

April 10, 2023

The Honorable Brad Buckley  
Texas House of Representatives  
PO Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768

Dear Chairman Buckley and Members of the House Public Education Committee:

The undersigned organizations, which are all committed to supporting the success of Texas' neighborhood public school students, thank you for your service to public education in our state and the work you have been doing this legislative session on their behalf. We respectfully request that you consider the following points when deliberating on any proposed legislation that would create education savings accounts (ESAs) of any kind or utilize taxpayer dollars to fund private or homeschool education.

- Private schools do not have to accept all students; they can pick and choose which students to serve. This type of legislation is about the private school's power to choose students, not the parent's choice of schools.
- Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers. They do not have elected boards, are not subject to open meetings or open records laws, and do not assess their students with standardized state academic assessments. Private schools are not required to report student achievement data to the state. Our neighborhood public schools, managed by locally elected school boards, are subject to laws related to transparency in operations, and are accountable to taxpayers for the academic growth of their students and the management of their finances.
- Vouchers/ESAs defund public schools. Small schools in particular have fixed costs. If you take four students out of a class of 26, you still have to pay the teacher of that class the same salary, regardless if he/she is teaching 22 or 26. Other states' experiences with vouchers have shown that costs for such programs often grow well above projections. Texas can't afford to fund three school systems – community schools, charters and private with three different sets of rules.
- Vouchers result in taxation without representation, which runs counter to American values since the beginning of our nation. Approximately 80% of Texans do not have school-aged children and they will have no say and no information about how a large percentage of their tax dollars are being spent.
- Texas already ranks 40th in per-student spending, according to the [Education Law Center](#). State funding of public education has been stagnant since 2019, while the rate of inflation since 2019 is 14.5%, per the State Comptroller. Texas should fully fund public education rather than syphon funds to private schools.
- No credible research exists to suggest ESAs or other forms of private school vouchers improve academic performance. [Evaluations](#) of voucher programs in Louisiana, Indiana, Washington, DC, and New York have shown that vouchers have no positive impact on academic achievement — and can often have a negative impact. According to a [report](#) by the Center for American Progress, the use of school vouchers is equivalent to missing out on more than one-third of a year of classroom learning.
- Vouchers/ESA programs often subsidize tuition for existing private school and homeschooled students, putting a huge new financial burden on the state. New Hampshire, Arizona, Wisconsin have all seen voucher programs used primarily by students who have never attended public schools.
- The amount of money often suggested for ESAs/vouchers falls well short of tuition and other costs at many private schools, so low-income students wouldn't benefit. Private schools don't even exist in every part of Texas, especially rural areas. Rural Texans don't want their tax dollars to fund private school tuition for suburban kids at the expense of their own local schools, which are often the center of community engagement and pride.
- Choice already exists within the public school system: Districts have transfer policies, magnet schools, career/tech academies, and more options. Charter schools, though lacking the same level of state oversight as traditional public schools, offer additional choices for families. Communities that want to expand choice can do so by asking their locally elected boards to take that action.

Respectfully submitted by the following organizations:



South Texas Association  
of Schools

