

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Public Education
For HB 4969

Compiled on: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 2:45 AM

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

Hearing Date: April 11, 2023 8:00 AM

Jennifer Harris

Self, a parent of a public school student
Austin, TX

I'm a public school parent and a graduate of public schools in Texas. I'm a lifelong GOP primary voter. All of these things lead me to strongly oppose public school vouchers. I ask you to oppose any and all vouchers or ESA programs and keep public dollars in public education. As a public school parent and taxpayer, I oppose voucher and ESA programs as they take public money from public schools and do so without the transparency and accountability Texas taxpayers, students, and parents deserve. Any school receiving public money must be held to the same financial, academic ratings, and other requirements as our public schools. Republicans used to respect local control, including school boards being elected and are required to be transparent and accountable to the voters and taxpayers in their community. Private schools and private vendors do not have elected boards or the same level of local control and accountability. Please vote NO on HB 4969.

Kim Buttrum

Myself
League City, TX

As an educator, I am adamantly in support of public education and strengthening that revered institution - and adamantly against these lame attempts to knock it down by promoting privatization. Privatizing public education has shown time & again to be short sighted and an abject failure. We should instead be increasing funding to public schools, funding that has been siphoned away over the years by these same politicians.

Jolie Willis

Self
Austin, TX

I am opposed to any measure that takes basic allotment or any type of funding away from public school districts. I oppose this measure.

Savanna Hidalgo

self
Beaumont, TX

Against

David McCardle

Self

Katy, TX

Please protect public education in Texas. Vote against any school voucher programs or any other bills allowing tax dollars to be used for private and/or religious schools. Do not allow religious indoctrination in Texas Public schools.

Diana Sharp

Democratic Women of Comal County

New Braunfels, TX

House Education Committee Members,

I am asking each member of the House Education Committee to must act now to oppose the proposed school vouchers (HB 619, HB 3781, HB 4340, HB 4807, and HB4969) legislation that would have a harmful impact on our public education system. Vouchers would divert public funds away from our schools, putting the future of our children at risk.

School vouchers are a flawed policy that would benefit only a select few while leaving the majority behind. They would take away resources from public schools and redirect them towards private schools, which often lack accountability and are not held to the same standards as public schools.

YOU cannot allow any of these vouchers bills to pass out of the House Public Education Committee, as it would only exacerbate the inequities in our education system and undermine the fundamental principle of equal access to education for all.

I urge every member of the House Public Education Committee to vote in opposition to HB 619, HB 3781, HB 4340, HB 4807, and HB4969. The Texas Legislature needs to invest in our public schools, not dismantle them. Our children's future and the future of Texas depends on it.

Thank you committee members. Together, we can make a difference in protecting the future of our education system

Pro Public Education Supporter,

Jackie Stone

Self, real estate

Austin, TX

Public money should fund public schools.

Paul Yamarick

Self

Moulton, TX

I am in favor of HB4969. Educational freedom will allow a wider range of opportunities with innovative techniques only competition can provide as each individual child requires.

Tracy Wuster

Self/Teacher

Austin / Central Texas, TX

I am opposed to this bill that would hurt public school funding and public school children.

KIMBERLY WARR

self

CARROLLTON, TX

If we can just increase the BASIC ALLOTMENT and eliminate the "recapture" policy, ALL our schools will benefit!!!!

Anita Hebert
Shallowater ISD
Shallowater, TX

I am Dr. Anita Hebert, Superintendent of Shallowater ISD, in the Lubbock area, and I am here in support of SB 245. I am a lifelong public educator, finishing up my 41st year of service in public schools, and first and always, a teacher. I want to express my appreciation to Chairman Buckley and all the members of this committee for your support of public schools and your willingness to listen to those of us in the field on issues that are important to us.

I write with the passion that comes from giving my entire career, yea, my whole life to the pursuit of building a high quality educational experience for the kids of Texas. I believe wholeheartedly that the public school system is the heartbeat of Texas. Our local communities, the values the teachers instill, and the spirit created in the small-town school are what makes us Texans and continues the proud tradition of the Lone Star State.

Public schools have continued to operate throughout the years with limited resources and a smile on our faces. We take kids of all kinds and find ways to make miracles. The challenges have only become greater in the last several years, now in a post-COVID world, we have additional social challenges and inflation to deal with. In unprecedented times with surplus funds, the legislature has the opportunity to fully fund public schools not only to continue operating as normal, but to improve with specialized people and programs to meet the needs and challenges of today.

For these reasons, I oppose the use of any public funds to provide vouchers as a means to fund opportunities for private school or home school. These options currently exist and do so without the accountability that public schools are held to. Any public funds should be subject to the same levels of accountability for all. Private entities are not required to provide the same level of service as our public service and serve all students. Please listen to the majority of your taxpayers rather than the special interest groups. We want a world class experience for our kids every day in our Texas public schools.

Thank you for listening.

Linda Litzinger
Texas Parent to Parent - Public Policy Specialist, and self (public policy specialist)
Austin, TX

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. Texas Parent to Parent is a statewide non-profit serving 14,000 families who have children with any type of disability, mental health or special healthcare need. We are against all educational savings account or voucher bills including HB4649. Thank you!

Janna Canard
Texas UU Justice Ministry
Fort Worth, TX

I oppose HB 4969. Public dollars should remain in public schools. Students, parents, communities, and businesses rely on public schools to provide high-quality education and ensure a bright future for Texas. I urge you to do the right thing and vote against this legislation.

Ruth Torres
Self
DALLAS, TX

Vouchers are Billion's in annual funding and a TRILLION \$ pubic land grab. Taxpayers will be paying for private owned lands while existing public schools decline, are abandoned and sold off to become anything in our neighborhoods. When students are rejected or expelled, they keep the money and where is the kid supposed to go, there is no longer a public school option. 20 years will go by before people fully comprehend the con with a destroyed public education system & the politicians pushing for it will be richly retired. Vouchers & charters are unregulated, underperformers are expanding and simply change their name & keep operating with parents unaware.

Charters & vouchers are UNINFORMED choice because they are advertising a superior education that is not better than traditional public schools. They lack oversight and can be owned by ANYONE including foreign enemies of the US while getting our tax \$\$ and our kids and future scientists and engineers info. Their meetings are closed to the public & they don't have to respond to information requests. We can't vote out or demand bad teachers or admin be fired. The courts will NOT get involved in church operations. So parents will have LESS rights & information.

Private schools have NO regulation, not required to do backgrounds, drug screens, no cameras. The church has yet to fully deal with & correct sexual abuses but we should hand them hundreds of thousands of kids?

Charters & vouchers shift dollars more to administration and overhead and less to actual classroom instruction for uncertified teachers, especially for black & brown kids & poor children while the wealthy children receive the best education. They get to choose which kids they accept or not leaving out SPED, foster kids, the most vulnerable. This increases the learning & income gaps robbing our kids of their education, increasing crime and costs for prisons.

When hospitals were sold to be for-profit, they reduced and closed leaving rural communities without adequate access, people died. When a Walmart comes into the community, they drive out all the mom & pops and then they can raise prices or close and create a food desert taking years to figure out what to do. Unregulated banks now threaten our entire economy. Commercializing our residential neighborhoods for STR & hourly renting of pools etc. are destroying our neighborhoods for the profit of everyone but the people that actually live there. I am a business woman, I believe in capitalism but these unbalanced, greedy policies take it too far.

DOOM to you who legislate evil, who make laws that make victims- laws that make misery for the poor, that rob my destitute people of dignity, exploiting the defenseless and hurting, taking advantage of children. What will you have to say on Judgment Day. Isaiah 10:1-4

PLEASE FUND public school CERTIFIED educators. Keep your oath to God & country, VOTE for our kids not campaign donations.

Norman Farrar
self
Carr, TX

I'm against this bill. This will place a significant burden on school districts because it will create many curriculums directed by parents who have no responsibility for managing the school districts.

Concentrate on attracting the best educators, by paying them more and providing them with more manageable work loads.

Jennifer Easley
N/A
San Antonio, TX

School vouchers, including education savings account (ESA) and tax credit scholarship programs, hurt Texas public schools because they direct funding away from an already critically underfunded system. Please increase funding for our public schools in lieu of creating a new system that will divert these funds.

Bobby Ott
Temple ISD
Austin, TX

My name is Bobby Ott and I am opposed to this bill. I am the Superintendent of Temple ISD, a conservative and a Republican. There are many reasons I oppose this bill and they are as follows:

- Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers; they are not required to report student achievement or financial data to the state or public. This is not Republican and does not represent conservative values.
Tax money going towards an unregulated service without transparency is inconsistent with Republican values.
- Private schools do not have to accept all students; they can discriminate through selective admissions. This is not parent choice after all and many parents will be upset if they are promised "choice", but later denied by their local private schools. Further, if a student happens to get accepted and then turned away due to behavior etc. the student will be sent right back to public schools, but this time minus the funding. This will result in higher taxes locally to make up the difference.
- The superiority of private schools is a myth. Private schools are not required to hire certified teachers. No credible research exists to suggest vouchers improve academic performance. In fact, the latest research suggests otherwise due to misappropriations and closures.
- Vouchers drain resources from public schools; other states have shown that voucher costs often grow well above projections. Texas bill proposals are showing that an ESA around \$8,000, which is almost \$2,000 per student than public schools. This diverts money from public schools.
- Texas already ranks 40th in per-student spending and the rate of inflation since 2019 is 14.5%, per the Comptroller.
- Choice already exists within the public school system: Districts have transfer policies, magnet schools, career/tech academies, etc. Temple ISD accepts transfers without any charge of tuition.
- Vouchers subsidize tuition for existing private school and homeschooled students, putting a huge new financial burden on the state.
- Expressed concerns related to curriculum taught in public schools grows ten-fold in a private school system where the state has no oversight over standards or curriculum.
- When systems are not required to provide special education services, language learner services or additional resources to support low-income learners, eventually this will divide both systems economically and divide our children and our future.
- Lastly, there is no precedent for diverting tax money for the greater good into private services. If I want private security for my child, the legislature does not allow me to divert my tax dollars from the local police department for this expense. If I do not like the tennis courts at the public park and prefer the one at the country club, the same applies. If I make the choice not to use public services, then I should pay for it additionally. That is my choice.

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Terry Kosobud
Retired
Austin, TX

I oppose this bill. Texas is the 9th largest economy on Earth yet we can't fund public education and must resort to gimmicks like those described in this bill. Texas ranks 40th in terms of school funding. Texas legislators need to do their job and move Texas to one of the top states in educational funding not try to trick Texans with these gimmicks.

Scott Milder
Self
Rockwall, TX

Another scheme to score a political victory for those with aspirations for higher office, not in the best interests of students. Also, privatization schemes such as these are about profit potential on the \$70 billion plus Texas spends on public education. Each of you know this. If you disagree and truly believe you are promoting these bills to benefit students, then you don't understand the complexities and you are being played as a pawn by those who do. BTW, 99.4% of Texas campuses earned a C or better, and 74% earned an A or B. Where are these so called failing schools that you say drives all this nonsense? How about we invest in the .6% that scored below C, rather than gift tens of billions to alternatives? Nothing conservative about any of these bills! I am a lifelong Republican voter and an authentic conservative. These bills represent very liberal, reckless spending.

Mossman David

Self - Intellectual property law attorney

Austin, TX

I am AGAINST any bill that can be construed as in favor of vouchers. Vouchers are an attack on public education. I am AGAINST this bill.

Amber Lemons

Self

Stephenville, TX

Against

Please do not take money away from public education. Every child deserves the best. If a parent chooses another choice, it should be their responsibility to pay for that choice. This will ruin public education.

Lenise Eidson

Self-teacher

Belton, TX

As a Texas citizen and public school teacher, I do NOT agree with this bill. Please vote against it as it will take funds away from public schools.

Susan Beaty

Myself

San Angelo, TX

I am against any and all forms of vouchers, tax credits, and savings accounts.

Peggy Beaty

Self

Abilene, TX

I am opposed to there being any avenue for public money to flow to fund the education of children by any means other than Texas Public Schools. Vouchers, savings accounts, ... or any other name funnels money away from public schools. Texas public schools are not fully funded now and we should not do anything that pulls any funding away from our schools.

Stacy Beaty

Myself

San Angelo, TX

I am against all forms of school vouchers, savings accounts, and tax credits.

Maylon Beaty

Self

Abioene, TX

I do not support implementing this bill. I do not support any bills that would take money away from Texas public schools and place it in the hands of private schools, home schools, or any other no public education entity. I do not support savings accounts, vouchers, or any other name you want to hide this under.

Jacqueline Wright
Academy ISD
Belton, TX

I strongly oppose any voucher, tax credit, scholarship, or other program to fund private or home schools using taxpayer resources that public schools need to serve all students. As an educator in a public school and as a parent with a child in public education, I believe that this bill would have detrimental effects on public education, and would ultimately do much more harm than good.

Deana Copeland
self
Eddy, TX
Against

Randall Burks
Myself
Hamlin, TX

I am opposed to this bill.

Karen Morgan, Director of Accountability
Temple ISD
Temple, TX

Education savings accounts, or vouchers, are a fallacy as demonstrated by nationwide research. In states with a voucher program, about 85% of students using vouchers were already in a private school, so you cannot argue that vouchers are about private school access. Public schools already offer parental choice with equity and transparency. In Temple ISD, we serve so many in special education (what private schools can serve them well?), and English learners (what services are available to them in private schools?), as well as so many in poverty, for whom a voucher would never be enough to provide them with "freedom." Charters are already enough, and do not serve all populations.

Please let go of this notion that education savings accounts will "save" our students. All they will do is take necessary tax dollars from a currently financially strapped system and leave students and families behind that do not have a voice or a choice. Say NO to vouchers.

Randy Burks
Hamlin Collegiate ISD
Hamlin, TX

I am opposed to this bill.

Kelli Moulton
Self-retired educator
Corsicana, TX

I oppose HB4969. Any and all attempts to incentivize private education using public funds reflects a voucher system. Increasing and fully funding our public schools, including materials for all children in the state's public schools, is the best, most equitable, and inclusive option for Texas legislators.

Loyd Morgan, Mr.
Self- Educator
Temple, TX

Vouchers are wrong for Texas. They will only provide school choice for private schools, and private schools do not really want to be put in that position.

Please do the right thing for ALL of the children in Texas and vote NO to school vouchers.

Karen Morgan, Dr.
Temple ISD, Self - Educator
Temple, TX

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Brad Owen, Dr.
Self
Burkburnett, TX

I am asking you to vote in opposition of HB 4969. Many of the bills advocating for Education Savings Accounts say they are intended for students with educational needs or students with disabilities. Yet, the bills clearly indicate that private schools are not required to provide services for students with disabilities like public schools are. Private schools are also not required to accept all students who apply. Public schools accept ALL students and provide ALL students with the Free Appropriate Public Education they are guaranteed to receive.

I know many of these bills are being pushed under the guise of parent choice and parental freedoms. Our parents in Texas already have school choice. A clear majority of public schools offer open transfer and we have open-enrollment charter schools. In both of these instances, the state's allocation for the student would follow the child to the school they transferred to. And for those parents who desire to send their kids to private schools, there is already that option also. And many private schools have provided scholarships for families who may not be able to afford the tuition. Texas already has school choice. Education Savings Accounts are not needed.

Education Savings Accounts will not benefit rural areas in any way as there are little to no private school options in these areas. In urban areas, private schools have been around for many years and the students who were going to attend them are already there. And that is their parent's choice. Education Savings Accounts would only benefit these families who have already made that choice. Private schools will not alter their admission policies regarding students receiving special education services or for students who are academically behind based on education savings accounts. Legislative actions intended to benefit education in the state of Texas should be aimed at providing support for ALL of the 5.5 million students in the state and not just for the few who have the opportunity to apply and be accepted by private schools.

PLEASE VOTE NO ON EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS!

Jame Wilson, Dr.
Denton ISD
Denton, TX

AGAINST: There is not any state accountability for performance or fiscal stewardship with these programs. Vouchers reduce equitable access to educational opportunities, weaken rights for students with disabilities, and expose taxpayers to fraud. Voucher programs in other states have a long history of expanding well beyond their intended scope, even surpassing spending limits set by their legislation, resulting in increased state spending on programs that benefit private schools and businesses. Research also shows vouchers do not improve student achievement.

Vouchers also hurt our public schools by forcing rural communities to pay into a system they likely are unable to participate in, not protecting the rights of special education students, and leaving middle- and lower-class families with a large tuition bill for expenses not covered by a voucher.

Randel Beaver
Beaver Ranch
Archer City, TX

Please do not use public funds for private use at private schools. Funding tax breaks and public schools down the road will be a challenge within itself.

Ritchie Bowling
Maypearl ISD
Maypearl, TX

In my home district we struggle to supply all the needed supplemental services and instructional materials due to lack of funding. We need the State to fully fund Special Education at the Public School level and and Instructional Materials were cut in the last legislative session. We need that funding increased so that we can purchase services and materials that will meet the needs of our all of our students. Providing this waiver would deplete those funds further and how would they be vetted. Not all parents are equipped with the knowledge of what instructional materials or services are best practice for meeting a student with specific learning issues. I have a special needs son, I am an educator, and I expected the expertise of the local school district to help select best practices for my son. Again, this is a blank check that will be very difficult to monitor the use of these funds, and the Comptroller said in December he does not have the staff nor is his office equipped to provide such oversight. This may be well intentioned, but has many flaws and other issues need to be addressed first.

Barry Nebhut
Self
Austin, TX

I am opposed to any legislation and public funding in any form of voucher or so-called savings programs that are to be utilized to fund private and religious educational institution fees. I fully support our community educational system and only that system should be eligible for taxpayer funding.

Micah Arrott
self
Odessa, TX

Against- I am not in favor of any voucher effecting public education.

Scott Brooks
Self - Engineering Director
Florence, TX

I support all efforts to give parents options for educating their children. The public education system needs competition and reform, and allowing parents access to public funds for alternative schools is a great idea!

Deborah Ball
Self(teacher)
Cypress, TX

I am a taxpayer and am opposed to ALL VOUCHER bills.

Paul Dunk
Self/Public Education
Katy, TX

I am AGAINST HB 4969. Any form of voucher or ESA will create a multi-tiered publicly funded education system in Texas allowing exclusive private schools to access public funds. Subsidizing private schools that are not truly open to the public, but rather are allowed to self-segregate based on a variety of issues including ability and intelligence, would result in a separate and unequal education system where private schools funded by PUBLIC funds are allowed to pick and choose who they admit and who they reject. Only in PUBLIC schools do you find the freedom of opportunity for ALL students that is mandated in our state constitution. Thank you for your consideration on this IMPORTANT issue.

Valerie Effinger
Self - marketing
Houston, TX

Please, please! I urge you members of our state legislature, to vote "NO" to ALL bills allowing for education savings accounts (A.k.a. Vouchers). This drains funds from public schools, without requiring the same accountability financially or academically. Besides that, private schools are not even required to admit everyone. Would this truly give parents choice? No. Our state is already ranked 49th of 50 in the country in school funding. We should be embarrassed to even be considering these bills. Our public schools need more funding, not dilution of funds to go to other options.

Abbie Lester
self
Houston, TX

I am opposed to education savings accounts (vouchers) for the following reasons.

1. They drain funds from our public schools to private schools and vendors.
2. There is NO FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY on the use of these funds which can lead to mismanagement of our taxpayer dollars. Public schools have a school board and the TEA they must answer to.
3. There is NO STUDENT PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY. Public school students must take the STAAR test to show academic growth and achievement. Private education providers would not be subject to this requirement.
4. Private education providers DO NOT HAVE TO ACCEPT ALL STUDENTS. The choice in "school choice" is really in the power of private schools - NOT THE PARENTS.
5. Subsidizing current private school students (who do not need the money) would put a huge financial burden on the State - which is currently ranked 49th of the 50 States in funding its public schools.

Trista Dean
Self
Odessa, TX

I am against any vouchers that defund public education

Heather Perkins
Self
Morgan's Point Resort, TX

As an educator for 29 years and having two daughters that just entered their careers, I would hate to see the future of our schools put at risk. The whole idea of local public schools is to keep communities strong and provide a free and equal education available to everyone. With this bill, you will demolish everything that was intended. Some schools will excel while others are impoverished. This bill will compromise the middle and lower socioeconomic classes and once again provide privileged children opportunities that others do not get. Having free public schools is one of the only hopes that we have of providing students with a better future. How in the world, do you think that having a voucher system will be fair? Everyone cannot employ all the teachers or house all the students.

Eileen Nehiley
self; RD & retired TX public school teacher
Houston, TX

Please, vote no on all Voucher bills.

Frances Romero
Self
Houston, TX

Please OPPOSE HB 4969. Policy that allows vouchers under any name threatens our education system in Texas. The lack of financial and academic accountability opens up our system to mismanagement and lower student academic outcomes. Please vote NO on this bill.
Thank you.

Anne Russey
Self
Katy, TX

As a taxpayer (77494) I ask you to, please, strongly oppose and vote no on any and all bills that move to establish vouchers, education savings plans, etc. Taxpayer dollars belong in public schools. Thank you.

Barrett Pollard
Self - Superintendent - Gatesville Independent School District
GATESVILLE, TX

I strongly oppose any parent directed option that would funnel public school funds to private entities. Public school has been the backbone of this state and country since its inception. Directing public funds to private entities that lack any accountability or oversight is inappropriate. The vast majority of public schools in Texas are excellent. Do not let financial or social mis-steps made by a few isolated schools around the state and country fuel a program that would damage our great public school system.

Sylvia Campbell
self, retired
The Woodlands, TX

Dear Public Education Committee,
This bill is just another way to use public money for private schools. Public money should never be used to support private schools, which don't have to meet state mandates for hiring certified teachers, financial transparency, or academic achievement. I do not want my tax dollars going to private schools. Instead, we need to beef up our support for our public schools, which are the mainstay of a strong Texas.
Please vote NO on HB 4969.
Thank you,
Sylvia Campbell

Karen Thomas
Self - Software Consultant
HOUSTON, TX

I am a taxpayer and OPPOSED TO VOUCHERS!

L Quentin Dixon
Self/concerned citizen
Spring, TX

Please vote against HB 4969. This state-funded private-school scheme syphons money away from an already underfunded public education system, which we are required by the Texas constitution to provide. We need high-quality, well-funded public schools for all students in Texas to ensure the economic strength of Texas in the future. I am very concerned also that these taxpayer funds could be used to pay for tuition at extremist religious schools - I do not want any taxpayer money/public funds to support private schools which can indoctrinate students any way they like and have no obligation to provide a high-quality education to all students.

Deborah Leiber
self
THE WOODLANDS, TX

Good morning

I am a longtime Texas resident and a strong supporter of our public school system. Please do NOT support HB 4969 which is merely an educational savings account funding scheme! A voucher by any other name is still a voucher—it still siphons funds from an underfunded public education system and benefits unaccountable private and charter schools that have selective enrollment and don't have to meet state mandates for hiring certified teachers, financial transparency, or academic achievement.

Thank you,
Deborah Leiber

Johna Underwood
myself
Temple, TX

Please vote against any bill that funnels money away from public schools. Taking money away from public schools hurts students, families, and communities.

Debora McWhorter
self
Gatesville, TX

I do not believe that the state should supply funding for families who choose not to participate in the public school system. These "Education Savings Accounts" will only empower those parents who already have enough wealth to put with it to pay private school tuition and have access to private schools. This will have little to no effect in the small towns and rural areas of Texas. I am also concerned about poverty families who will take their children out of public school so that they can collect these funds to support their families, but have no intention or ability to educate them.

I do not understand why the state of Texas is willing to put funds into unregulated parents and companies who are not required to serve all children, only those they want to serve, but is unwilling to support and improve the public schools who serve all children that they are responsible for. However, they are quite willing to continue to mandate programs without funding, raise the expectations above students' developmental abilities, and add more responsibilities to teachers in the public schools. If available funds and common sense went into public school programs and funding, it would be a win for everyone!

s Dotson
self
Houston, TX

I am opposed to supplemented service materials receiving no allotment.. I am opposed to all vouchers. I want my hard-earned money to go to the public schools we already have. Personally, this whole effort makes me sick.

Charles Conley
Self, Welding Instructor
Gatesville, TX

Good day,

I'd like to voice my support for a school-choice voucher system that gives parents the option to choose where their children go to school. This kind of program will especially help low-income families who otherwise would not have a choice of where their child is educated. Let's make Texas schools great again.

Ray Jeffrey
Self
Irving, TX

I am opposed to all measures including this one currently being considered by the Texas House. Public funds must NOT be diverted to private schools in Texas. Creating a voucher system will siphon funds away from our already critically underfunded public schools, and will NOT even help the constituents it aims to support. Creating a voucher system for private schools will INFLATE tuition costs at private schools resulting in minimal (if any) savings for parents of private school students. This is a terrible idea and will only make education in Texas worse, not better.

The correct solution is to PROPERLY FUND Texas schools so that we can hire and retain teachers, reduce classroom sizes, and provide much needed mental health services for students. Stop trying to enrich your cronies in the private school systems with these schemes. These bills amount to nothing more than theft of public funds.

Theresa S Neman
Self teacher
Spring, TX

Please do not approve any bill that creates vouchers in any iteration. Instead, fully fund Texas public schools.

Any school receiving Texas \$\$ must follow the same accountability rules.

Page Foster
self
Moody, TX

I am in opposition of this bill.

Thomas Yarrish
Self, Lead Security Engineer
Cypress, TX

I am a taxpayer in the CyFair ISD area and opposed to any type of school voucher program. I'm asking you to vote NO on any type of school voucher bills in committee on Tuesday.

Keegan Webb
self/principal
Gatesville, TX

I am an Elementary Principal, a republican supporter, and proud advocate of our Texas Public Schools. Education Savings program (aka vouchers) will be determinantal to our Texas Public School system funneling billions of dollars away from public schools. Our public schools exist for the good ALL students, not a select few. We serve ALL students regardless of disability, native language, socio-economic status, etc. If we defund our public schools, Texas (and especially our rural communities) are the ones who will pay the price. Private schools and homeschool students have never had the mandates and regulations placed on them that our public schools have. Private schools are not required to accept students with disabilities, behavior disorders, English language learners, chronic absenteeism, homeless students, migrant students, etc. They are not required to take STAAR and other state mandated assessments that public school students take each year. Our current homeschool students have no oversight with some students receiving no education whatsoever. Until you are prepared to have the same expectations and oversight of private and homeschool, it is simply an unjust system to funnel money away from our public schools to give to these private institutions. If you want to better the education options in Texas, pay our teachers in a manner that is comparable to their education level and the professionals they are. Let's recruit the best for our students and fund our schools properly!

We humbly ask that you please vote no to all voucher proposals and continue to be the supporters of Texas Public Schools. I ask this not for my personal children, but for the good of ALL Texas children. Our public schools are the backbone of our society, please support them as such.

I am happy to speak with you to advocate further for the children of Texas.

Thank you,
Keegan Webb
Principal
Gatesville Elementary

Virginia Garcia
Self
Hondo, TX

Kindly only use public tax dollars for public schools. Attempt to provide respect and a living wage for public school teachers. Leave religion to parents and their chosen faith. Try talking to teachers, parents, not politicians with agendas, nor parents with perceived injustices. The dumbing down of Texas by unregulated and unaccountable private schools isn't going to work to make our state great. As a parent, grandparent, and public school teacher, get the facts and quit with the political power plays.

Georgia Polley
Spring Branch ISD Council of PTAs/Self
Houston, TX

Public dollars should remain in public schools. Our amazing district will pay more than \$80million in recapture to the state. Oddly enough, Appropriations wants to move \$8 BILLION from the School Foundation to General Revenue. THESE ARE ISD DOLLARS, NOT THE STATE'S!! Fund our public schools first to where they're not forced to make budget cuts or come back to the legislature every 2 years and beg for funding.

cAROL hEAFNER
SELF
cYPRESS, TX

OPPOSED TO VOUCHERS. PLEASE VOTE NO on all bills in Committee today.

Thomas Oehler

self

Austin, TX

I am not in support of any contributions of tax credits or any public funds to be utilized for educational assistance programs, vouchers, educational savings accounts or other designated items that would divert funds away from our public school systems. Our public school system is critical to the continued success of the children of the State of Texas and the communities that our public schools serve. Any diversion of funds away from our public schools will negatively impact our school system, and our constitutional right to a quality public education.

Stephen Stinson

SELF

Manchaca, TX

Oppose.

Melissa Fleming

Self

Houston, TX

I oppose this bill and urge lawmakers to vote against it.

Janet Dunbar, Dr.

Self - School Psychologist

Gatesville, TX

Please vote No to using tax payer dollars to fund student education outside of the public school system. The public schools are underfunded as it is and are not able to provide appropriate staff to student ratios. Pulling funds out of public schools will make this even more difficult. Additionally, in order to provide the current mandated accelerated instruction to students teachers are having to go without lunch and planning periods due to no funds to hire enough teachers. Taking what funds do exist away from public education will make the situation even worse.

Marlene Lobberecht

self & retired TX teacher

Houston, TX

Please OPPOSE all voucher bills (education savings accounts/insurance premium tax credits/parent allotment) which include this HB 4969. I am a retired teacher and a taxpayer in Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District. I oppose this bill for the following reasons:

- 1) They drain funds from our public schools to private schools and vendors.
- 2) There is NO financial accountability on the use of these funds which equates to mismanagement of taxpayer dollars.
- 3) NO student performance accountability to show STARR academic performance as private providers are not subject to this testing requirement.
- 4) Private education providers do NOT accept all students. This school choice is really private school administrator choice of students and NOT parent choice.

Respectfully,

Marlene Lobberecht

Niki Schoessow

SELF

Granbury, TX

I adamantly oppose any form of voucher bills... also known as tax scholarships, education savings accounts, education freedom, parent empowerment, school choice, etc. I enthusiastically support measures to support and improve public education.

Laura Cannon

self, retired teacher currently tutoring in Comal ISD

New Braunfels, TX

I am asking each member of the House Education Committee to must act now to oppose the proposed school vouchers HB 4969, legislation that would have a harmful impact on our public education system. Vouchers would divert public funds away from our schools, putting the future of our children at risk.

School vouchers are a flawed policy that would benefit only a select few while leaving the majority behind. They would take away resources from public schools and redirect them towards private schools, which often lack accountability and are not held to the same standards as public schools. The Texas Legislature needs to invest in our public schools, not dismantle them. Our children's future and the future of Texas depends on it.

Thank you committee members. Together, we can make a difference in protecting the future of our education system. Laura Cannon-retired teacher with 41 years in public education.

Dede Fox

Dede Fox

The Woodlands, TX

Against. A voucher by any other name is still a voucher—it still siphons funds from an underfunded public education system and benefits unaccountable private and charter schools that have selective enrollment and don't have to meet state mandates for hiring certified teachers, financial transparency, or academic achievement.

JERALDINE PORTER

self

Fischer, TX

I strongly encourage the House Committee to abandon this bill which will have an adverse effect on Texas public education. The system certainly needs some updating and adjustments but this bill does nothing except divert resources from the public system and send them to private schools. This will benefit only those who are already in a better position to educate their children, to the detriment of those less fortunate.

The education system in this country was established to give equal opportunity to ALL to receive a good, basic education. By leaving the disadvantaged student behind, Texas will most likely become equal to the schools in the USA which have already taken the route proposed by this and the other bills. We need to invest more resources into the existing system, offer better pay to teachers, let the educators determine the best means of education rather than leave it to special interests; seek to improve the system, not destroy it.

Stephanie O'Banion

Self - Nonprofit CEO

Belton, TX

I am registering in OPPOSITION of this bill. Our public schools are already faced with enormous challenges. Utilizing public funding to support private schools is not the answer and would only further these challenges for our public schools. Please vote NO for this bill.

Ryan Steele

Self

Cisco, TX

This bill is a joke. It allows a parent to receive money for "supplemental services" for a variety of services, including extracurricular services. Basically, this means that the state can now pay for outside of school sports such as select volleyball, baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, etc. Texas taxes should not go towards someone's private baseball coach or team fees.

Jean Grimsley
myself/teacher
GATESVILLE, TX

I am in support of our public schools and against any bill that would funnel public funds away.

Steve Post
self/Business Development Director
Abilene, TX

I am against this bill and any form of public money (vouchers, ESA, etc..) used for private schools. Educational funding should only flow to public schools. The future of our great state is reliant upon us fully supporting and funding our public schools and teachers. Diverting or redirecting public funds to private schools who are not required to comply with all federal or state requirements in regards to special education, student admissions, as well as academic or fiscal accountability doesn't seem like good use of taxpayer dollars. Please vote no to any bill supporting such measures.

Becky Stich
Self/Retired public school teacher
NEW BRAUNFELS, TX

House Education Committee Members,

I am asking each member of the House Education Committee to must act now to oppose the proposed school vouchers (HB 619, HB 3781, HB 4340, HB 4807, and HB4969) legislation that would have a harmful impact on our public education system. Vouchers would divert public funds away from our schools, putting the future of our children at risk.

School vouchers are a flawed policy that would benefit only a select few while leaving the majority behind. They would take away resources from public schools and redirect them towards private schools, which often lack accountability and are not held to the same standards as public schools.

YOU cannot allow any of these vouchers bills to pass out of the House Public Education Committee, as it would only exacerbate the inequities in our education system and undermine the fundamental principle of equal access to education for all.

I urge every member of the House Public Education Committee to vote in opposition to HB 619, HB 3781, HB 4340, HB 4807, and HB4969. The Texas Legislature needs to invest in our public schools, not dismantle them. Our children's future and the future of Texas depends on it.

Thank you committee members. Together, we can make a difference in protecting the future of our education system

Pro Public Education Supporter,

Ashley Gaulden
Myself
Gatesville, TX

It is careless and unacceptable to take money away from public schools. They already have to do so much with so little. You keep adding things to teachers plates and taking more and more money away at the same time. How can you honestly expect things to ever get better if you don't support our public education system. Vote no to this bill.

Robin Sherman

self

New Braunfels, TX

I, and my entire family - 4 voters , have ALWAYS supported our public schools and we are AGAINST any voucher programs. These programs have proven to divert much needed PUBLIC funds from our public schools. It is a fact that when voucher programs are instituted children are left behind. Do not allow these programs to pass out of the House Public Education Committee. Education in the United States should be free and equal for all. These programs will only ensure Texas falls even further behind and becomes a two class society. Stop the madness!

Linda Evans, Ms

Self

Conroe, TX

Vote No HB 4969

A voucher by any other name is still a voucher—it still siphons funds from an underfunded public education system and benefits unaccountable private and charter schools that have selective enrollment and don't have to meet state mandates for hiring certified teachers, financial transparency, or academic achievement.

Barbara Brock

Self

The Woodlands, TX

Please do not approve this bill which will ultimately take funds from underfunded public schools, which need the supplemental services and instructional materials. OPPOSE!

Jane Chesney

self, retired educator

The Woodlands, TX

The primary source of state funding for Texas school districts is the Foundation School Program (FSP). This program ensures that all school districts, regardless of property wealth, receive "substantially equal access to similar revenue per student at similar tax effort." THIS WORDING IS VERY CLEAR. Our tax money should be equitably distributed to public school districts. Period.

Jodi Duron, Associate Director
Texas Association of Midsize Schools
Elgin, TX

On behalf of TAMS, representing nearly 25% of school districts in Texas, we are registering our opposition to HB 4969 for the following reasons:

1. The use of taxpayer-funded vouchers with no oversight or accountability is not a fiscally conservative principle. It is a double standard that is reckless and ultimately leaves our most vulnerable students behind by reducing funding to an already underfunded system.
2. Since the passage of No Child Left Behind over 30 years ago, with the intent to close achievement gaps and prevent students from falling through the cracks, the State's assessment and accountability system has evolved from a place of good intent to the demise and takeover of community schools and duly elected boards. It is the same system that is being used to label schools/districts as failing, while promoting a voucher program to "save students from failing schools" that will not be held to the same standards of assessment and accountability yielding such arbitrary and false labels.
3. Most, if not all, of our districts/members reside in and/or represent a fiscally conservative mindset. The introduction of a voucher program is not fiscally conservative. In fact, in most cases across our nation, small and targeted voucher programs have ballooned well beyond their initial scope and have ultimately cost tax payers huge sums of money with no evidence of increased student performance.
4. Access to private schools is generally limited in rural areas, which forces our families to fund a program they cannot access. Vouchers, therefore, will leave our rural students behind.

At the end of the day, vouchers are not a "school choice" option for parents and families. Rather, it is a "private school's choice" who they choose to select. This is not parent empowerment. This is private school empowerment with no accountability. For these reasons, and many more, we respectfully ask that you oppose any/all forms of vouchers/ESA's/tax credits with the intent to divert critical tax dollars for private purposes. We ask that you prioritize our public schools instead of funding alternatives to it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Anne Darr
Self
Fort Worth, TX

PLEASE DO NOT SUPPORT HB 4969! The facts speak for themselves. Public schools welcome EVERY child, create communities, provide educational programming and related services for students with disabilities, are held accountable, and are required to comply with state and federal laws. Private/parochial schools pick and choose their students, are ill-equipped to serve students with diverse learning needs and disabilities, are not governed by representatives elected by the public, and are not held accountable for student academic outcomes or responsible spending. Therefore, diverting funding from public schools and giving that money to private/parochial schools is a reckless, irresponsible, inequitable way to spend the taxpayers' money as well as an invitation for corruption, misuse, and fraud. **PLEASE DO NOT SUPPORT HB 4969!**

Scott Caloss
Self
Castroville, TX

While the amount of a voucher in each state varies, it almost always falls short of a private school's cost. Vouchers leave low-income families scrambling to pay the remaining tuition amount and also become a tax subsidy for wealthy families already in private schools.

Jeanne King
self, client support
Katy, TX

I oppose these supplemental services as it will be detrimental to public schools. We need to invest in, not defund, public education! These and similar programs will be very harmful to poor, underprivileged, and rural areas of Texas. ALL Texans deserve the right to a free public school education! Texas parents are ALREADY EMPOWERED -- if they want their children to attend a private or parochial school, they are free to do so and pay for that privilege. Education is a RIGHT FOR ALL CHILDREN. These supplemental services and instructional materials easily can be paid for by wealthier families, but those families that live paycheck to paycheck will not have the additional funds to provide these services for their children. We are NOT LIVING in a Plessy v. Ferguson era. It was over 125 years ago that the Supreme Court determined that "separate but equal" was appropriate for public education. However, it was 1954 (69 years ago) that the Supreme Court corrected that error in judgement with the Brown v Board of Education decision that "separate but equal is NOT equal." All students deserve the right to supplemental services and instructional materials. We SHOULD NOT be moving backward.

Lou Montana
Self; Retired
The Woodlands, TX

I am against this bill, primarily because I believe it would reduce the funding and impact of public education. Public education accepts all children and is subject to public/governmental oversight. Private institutions can select their students and avoid public oversight of curriculum and outcomes. We need to level playing fields, not tilt them even further.

Jeannie Ryan, Ms
Self public school teacher
Lorena, TX

Against. I fear it will lead to unfounded censorship like it has in other states

Camille Rodriguez, Dr
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I support this bill.

Jim Armstrong
West Hardin County CISD
Saratoga, TX

I do not support any "voucher" program called by whatever name given. It will take money from traditional public schools in Texas and will especially harm small rural schools.

Stacey Ward
ATPE
Houston, TX

Vouchers are a ploy that take taxpayer money from public schools and give it to private schools and vendors, and then continue to undermine traditional public schools and charters, teachers, and students. The lack of public accountability in any voucher program is asking for mismanagement of financial resources, lacks academic accountability of the schools that receive the private voucher money, and takes funds away from a system that is broken and needs to be fixed. Any voucher program will have a long term negative impact on our state, teachers and students.

According to Raise Your Hand Texas, the last failed voucher bill in Texas was estimated to divert \$340 million per year from our public schools. That's hundreds of millions of dollars that would've been unavailable to public schools that could be used to support much-needed salary and retirement increases for teachers and staff, support tutoring and accelerated instruction for our at-risk students, including those with learning loss due to COVID.

The amount of public taxpayer money that parents would receive would not be enough to cover the cost of a private school tuition. Parents already have the choice to send their children to any school in the District where they live. When public funds are diverted to private entities, the public school still has to pay the fixed costs to run the schools. There is no discount to the public school. Class sizes will increase, more teachers will be needed, and we already have a hard time filling the classes with certified teachers as it is.

As private schools do not have the same accountability that public schools are held to, if a parent of a Special Education student (which includes dyslexia or any disability under 504), they are not required to provide accommodations to help those students be successful in the classroom as public schools are. How will that help the student who is already struggling? What about a student who has behavioral issues? Private schools are not mandated to accept or keep anyone. So if a student's behavior will not allow the student to stay in the private school setting, the student will either be homeschooled or sent back to public school. Where is the consistency there?

Vote NO on any bill that has any public education money going to a private school institution. It's not good for our state and most importantly, our children.

Gaea Sawan
self
HOUSTON, TX

No public funds for vouchers. Protect our public schools.

David Dorman
Self
Canton, TX

No vouchers or threaten public school funding

Katherine Johanns
Self, Marketing and Communications Director
Austin, TX

I oppose private school vouchers of any type. The Texas Legislature is bound by the Texas Constitution to maintain and support a system of free public schools. Sending taxpayer dollars out for use by unaccountable private schools that can pick and choose their students will hurt the public schools that are the backbones of our communities. I am proud of my Texas public school education and believe we should focus our resources on the school system that is required to educate any student who crosses its threshold.

Isabel Wood, Mrs
Self
San Antonio, TX

This is another form of vouchers which the state of Texas does NOT need.

Lily Jones, Employee

Self

Aledo, TX

None

Emily Sommerfeld

myself

Gatesville, TX

I am in complete support of our public schools and against any bill that would funnel public funds away

Sarah Flusche

Self

Baytown, TX

Please do not vote in favor of any voucher related bills. Public education is the backbone of our state, and any bills pertaining to vouchers threaten public education.

Wendy Kirkpatrick

kleinisd

Spring, TX

I am against this bill and I want you to vote against it.

Rachel Gonzales

Self

Leander, TX

Where's the financial support for teachers and students of public education that elected members promised during campaigns??? We were told that Texas always takes care of their teachers and likes to be #1 in everything...yet our education system is falling apart at your hands. We will remember during re election. We will boot out those who lied and did not give appropriate raises. Other states are giving substantial raises, texas will fall even farther behind and it will be extremely embarrassing considering the surplus that was available. Our public Ed students are suffering. Texas will pay the price for the downfall of this foundational component.

Sarah Gregory

Pflugerville ISD- Teacher

Round Rock, TX

I do not support allowing taxpayer funds to be redirected to private or home schools. Public schools serve ALL students, including students with special educational needs and bilingual students. Also, public schools provide career and technical education needed to train our future workforce. Public school boards are elected positions, and public schools are held accountable by state accountability standards, unlike private and home schools. Currently, Texas public schools are underfunded (ranked 42nd in the nation for per pupil funding) and lack the resources to offer competitive salaries. As a result, Texas faces an unprecedented teacher and staff shortage. Texas students, including my two daughters, deserve better. We need a fully funded public school system to prepare young Texans for the best possible future for our state. I'm addition, we need to invest in student mental health and safety, so our students can be protected from the growing threats of gun violence and fentanyl overdosing. I respectfully ask for your support of Texas public schools and the majority of Texas families who are served by public schools. I ask you to reject all proposals that divert taxpayer funds to other educational institutions. Thank you!

R Freeman

Self

Murchison, TX

No vouchers!

Sarah Gray

Self

Austin, TX

I am against HB 4969. This bill is just another voucher bill that poses a threat to public education. I support my neighborhood public schools and want my tax dollars to stay there, in my community, helping my local schools. Vouchers do nothing but force taxpayers to subsidize tuition at private and religious schools that are unregulated, unaccountable to the public, and do not have to meet the same standards of public schools. Stop putting effort toward vouchers and start putting money and support toward our public schools.

Lance Schultz

Self - Educator

Port Lavaca, TX

Dear Members of the Texas House Committee on Public Education,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the use of Texas taxpayer money to fund private education through voucher or voucher-like programs. As a citizen who values education and equal opportunities for all, I strongly believe that such actions are unconstitutional and undermine the Texas Constitution's principles of providing public benefit and free, quality education to all children in Texas.

The Texas Constitution states that public funds must be used for the public benefit, and this includes providing education to all children in Texas. Voucher programs, however, divert public funds away from public schools and into private institutions that are not held to the same standards of transparency and accountability as public schools. This goes against the fundamental principle of equal opportunity and fairness that is enshrined in the Texas Constitution.

Moreover, voucher programs have been shown to disproportionately benefit wealthy families and exacerbate existing inequalities in our education system. This not only violates the spirit of the Texas Constitution but also undermines the state's commitment to providing high-quality education to all its residents.

Therefore, I urge you to consider the constitutional implications of any legislation that seeks to divert public funds away from public schools and into private institutions through voucher or voucher-like programs. Let us work together to ensure that every child in Texas has access to a high-quality education, regardless of their socioeconomic status or background.

Thank you for your attention to this crucial issue.

Sincerely,

Lance A. Schultz

Educator

GRACE RILEY, Mr.

Self

Kingwood, TX

I'm a retired public school teacher. I would hope to believe that Texas Schools are better, but discipline in schools is non-existent. No corporal punishment has harmed education in the classroom.

Callie Nelsen

Self

Cedar Park, TX

Could this be any more obscure? Call it what it is: public school money for non-public schooling. This will only widen the gap between the haves and have-nots. If you want to help out parents, give them access to what the schools have: the same textbooks, instructional materials, etc. that their public school district offers its teachers. Don't just give them money to spend on unapproved materials. Public schools have to meet stringent rules when it comes to performance, testing, text books, and curriculum. No public money should ever be used to fund education that does not have to meet these same requirements.

Julie Petri
myself
Friendswood, TX
against

Geri Neemidge
Self Librarian
Round Rock, TX
Public Money belongs in Public Schools

Marie Marks
Teacher
San Antonio, TX
In favor

Cassie Carpenter, Mrs.
ATPE member, self, public school teacher
Lufkin, TX
Please vote no.

Yimadabattuni Rao, Dr.
Self, retired
Temple, TX
Opposed

Tommy Woodall
self, retired
Georgetown, TX
Public Money belongs in Public Schools

Dennis Sloan
Self / self employed
Magnolia, TX

Keep public school funding in public schools. I will not vote for any candidate, Republican or Democrat, who votes to divert public school funding.

Denise Parham
Self/Teacher
Tulia, TX

As a teacher of 29 years in public education, I asking you to VOTE NO for vouchers or saving account plans.

Krista Benson
Self - educator
Garland, TX

I am the daughter of a retired Texas public school educator, the product of Texas public school education, the mother of a 3rd-grader in Texas public schools, and a 19-year-veteran Texas public school teacher.

This bill is not good for Texas and Texas students. This bill only benefits the wealthy in urban and suburban areas.

Free public education is guaranteed in our Texas Constitution. Public school education is the right of every Texas child. Public school education funds need to remain in public school education.

Kathy Hartzler
Self retired
Georgetown, TX

Taxpayer funds spent only on public schools.

Jennifer Freeman
Self
Graham, TX

Vote No!

Melody Mitchell
Self - public school employee in Texas
Henrietta, TX

Please vote NO. PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING NEEDS TO STAY IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS!

Rhonda Bernard
Self
Allen, TX

Do not support taxpayer money supporting educational savings accounts or private schools. Properly fund the existing Texas public schools and districts.

Jenny Moore
Self
Millsap, TX

As a public educator in the State of Texas, I strongly discourage the use of vouchers. I feel this is another way to defund & deteriorate the education system in our state. Please do not vote for this bill or any other that will allow funding to try to dismantle our public schools.

Jenny Moore
Self
Millsap, TX

As a public educator in the State of Texas, I strongly discourage the use of vouchers. I feel this is another way to defund & deteriorate the education system in our state. Please do not vote for this bill or any other that will allow funding to try to dismantle our public schools.

Denise Gordon
Self/Taxpayer/ Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Round Rock, TX

I strongly oppose HB 4969; Public Tax Money belongs in Public Schools. TX already vastly underfunds its Public Schools, this Bill will further damage our Public Schools. Defeat it!

Jenny Moore
Self
Millsap, TX

As a public educator in the State of Texas, I strongly discourage the use of vouchers. I feel this is another way to defund & deteriorate the education system in our state. Please do not vote for this bill or any other that will allow funding to try to dismantle our public schools.

Jackie Besinger
Self
Austin, TX

I am against this bill. This bill is like all the other bills, it those not give parents the rights to use their tax dollars on the education they want for their children. This bill has rules of engagement that will only support few children.

Dawn Bjorge
self/teacher
Austin, TX

Vote this bill down. Fund free public schools appropriately and grants won't be needed.

Sonny Cruse
Self, School Superintendent
Graham, TX

The State of Texas has never provided public dollars for private education through legislation or appropriation. However, for the past twenty years, the State has had a variety of policy proposals that would have initiated such programs.

Vouchers are taxpayer-funded subsidies for private schools and vendors with little or no accountability and in my opinion have real potential for creating a segregated society based on economics, disabilities, special needs, etc.

A system that leads to a divided society and increases the gap between have and have-nots is not a system that is beneficial for the State of Texas. Have we not learned what happens in a divided society?

Public schools are accountable to their communities and the state.

Private education entities do not have to adhere to the state accountability system for academics or finances.

Public schools accept ALL students.

Private schools choose their students.

Public schools must adhere to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and have a system of protections for special education students.

Private schools are allowed to have selection criteria.

Public state agencies cannot regulate the private school admission process.

Private schools can include or exclude whomever they choose in student selection.

Private schools are not typically known for taking ALL students whereas public education is held to that standard of enrollment.

I am not aware of private schools that take students with English language learning needs, children with disabilities, or children with lesser financial means as a majority of their selections or in large numbers.

Rebecca Strickland, Mrs.
Lee Longino Elementary, Librarian
Duncanville, TX

I understand the house wants to give parents a voucher to educate their children wherever they would like. But if public schools were fully funded with the revenue to adequately pay teachers, support programs that are in place, reduce the workload for teachers. Then public schools would be better. But since we are underfunded as it is. We are doing the best we can with what we have. Taking money away from public schools will only widen the gap between the wealthy high achieving students and the rural low achieving poverty students.

As for the parents wanting to know what is being taught in classrooms parents can look at the teks resource system to see what is supposed to be taught. What they really should be concerned with are the teachers who are teaching their own woke agenda. Teachers who are going against the plans are or taking their lessons off script with an inappropriate lesson/activity are not bringing it to the team planning meeting. They get away with it until a student tells a parent that is willing to speak up and take it higher over the principals head. Even then the school boards are afraid of the rogue teacher. They are more protected than a tenured teacher who has a bad year. They are terminated because many different illnesses, accidents, pregnancy, or death in the family.

Vouchers are bad for schools and communities and parents trying to run the school by banning books and monitoring all content materials is not feasible.

Donna Ward, Mrs
ATPE and TRTA
Willis, TX

Voucher/savings account/ whatever name you give it is detrimental to public education. You are pulling money from public education where accountability measures are in place and giving money to facilities/homes where there is no accountability. How far behind will students be when they return to public education? Public education teachers will then be held responsible for what others didn't prepare students for. Is that fair? Please do not pass a voucher/savings account bill.

Renee Hawk
Self/Educator
Houston, TX

This is vaguely worded. What constitutes parent directed supplemental services and what exactly are the instructional materials that would qualify? What is the amount and details of tune allotment? What is the fee and who determines the fee, and is it a fixed rate or variable fee?

Jacob DeLarm
Self - Teacher
Katy, TX

Any efforts to allow parents to use public funds to pursue private education will do nothing but drain public schools and further the segregation we already see currently in our schools. It would be far more beneficial for the state government to work with and for the public services currently in place to educate all citizens than allow money to be funneled to for-profit or religious institutions. The right to a free, equal, and high quality education is the cornerstone of democracy and all efforts should be made to recognize and reinforce that cornerstone. Private education, alternative education, are just that, alternatives that have no business being funded by tax dollars.

Ashlynn Pohlmeier
Self Teacher
Shady Shores, TX

All of these bills are NOT choosing to fight for any sort of public education change that works in favor of those who are in education. If you want to change education for the better then place yourself within education.

Christina Haley
self
Round Rock, TX

Public schoolers don't want this. Charter schoolers don't want this. Home schoolers don't want this. Rural families don't want this. The only people who want this are people who can already afford private schools. Public funds belong in public schools.

Reed Bilz, Ms
Self
Fort Worth, TX

I am strongly against ALL attempts to drain tax dollars from neighborhood public schools to subsidize tuition at private and religious schools that are unaccountable to taxpayers and don't have to meet the same fiscal and educational standards as public schools do. I urge you to do the right thing and vote AGAINST this legislation.

Shawn Troxell, Ms.
Self/Retired Teacher
New Braunfels, TX

I am pleading with each of you to act NOW to oppose every one of these proposed school vouchers legislation: HB 619, HB 3781, HB 4340, HB 4807, and HB4969. These are misguided policies, because our taxes are supposed to fund public works, not private. As both a Mom and a retired teacher, it is maddeningly illogical to divert the public's money to private schools.

School vouchers would take away resources from public schools and redirect them to private schools, but private schools are not accountable to the public. Also, private schools are not held to the same standards as public schools.

You must not allow ANY of these vouchers bills to pass out of the House Public Education Committee; if they pass through, they will damage our basic right to an equal educational opportunity for the majority of Americans.

Parents who choose private schools for their children must pay for their choice. It's a choice they made, and we should not pay for their choice.

Again, I plead with all of you to vote in opposition to HB 619, HB 3781, HB 4340, HB 4807, and HB4969. Our Texas Legislature needs to invest our tax dollars in our public schools, not throw our money at private schools.

Ms. Shawn Troxell
Huge fan of Public Schools

Virginia Stout
Self parent
Katy, TX

This bill is bad public policy. Bills like this one drain funds from our public schools to private schools and vendors. There is no financial accountability. There is no student performance accountability. Private schools do not have to accept all students; the choice in school choice is really in the hands of the private schools, NOT the parents. Texas is currently ranked 49th in funding public schools and this bill certainly does not help as it will put a financial burden on the State.

Adam Stout
Self parent
Katy, TX

This bill is bad public policy. Bills like this one drain funds from our public schools to private schools and vendors. There is no financial accountability. There is no student performance accountability. Private schools do not have to accept all students; the choice in school choice is really in the hands of the private schools, NOT the parents. Texas is currently ranked 49th in funding public schools and this bill certainly does not help as it will put a financial burden on the State.

James Sanders, Taxpayer
Self
Salado, TX

I am for this bill. It will provide better services for Texas school children.

Nicole Fuller, Mrs.

Self-teacher

Tuscola, TX

Any public money should stay in public education!! Please do not take money away from our schools, which are already struggling. The teacher shortages and 4545 requirements have already left many districts unable to fill spots. Taking more money out is not the answer!!! No to vouchers! No to tax credits! No to ESAs! No to parent choice! No! No! No! Please do what is right for our public school children! Say NO to any public money leaving the public education system. Thank you.

Parent led education is home school! As teachers, we already have the TEKS and TEKS Resources which can be viewed by parents.

Nicole Fuller

Self- teacher

Tuscola, TX

Any public money should stay in public education!! Please do not take money away from our schools, which are already struggling. The teacher shortages and 4545 requirements have already left many districts unable to fill spots. Taking more money out is not the answer!!! No to vouchers! No to tax credits! No to ESAs! No to parent choice! No! No! No! Please do what is right for our public school children! Say NO to any public money leaving the public education system. Thank you.

Parent led education is home school! We, as teachers already have TEKS and TEKS Resources, which parents can view. As a parent, I trust the teachers in my district.

Michelle Rinehart, Dr.

Self, Superintendent

Alpine, TX

The Texas legislature is spending excessive time fighting over something that isn't good for Texas and doesn't align with Texan values: vouchers.

While vouchers have been rebranded as "educational savings accounts" and "school choice" this session, rural Texans aren't fooled: this is a deliberate effort to further defund public education in Texas, at a time when Texas already ranks in the bottom 10% in the nation in per pupil funding.

Vouchers aren't good for Texas and go against our Texan values. Here's why.

First, Texas public schools need every dollar of public education funding. Alpine ISD is a textbook example, being one of the most underfunded school districts in the state. This underfunding limits the opportunities we can provide our students and the salaries we can pay our staff.

While the average teacher salary in Texas is \$60,000, this salary isn't even on our district pay scale. State averages often mask outlier actualities; Alpine ISD's underfunding is a case study in a rural, remote district that suffers from Texas' disinvestment in public education.

Not only do districts need every dollar of public education funding, the state of Texas has a constitutional requirement to provide it (see Article 7 of the Texas Constitution).

Siphoning money from public schools to fund private schools is malpractice, especially at a time when many of our public schools are so dramatically underfunded.

Second, vouchers allow public funds to be spent without any accountability or transparency. This is as anti-Texan as a proposal could be.

Texas public schools are held to rigorous standards in accountability, finance, academic achievements, discipline, safety/security, and more. And rightfully so. As stewards of public funds, public schools should be (and are) accountable for their effective use of those funds on the public's behalf.

Why are transparency, accountability, and responsible stewardship essential for public schools, but not required for private entities that would receive vouchers? This is a core conflict with Texas values.

Either we believe in transparency and accountability when dealing with public funds, or we don't.

Lastly, and concerningly, while public schools must educate every child, private schools may discriminate, choosing who is and isn't allowed in their institutions.

Students with a history of academic struggles, special needs, or behavioral needs are disproportionately underrepresented in private schools. Private schools typically are not representative of the community they exist in, in terms of race/ethnicity, socioeconomics, and students with special needs.

Unfortunately, this session's relentless emphasis on vouchers is keeping the legislature from tackling real public education issues, including addressing the persistent underfunding of public schools. It is time to move on from the vouchers debate and get to the real work of state legislative leadership, including fully funding our public schools.

Robert Seward, Hon.

Mesquite ISD

Mesquite, TX

I am a school board trustee, a taxpayer, and a voter. I'm writing to ask you to OPPOSE any bills that would use taxpayer funding for private school vouchers, including Education Savings Account (ESA) vouchers and "tax credit scholarships."

School vouchers, in my opinion, are not a viable solution for improving educational outcomes. They serve as a diversion from the real issues and opportunities confronting our public schools: poverty, racism, segregation, underfunding, overcrowding, teacher turnover, a lack of resources, and so on. Instead of addressing these systemic issues through evidence-based policies and practices such as universal pre-K access, increased teacher pay, smaller class sizes, responsive curriculum, and so on, we are creating a parallel system with another high level of bureaucracy that benefits some students while harming others.

Please say NO to private school vouchers this session.

Thank you for your time and service to the great State of Texas.

Lori Rapp, Dr.

Lewisville ISD Superintendent and Board of Trustees

Lewisville, TX

The Texas Legislature, in upholding the mission of public education, enacted legislation in the previous 87 legislative sessions to establish and protect a superior educational system for the children of Texas when compared to other states. At this time, these bills related to public taxpayer funds being used for educational savings accounts, alternative education providers, and/or tax credits are not subject to the robust education code and accountability that has been established for Texas public schools. It is this very education code passed by the Legislature that ensures oversight of curriculum (which does not allow for teaching of the Common Core), financial transparency standards, open meetings act, parental rights, complaint procedures, compliance with IDEA for children with disabilities, open records, and the list goes on.

If providing parents freedom from state regulations passed by the Texas Legislature in Texas Education Code (TEC) is the goal of this committee, then these same freedoms from the statutes should be extended to public schools equally. Unless the educational providers that receive tax-payer dollars are required to accept all students, then parents are not being provided additional rights because the school they may choose is not required to accept their child.

We urge this committee to look at research related to the impact of student mobility on student achievement. While some studies have found students can lose up to three months of reading and math learning each time they switch schools, other research indicated a student who changes schools often would equate to the loss of nearly a year of learning for that learner. Any policy enacted that increases the mobility of students between schools or schools and home can have detrimental effects in learning which will ultimately impact the workforce of Texas.

Any basis for asserting Texas public schools are failing is a flawed premise. Public education in Texas is under-funded, especially in light of inflationary costs. The basic allotment of \$6,160 per student is far below what private school tuition costs and is one of the lowest per pupil funding amounts across the country. Texas is currently \$4,000 behind the national average in per pupil spending and ranks 42nd out of 50 states. This committee has the possibility of taking historic steps to raise the Basic Allotment which would prioritize salary increases for teachers, address the student learning challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, and continue to ensure Texas public schools meet the needs of ALL students and their communities.

In LISD, we spend on average \$10,000 per student, and without an increase to the basic allotment, we are opposed to any LISD taxpayer funds diverted to alternative educational choices. Any system that is created to provide for public education should all be funded equally and with the same accountability for the use of taxpayer dollars.

JERI ROSS

Self - Public School Teacher

WIMBERLEY, TX

HB 4969 is just another scheme for redirecting public funds to private education providers, including religious education providers and private corporations, or anyone and everyone who wishes to call themselves an educator, without holding them to the same professional standards required of public educators. Education by high quality, certified, professional educators is all the state should be paying for. We should not be taking state funds for education and squandering them on schemes designed to destroy teaching as a profession. Running dual systems of education is incredibly inefficient and is a waste of taxpayer dollars. Please fund public education fully and not fund unconstitutional religious and private education schemes, including home schools. Don't waste our tax funds and encourage corruption in education by funding fly-by-night players pretending to be educators. Our children deserve true, high-quality, professional and public education, free to everyone. Don't line the pockets of charlatans in the name of competition. This will undermine tried and true, professional education.

Jennifer DeeAnn Hamner

Self

Paris, TX

State funding should not be moved from public schools to private. If the state funds any portion of private education it will set back gains the state has made in the past 50 years to educate ALL students. Private educational setting does not have the rigor and accountability public educators represent.

D.S. Zamora, Mrs.

Self - Retired

Houston, TX

I hereby register my ****opposition**** to HB 4969.

I was born in the early 60s and thus exposed to the language used to advocate for Texas vouchers starting in 1967.

I was educated by urban and suburban schools in Austin and Houston (not Houston ISD, but Spring Branch ISD) after being taught the basics of reading at home before starting first grade. I was fortunate to have parents highly involved in my educational journey. We moved to Houston at a time when the Westheimer ISD litigation was still taking place at the state level. I later earned a degree from a Texas public university.

My Texas public school education wasn't only about curriculum. I learned about the challenges faced by my peers through wisdom passed along by great public school teachers, my mother's volunteerism (which she performed without hovering over me), and the experience of interacting with said peers. As what would later be designated as a gifted/talented student, I was encouraged at several points to assist in individual tutoring - a practice commonly used in Japanese schools.

I'm of Anglo origin but became an ally to members of minority groups back in my pre-20s years. I occasionally experienced educational and work discrimination back in those days because I also happen to be female, so I got a small taste of what they received. My personal experience was supplemented by my interest in history - particularly the history and progression of the Texas public school system.

I've described my background because it's the primary basis for discounting the words used by the people pushing this bill. This bill is an excuse to avoid doing the right things to improve our public schools. The Texas Legislature has been avoiding doing the right things for all students in our school system for at least 30 years.

I also studied accounting and finance as part of my Texas bachelor's degree, and everything I've seen indicates that this bill would be a bad investment that merely avoids the real problems.

My advice?

Spend more time getting ideas and suggestions from teachers and parents who are on the front line. The teachers and parents you consult need to be people with a solid understanding of real Texas rather than people trying to convert everybody to their religion or their cult.

Anna Roome, Teacher

Public education

Dallas, TX

No this is a way for rich people to get money back on their property taxes that are supposed to go to fulfill students rights to a free public education. It is the rich and religious robbing our public education. What amazes me is the Gov. Seems to have plenty of money to give those who chose private schools but cannot give public education teachers decent wages. I am a 20 yr teacher and new teachers are making almost the same income. So done with TEI. All these education bills this year are about making public education fail with lack of funds, unnecessary programs that greedy corporate America companies are pushing on education and they want a tax credit to boot, more ways for tetired teachers to double dip which eventually ruin our requirement fund. TEA taking over districts after 3 years of overcoming Covid? Teachers are Fed Up with testing testing testing. Students are too. My three kids got an excellent public education, but as a 20 year teacher it is going down hill. As a legislative representative you are not doing what is best for the students in public education.

Where is my tax credit? Why do I even have to pay a school tax? Why can I not collect social security and retirement like other people?

Do we need more teachers in special ed?

Dallas ISD has TEI system which is rigged to help special people who are related or favorites and they are robbing teachers. They discriminate against older teachers. Why is no one focuses on the real issues.

Overall, if these parents get a tax credit they are getting their taxes back and public education suffers. You have no right to make me pay taxes anymore if you take public funds and put them in the hands of religious and private schools. All you have done is prove you have funds to pay teachers much better. Many have 2nd and 3rd jobs because we cannot pay our rent and food. It is ridiculous how horrible we are treated.

Melanie Tanner

Self, retired professional school counselor grades 6,7,8

Hurst, TX

s a retired middle school counselor, I urge my representative to vote no to this bill. My service was happily dedicated to a large public school district located in an urban setting. In this environment, I found positive, professional educators dedicated to providing safe environments for students to thrive academically as well as emotionally. With that in mind, my tax dollars need to support public education not private, charter schools or whatever the name is coined at this date. Having no children and having paid taxes to provide free public education as my gift to the children of the future, this citizen does not wish my money to be spent elsewhere. If a parent chooses to not take advantage of the public school dedication and focus towards providing their child's academic and future success in college and career readiness they do have a choice, to pay for it themselves. This retired educator envisions my state spending money in the public school sector promoting these goals and ideals. Education has been going through a difficult time due to the restrictions of Covid however this is not an excuse to take an opening to assume public education has not been meeting the students' needs. Having seen students thrive in public education as a counselor, I have also experienced the influx of students at the end of the first six weeks and semester unable to continue their education from charter schools due to low performing grades or discipline behaviors something that public education would address with parents and child to encourage success. Public education supports and motivates all students. Thank you for your time and in voting no.

Maritza Wong, Mrs.

Self - Stay at home mom

Manvel, TX

I am the parent of two Texas public school students and I am adamantly opposed to this bill. Public schools are currently underfunded, and if an additional \$1,000 per student is available in the Foundation School Program, it should be applied to the basic allotment. This is the only way to ensure that taxpayer dollars will benefit ALL students, not just a select few. Each public school student should have equal opportunity to thrive WITHIN a healthy school system, and this is what each taxpayer dollar must go towards. Please take care of your constitutional duty instead of trying to hand out public school dollars to parents. Vote no on this bill and ensure that it does not advance past this committee hearing. Thank you.

Jennifer Barbaste

“Self” teacher

Carrollton, TX

The state has an obligation to support a system of free public schools. As a state ranked with one of the worst public funded school systems why would you take more away rather than putting more money to solve the problem at hand.

Most parents still can't afford private school tuition even with the voucher. The voucher will only benefit the wealthy.

Vouchers are a terrible idea. Please support public schools.

Necia Marin, Assistant Principal

SELF/Educator

GRAHAM, TX

Against

Stacey McNeely

Self/School Counselor

Dallas, TX

As a lifelong Texas resident, tax payer, and public school counselor for the past 26 years, I vehemently oppose using any tax dollars to fund ANY private schools. Do your job! Properly fund our Texas public schools and build the workforce Texas will need to stay competitive in the future. I vote in every election. I continuously educate my conservative family, friends, neighbors, and public at large on issues surrounding public education. Polling shows that Texas DO NOT want their public tax dollars to fund private schools. DO YOUR JOB! Use the surplus to FINALLY properly fund public schools and pay teachers a competitive wage.

Jana Cash

Vidor ISD

Beaumont, TX

Mrs. Carver... Mrs. Crews... Mrs. Papania... Mrs. Moore... Mr. Brown... Coach Graves... Mrs. Watson... Coach Landry... Mrs. Tarter... my father, Roger Russell. These are public school teachers names that helped lay the foundation that has lasted now for 43 years in my own career now. I challenge you to think about those who taught you along the way to get you where you are today and just let them know why you voted NO to these vouchers. Thank you.

Gloria Retana

Self

Temple, TX

Against HB 4969

Todd Copeland

Self

Eddy, TX

Against

Cody Carroll, Superintendent
Holliday ISD
Wichita Falls, TX

Please vote NO on HB 4969 for the following reasons:

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

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

The superiority of private schools is a myth. Private schools are not required to hire certified teachers. No credible research exists to suggest vouchers improve academic performance.

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

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

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

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

Public tax dollars should go to schools that are accountable to taxpayers.

Vouchers take much-needed money from local neighborhood schools and tend to help only students whose parents can already afford private schools.

Vouchers give private schools, not parents, the right to choose.

Alisa McElroy
Self - Taxpayer in CFISD
Cypress, TX

I am OPPOSED to all voucher bills
PLEASE VOTE NO ON ALL VOUCHER BILLS IN COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY (TODAY)

Shane Webb
Gatesville ISD
GATESVILLE, TX

I am an Assistant Superintendent, a republican supporter, and proud advocate of our Texas Public Schools. Education Savings program (aka vouchers) will be determinantal to our Texas Public School system funneling billions of dollars away from public schools. Our public schools exist for the good ALL students, not a select few. We serve ALL students regardless of disability, native language, socio-economic status, etc. If we defund our public schools, Texas (and especially our rural communities) are the ones who will pay the price. Private schools and homeschool students have never had the mandates and regulations placed on them that our public schools have. Private schools are not required to accept students with disabilities, behavior disorders, English language learners, chronic absenteeism, homeless students, migrant students, etc. They are not required to take STAAR and other state mandated assessments that public school students take each year. Our current homeschool students have no oversight with some students receiving no education whatsoever. Until you are prepared to have the same expectations and oversight of private and homeschool, it is simply an unjust system to funnel money away from our public schools to give to these private institutions. If you want to better the education options in Texas, pay our teachers in a manner that is comparable to their education level and the professionals they are. Let's recruit the best for our students and fund our schools properly!
We humbly ask that you please vote no to all voucher proposals and continue to be the supporters of Texas Public Schools. I ask this not for my personal children, but for the good of ALL Texas children. Our public schools are the backbone of our society, please support them as such.

Monique Mason-Kelly, ESL Secondary Teacher
Self
Houston, TX

Vote no to this bill that provides a loop hole for voucher like wording that will take funding away from public schools . Vote no to this bill which will impact rural and urban school funding.

Joe Gordy
Myself
Graham, TX

Texas should not fund tax credits, Educational savings credits, or vouchers for private institutions unless they are held to the same accountability and entrance standards as Texas Public Schools.

Melissa O'Malley
Self
Wichita Falls, TX

No

Jay Baccus
Anson ISD
Anson, TX

Vouchers are harmful to public education and harmful to the common good. They will create a more segregated population that damages the bridges we have worked so hard to build. I will give an example from our District. The White Horse Academy opened this school year. Anson ISD had 4 students attend the academy. All 4 were white and their families could afford to send their child to private school. If vouchers are passed, our Hispanic population will still not attend the Academy and are left out. I suspect this will be the case across much of the State. This is not a bill that will benefit Texas and should be voted down.

Sharon M Wilson
self retired
Temple, TX
Against

Marc Floyd

Self

Belton, TX

Against

Gary Browning

-- Select a Prefix Name --

Graham, TX

Vouchers are not in the best interest of school age children in the state of Texas. Public Independent School Districts have the best teachers, a greater capacity to offer career preparation courses, and extra-curricular programs that cannot be matched by private/charter schools. Until there are accountability requirements for private schools that can show they produce superior academic outcomes for students, voucher bills should not be considered. Also, private/charter schools are not under the same requirements for accepting ALL students, creating inequities in student populations. Public schools are not failing students. Society is failing itself by not taking advantage of the free education they have access to. Create a bill that makes parents accountable for supporting schools in the education of their student. Thank you for considering these comments.

Kim Kelley

self

League City, TX

Absolutely NO public monies should be used for a voucher program or "alternative options" to public education. Public education is the cornerstone of our democracy and the private agendas of lawmakers threaten our education system. DO NOT support this!

Sharon M Wilson

self retired

Temple, TX

Against

Bryan Shipman

Blackwell CISD

Blackwell, TX

We are for this program, but have concerns about the growing administrative cost incurred as additional duties are added to the TEA.

Jennifer Cain
Self
Cedar Park, TX

As a central Texas educator, I am strongly opposed to repurposing public school funding to support any kind of voucher and private school programs. A strong public education is a critical component to ensuring all students have access to a high quality education.

As an educator, I am against any bill that adds additional constraints regarding instructional materials including school libraries and classroom libraries. Local districts can establish and follow local board policy regarding instructional materials. I do not believe lawmakers without educational expertise should be overstepping. As an educator, I encourage you to step foot in a school or go to a school event and look around at all of the students you serve and represent. I believe all students should have access to instructional materials where they can see themselves represented. All students should have fingertip access to books of choice. Educators need to focus on planning for instruction to meet the needs of each student. Teachers should not be spending valuable time completing tasks that have been suggested in many bills claiming transparency. A parent is always welcome to partner with a campus to view instructional materials.

Please say no to any kind of voucher system that takes money from public education. Please vote no to any instructional materials constraints or removal of access. Please vote for all students.

Jennifer Cain
Self
Cedar park, TX

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Kay Smart
myself
Gatesville, TX

I live in a rural community with public school(s) being the only school option for children/teenagers education. Our community is a blue collar workforce; households require multiple incomes in order to survive. A voucher system would be detrimental to our schools surviving. Please vote against the voucher system so our children that attend public schools do not suffer due to lack of funds.

Toby Thomason
self
Denton, TX

I am opposed to any bill that would reduce funding to public schools, especially if those funds would be diverted to private schools, charters, etc. Texas should increase funding to public schools. Public schools are the best option for educating the children of Texas.

Tara Cummings, Dr.
self, psychologist
Cypress, TX

I am a proud parent of public school students and product of public education myself, and I am a taxpayer within Cypress-Fairbanks ISD. I am OPPOSED to ALL voucher bills (by whatever wolf-in-sheep's-clothing term they may be called), and I urge the Committee to vote NO on ALL voucher bills today, including this one. Public funds for education belong in public schools and nowhere else.

Traci Dennis-Witter
Self
Temple, TX

I do not support this bill. This bill will further create an inequity and educational divide based on income and contribution abilities. The poverty gap will increase and more Texans will be in an impoverished cycle that will increase and repeat for generations to come.

Traci Dennis-Witter
Self
Temple, TX

I do NOT support this bill. This bill will directly affect the most vulnerable and impoverished student populations.

Delaina Bishop
Self/ Parent of young school age children in public schools
Austin, TX

I highly OPPOSE this bill. Public funds are for Public schools. Period.
Once again...

Fully fund our Teachers and staff, stop mandating and piling on more and more onto our Educators and the public schools would flourish. For decades Republicans have had control of our State. Maybe place blame of any school faults to the people in actual control and stop trying to wage war against our Educators. Giving public Money to any school not held accountable like public schools are is just theft of public tax dollars and does not help our children.

Texas has school choice already, charter schools are a free alternative to public schools. If parents want any other type of education for their child, they are more than welcome to seek that education out and pay for it themselves.

I appreciate those of you on both party sides that see how damaging this could be to our children. Thank you.

Darlene Kelly
self
BALLINGER, TX

Just another word to use for VOUCHERS which hurt public schools. Please don't take funding away from Public schools and make more families try to homeschool their own children. This will only make parents keep kid at home to get FREE money

Darrin Ard
self / high school teacher
Wichita Falls, TX

No

Amy English
Hutto ISD
Hutto, TX

Public Money belongs in Public Schools

Kylee Windham

self; teacher

Dickinson, TX

I oppose the allocation of funds towards "educational alternatives to public schools." We must defend public schools and the rights of children in all walks of life to attend a properly funded school they are zoned to. Voucher programs will inherently affect students who are already disenfranchised. These students will ultimately suffer the most if a voucher program is approved. We must protect our low income students and the schools that often times are the greatest influence in a student's life. Decisions on education must be based in a pure motive to better education for all students. Vouchers, quite simply, are not the best decision for students. Please do what is best for all students, especially our low-income, disenfranchised students, and keep public school funding within public schools. Private schools are just that- private. They must make their own financial decisions. Do what is right and protect our public schools.

Daniel BARTON

Goodrich ISD

CLEVELAND, TX

Please do not support an educational voucher/savings account. Educational vouchers/savings accounts take funding away from public schools that desperately need to support teacher salaries, etc. Support of vouchers would allow private schools to receive this funding without accountability for student success. Additionally, this would encourage segregation based on financial ability or special population. Private and charter schools are allowed to deny enrollment for reasons such as special population and discipline concerns. Lastly, the sovereignty of any nation is based upon its ability to produce an educated workforce. Please do not consider releasing public school funding to unregulated educational systems. Thank you for your service to our state.

Virginia Gaskey

self

Henrietta, TX

NO

Virginia Gustin

self

Round Rock, TX

Public money belongs in public schools

Tobi McCain

myself

Graham, TX

Please do not pass anything with vouchers. Rural and smaller districts will not benefit from them at all. Students in these schools need the funding to go to public education, not private.

Brandi Jackson

Temple ISD

Salado, TX

Please vote AGAINST all legislation that will take funds from public schools. We already run a major corporation (school district) on a very limited budget. Removing funds for private institutions would cut those even further. Please help me understand how the state provides \$6,160 per student in funds, but we would be expected to give up \$8,000 for you to take your student to a private school. That would be like me going to a Ford dealership to purchase a car, not finding what I wanted, and expecting them to just give me additional cash, so that I could go to the BMW dealership. Also, what happens when a student leaves to go to private school, and due to behavior/needs/grades returns to public school? We have already lost those funds and are now expected to give that child the FAPE he/she deserves while receiving zero funds. Often upon return from private schools, students are often behind what is expected of public school and it costs money in interventions to fill in gaps. This takes a way from all of our students.

I feel this will tip our student numbers, so that we will have more students in special programs than not. I foresee low SES students remaining in public education, as they cannot pay the difference in tuition costs; special education students will remain due to private schools not being mandated to have services. Students with difficult behavior and EL students would be in the same position. Staff retention is already difficult. Not having balanced classrooms will just be another reason for quality staff to leave the field.

Public school money would go to organizations that are not held to the same monitoring and grading that public schools are held to.

More and more responsibility is being placed on public schools with less and less support from the state and federal government. I have 23 years in the school system and do not know if I can withstand my 5 remaining years for many reasons, but this legislation is part of it. STAND FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Cindy Fountain, Ms

Self, Retail Merchandiser

Cleburne, TX

I oppose this bill. Rep. Schaefer's philosophy about government spending is "personal responsibility", not government intervention. If a parent doesn't like the curriculum being taught, they absolutely have the option of taking personal responsibility and buying or creating supplemental materials for their child's education. I certainly did this. Spelling lessons were not all that helpful for my son, so we made up songs to practice spelling. I didn't go to Texas taxpayers to pay for this. Thank you.

AARON MORRIS

self

SHALLOWATER, TX

I am against vouchers and sending out tax dollars to outside sources with no accountability. I am an elected school board member in a very successful district.

Nicole Ma

<https://woorijuntos.org/>

Houston, TX

Against

Linda Hanratty

self

FORT WORTH, TX

-

- I am strongly against ALL attempts to drain tax dollars from neighborhood public schools to subsidize tuition at private and religious schools that are unaccountable to taxpayers and don't have to meet the same fiscal and educational standards as public schools do. I urge you to do the right thing and vote against HB 4969.

Steven Wu
Woori Juntos
Houston, TX
Vote No!

Betty Daugherty
self
The Woodlands, TX

Vote No . this is vouchers undwe another name

Keith Jones
Anson ISD/Board Member
Anson, TX

No to vouchers.

Sherri Blassingame
self
Wichita Falls, TX

As a parent and teacher, I do not agree with this bill and do not want it pass.

Sherri Blassingame
self
Wichita Falls, TX

As a parent and teacher, I do not agree with this bill and do not want it pass.

Quynh-Huong Nguyen

Woori Juntos

Houston, TX

I am concerned about the potential impacts of this bill on marginalized communities, particularly Asian communities and individuals with disabilities, language barriers, low income, and people of color.

This bill proposes to establish a parent-directed supplemental services and instructional materials program for public school students, which may seem like a positive step on the surface. However, I believe that this program will exacerbate existing inequities in our education system and widen the gap between privileged and marginalized students.

Firstly, this bill establishes an allotment under the Foundation School Program, which means that funds will be diverted from the public school system to this new program. This could have serious consequences for public schools that serve marginalized communities, which are already underfunded and struggling to provide basic resources to their students.

Furthermore, this bill authorizes a fee for participating in the program, which could place an undue financial burden on low-income families who may not be able to afford it. This fee could prevent these families from accessing the resources and services that could help their children succeed in school.

Additionally, this program is parent-directed, which means that parents will have the power to choose which services and instructional materials their children receive. While this may sound empowering, it could lead to further disparities in access to quality education. Parents who are already more involved and invested in their children's education may be better equipped to navigate the options and choose the most effective resources, while parents who face language barriers, disabilities, or other challenges may be left behind.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to consider the potential impacts of this bill on marginalized communities and to prioritize equity and inclusion in our education system. We should be working to support and strengthen our public schools, not siphoning resources away from them and creating new programs that may only benefit a privileged few.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Rebecca Rashidzadeh, Curriculum Corrdinator

Terrell ISD

Terrell, TX

This will drastically have a negative impacy on public schools.

Elizabeth Valenzon

myself

La Marque, TX

HB 4969-Vote No. Money should not be directed away from public education. People already have the right to choose to attend a private school. We need money to stay in public education to keep improving the services provided to all students.

Shannon Myers

self

Temple, TX

I am opposed to using public funds for private education in any way. The notion of taxpayer money going towards programs and possibly harmful ideologies that have no accountability to the state is deeply concerning. How will the state monitor the success of these private schools and determine that tax dollars are truly being spent to benefit students? Private schools do not require certified teachers, nor do they have a record of improving academic performance.

Providing tax money to subsidize these schools will only be a burden to our state and cause private tuitions to inflate. Once that happens, the only parents with a true "choice" are the ones who could afford it in the first place. That eventuality, along with the private schools' ability to pick and choose their students, will only serve to deepen a harmful divide between student populations.

There are a multitude of possible barriers to a child attending private school that will not be overcome by simply shaving a portion off of tuition. Support with transportation, meal assistance, mental health assistance, need for special education services are all provided by our public schools. How is a private school truly a choice for a child that needs these services?

I am not opposed to the existence of private schools. Several of my family members attended a small Catholic school and it was a good fit for them. What I am opposed to is using my tax money to support the idea that this bestows parental choice. Parents already have many choices: attend your public school, transfer to another public school, pay tuition at a charter school which the state funds, pay tuition at a private school, or homeschool and pay the expenses.

Julie Hicks

Lewisville ISD

Flower Mound, TX

I am a public school teacher and live within my district where my daughter will attend kinder next year. I am highly against this bill as a teacher and a tax payer. As a Texas teacher, I follow the rules and regulations set by the state. I teach the TEKS and work hard to make my lessons clear and engaging for students of all learning styles, who come from all different homes, cultures and backgrounds. To say that a parent could/should add something to my curriculum would mean that parent would need to research what I'm already teaching, how I'm teaching it and then provide something that would support and/or enrich what I've already provided. To assume a parent would do all of that is silly. I'm a mom of two and sincerely ask you, who has the time? Not school parents that are already not in the PTA, not reading my posted lesson plans, not checking their children's grades that they have 24/7 access to, working full time jobs or working 3 jobs to make ends meet. And I absolutely do not support my tax dollars funding any such program when we don't get enough funds per child in the public school system to care for or protect the students we have.

Dawn Cook

Self/Title Policy Typist

Temple, TX

As a community member and supporter of public schools, I oppose this Bill because I believe public education should be for all. Vouchers drain resources from public schools, putting a huge financial burden on the state. Texas already ranks 40th in per-student spending and the rate of inflation since 2019 is 14.5%, per the Comptroller.

The superiority of private schools is a falsehood. Private schools are not required to hire certified teachers, they are not accountable to taxpayers, and they are not required to report student achievement data to the state.

If a parent wants choice - that already exists within the public school system. Vouchers are divisive and they discriminate. Education should be for all!

Carolyn Mitchell, Rev
Texas Women for Justice
CONROE, TX

I urge the House Public Education Committee NOT to approve HB 4869. Do not siphon funds from an underfunded public education system to benefit unaccountable private and charter schools that have selective enrollment and don't have to meet state mandates for hiring certified teachers, financial transparency, or academic achievement.

Respectfully,
Rev. Carolyn Mitchell

John Buchanan
Self/self-employed
Sanger, TX

I respectfully request that public schools be fully funded and NO money be allocated for vouchers or ESAs. Parents may choose any education option they wish, but no public money can go to education that is not accountable the way public schools are accountable.

Ashley R Gunn Chohlis
Poth ISD
FLORESVILLE, TX

As a taxpayer, a parent of 3 school aged children (2 of which receive special services), and a rural school district superintendent, I OPPOSE any state plan that would use vouchers, tax credits, taxpayer savings grants, tuition reimbursements, or any other means to divert public tax dollars to private entities, homeschooled students, or parents, with little or no academic or financial accountability or transparency to the state, taxpayers, or local communities. We who serve traditional public education are held to highest standards of accountability in exchange for the taxpayer dollars we're given. The double standard has gone on too long. Charters are already not held to the same standards. Legislators can not continue to divert public school funds away from public schools, while raising accountability standards, and expect public schools to educate children "successfully". Public education is the foundation of our democracy. An educated population is necessary for a civilized society. The breakdown of the family unit has already stressed our social constructs to the limit, including public education. It's one of the only things still holding this country together. During the pandemic public schools are how we got everything done in our community. Now, I serve a rural community that absolutely can not afford to lose a single student to commuter parents who can take them and their tax dollars into the city as opposed to our public school, which is "A" rated. Our teachers already don't make very much money. They work for the District because they live in the community. If even just a few parents take their kids out of our schools, it is detrimental to the entire community because jobs will be lost. In rural communities, the effects of such legislation will be crippling. I urge you to stand strong with public education and public educators, please OPPOSE any bills that divert tax dollars away from public schools. Thank you.

Charlene Shafer
Self/Retired Teacher
Cypress, TX

NO to all voucher related schemes!! Under vouchers, our taxpayer dollars would be taken away from public schools—which are already severely underfunded—Texas ranks 49th in funding—to subsidize tuition at unregulated private and religious schools. Even with a small credit from the government, the vast majority of Texas families still won't be able to afford tuition at most private schools.

Kimbelry Bruch

self

Lockhart, TX

I am a middle school teacher for AISD. Public schools need to be funded by public dollars and those funds should not be diverted away from public education. Public schools are for all students. Saying yes to this bill would create a situation like 3rd world countries where only rich and affluent families are allowed the right to FAPE. Public education in Texas has been underfunded and under-supported for years. The last thing our 5.5 million children need is for the public money intended for public schools to be diverted to private and for profit education. How about fully funding public schools for 5-10 years and see what the return on that is before you give away money to the rich and for profit school. Please say NO to all voucher/ESA proposals.

Theresa Williams, Superintendent

Plano ISD

Plano, TX

Plano ISD opposes HB 4969.

Kevin Cauble

Self, Retired

Martindale, TX

Do NOT funnel MY taxpayer money to private business and to other entities that have no local control and accountability and do not compete on a leveling playing ground with public schools. Vouchers are nothing more than a scheme that diverts public funds to private schools and vendors (just look at how much their stock has gone up on the anticipation of hoodwinking the taxpayers), and undermine traditional public schools and charters, teachers, and students. The lack of public accountability in any voucher program leaves the system open to mismanagement of financial resources and lets private education providers off the hook for poor student performance.

Traci Dunlap

Self, Teacher

Austin, TX

My name is Traci Dunlap, and I am a public school teacher in Austin ISD and a proud member of Education Austin, Texas AFT, and TSTA. I am strongly against ALL attempts to drain tax dollars from neighborhood public schools to subsidize tuition at private and religious schools that are unaccountable to taxpayers and don't have to meet the same fiscal and educational standards as public schools do. Our PUBLIC SCHOOLS are the foundation of our democracy and must be fully supported. I urge you to do the right thing and vote against this legislation.

Jennifer Mitchell

Shallowater ISD

Shallowater, TX

Public dollars should remain in schools. Shallowater ISD is proud to be one of the highest-performing districts in the state, why would I want my dollars to go anywhere else? As a public school district, they are required to accept ALL students, annual assessments to track student progress, public reporting of the use of taxpayer dollars, and comply with federal protections for students with disabilities. Vouchers would leave our most vulnerable (students with disabilities and middle- lower- incomes students) behind. What about those in rural areas? There aren't private schools in rural areas, so the state would be forcing those families to pay for something they don't even have access to.

Jennifer Fleck
self
Spicewood, TX

I am opposed to 4969. Public education is as bad as WE have allowed it to be. The proliferation of bills to protect children this session have been discussed with Legislators since I started coming to the Capitol in 2013. For years, Legislators turned a blind eye and did very little, while allowing public education to self destruct. In hindsight, it looks like a plan to bring forth "vouchers". The answer is NOT to create a government and agency regulated elite profiting option. The answer is to put strict boundaries on public schools to force adherence to the Texas Constitution, focus on academics and include enforcement provisions. The Legislature has crippled parents with unenforceable laws and delayed action. The Legislature has been distracted by the results of their inaction on children i.e. mental health. Vouchers are not the answer. Enforcement of the laws we have is the answer.

Mary Metcalf
Self/Teacher
Austin, TX

I am a public school teacher in Austin. I am writing to implore you to vote AGAINST any bill that would give our public tax dollars to support private schools. Vouchers will undermine public education, which is already suffering under insufficient funding. Vouchers will result in greater privilege for the privileged, and will leave our most vulnerable young Texans with less of the resources they need to reach their academic potential.

Susan Stewart
self
Pflugerville, TX

I am in opposition to this bill and let the record show all bills that call for vouchers, parent empowerment, ESAs or any other disingenuous term that refers to the further defunding of our Texas public schools. Parents have always had the choice to send their child to any school. It is only now, with large corporate PACS and special interests who benefit financially from the destruction of our public schools, that this has become a wildfire. You are harming Texas school children through divisive rhetoric that condemns public schools and the teachers and admin.

In July of 2018, former Enron trader, John Arnold, joined forces with San Francisco billionaire and Netflix CEO, Reed Hastings. They each pledged \$100,000,000 to a new non-profit dedicated to selling the portfolio model of school governance. The portfolio model promotes disruption as a virtue and posits no value for stable neighborhood schools. As schools are closed or reconstituted, the new schools are not democratically controlled. This is what we are now faced with along with a financial scheme called SOCIAL IMPACT BONDS. Ask Mike Morath about those. The profit and privatization idea underlying social impact bonds is that communities basically outsource education programs.

If you want Texas public schools to compete with private schools, then level the playing field. Private schools charge \$25,000 per child. They have a teacher and two aides in each classroom, they hire various specialists to provide therapy for students. Texas legislators provide \$6,160 per child, ZERO FUNDING FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION, teachers are paid \$10,000 less than the national average. Then Texas legislatures condemn public schools and call them failing. In my book, they are doing heroic work in the face of constant attacks and disparagement by our legislators. REJECT THE SCHOOL VOUCHER SCHEME TO BENEFIT A MINORITY OF CHILDREN AND FULLY FUND TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS, SO WE CAN COMPETE IN A FAIR FIGHT.

Gilbert Cantu
Self/public school educator
Corpus Christi, TX

I do not support this bill.

Patricia Butler

self, teacher

Houston, TX

NO TO VOUCHERS. NO PUBLIC FUNDING SHOULD BE FUNNELED TOWARDS PRIVATE OR CHARTER EDUCATION. MY TAXES SHOULD BE USED TO FUND PUBLIC EDUCATION ONLY.

Randy Pittenger

Self

Belton, TX

I oppose any use of public funds for private schools. Any voucher system, tax credit, or use of public funds should only be used for public schools with full public accountability that is lacking in private schools.