



Public education advocacy rooted in equity and
committed to growing child-centered education policy.

SAY NO TO SCHOOL VOUCHERS: FACT SHEET

Please **vote no** on voucher legislation and please support bills that fully fund and support our Tennessee public education system.

Thank you, _____ signature

name _____ email _____

address _____ phone _____

Vouchers shift public school funds away from our cash-strapped public schools to private entities that can pick and choose which students to serve.

Private school vouchers have been used for years in other states. Results in these places clearly show that vouchers do NOT increase student achievement, and often students who attend voucher schools perform worse than those who remain in public school. As a tool to increase student performance, **VOUCHERS ARE A PROVEN FAILURE**. *Milwaukee, Wisconsin has had a voucher program since 1990. According to a 2012 study by the Public Policy Forum, Milwaukee public school students clearly outperformed voucher school students in both math and reading. And while Florida originally placed a \$50 million cap on its voucher program, spending has now increased tenfold, despite no evidence of increased student achievement.*

- Vouchers don't empower students or parents with "choice". The choice lies entirely with the private voucher school. They can accept or deny a student based on their admission criteria, which may include religion, academic ability, disability and sexual orientation. **Private schools CHOOSE who they want to admit leaving voucher students at their mercy.**
- Voucher schools will be free to use **public funds to teach a wide range of religious and political doctrines.**
- Vouchers mean less money to our already underfunded public schools. Don't be fooled by "money follows the child" rhetoric. When students use a voucher, our public schools become no less costly to run. Facility costs, transportation, faculty and staff, and other costs are not reduced by the departure of a few students. **Legislators want accountability from our educators and schools yet continue down the path of decreasing funding for our schools by diverting the money to private schools with vouchers.**

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- If Tennessee passes any voucher law, voucher proponents will be back again and again to expand the program. One current voucher proposal claims to limit vouchers to Memphis/Shelby County. However, every state that has passed any voucher legislation has seen continually expansion of the reach of vouchers. The goal of voucher proponents is unlimited vouchers, available to all, and a dismantling of the public school system. Current voucher bills are a Pandora's Box.
- Memphis doesn't want vouchers, period. The 2016 legislative primaries in Memphis were about vouchers, and the people in Memphis voted overwhelmingly against them. Pro-public school lawmakers Reps. Jonnie Turner and Antonio Parkinson were challenged by strongly backed pro-voucher candidates. Despite record spending against them by special interests, Turner and Parkinson won in landslides. These districts are ground zero for the "Memphis-only" vouchers bill, and these voters clearly do not want vouchers.
- The cost of vouchers would strain local school and county budgets. **According to the executive director of Tennessee County Commissioners Association (TCCA), "Vouchers, at the end of the day, would be the greatest [financial] nightmare counties ever faced."**
- Tennessee voters oppose vouchers by a two-to-one average across the state (57% no, 24% yes), consistent in rural, urban, and suburban districts, and among voters of both parties. Vouchers are political losers in every legislative district. The public backlash against voucher advocate Betsy DeVos' nomination for federal Secretary of Education is a sign that Tennesseans do not support vouchers.
- Who do vouchers really help? A December 2012 *Tennessean* article reported that most private schools are not interested in accepting vouchers. Financially struggling private schools will turn to vouchers for an influx of students and money that they haven't been able to garner on their own. **Public school funds should not be used as a financial bail out for struggling private schools.**
- **Wonder why you never hear about the Special Needs Voucher that snuck through in Tennessee a year or so ago?** Out of the 20k students who could qualify for a special "Individualized Education Account" only 130 applied and 38 were accepted in the entire state of Tennessee. **It is a failed program.** Tennesseans don't want vouchers. They want local control and their neighborhood schools funded, made whole with enriched learning and supports to improve academic outcomes.

Vouchers, at their core, are an abandonment of public education. And they are the same schemes supported by Betsy Devos. Thank you for being a voice for children in the State of Tennessee.

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