



## Input on HB 3

Regarding Education Savings Accounts

March 11, 2025

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** offers the following input in opposition to **HB 3** by Chairman Buckley:

ATPE's 2025 Legislative Program, developed by our member-run Legislative Committee and voted on by our membership at the 2024 ATPE Summit, has the following to say about education savings accounts:

**ATPE opposes any voucher program, including a tuition tax credit, education savings account, or any other such program that would direct public funds to private, home, or for-profit virtual schools.**

ATPE's 2025 Legislative Priorities include protecting the state's educational safety net, which is our public school system.

**ATPE urges the Legislature to consider the substantial pitfalls of creating a taxpayer-funded entitlement for private schools, including the experiences of other states where vouchers have proven to be costly and, in some cases, budget-busting programs unpopular with voters. A Texas voucher entitlement could easily amount to over \$7 billion annually. Any voucher should be considered as standalone legislation and not be tied to public school funding or teacher compensation. The Legislature should prioritize funding for traditional school districts, the state's educational safety net, now and into the future, over private educational pathways.**

This represents the collective view of our bipartisan statewide membership. This view has been separately confirmed by numerous internal polls of our membership, more than 70% of whom self-identify as Republican, Libertarian, or independent voters.

Any funds either collected by the state or a local taxing entity, or funds that would have been collected but for a tax exemption or credit, are considered public funds.

Texas schools currently face a funding crisis. ATPE believes the Texas Legislature should prioritize improving overall funding for public schools, as well as targeted investments in the areas facing the most significant challenges, instead of establishing a parallel system with less transparency and accountability. As with previously proposed voucher legislation, HB 3 offers up tax dollars without any mechanism to provide accountability back to taxpayers, including

*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 approximately 90,000 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.*

not providing taxpayers with the ability to compare the academic performance of voucher students with that of the public school population.

The voucher proposal has already gone from \$500 million for the first year of implantation to \$1 billion for the first year. Simply covering the current population of students whose families already choose not to enroll in the public school system would cost between \$6 billion and \$8 billion per year. If passed, that level of spending would crowd out other priorities. HB 3 would do nothing to help the vast majority of students who will remain in underfunded public schools. Should the Legislature prioritize creating a subsidy for current private school students over dedicating those financial resources to improving public education or the other pressing issues vying for limited state dollars, such as funding water infrastructure, the electric grid, border security, or roads?

We want to acknowledge and thank Chairman Buckley for doing as ATPE has recommended and separating the content of this bill from other important issues such as funding and educator compensation. We also applaud the investments in public education that are being made in the school finance bill, HB 2. With that said, we must oppose HB 3 based on the fact that it will divert \$1 billion this biennium into private and homeschool education, rather than continuing to close the gap in funding that has been caused by inflation and the lack of funding increase to public education since 2019. The vast majority of Texas students, around 5.4 million, attend public schools, and we can and should do more to ensure they have the resources they need to be successful.

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