



NETWORK *for* PUBLIC EDUCATION

A Resolution in Support of Community-based Public Education, a Pillar of our Democracy

We believe that public education is the pillar of our democracy. We believe in the common school, as initially envisioned by Horace Mann. A common school is a public institution that nurtures and teaches all who live within its boundaries, regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, LGBTQ+ status, or learning ability. All may enroll—regardless of when they seek to enter the school or where they were educated before.

We believe that taxpayers bear the responsibility for funding such schools and that funding should be ample and equitable to address the needs of the served community. We also believe that taxpayers have the right to examine how schools use tax dollars to educate children.

Most importantly, we believe that such schools should be accountable to their community and that community residents have the right and responsibility to elect those who govern the school. Communities also have the right and the obligation to insist that schooling be done in a manner that best serves the needs of all.

Therefore, we have become increasingly concerned with efforts to privatize public education, remove the governance of schools from communities, and divert that power to private boards, religious institutions, and nonprofit and for-profit corporations.

These attempts to undermine and ultimately destroy democratically governed community-based schools devastate our collective vision of the common school. Publicly funded “market” alternatives distract from the important task of public school improvement, on which all of our energies should focus. Therefore, we, the undersigned, will advocate for the following reforms to preserve our public education system and protect the students who attend public schools.



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Charter Schools

We look forward to the day when charter schools are governed not by private boards but by those elected by the community at the district, city, or county level. Until then, we support all legislation and regulations that will make charters better learning environments for students and more accountable to the taxpayers who fund them. Such legislation would include the following:

- An immediate moratorium on creating new charter schools, including no replication or expansion of existing charter schools;
- The end of federal Charter School Programs that subsidize and encourage charter expansion;
- The transformation of for-profit charters to nonprofit charters and for-profit management organizations to non-profit management organizations;
- The elimination of all federal funding to charter schools run by for-profit corporations until the above is achieved;
- The mandate that all disciplinary regulations and due process rights afforded public school students are available to charter-school students;
- The elimination of enrollment privileges in charter schools with the exception of sibling preference;
- Required certification of all school teaching and administrative staff in accordance with public school requirements;
- Complete transparency in all expenditures and income;
- Open meetings of charter boards, posted at least 2 weeks prior on the charter's website, with all meeting minutes posted;
- The obligation that charter schools offer free or reduced-price lunch programs for qualified students;
- The requirement that charter schools offer services and support for students with special needs and students who are not yet proficient in English;



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- The publication of annual audits and management contracts on state education department websites;
- The requirement that charter schools follow bidding laws and regulations;
- The obligation that all properties and equipment owned by the charter school become the property of the local public school district if the charter closes;
- A mandate that all charter facilities meet building codes;
- The requirement that no students be excluded, discouraged from enrolling in a charter school, or counseled or pushed out based on behavior, academic achievement, or special needs;
- The transference of authorization, oversight, and renewal of the charter to the public school district in which the charter school is located;
- Regulations that prohibit charter schools from refusing transfer students mid-year (“backfilling”) if they have available space;
- Mandated public annual reporting of student withdrawal, expulsion, other disciplinary action, and the reason for leaving the school;
- Pro rata reimbursement for the school district (or the state) when students leave a charter school during the school year.

Vouchers

We support a parent’s right to educate their child in a private school; however, we believe that private services should be funded privately and not by the public. We applaud all charitable and religious organizations that provide scholarship funding, and we do not object to the tax subsidy they receive through federal and state tax deductions afforded other charitable organizations. However, we oppose direct and indirect voucher schemes that pose as “scholarships” to funnel large sums of taxpayer dollars to families to pay for private school tuition or homeschool expenses. We advocate for the phase-out of all voucher programs.



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Until voucher programs are ended, we support all legislation that protects students, families, and taxpayers in those states with voucher programs (including micro-schools and subsidized homeschools), including the following:

- An immediate moratorium on the creation of new voucher programs or their expansion;
- The requirement that private schools that receive vouchers cannot discriminate in any form, including based on religion, gender, marital status, disability, achievement, and LGBTQ+ status. This includes discrimination through admission rules, bigoted curriculum, hiring, discipline, and dress codes. When a private school accepts public funding, it should comply with the same anti-discrimination and civil rights laws as public schools;
- The requirement that private schools that receive vouchers comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 protections;
- The legal obligation that schools that accept vouchers publicly report student demographic data required of public schools as well as student admission, enrollment, graduation, and attrition data;
- Mandated financial audits of voucher programs, participating private education providers, and third-party voucher-granting organizations;
- Required physical inspections of all private schools and micro-schools before allowing them into the voucher program;
- Mandated state collection of data on voucher school closures and year-to-year changes in tuition;
- The mandate that all due process rights apply to voucher students that are afforded public school students in all matters of discipline;
- Required certification of all school teaching and administrative staff in schools that receive vouchers in accordance with public school requirements;
- Complete transparency in all expenditures and income for private schools, micro-schools, and homeschools receiving voucher funding;



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- Requirements that voucher students, including micro and homeschool students, participate in the same state testing programs as public and charter students and that student results be made publicly available;
- Required annual audits and management contracts available to the public by postings on state education department websites for all private schools receiving vouchers;
- Requirements that voucher schools follow bidding laws and regulations;
- The obligation that all voucher school facilities meet building codes;
- The mandate that students receiving a voucher be offered free or reduced-price lunch if they would receive FRPL in the public school;
- The requirement that all unused voucher funding be returned to local, state, and federal sources if the students return or transfer to public schools.

The Network for Public Education, October 29, 2023