

End the ‘Invest in Kids’ Act voucher program

Oppose the Use of Public Dollars for Private Schools

Voucher programs like Illinois’ tax credit scholarship program divert state resources from our under-funded public schools and don’t improve academic outcomes for voucher recipients. ILGA passed the Invest in Kids Act in 2017 with the intent for it to sunset after five years. After the program sunsets, scholarships to private schools can be funded privately without state involvement, just as they were prior to 2017.

Why is this important?

- **Vouchers reduce funding for public schools:** The Invest in Kids program diverts up to \$75M/year in tax revenue funding vouchers. Meanwhile, 80% of Illinois public schools are not adequately funded. Every dollar diverted to private schools via the Invest in Kids Act is one that could be used to increase state funding of the Evidence-Based Funding Formula, which is still short ~\$2.5B.
- **Vouchers allow the use of taxpayer public funds for religious schools:** The vast majority of voucher recipients (~94%) in Illinois are attending religiously-affiliated schools. Using tax credits to pay for religious schools is a violation of one of the fundamental principles the US was founded on—separation of church and state. Recent Supreme Court rulings also make enforcement of anti-discrimination laws in religious schools difficult. The best solution is not to provide a tax credit scholarship program for any private school in Illinois.
- **Vouchers do not improve academic outcomes:** Advocates argue that vouchers provide access to high quality private education for poor children. In fact, decades of studies of voucher programs across the country have not found evidence that voucher students outperform their demographically-matched public school counterparts. More recent long-term studies of programs, including those in DC, IN, LA and OH, have found that students who participate in voucher programs fare substantially *worse* academically (e.g. based on graduation rates and test scores) than students educated in public schools.
- **Vouchers decrease equity:** The ~900,000 low-income students in IL public schools will not be helped by diverting funds to a privatized system that could be used instead to provide funding needed for smaller class sizes, enriched curriculum, better professional development, and wraparound services and support. Vouchers instead concentrate the highest need children in public schools while decreasing resources for those same schools.
- **Vouchers decrease accountability and transparency:** There is a major lack of oversight over both the program as a whole and the individual schools getting voucher funds. Private schools are not held to the same standards of accountability as public schools. They are not required to disclose how much money they spend on faculty, resources, or materials. Private schools don't have to make their academic standards public or reveal what their curriculum is. To date, there is no public information about the performance of Illinois’ voucher students
- **Vouchers put students at risk of discrimination:** Private schools receiving vouchers in Illinois must follow state and federal anti-discrimination laws, but there is little oversight, and there are no mechanisms for enforcement or compliance. Discrimination on the basis of religion, disability status and sexual orientation in admissions and other school policies is a significant issue in many of the schools receiving Invest in Kids’ vouchers.
- **Vouchers don’t have to provide a broad education:** Schools receiving vouchers don’t have to comply with the full Illinois School Code, including curriculum requirements designed to educate well-rounded citizens of a multicultural, multiracial democracy.



Ending the Invest in Kids Act is endorsed by the following organizations:

Access Living	Equality Illinois	Lugenia Burns Hope Center
ACLU of IL	Families 4 Students and Teachers	National Association of Social Workers - IL Chapter
Action Ridge	50th Ward Working Families	National Council of Jewish Women - Chicago North Shore
Activate Chicago Parents	48th Ward Neighbors for Justice	National Council of Jewish Women - South Cook Section
AFT Local 604	Healing to Action	Network 49
American Association of University Women Illinois	Illinois Education Association	Network for Public Education
American Association of University Women Naperville Area	Illinois Families for Public Schools	Northside Action for Justice
Americans United for the Separation of Church and State	Illinois Federation of Teachers	ONE Northside
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Chicago	Illinois Green Party	PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois
BG Pride	Illinois High School District Organization	Peoria Illinois NOW
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council	Independent Voters of IL-Independent Precinct Organization	Pilsen Alliance
Center for Tax and Budget Accountability	Illinois Moms 4 Change	POWER-PAC
Champaign-Urbana Democratic Socialists of America	Illinois National Organization for Women	Public Funds Public Schools
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless	Illinois Parent Teacher Association	Progressives for Democracy in America - Illinois
Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights	Illinois State Conference NAACP	Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education
Chicago Teachers Union	Indivisible Chicago	SCOPE
Citizens Action/Illinois	Indivisible Evanston	Teach Plus
COFI	Indivisible Lincoln Square	30th United
Cook County College Teachers Union, Local 1600	JCUA	39th Ward Neighbors United
Democratic Women of McDonough County	Journey for Justice Alliance	33rd Ward Working Families
ED-RED	League of Women Voters of Illinois	Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of Illinois
Educational Village Keepers	Learning Disabilities Association of Illinois	United Northwestern Side
	Kenwood Oakland Community Organization	
	Legal Council for Health Justice	
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	Library Defense	

References

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- [The Highly Negative Impacts of Vouchers](#). 2018. Center for American Progress.
- [23 Illinois Administrative Code 425: Voluntary Registration And Recognition Of Nonpublic Schools](#)
- [Illinois Report Card State Snapshot](#). 2021. IL State Board of Education
- [Invest in Kids Annual Report](#). 2022. IL Department of Revenue
- [Keeping Informed about School Vouchers: A review of major developments & research](#). 2016. Center on Education Policy