

Parental Choice/Educational Vouchers

National Council of Jewish Women works to advance the well-being of children and families. We endorse and resolve to work for:

- Quality public education must be provided for all, utilizing public funds for public schools only.
- Religious liberty and the separation of religion and state are constitutional principles which must be protected and preserved in order to maintain our democratic society.

To provide quality public education to school-aged children in Texas, NCJW:

- **Supports HRJ 31 (Raymond)**, which proposes a constitutional amendment prohibiting the authorization or funding of an elementary or secondary education voucher program.
- **Opposes Bill SB115 (Williams)** which relates to a school choice program for certain students with disabilities for the same reasons as cited above.
- **Opposes any “Parental Choice” legislation** where money is diverted away from the public school system. “Parental Choice” legislation promotes direct state subsidies or indirect tax credit scholarships to be used at private or religious schools.

Voucher programs that divert public money to private or religious schools harm the public school system.

- Particularly in view of the recent cuts in public education, Texas schools cannot afford to have needed funds siphoned off to private and religious schools. The loss of these vital resources endangers the public schools' ability to fulfill their mission to provide an education to all children.
- Private schools do not have to accept everyone and can select only the most capable and motivated.
- Voucher programs may cause a loss of talented staff and teachers from the public schools.

Voucher programs that transfer funds to private or parochial schools breach the barrier between religion and state and threaten the first amendment's guarantee of religious liberty.

- Vouchers may provide state support for religious instruction and indoctrination. They may even subsidize instruction that promotes discrimination. This can put taxpayers in the position of funding religious schools that promote a sectarian dogma which the taxpayer may disagree with. Members of faith, not the government, should fund religious institutions.

Private schools receiving vouchers are not accountable to taxpayers.

- There is a lack of credible evidence that shows voucher students are performing better than public school students.
- Public schools are forced to administer STAAR tests for accountability. That standard is not placed on private schools, so taxpayers have no way to ensure the money is producing educated children.
- Private schools are not held to the same transparency standard as public schools are held in areas such as open records, open meetings and financial disclosures.

Voucher programs are unnecessary as public school choice is widely available.

- Texas parents have many choices for the public school their child attends, including intra-district and inter-district transfers, magnet schools, charter schools and open-enrollment schools.

Voucher programs do not always meet their intended purpose.

- While proponents claim that voucher programs provide opportunities for disadvantaged students, the voucher does not provide for the full cost of tuition or for related costs such as transportation, uniforms and supplies.
- Often vouchers are provided for students who are already attending private schools.