

Talking Points

Private School Vouchers

School voucher programs — including tuition tax credits, education savings accounts, and scholarships — are a form of government subsidy given to parents for use toward funding tuition and related expenses in primarily private schools, including religious schools. The current administration has promised to expand private school voucher programs nationwide as a part of larger cuts to public education. While the American public education system faces significant challenges that need to be met with equitable and effective solutions for our nation's students, private school vouchers are not a comprehensive solution and are in fact damaging to public education by diverting desperately needed resources away from the public schools.

NCJW opposes school voucher programs that funnel taxpayer dollars to private schools, religious organizations, or schools with discriminatory policies toward students, teachers, and/or other school personnel.

Talking Points

- **Public money should go to public schools.** Private school vouchers divert funds from the already limited resources available to public schools, which limits the programs public schools might implement, such as teacher trainings, reduced class sizes, and providing social services like guidance or college counselors. In turn, these limitations endanger the ability of public schools to meet the needs of their students and the broader community in which they serve. Furthermore, vouchers often do not cover the full cost of tuition, making it difficult for low-income students to actually use them. Education reform should focus on improving public schools, which educate about 90% of American students.
- **Federal funds should not be used to discriminate.** Private schools do not guarantee students, teachers, and other school personnel the same civil rights protections provided by public schools, such as Title IX (which prohibits discrimination in public schools based on sex) or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (which provides specific rights and protections for students with disabilities). As a result, these schools may deny admission to students at their own discretion. Further, students, teachers, and school personnel may be subject to discrimination while attending or working for private schools. For example, transgender students may face expulsion solely due to their gender identity, students with disabilities may be denied building accessibility, and female teachers could be fired for having children while unmarried. Taxpayer money should not fund private school vouchers that violate the fundamental civil rights of students and teachers.
- **School vouchers threaten religious freedom.** The first amendment protects freedom of, and freedom from, religion. Private school voucher programs violate this principle by using taxpayer dollars to fund primarily religious education. For example, approximately 80% of the students participating in the District of Columbia voucher program attend religious schools. Parents may choose such an education for their children, but no taxpayer should be required to pay for another's religious education. Further, vouchers can also threaten the autonomy of private religious schools by subjecting them to government oversight.