

September 30, 2026

Dear Governors:

We write to urge you, in the strongest possible terms, not to opt your state into the federal private school voucher program set to begin on January 1, 2027. The undersigned national nonprofit organizations represent and advocate for faith communities, communities of color, individuals with disabilities, educators at all levels, and students, families, and communities across the country. We are united in our opposition to this program due to the damage it will inflict.

As you know, this tax credit scholarship voucher program was enacted by Congress in 2025 as part of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. It provides a one hundred percent federal tax credit, up to \$1700 annually, to individuals who contribute money to “scholarship granting organizations” (SGOs). The SGOs then hand out that money in the form of education vouchers to whomever they see fit. Governors (or other state officials designated by state law) must decide each year whether their state will participate.

We want to address up front the myth that federal vouchers can significantly benefit public schools or their students. Although it is technically permissible for public school students to receive vouchers under the federal program, the allowable expenses and program format will ensure that the vast majority of voucher funds go to private education providers. The statute creating the voucher program makes it clear that voucher money cannot be given by an SGO directly to a public school, whether to fill budget holes or improve programs or for any other reason. Vouchers must go to public school students who then decide what to purchase, which will most likely be discrete personal benefits such as individual technology or private tutoring. There isn’t much for these students to buy from the school district because their schools offer most services for free by design.

We know that including public school students in the federal voucher program is simply a sweetener to entice states without vouchers to let the camel’s nose slip under the tent. If the federal program is anything like current state voucher programs, more affluent families that have already chosen private education will corner the voucher market. In fact, existing SGOs and national pro-voucher and pro-education privatization organizations are already using their vast resources to advertise and inform about the program and to encourage contributions (of which the SGOs can keep up to 10%).

We certainly don’t have to guess about the effects of voucher programs on students, public schools, and communities. We have two decades of evidence from a growing number of states with existing voucher programs, and the data from those states is overwhelmingly negative. There is no reason to think the effects of the federal voucher program will be any better; in fact,

there is every reason to predict they will be worse, as the federal voucher program has even fewer guardrails and accountability requirements than many state voucher programs.

What are the effects of school voucher programs?

- **Reduced academic achievement:** Numerous studies have demonstrated that vouchers often lead to *worse* educational outcomes for voucher students than their public school peers.
- **Discrimination:** State voucher programs fund private schools that discriminate on the basis of religion, disability, LGBTQ+ status, English language facility, academic ability, and many other student, family and educator characteristics.
- **Loss of rights for students with disabilities:** Students with disabilities who take a voucher to attend private schools give up most of their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other federal disability laws.
- **Fraud, waste, and abuse of public funds:** Data from numerous states, such as Florida and Arizona, demonstrate that voucher programs are rife with misuse and mismanagement, to the tune of hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars.
- **Undermining public school funding and resources:** Voucher programs weaken public schools by diverting students and funding, while leaving those schools responsible for significant fixed costs and for serving a higher concentration of students with greater needs.

Families and communities are already experiencing the devastation wrought by state voucher programs, including the loss of essential educational resources in public schools, such as teachers, counselors, advanced course offerings, and special education services. In states like Arizona and West Virginia, these effects are so pronounced that they are leading to public school closures, with devastating consequences for schools and communities, especially in rural areas.

Education programs should improve, not harm, educational outcomes, and public dollars should not fund discrimination. States should be in the vanguard of protecting public schools, the vibrant hubs of our communities and a cornerstone of our democracy.

We represent many of the same groups that President Trump and his allies claim will benefit from school voucher programs. And we write to tell you that our communities and constituents do not gain from vouchers. We don't want them. Furthermore, voters in states around the country agree: they have NEVER voted in favor of vouchers when provided with the opportunity to weigh in.

If you and your state wish to be counted among those who stand up for public schools, there is only one path: reject the federal voucher program. The threat is truly existential, and the eyes of the country are now on state governors like you.

Sincerely,

Public Funds Public Schools

Advancement Project

AFL-CIO

Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS)

Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA)

EdTrust

Education Law Center

Freedom From Religion Foundation

In the Public Interest

Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)

Interfaith Alliance

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

NAACP

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Center for Youth Law

National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)

National PTA

National Women's Law Center

Network for Public Education

Pastors for Children

Southern Poverty Law Center

The Arc of the United States