

## Testimony to Senate Education Committee: SB 2 – Voucher Implementation

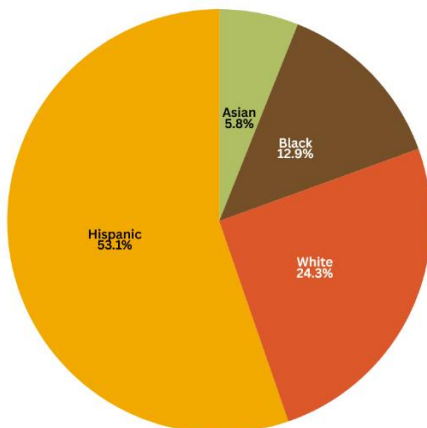
**Jaime Puente, Director of Economic Opportunity, Every Texan**

October 7, 2026

As public schools across Texas experience declines in enrollment and reduced spending power, vouchers are exacerbating financial crises in school districts while failing to serve most Texas students in their neighborhood schools. Last year, Every Texan estimated that a 5% loss of student enrollment meant Texas schools would lose \$2.25 billion in weighted average daily attendance (WADA) funding. The \$1 billion appropriated to launch vouchers in Texas, serves less than 1% of public school students statewide. At the same time, in districts large and small, resources for activities in classrooms are decreasing while everyday costs increase. Diverting funds away from public education to students already in private schools is an inefficient use of public resources - the cost far outweighs the limited reach. Before the legislature considers appropriating more general revenue dollars to vouchers, Every Texan urges lawmakers to establish more rigorous reporting measures that can determine the actual reach and effectiveness of the program.

### Texas Public Student Enrollment

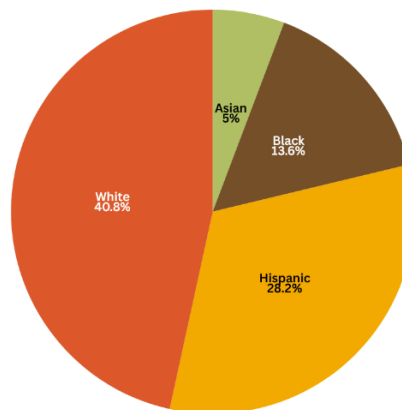
Statewide Totals - 2025-2026



Source: Every Texan Analysis of TEA Data

### TEFA Funded Voucher Participants

2026 - 2027 School Year



Source: Every Texan Analysis of TEFA Annual Demographic Report • Data as of August 1, 2026.

The first cohort of voucher recipients in Texas are students already attending private school, not public school students. The most recent data available from the Comptroller's office shows that only 21% of the 116,574 funded participants were previously enrolled in a public school. Homeschool or other non-public school students make up 52% of all funded participants for the 2026-2027 school year. Data released at the end of the summer shows the demographic makeup of funded participants as of August 1 were significantly different than the students attending Texas public schools. The return on the \$1 billion dollar public investment for vouchers is not evidenced in the participant data. Even with 0.45% of



the Texas public school population leaving for a voucher, the hit to district budgets is measurable and felt.<sup>i</sup>

Conservative estimates built on our data from the 89th Legislature show that a 0.5% loss of enrollment to vouchers will have a significant negative effect on a district's revenue. In Comal ISD, for example, a 1% loss in students means the district could be losing more than \$2.4 million from its operating budget. Comal ISD is just one of more than 700 school districts across the state facing new and unpredictable budget constraints because of the Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA) program, which funds vouchers. Every Texan's recent report, *Pinching Pennies*, describes the overly complex funding regime that districts must contend with when setting their annual budgets, and vouchers have created a new burden with uncertain effects.<sup>ii</sup>

Even as mostly private school students and parents benefit from the \$1 billion voucher program, base funding in Texas for public education is still \$1,600 below what is needed to meet current inflation. News reports show districts are making hard choices to avoid deficit budgets while school closures escalate, with more than 190 in the last three years.<sup>iii</sup> Estimates provided by Every Texan and Our Schools Our Democracy offer communities and their school districts critical information they can use to properly plan their academic futures - we ask the state to commit to its role on that. Efficient and effective public education policy means tracking the necessary data to ensure the state is spending public resources in a fiscally responsible manner to educate all 5.5 million Texas students. As implemented, the TEFA program offers no choice to more than 99% of current public school students despite its exorbitant cost, while diverting critical resources away from underfunded schools.

Publicly available data, even as requested from the agency, fails to show the exact effect of vouchers on public education. Every Texan urges lawmakers to establish more robust reporting requirements for the TEFA program. Before program spending is renewed or doubled, as requested by the Comptroller's office, Texans need a more accurate understanding of how diverting state funding away from public education is affecting school enrollment and revenue. Specifically, Texans should know exactly how many students are leaving school districts for a voucher, the actual loss of revenue to the district for each funded voucher participant, and whether those students are emergent bilingual, received special education services, or benefitted from the comprehensive education allotment.

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<sup>i</sup> Texas Education Freedom Accounts Fact Sheet, October 1, 2026, <https://educationfreedom.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/10.1.26-Participants-Fact-Sheet.pdf>; TEFA Annual Demographic Report 2026-2027, <https://educationfreedom.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/TEFA-Annual-Demographic-Report.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Chandra Villanueva, *Pinching Pennies: Texas Is Shortchanging Public Education*, <https://everytexan.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Pinching-Pennies-2026-Report.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Hays CISD Joins Public School Districts Across the State in Making Budget Reductions, <https://www.hayscisd.net/page/reductions2026/>; Texas schools say they still face budget difficulties despite \$8.5 billion boost, <https://www.texastribune.org/2026/06/01/texas-school-funding-teacher-quality-special-education/>; Texas Public School Closures & Consolidations, [https://osod.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/1-FINAL-SCHOOL-CLOSURE-MAP\\_OSOD-w-Verification\\_8-10-26.pdf](https://osod.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/1-FINAL-SCHOOL-CLOSURE-MAP_OSOD-w-Verification_8-10-26.pdf)