

November 6, 2017

The Honorable Terri Sewell
2201 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Public Funds for Public Schools Act

Dear Representative Sewell,

The thirty-three undersigned national education, disability, civil rights, church-state separation, and religious organizations applaud the introduction of your legislation *The Public Funds for Public Schools Act*.

Your bill would specifically bar any individuals from receiving a federal charitable tax deduction for contributions to voucher nonprofits that were already reimbursed with a state tuition tax credit. It would close a tax shelter benefiting wealthy taxpayers in nine states with tuition tax credit programs who are able to enrich themselves by donating to scholarship granting organizations (or voucher nonprofits). *The Public Funds for Public Schools Act* would ensure that the federal government is no longer able to sanction a tax shelter for wealthy Americans who opt to enrich themselves by donating money to state voucher programs. Further, it would redirect funding into the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the foundational federal funding stream that supports the education of students with disabilities in our public schools.

While the federal government cannot stop states from enacting voucher legislation that diverts desperately needed resources away from the public school system to fund the education of a few voucher students, *The Public Funds for Public Schools Act* will make it far less appealing for wealthy Americans filing under the Alternative Minimum Tax to donate to these voucher programs. Currently, states are forgoing up to \$1 billion dollars a year to operate tuition tax credit programs that subsidize a private school education for 250,000 students. These tuition tax credit schemes have a steep cost and directly impact the funding that public schools, which educate 90% of America's children, receive.

The current voucher tax shelter is also a significant drain on federal revenues that only benefits taxpayers with savvy accountants, not students. We know that final FY17 allocations to USED were below that of FY10 and that both the President and House FY18 numbers go lower still. When paired with the reality that the nation's public schools are serving more of the neediest students—more students in poverty, more students with disabilities, and more students who are English learners—the reality is that federal investment in education and students continues to fall short.

Open and nondiscriminatory in their acceptance of all students, American public schools are a unifying factor among the diverse range of communities in our society. Public schools are the only schools that must meet the needs of all students. They do not turn children or families away. They serve all children, including those with physical, behavioral and intellectual disabilities, those who are gifted, and those who have learning differences. *The Public Funds for Public Schools Act* ensures that the federal government will no longer allow Americans to profit from their donations to voucher programs that deplete resources from the public school system.

Thank you for your leadership on this important tax issue that has broad educational and civil rights implications.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
American Association of University Women
American Federation of School Administrators
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
Americans for Religious Liberty
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Association of School Business Officials International
Center for Inquiry
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Feminist Majority Foundation
Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc.
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Center on Learning Disabilities
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Teachers of English
National Disability Rights Network
National Education Association
National PTA
National Rural Education Association
National Rural Education Advocacy Collaborative
National School Boards Association
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
School Social Work Association of America
Stand for Children
People for the American Way
The Arc of the United States
The Advocacy Institute

