



ATPE Opposition to SB 4

Relating to school choice programs
for certain students eligible to
attend public school.

April 15, 2015

Senate Bill 4 is a private school voucher bill that diverts state franchise tax dollars away from the state budget, where they are traditionally used to fund public schools, and instead uses them to subsidize private and religious schools that are not held accountable to taxpayers and voters. **ATPE opposes vouchers in any form and urges legislators to reject SB 4.** Please consider the following bullets pertaining to the bill:

- **Vouchers eliminate accountability.** Senate Bill (SB) 4 by Sen. Larry Taylor (R-Friendswood) calls for using state money to subsidize private and religious schools that are not held accountable to taxpayers and voters. The private schools would be funded by state taxpayers but largely unregulated and free to choose their own students, standards, and curriculum.
- **Vouchers do not benefit all students.** Unlike public schools, private schools are not required to accept all students and can institute selective enrollment policies. As a result, the population of students who might benefit from a tuition tax credit or voucher is substantially limited—most likely to students from wealthier families who can afford to pay supplemental tuition or meet private school eligibility requirements. Private schools also do not face the public accountability requirements contained in state and federal laws, including special education, health, and safety laws.
- **While SB 4 would allow some limited money to be used for tutoring students in public schools, there is no requirement that any money go to public schools or their students under this bill, and it's clear that SB 4's main purpose is to funnel public dollars to private entities.** SB 4 would enable wealthy individuals and businesses to take advantage of tax breaks for private education while decreasing the amount of revenue available to be spent on public schools that are still struggling to make up for devastating budget cuts in recent years.
- **SB 4 opens the door for private entities** set up as middleman organizations to take advantage of the privatization plan; if passed, SB 4 could lead to the same type of corruption and scandal that has plagued other states that have already experimented with “tax-credit vouchers.”
- **Voucher programs force taxpayers to pay for two discrete school systems.** Texas cannot afford to fund two schools systems – one public and one private – at a time when we're trying to clean up our school finance system and ensure that all Texas public school students have access to adequate and equitable funding.

ATPE opposes any program or initiative, tuition tax credit, or voucher system that would direct public funds to private, home, or for-profit virtual schools. **We urge you to reject SB 4.**

The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators' association in Texas with more than 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, future, retired and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public school educators.