



March 21, 2023

The Honorable Brandon Creighton, Chair  
Senate Committee on Education  
Post Office Box 12068, Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Plano ISD Board of Trustees Position Statement on Vouchers, Taxpayer Savings Accounts, Education Savings Accounts, Tax Credit Scholarships, Tuition Tax Credits, Opportunity Scholarships, and Insurance Premium Tax Credits

Senator Creighton and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

We support choices in education. More than just talking about it, we do it. We are proud that Plano Independent School District, known nationally for its excellence, offers many high-quality educational choices for students and serves every student that chooses to enroll.

On October 3, 2022, by a unanimous vote, the Plano ISD Board of Trustees adopted its legislative priorities for the 88<sup>th</sup> session of the Texas Legislature. Beyond the primary objective of school safety, it is imperative the legislature fully fund traditional public schools. To that end, referencing the recent Senate Bill 8 (SB 8) draft, if there is willingness to offer \$8,000 for parents to send their child to a private school, tantamount to admitting public schools are underfunded, then we suggest increasing the basic allotment to at least \$8,000 for public schools.

SB 8 offers no business case to support vouchers and it includes no goal for improvement in student outcomes. Despite the recent impetus for vouchers, decades of data overwhelmingly confirm that public school students outperform their voucher counterparts in private or home school, and suggests public school is the best choice in education.

Private or home schools that accept vouchers are not subject to the same reporting or accountability requirements as public schools, which guarantee that taxpayer monies are used in accordance with statute. We fully support these financial and academic accountability measures to safeguard taxpayer dollars and reinforce the highest academic outcomes for the students in Texas. With no meaningful transparency or financial reporting requirements for private or home schools that receive vouchers, how will taxpayers evaluate the effectiveness of their tax dollars allocated to private or home schools via vouchers?

Furthermore, SB 8 does not outline how the state will fund the voucher option, nor how many students it plans to support with a voucher, other than to indicate the Comptroller will set aside funding for vouchers appropriated from the General Fund, funded by taxpayers. In addition, it offers costly and inequitable hold harmless provisions, tens of millions of dollars, to only some schools, leading to great inequity between small and large school districts. In Plano, the cost of a single student who leaves the District is approximately \$9,800 plus other fixed costs that take time to mitigate, resulting in reduced resources for the schools.

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Potentially, over a million students who currently attend private or home schools could begin to receive vouchers, requiring the state to spend much more on education than it does now, albeit without any accountability for fiscal responsibility or students' academic outcomes. In several states where vouchers have been approved, more than three-fourths of new voucher recipients were already enrolled in private or home schools.

Additionally, the cost of a voucher is not likely to equal the average cost of tuition for most private schools and may, therefore, result in an option only for those who can afford to pay the tuition differential and provide their own transportation. Many times, the argument in favor of vouchers is to, indeed, serve these exact students who will most certainly be left behind.

Additionally, we want to emphasize our continuous support for parent empowerment, as it is evident from Plano ISD's active parent participation in organizations like our PTA and booster clubs. Our District's policies also demonstrate our commitments to parent involvement, which are carried out rigorously across all campuses every day. We encourage parents to be partners in their children's education which positively impacts academic outcomes by providing additional support, motivation, and communication between home and school.

Finally, we stand by our priority to oppose the use of taxpayer funds for private use in any form (such as vouchers, taxpayer savings grants, education savings accounts, tax credit scholarships, tuition tax credits, opportunity scholarships) that divert funds from traditional public schools.

A system that uses any mechanism to fund private education with no accountability standards or financial transparency will not guarantee a quality education for students to be life ready, nor will it provide a competitive, educated workforce to meet the demands of employers in Texas, the eighth largest economy in the world.

Sincerely,



David Stolle  
President, Board of Trustees

By email