



Vouchers

Legislation to create taxpayer-funded private school vouchers has been introduced — and failed to pass — in every Texas legislative session since 1995. In more recent sessions, proponents introduced vouchers in the form of “tax credit scholarships” and “education savings grants” and began marketing the idea as “school choice” and the “civil rights issue of the 21st century.” In 2017, there was an attempt to open the door to vouchers with the addition of a pilot “education savings grant” to an important school funding bill — a move that resulted in the death of the bill. Despite all these failed attempts, voucher proponents persist. Many public education advocates believe the reason for their persistence is that the true goal is to siphon public funds for private gain. The fight continues. Defeating voucher legislation requires reminding lawmakers of the damage they would do to Texas public schools and students.

Public schools need every dollar.

Texas public schools are struggling to recover from the pandemic, which resulted in the need for additional funding to combat learning loss and provide wrap-around services. Schools are also grappling with unprecedented staffing shortages.

Vouchers have been shown to decrease, not increase, student academic achievement.

Despite claims that school voucher programs lead to gains in student success, there has been no credible research to suggest that vouchers improve academic performance. According to a [report by the Center for American Progress](#), an independent, nonpartisan policy institute, the use of school vouchers is equivalent to missing out on more than one-third of a year of classroom learning.

Vouchers allow public funds to be spent without any accountability.

Texas public schools are held to rigorous accountability standards, so lawmakers should not allow public, taxpayer dollars to be spent at private or religious schools that do not have to meet the same standards. Private schools do not have to report student achievement data to the state, and they do not have to meet the same standards for hiring teachers.

Vouchers could be expensive to the state.

Depending on the limitations set in the specific voucher legislation, hundreds of thousands of students who are currently attending private schools or being home-schooled could begin to receive vouchers, requiring the state to spend much more on education than it does now.

The amount of a voucher would not be enough to cover tuition at most private schools.

The amount of a voucher would not be enough to cover tuition at most private schools. Only more affluent families with the means to pay the balance of their children’s tuition would truly benefit. This would leave the very children vouchers are supposed to help left behind in schools with even less funding than before.

Most Texas public school students are economically disadvantaged.

Six out of 10 Texas public school students are economically disadvantaged, and economically disadvantaged students are the

ones who would most likely be left behind in underfunded public schools should a voucher program be established. Historically, economically disadvantaged are more expensive to educate than more affluent students because they don’t have as many external educational opportunities. Also, districts often provide them with more services. Schools need more, not less, money to educate these students.

Private schools are not an option for most students.

Private schools do not exist in every part of Texas, especially in rural areas. If a voucher program is created, fly-by-night private schools could pop up across the state, offering “choice” while profiting from public tax dollars.

School choice is already offered in Texas.

School choice is already offered in Texas in such a way that preserves accountability and local control. Many districts offer multiple school options through magnets, academies, and transfers. Students are benefiting from legislation giving districts more tools for innovation. Public schools are providing more personalized curriculum and pathways to college and career.

Private schools may discriminate; public schools must educate every child.

Private schools are the ones that have choice with vouchers. They may or may not enroll any student they choose. Those with records of academic failure, those with disabilities, and those who are difficult to teach due to behavioral issues would not be the top choices of private schools with limited space. The children who need the most attention would be left behind in schools lacking the resources to provide them with what they need.

Vouchers would allow public funds to be spent on religious activities.

Most private schools have a religious affiliation and teach religion. Vouchers would allow public funds to be spent on religious activities, blurring the line between church and state.

How are education savings grants just vouchers by another name?

Education savings accounts take a portion of public funds that would have been used to educate a child in public school and put the funds in a special savings account for the child’s family to spend on private tuition and other education-related expenses with no accountability for how the funds are spent.