the children of your constituents.

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Laura Bachtel, Mrs.  
Self/Adapted Physical Education Teacher  
Pflugerville, TX

Good evening,

I work as a Special Education Teacher in Pflugerville ISD. I am reaching out to ask that you vote against vouchers. The Governor's refusal to to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students. Pflugerville ISD alone was required to pay almost \$20 million back to the state which has caused the school district to make tough decisions about education. Students deserve to be supported! It starts with increasing funding back into public education!

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Thank you for your time and consideration. Please support students, teachers and schools!

Laura Bachtel  
Proud Special Education Teacher

refusal to to increase state funding for public schools has left many districts with crushing deficits, forcing schools to make hard choices about increasing class sizes and forgoing educational enrichment opportunities for our students.

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Jorge Galindo  
SELF  
El Paso, TX

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