



Protect Idaho's Public Schools

Private School Vouchers are Wrong for Idaho

Idaho's public schools are the bedrock of our communities and our best pathway to fulfilling the aspirations and potential of our students, as well as ensuring that our state has a prosperous future. Unfortunately, our state is facing a serious threat to those community-anchoring public schools in the form of private school vouchers, which could surface in the state legislature this year.

As the three major education stakeholder groups in Idaho, part of the mission of the Idaho Education Association (IEA), the Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA), and the Idaho Association of School Administrators (IASA) is to advocate for education policies that benefit students and public schools. In this instance, our mission clearly becomes opposition to a private school voucher policy that would be extremely detrimental to students throughout Idaho and would undermine the great work being done by teachers, administrators, and school boards in local communities. **We join together here to make our position perfectly clear—the IEA, ISBA, and IASA vehemently oppose any form of school vouchers that divert taxpayer funds from public schools into private or parochial schools.**

Idaho is already 49th out of 50 states in per-pupil spending, and our public schools can't afford the further erosion of resources that private school vouchers create. We should be focused on investing in opportunities for the 97% of Idaho children who attend public schools, rather than on diverting taxpayer money for the 3% who attend private schools. Private school vouchers are a classic "wolf in sheep's clothing". Even if they are couched as "Education Savings Accounts" or "Tuition Tax Credits", the result is the same—they take taxpayer money away from public schools for use in private schools.

Idaho's rural schools would be particularly affected by private school vouchers. These public schools would be devastated by a reduction to Idaho's general fund, which is the primary source of funding for public schools in rural areas. 75% of Idaho's school districts are already running "supplemental" levies on a consistent basis. We should not be asking these communities to take on more tax burden for the sake of sending a select few students to private schools, especially since most of these rural areas don't even have a private school option.

Additionally, changes to federal tax laws regarding 529 education savings plans now make it possible to use 529 plans for K-12 levels as well as higher education. Since this is new policy and there is considerable uncertainty as to how it will play out, it would be unwise to implement any private school voucher plan that might be in conflict with, or duplicative of, the modified 529 laws.

The core concept of this discussion is quite simple—**public tax dollars should NOT be used for private schools.** Private schools are not accountable to taxpayers and can reject students they do not wish to

admit. Public schools, meanwhile, welcome all students and strive to serve and educate each and every one. Private schools are not required to provide meals, transportation, and special education services, which are key components of the public education system.

Idaho legislators should protect our public schools and vote no on any private school voucher legislation. The IEA, ISBA, and IASA urge Idaho citizens to reject private school voucher plans which would compromise our public schools' ability to serve students and communities in our great state. Contact your legislator and tell him/her that private school vouchers are wrong for Idaho! For more information, visit www.idahoea.org/vouchers/

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