



SB 2: TAXPAYER FUNDED VOUCHERS

The following are the Texas State Teachers Association's comments delivered to the Texas Senate Committee on Education regarding School Vouchers on October 7, 2026.

The Texas State Teachers Association welcomes the opportunity to comment on SB 2 monitoring and the school voucher Texas Education Freedom Account program. Passed in the 89th legislative session, SB 2 devoted state taxpayer funds for voucher accounts that can be used to pay for private school tuition and homeschool programs, diverting appropriations away from the public school system that the state is constitutionally mandated to preserve. Lawmakers allocated \$1 billion for one schoolyear's worth of vouchers and are looking to expand upon that spending in future legislative sessions, even though the program has been in operation for less than a year. Of that \$1 billion, up to \$80 million can be spent on administrative and marketing costs, and \$2.5 million can be spent on accounting consulting services. Before expanding the voucher program, lawmakers should consider if taxpayer dollars are being spent responsibly, and if the program is actually improving educational outcomes.

Figures provided by the state Comptroller indicate that the voucher program is primarily serving as a subsidy for students already enrolled in private or homeschool. In the first round of applications, nearly 75% of student applications submitted were for students not previously enrolled in public school, and 70% of voucher awardees in grades 1-12 had been previously enrolled in a private or homeschool. Of the eligible students remaining on the voucher waitlist, 80% were not previously enrolled in public school. Lawmakers should not consider expanding a program that merely serves as a coupon for private schools.

Figures also show that the program is ineffective at enhancing the education of groups that lawmakers sought to prioritize. More than 27,500 Texas families have already returned their vouchers, with 25% of eligible students with disabilities opting out, and more than half of the opt outs were families making less than \$66,000 a year. Additionally, of the students that opted out of the voucher, 68% were previously enrolled in public school. Evidence points to Texas school vouchers already failing disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and those already in public schools.

The voucher program has expanded vendor handouts while hurting Texas public schools. The TEFA program has approved 2,700 unique vendors from 46 states to provide educational services, while 733 Texas public school districts contain voucher participants. Public schools that lose students due to the program will be forced to close schools, limit extracurriculars, and fire educators, limiting the educational experience of the majority of families who remain in public schools.

Of the approved TEFA program private schools, 57% of the schools only enroll PK-K, indicating a strong need for affordable preschool and childcare. Lawmakers should not seek to use vouchers as a patch-fix for this systematic need. Throughout the state school districts are closing schools, laying off staff, and increasing class sizes. Lawmakers should not prioritize the voucher program and should instead be fully funding the public schools that educate the overwhelming majority of Texas children.