



Oppose Choice Scholarship Expansion



Please vote NO on HB 1005, related provisions in HB 1001, and SB 413

The Indiana School Boards Association and the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents **oppose expansion** of the Choice Scholarship voucher program. Vouchers divert funding from public schools, lack financial transparency and accountability, are subject to less regulation and oversight, do not improve student achievement, and do not save the state money. We urge lawmakers to build on the good budget for public education passed in 2019 by continuing to address the teacher pay gap and funding a tuition support increase that keeps pace with, or exceeds, inflation. Public funds should fund public schools, which are open to all children and are a state constitutional duty.

- **Parents are pleased with how public schools have responded to the pandemic:** An Education Next survey conducted in November and December found that 65% of parents give their local public schools an A or a B grade, up from 60% before the pandemic.
- **Vouchers divert needed resources from public schools:** The choice expansion proposals in the House-passed budget would be funded out of the tuition support appropriation at an estimated cost of \$144M, further depleting the monies available to support traditional public education. When including all sources of funding (not just state support), Indiana ranked 39th in the U.S. for public K-12 per-pupil expenditures in 2018, down from 22nd among states in 2004. At the same time, Indiana has spent more than \$1 billion on school vouchers over the past 10 years.
- **Vouchers lack financial transparency:** Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers for the expenditures they make with public funds. Unlike public schools, they are not required to be audited by the State Board of Accounts and do not have to publish an annual financial report.
- **Vouchers are subject to less regulation and accountability:** Private schools are largely exempt from federal and state mandates, regulations, and reporting requirements. Unlike public schools, they do not receive federal accountability ratings and are not required to employ licensed teachers. All schools that receive public funds should play by the same rules.
- **Vouchers do not improve achievement:** EdChoice claims in its 2016 “Win-Win” analysis that the vast majority of gold standard studies on school choice show academic benefits for participating students, but none of the studies that EdChoice reviewed cover Indiana. Research from 2018 specific to Indiana’s Choice Scholarship Program found that Indiana students who received a voucher to transfer from a public to a private school experienced achievement loss in mathematics compared with matched students who remained in a public school. The 2018 Indiana study, which was co-authored by a University of Notre Dame professor, is available here: <https://edre.uark.edu/resources/pdf/berendslectureimpactindiana.pdf>.
- **Vouchers do not save the state money:** Proponents claim that vouchers save taxpayers money, but 61% of students who received a voucher in Indiana last year never attended a public school, suggesting that these are in fact new costs to the State of Indiana.
- **Voucher expansion benefits the upper class:** Under HB 1005 and the House-passed budget, eligibility to receive a voucher would expand from 150% to 300% of the amount to qualify for reduced price meals. This would raise the income limits to \$145,410 for a household of four and \$170,274 for a household of five – amounts that qualify as upper-class incomes in many Hoosier communities. These families likely already have the means to afford a private education.
- **Vouchers do not offer families real choice:** Vouchers give choice to private schools, not families. Unlike public schools, private and religious schools often discriminate in who they educate and are not required to accept all students. Public funds should only be used for education that is open and inclusive to all Hoosiers.
- **Public schools are already the true schools of choice:** Indiana’s family-friendly public school transfer laws already ensure that children are not limited by Zip code. More than 70,000 Hoosier students currently choose to enroll in a neighboring public school district.