

# Voucher plans lack the accountability that parents and taxpayers need



## Schools receiving vouchers are not accountable to parents or taxpayers.

Public schools are held accountable for their students' performance through the STAAR test and other measures. The state also gives public school districts financial ratings to evaluate their management of taxpayer resources and school districts' finances are open to the public. Most importantly, public school districts are governed by publicly elected trustees. Private schools do not have these accountability measures in place, and many private schools have voiced strong opposition to state assessments at their schools.



## Texas' experience with charter schools highlights opportunities for abuse.

Publicly funded charter schools are held to higher standards of oversight than private schools, but they do not have the same accountability standards in place as traditional school districts with local school boards. This lax oversight invites abuse. Hearst Newspapers reported in January 2023 that some taxpayer-funded charter schools are renting properties from the very people who own those schools, which is a clear conflict of interest. The U.S. Office of the Inspector General audited 33 charter schools in six states (including Texas) in 2016 and found that 22 of them were in violation of federal conflict of interest rules. A voucher program for private and home schools would provide even fewer taxpayer protections.



## Vouchers drain needed dollars from all public schools.

State funding for public education has been stagnant since 2019, yet the rate of inflation during that time has been 14.5 percent. Schools' costs are on the rise and they face a severe teacher shortage. Even rural areas with no brick-and-mortar private schools nearby will be impacted because virtual private schools will recruit their students, slashing funding for those schools and making it more difficult to pay fixed costs such as transportation and instructional programs. Meanwhile, the costs of voucher programs often grow quickly; the Florida Policy Institute reports that there has been "tremendous growth" in the cost of the state's voucher program, with \$1.3 billion per year now diverted to public schools.

### KEY POINTS:

1

Private schools are not publicly accountable for performance, finance

2

Voucher plans remove needed dollars from public schools

3

Public schools already offer widespread choice to parents



## Vouchers would pay for students already attending private and home schools.

States such as Arizona, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin have found that more than 75 percent of students receiving vouchers have never attended public schools, according to the National Coalition for Public Education. Vouchers often subsidize tuition for students who already attend private schools. In Texas, more than 300,000 students already attend private school. These are students that Texas is not paying to educate now. Providing those students with vouchers to attend private schools could cost Texas taxpayers billions of dollars per year.



## School choice already exists in Texas.

State law requires districts to allow students at low-performing schools to transfer. Public school districts operate magnet schools, career and technical campuses, virtual schools, and credit-recovery programs, among other programs. Public charter schools provide another form of existing choice. Legislators who want to expand choice should do so within the state's system of transparent, accountable public schools.

### PRIVATE SCHOOLS ARE **NOT** REQUIRED TO:

- ✗ Give the STAAR test
- ✗ Publicly report their spending
- ✗ Comply with laws regarding open meetings and records
- ✗ Make accommodations for students with disabilities
- ✗ Adhere to the same safety standards as traditional districts
- ✗ Accept all students