



Kids Matter Index Rating on HB294 Strong Student Grant Program (School Vouchers)

No, this bill is NOT good for Idaho Kids

Key Points in opposition to school vouchers:

1. Vouchers take funding from public schools, which serve over 90% of students. Currently, Idaho ranks 50th in public school funding per student.
2. Voucher funds are given to private and religious schools which are not accountable to taxpayers.
3. There is no evidence that school vouchers lead to increased student achievement.
4. Vouchers increase public education costs by requiring taxpayers to fund two systems, one public and one private.
5. Vouchers rarely cover a student's full tuition, so families who are promised admission are left paying for a significant portion of the tuition.
6. Vouchers undermine principles of accountability and equity.
7. Unlike public schools, private and religious schools can — and do — discriminate in admissions on the basis of gender, religion, sexual orientation, ability, behavioral history, prior academic achievement, standardized test scores, interviews with applicants and parents, and income.
8. Public schools are mandated to accept all students, including those with learning disabilities, behavioral and mental health issues, etc. With real dollars taken out of the schools' budgets they have to educate students of all abilities with less. Private schools can selectively choose students of high ability, and low behavioral issues, thus leaving the burden on the lower funded public school system.

Impact on Idaho Children: An Idaho voucher program would dramatically hurt children in our state. Our schools are currently underfunded with many essential needs, such as Pre-K education not being met. Given the historic underfunding, the population growth, the needs of school age children across the state, technology needs, and the urban/rural demographics, taking money out of an already underfunded system would negatively impact all children in Idaho.