



Your Tax Dollars Are Funding Private Education At The Expense Of Public Schools

By Christine Kushner

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If someone was using your tax dollars to support private, mostly religious schools by decreasing services available to public school children, would you try to stop them?

Right now, through North Carolina's voucher programs, taxpayer dollars are given to private schools that have practically no transparency and accountability for that money. And our legislature wants to expand that even more. It is a taxpayer rip-off. Decades of research, including a new [report](#), make it clear that private school vouchers do not improve education. Instead, they undermine public schools, and they lead to school segregation.

The **Education Law Center at the Southern Poverty Law Center** found that, "The context in which the growth of voucher spending is occurring is important: At the same time funding for vouchers has climbed considerably, these voucher states' efforts to fund public schools— which serve a significant majority of students—have declined." That is, public funding for public schools declined as voucher spending grew.

Charter schools and other private schools are taking public taxpayer dollars without producing positive academic outcomes. Instead, experience and studies predict that in the long run, for our children and for our taxpayers, the funding spent on private schools will yield a negative return on investment.

School vouchers are nothing new to North Carolina. Soon after the Brown vs. Board decision in 1956, when the US Supreme Court declared racial segregation in public schooling was unconstitutional, North Carolina legislators set up the Pearsoll Plan, providing private school vouchers to students so they could attend a school with their own racial subgroup. The clear purpose was to preserve racial segregation in schools despite the Brown vs. Board ruling.

Now, both the NC Senate and NC House are moving through bills to greatly expand vouchers, **with virtually no public comment**. They are likely avoiding public comment because polls overwhelmingly show that voters want public dollars going to public schools.

I am among the 70 percent of taxpayers who do not have school-aged children, and my #SchoolChoice is to have my tax dollars only go to public schools. Public schools are the only way to scale opportunities for all children, not just select children.

Public schools are foundational to our nation—from their founding in the 19th century, public schools have created shared values and culture in America. As a nation, we are charged in our Constitution's preamble to strive to "promote the general welfare." **We should be working to create a "more perfect union" through creating more perfect public schools.**

Public schools are not yet perfect, but they provide the best hope for our divided and segregated nation to educate all our children with the shared *American values*, of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, for all, values that work to create a more perfect union.

I am a fierce defender of public schools, in part because as a child of immigrants, public schools were my way of feeling and becoming American. When defending public schools, I am often met with the false belief that public schools are failing. That is a **myth**—we, as Americans, as North Carolinians, are failing our public schools by underfunding them. This important voucher report from the Education Law Center underscores this emphatically. We are short-changing our children by underfunding public schools. This underfunding creates incentives for families to choose charters and other private schools, while failing to provide any accountability for public dollars or for academic outcomes from private schools.

If we are a nation dedicated to equality and justice for all, we must stop undermining public education, and in North Carolina, that means fully funding our public schools, as demanded by the NC Constitution and the Leandro Plan.

The expansion in the "Opportunity scholarship" school voucher program has come without any review of academic outcomes for students or ensuring accountability for taxpayer dollars.

Again, I will ask my fellow taxpayers, if someone was diverting money away from public school children to subsidize private schools, using your money, would you work to stop them? With vouchers, private schools are taking your money without providing a shared public benefit nor are they providing accountability for that money. Our tax dollars should be used to promote and protect the common good for all citizens, not used for personal or private gains.

Stop giving them your money.

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