

**TO: All members of the PA House and Senate**  
**FROM: Concerned Education Stakeholders and Advocates**  
**SUBJECT: Opposition to School Vouchers**  
**DATE: May 7, 2024**

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we respectfully urge you to oppose any additional public funding for private and religious school vouchers in the 2024-2025 state budget.

There should be **no discussion of sending additional taxpayer money to private and religious schools until the commonwealth's system for funding public education is in constitutional compliance.**

In addition, Pennsylvania already spends \$470 million each year on vouchers for private and religious schools through the notoriously unaccountable Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs.

The EITC and OSTC private school voucher programs have received more than \$2.6 billion in diverted taxes since 2001, yet little to nothing is known about which students have benefited from these vouchers or about the educational outcomes of students who have received them. In addition, lax reporting standards and an absence of legislative oversight and public auditing in the current law leave no safeguard against the misuse of tax dollars by scholarship organizations that have been allowed to keep up to 20 percent for administrative costs for more than two decades.

A 2022 report from the Independent Fiscal Office focused on the EITC and OSTC programs found that, "... it is not possible to comment on whether state funds have been used effectively due to lack of general and specific outcome data."

It is ironic that some policymakers' annual focus on performance-based budgeting and/or outcomes in K-12 public schools somehow always seems to exclude the EITC and OSTC programs — by the very proponents of these same initiatives.

**The commonwealth must conduct a thorough examination of Pennsylvania's existing EITC and OSTC voucher programs and taxpayers must know, based on data, that the current funds are producing positive educational outcomes before there is any discussion of increasing funding for the EITC or OSTC programs or creating a new, duplicative voucher program, such as the proposed PASS or Lifeline Scholarship programs.**

Further, Pennsylvania must codify explicit anti-discrimination protections and strong enforcement mechanisms in the EITC and OSTC school voucher law and in all state laws that govern private schools that choose to accept voucher funding to ensure that state tax dollars will not be used to advance discrimination against students.

Private and religious schools that participate in Pennsylvania's OSTC program have publicly-posted policies and procedures that demonstrate they engage in blatant and explicit discrimination against students because of their LGBTQ+ status, religion, academics, disability, pregnancy or abortion, and more.

School vouchers do not create educational "choice" for many families and students. Instead, voucher programs create the illusion of "choice" because private and religious voucher schools can— and do— engage in discrimination and refuse to enroll students, even if their family is eligible for a voucher.

**Allocating state tax dollars to fund private and religious voucher schools does not help the state to meet its constitutional requirements.**

Instead, directing public dollars into voucher schools that are free to discriminate against children makes compliance with the court ruling harder to achieve. Every public dollar that funds tuition at a private school leaves fewer dollars available to be spent in the state budget, undermining the Commonwealth’s ability to fully fund public schools in every community.

**We most strongly urge you to oppose any additional funding for unaccountable EITC and OSTC programs and any other school voucher program in the 2024-2025 state budget and to instead support robust investments in public schools, which 90% of students attend, that will bring the commonwealth closer to meeting its constitutional responsibility.**

Pennsylvania students will be in the best position to succeed in their lives when our public schools across the commonwealth are fully funded and able to offer all students opportunities that will prepare them for a bright future after graduation.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this important issue.

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| 412 Justice                                  | Angel Gober           | Executive Director                     |
| Action Together NEPA                         | Kristin Volchansky    | Advocacy Director                      |
| Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools              | Moira Kaleida         | National Director                      |
| Cumberland Valley Rising                     | Katie Daniels         | Chair                                  |
| Disability Rights Pennsylvania               | Peri Jude Radecic     | Chief Executive Officer                |
| Education Voters of PA                       | Susan Spicka          | Executive Director                     |
| League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania       | Amy Widestrom         | Executive Director                     |
| Make The Road Pennsylvania                   | Patty Torres Vera     | Co-Deputy State Director               |
| Pennsylvanians for Fair Funding              | Laura Johnson         | Co-Founder                             |
| Pennsylvania Policy Center                   | Marc Stier            | Executive Director                     |
| Planned Parenthood Pennsylvania Advocates    | Signe Espinoza        | Executive Director                     |
| POWER Interfaith, Education Justice Campaign | John Barnett          | Lay Leader, Education Justice Campaign |
| Public Education Advocates of Lancaster      | Adam Hosey            | Co-founder                             |
| Red Wine & Blue                              | Ronna Dewey           | Pennsylvania Program Director          |
| Teach Plus PA                                | Laura Boyce           | Executive Director                     |
| The Arc of Pennsylvania                      | Sherri Landis         | Executive Director                     |
| Unitarian Universalist Justice PA            | Rev. Joan M. Sabatino | Director                               |