



Vouchers Violate Texan Values

Testimony Against SB 2
Jaime Puente, Every Texan
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When the framers of the Texas Constitution created our biennial Legislature in 1876, they did it in part to prevent the meddling of out-of-state power brokers. That forethought continues to serve Texas students today as external and internal forces push our state toward an expensive, unequal, and harmful voucher program. SB 2, as introduced by Senator Creighton, appears to be a vendor bill that would transfer the tax dollars of hardworking Texans to wealthy private school parents and billionaire out-of-state corporations, just as the framers of the 1876 Texas Constitution warned against. Not only does the voucher program in SB 2 violate the spirit of nearly 150 years of Texas values as an out-of-state vendor bill; by directing Texan tax dollars to private school pockets, this legislation defies the values expressed in Article 7 of our state Constitution because lawmakers have a “duty to establish and make suitable provision for... an efficient system of public free schools.”

SB 2 Will Further Reduce Funds Available to Schools

According to the Legislative Budget Board, inflation-adjusted classroom funding dropped to \$50.6 billion, or \$9,948 per student in 2025 compared to \$10,655 in 2019.ⁱ Despite claims of historic levels of spending on education, public school districts across the state are facing deficit budgets. Now, instead of addressing the needs of Texas students, schools, and teachers, Senate Bill 2 proposes to enact a costly voucher program that by [Every Texan's analysis](#) would cost the state \$2.25 billion if a meager 5% of students left public education for a voucher. At the local level, districts such as Conroe ISD, which adopted a [\\$11.92 million deficit budget for the 2024-2025](#) school year, would see a loss of per student funding totaling more than \$29.6 million if 5% of Conroe students left for a voucher. Brownsville ISD, itself having cut [\\$18 million](#) from its 2024-2025 budget, stands to lose over \$15 million with the same level of voucher take-up. Texas school districts are already facing difficult choices because the Legislature chose to keep the Basic Allotment stagnant since 2019 and has yet to address the needs of Special Education students. Introducing vouchers as a third, unequal system of education without addressing the dire funding needs of Texas public schools is an expensive abdication of a solemn Constitutional duty.

Vouchers are Unequal, Ineffective and Wasteful

The costly development of a voucher program would not only reduce funding for already cash-strapped districts, but it would also be unequal, ineffective, and wasteful. Every Texan testified previously that vouchers were first proposed as a recommendation of Governor Allan Shivers's [Subcommittee on Segregation in Public Schools](#), an effort to find “legal and legislative” rather

than violent methods of resistance to desegregation after the ruling in *Brown v. Board* (1954). 70 years later, the voucher program in SB 2 would once again use public dollars to fund segregated schools. In other voucher states such as North Carolina, [recent reporting](#) shows that private schools considered “segregation academies” in the 1960s and 70s are receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars in state voucher funding while maintaining a student body that is 99% white in a county that is only 40% white.

Just as SB 2 would recreate North Carolina style segregation academies in Texas, it would be just as ineffective at providing for a suitable education necessary to all 5.5 million public school students. In states that enacted vouchers to the scale Texas is proposing, most students using the vouchers were already in private school. Ohio, for example, saw little change in private school enrollment because most of the 60,000 new recipients since expansion to a universal voucher were already in private school. The same can be said for the voucher programs in [Arkansas](#) and [Arizona](#).

SB 2 as written attempts to control for some of the glaring problems witnessed in other states, but unequal segregation academies are ineffective solutions to Texas’s workforce needs. At its core, the current voucher legislation is a wasteful diversion of critical state funding needed in classrooms across the state from Alpine to Atlanta, Texline to Texas City. Even with a \$1 billion appropriation, SB 2 will not meet the needs of public-school students or their families. Instead, as we have seen in Florida and Arizona, lawmakers should expect massive waste from the Certified Education Assistance Organizations who will earn 5% of programs funds for serving as the middleman for voucher transactions. What, in this age of grift, would keep CEO’s from approving illegitimate expenses under the program except this legislature’s exercise of its Constitutional duty to fund public schools, not vouchers?

Public Education is the Tie That Binds

They knew in 1876 what was known in 1776 – a “general diffusion of knowledge” is “essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people.” Or, in other words – public education is the tie that binds us together as Texans and Americans. As long as America has been an idea, we have used public education to build out of many, one nation dedicated to the ideals the United States were founded upon. Over the centuries, what America means has grown to include folks like Frederick Douglass who had to steal his education before the Civil War as well as people like my mom who taught in Huelga Schools in the 1970s when Texas still refused to comply with desegregation. Texas public schools have, through dedicated struggle, supported an ever more diverse state by instilling a unified vision of who we are as a community into each new generation of Texans and Americans. The promise of public education is the promise of American freedom. Vouchers, as proposed by SB2, threaten that promise and our future as the democratic society or founders envisioned.

¹ Fiscal Size-Up 2024-25 Biennium, July 2024, Pg 221