

Comment Report

SF 2349

A bill for an act relating to education, including establishing a student first scholarship program and a student first enrollment supplement fund, requiring the boards of directors of school districts to publish certain specified information, modifying provisions related to required social studies instruction, open enrollment, teacher librarian endorsements, competent private instruction, and special education, making appropriations, providing penalties, and including effective date, applicability, and retroactive applicability provisions.(Formerly SSB 3080; See SF 2369.)

Subcommittee Members: Rozenboom-CH, Celsi, Cournoyer

Date: 02/23/2022

Time: 01:00 PM

Location: Room G15

Name: Shannon Patrick

Comment: Iowa's public money should be accountable to the public. That means it should go to public schools governed by elected school boards. Sending tax money to private schools is improper, uncivil, and takes resources away from public schools that use those resources more efficiently. The result is leaving Iowa's parents (like me) to choose among underfunded schools, unaccountable schools, and schools that are both. Iowa's children should have good schools, not their choice of worse schools.

Name: Elinor Levin

Comment: Taxpayer funds MUST go to public schools for the benefit of the communities. 1) All students deserve access to fullyfunded schools. 2) All Iowans deserve students who graduate with the skills and confidence to participate in our society, advocate for themselves, and see a future for themselves here in Iowa, should they consider staying. 3) Teachers are leaving the profession and the state in droves, and the surest way to attract teachers back and draw in new teachers is by paying a professional wage. Public schools should be funded at or above a 5% increase and NO taxpayer funds should be removed from the public schools that are the heart of rural, suburban, and urban Iowa communities.

Name: Michelle Kruse

Comment: My name is Michelle Kruse, and I am a teacher librarian and the 2022 President of the Iowa Association of School Librarians (IASL). I am writing in opposition of SF2349, and inserting the sentence in Iowa Code Section 256.11, subsection 9 that states, "Such license shall not require the completion of a master's degree."IASL believes that you are attempting to insert wording into Iowa Code that does not need to exist. Currently a masters degree is not needed to be a K12 teacher librarian in Iowa, so there is not a need to insert wording that it shall not be required. Here is the current wording: 9. Beginning July 1, 2006, each school district shall have a qualified teacher librarian who shall be licensed by the board of educational examiners under chapter 272. The state board shall establish in rule a definition of and standards for an articulated sequential kindergarten through grade twelve media program. A school district that entered into a contract with an individual for employment as a media specialist or librarian prior to June 1, 2006, shall be considered to be in compliance with this subsection until June 30, 2011, if the individual is making annual progress toward meeting the requirements for a teacher librarian endorsement issued by the board of educational examiners under chapter 272The Iowa Board of Educational Examiners currently offers three pathways to teacher librarianship in Iowa. Endorsement 108Elementary school teacher librarian.

Candidates complete 24 semester hours in school library coursework, and then they hold an endorsement that authorizes them to serve as a teacher librarian in kindergarten and grades one through eight. Endorsement 109 Secondary school teacher librarian. Candidates complete 24 semester hours in school library coursework, and then they hold an endorsement that authorizes them to serve as a teacher librarian in grades five through twelve. Endorsement 174 School teacher librarian. K12. This endorsement requires a masters degree. Candidates who complete the masters degree hold an endorsement that authorizes them to serve as a teacher librarian in prekindergarten through grade twelve. The applicant must be the holder of or eligible for the initial, standard, or master teaching license. It is possible for a candidate to hold endorsements 108 and 109 without a masters degree, and to serve as a K12 teacher librarian in Iowa. This is already an exception that the Board of Educational Examiners is honoring. We believe that endorsement 174 and the completion of the masters degree required for it is comparable to that of other masters degrees in education, such as guidance counseling. The masters degree offers candidates a rigorous curriculum, and offers them the best preparation for teacher librarianship. As a state we should advocate for our teacher librarians to be as prepared as possible to enter into their profession. I cant imagine doing the work that I do to teach, lead, and advocate without having earned my masters degree. It is my position, and IASL and Iowa Library Associations position, that we do not want you to insert the language to remove the masters degree requirement from Iowa Code Section 256.11, subsection 9.

Name: Chelsea Sims

Comment: This whole bill is bad. No to vouchers, no matter what you call them. Transparency already exists and this bill would cause incredible amounts of paperwork and database management for schools. It is a waste of time and money. School board policies already exist to deal with selection and reconsideration so this is duplicating existing law. There is no reason for the Teacher Librarian language to be there, as there are already ways to hire a K12 librarian without one through multiple endorsements.

Name: Vicki Aden

Comment: I am writing in opposition to SF2349. Public dollars need to go to public education. Public dollars should serve all students, not just those that private schools choose to admit. Public schools are required to admit and serve all students. This legislation would divert public funds to nonpublic schools, who are not required to adhere to this principle of equity. Public money should be subject to public oversight, and should require accountability and transparency. Private school spending is not transparent, and private school administration is not publicly accountable. Nonpublic schools are not held to the same standards for transparency as public schools. The absence of public accountability for public funds could contribute to waste and fraud of taxpayer dollars. This bill will greatly harm public education in Iowa.

Name: Lisa Petrie

Comment: I am writing in opposition to SF2349. While all public schools will be hurt if public funds are transferred to private schools, our small rural schools will be hurt the most. These communities are already struggling due to laws that favor large Ag corporations, and hurt small independent farmers and businesses. Further undermining the heart of their communities their public schools will be the final nail in the coffin. Kids in both rural and urban schools need and deserve a highquality education. We have the means YOU have the means to provide it. Fund PUBLIC, not private, education. Additionally, I'm asking that you reconsider the language in this bill regarding certification requirements for Teacher Librarians. It is currently NOT a requirement that a K12 librarian in a school district hold a Master's degree. A librarian can be certified for that position by holding both the K8 (108) and 512 (109) school library certifications. Please remove that language from this bill.

Name: Joan Steinmetz

Comment: Public school.money should be used for public schools that service all students!Public schools have been under funded without taking away money for student first scholarships.

Name: Jennifer Allen

Comment: I strongly oppose this bill. It will harm our public schools, our taxpayers, and our children.Public money belongs only to public schools. Public schools are held accountable to the taxpayers through elected boards, financial audits, and reporting requirements. Iowa taxpayers deserve to know how their money is spent, and that transparency is lost when public money is misdirected to non public schools. Public schools are required to serve all children, regardless of race, religion, gender, socioeconomic status or disability. Non public schools are able to pick and choose which children they wish to serve, making any argument for competition moot.Iowa's school leaders almost universally oppose this legislation, because they know that it will harm our children.Please, do not vote to harm Iowa's public schools, taxpayers, and children.

Name: Claire Matthews

Comment: I am writing in opposition to SF2349. Vouchers do nothing to improve Iowa schools, but take money from struggling districts and give it to schools that have resources and can discriminate against any child or family at any time for any reason. Vouchers do not include transparency or accountability, which is what this bill claims to favor.Language involving a master's degree requirement for school librarians is completely unnecessary, as there are already multiple paths to teacher librarianship in Iowa schools, as already outlined by the state BOEE. This bill is at best unnecessary, at worst, detrimental to the quality of public education in Iowa.

Name: Sheila Westegard

Comment: I could not be more frustrated with our state legislature and their disrespect for public schools and teachers. Fund private schools? Ban books? Put cameras in classrooms so parents can "monitor" teachers? I remember when Iowa schools were a model for the country (and we had a Republican governor who cared about all Iowa citizens). Shame on you.

Name: Diane Duncan-Goldsmith

Comment: It is ludicrous to enact a law creating student first scholarships which helps fund private education with public tax dollars. This law merely works to further defund public school education. Iowas public school systems must be adequately funded. Diverting tax dollars to private schools will not help improve public education or preserve the vitality of public schools as the governor believes. The National Education Association ranks Iowa 39th in public school funding per student. The US Census Bureau puts Iowa \$1,280 below the national average in funding per student. U.S. News and World Report once ranked Iowa as #1 of best states for education, Iowa is now #18. We can and must do better than this. Creating private school scholarships with public tax dollars is not the answer. My husband spent part of his childhood growing up in What Cheer, IA. Please explain how this bill would have given him easy access to a private school education. Private schools are not located in rural Iowa.Apparently legislators now believe curriculum needs to be micromanaged. Do those who wrote this piece of legislation believe teachers walk into their classrooms each day and just wing it? Division 1 of this bill will require school districts to post on their websites a course syllabus or written summary of what material will be taught in each class in the school district, sortable by subject area, grade level, and teacher. Not only this but the titles of all textbooks, books, articles, videos, and other educational materials used for student instruction in each class in the school district, or links to the internet sites containing such textbooks, books, articles, or other educational materials. My mother and sister were teachers

and spent hours on lesson plans, developing classroom activities, not to mention grading; if parents needed more information as to what was being taught they just needed to ask. How will this exercise in posting information no one may read or search be funded? In Division III of this bill, apparently micromanaging school social studies curriculum is now necessary. However, what seemed to be omitted in the bills required topics was any mention of the numerous laws enacted by GOP legislatures and signed into law by governors, including Iowas, which made it more difficult to vote. I also wonder how many of those who wrote this bill could pass a citizenship test. Finally, let us not forget banning books in school libraries. Apparently legislators to not trust educated, trained, certified, licensed librarians and teachers to have the expertise and knowledge needed to decide what books will provide students with the best, most current, diverse education possible. What is next, banning books in public libraries?

Name: Linda Fritts

Comment: I've read the comments preceding mine, and they're far more eloquent than I can be. Public funds for public schools. Period.

Name: JILL PURCELL

Comment: I am writing in opposition to SF2349. Public schools are the backbone of our communities and economy. Strong public schools are necessary to attract businesses to Iowa. Diverting public funds to private and charter schools with limited to no oversight will not improve education. Furthermore, as someone with a child with an IEP, it is highly unlikely my child would be accepted at a private school. Tax money would then be going to a school that will not even accept my child. Penalizing urban schools will not improve them. People making 100,000 do not need assistance paying private school tuition and those making closer to the median Iowa income will still not be able to afford private schools. This bill is bad for Iowans and nothing but a handout to those who dont need it.

Name: Allison Bielenberg

Comment: 1) USE PUBLIC DOLLARS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS. PERIOD. The publics investment should be used to support public community schools which are open to all students regardless of race, religion, gender, socioeconomic status and disability, not for a new entitlement program for parents who choose private education. 2) PUBLIC FUNDS REQUIRE PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY Public schools are overseen by a publicly elected citizen governing board, are required to report academic results to the general public, have an annual public financial audit, and be transparent with all expenditures and decisionmaking. Private and religious schools are not held to that same public standard. Taxpayers have a right to know how their funds are being used, but are left in the dark about the use and impact of voucher funds. 3) A SLIPPERY SLOPE TOWARD A COSTLY AND EXPANSIVE VOUCHER PROGRAM This voucher program may start small, but as we've seen in other states, once a program is established, it is easy to expand. This will pull more resources away from public schools.

Name: Debbie Koopman

Comment: No way this should pass. It is unamerican. Fight for the best public education in Iowa OR....strip it to bare threads and pass this ridiculous bill! Think of the generations before us that fought for public education! DO NOT DO THIS! You know better.

Name: Susan Enzle

Comment: The notion that public dollars will go to private schools violates the founding principle of this country and our state that public education is for all. This principle dates back over 230 years to the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 when Congress set up a system to pay for public schools in new states, which was then extended by the

Morrill Act of 1862 to landgrant state universities like Iowa State. Taking a leap away from this precedent undermines Iowas proud commitment to public education. The Student First Scholarship program is political slightofhand. It gives the appearance of offering students a choice, but in truth it is only a choice for the privileged few. It diverts public tax dollars into private hands yet offers nothing to students remaining in underperforming schools. If some students want out of underperforming schools, then we need to find real solutions that will fix real problems in those public schools, and not bogus solutions such as vouchers, that will only undermine public schools.I have numerous other concerns with this proposal to privatize education that include: lack of oversight of the private schools to ensure that the publics money is being spent responsibly; lack of assurances that the schools do not cherry pick students; lack of requirements that the same mandates for quality and equality be applied to private schools that apply to public schools; and, lack of openness for the public to be able to review and have input into school governance as is provided by school boards.

Name: Pamela Mohr

Comment: Please oppose SF2349. Use public dollars for public schools which are open to all students regardless of race, religion, gender, socioeconomic status and disability. Public dollars should not be used for a new entitlement program for parents who choose private education. Public schools are overseen by a publicly elected citizen governing board, are required to report academic results to the general public, have an annual public financial audit, and be transparent with all expenditures and decisionmaking. Private and religious schools are not held to that same public standard. Taxpayers have a right to know how their funds are being used, but are left in the dark about the use and impact of voucher funds.

Name: Diane Brown

Comment: I am writing in opposition to this bill. Vouchers do not work. There is no need to insert language that says a masters degree will not be required for teacher librarians because that is already the case. Transparency already exists. If the goal is to entice individuals into teaching and learning in Iowa or to improve the quality of education here, the multiple disparate measures outlined in this bill are not the way. Dont pass this.

Name: Terese Gramt

Comment: The Senate bill SF2349 will take money away from public schools and give scholarships to individual students to attend private or religious schools. We should not allow our public tax dollars to be taken away from our public school system. This could have devastating results for our schools and communities in rural areas. It is simply wrong for the money that Iowans pay every year to support their public schools go to private religious and public schools. Parents have a right to choose where to send their children and if they don't choose a public school, then they are responsible for those costs.

Name: Cindy Garlock

Comment: The Cedar Rapids Community School District Board of Directors would like to urge you to defeat Senate File 2349. The Student First Scholarships proposed by this bill would be detrimental to the public schools of Iowa. This legislation would weaken support for our public school students. Rather than shifting scarce resources away from public schools, the State of Iowa should be promoting and fully investing taxpayer resources in public schools. In light of the recent passage of a meager 2.5% SSA, any further resources shifted away from public schools will seriously compromise the ability of our public schools to provide a high quality education to ALL Iowa students.Our public schools are held to high standards mandated by the state and federal government. Oversight of public schools is provided by locally elected school boards. These boards are accountable to the public, unlike the

governing bodies of private schools. Private schools have no publicly elected oversight. Establishing a Student First Scholarship program, even if limited to ten thousand students, will lead to decreased funding for our public schools. It is our position that public tax dollars should be used to fund public schools. And only public schools. Unlike private schools, public schools provide a free education to all students, regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status. Unlike private schools, public schools must follow all guidelines established by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Individual with Disabilities Education Act. Unlike private schools, public schools must provide accountability and transparency to their community and to the State of Iowa. Private schools are not universally accessible by Iowa families. This legislation would benefit a few, at the expense of the many. By diverting 30% (\$2,270) of the per pupil cost to rural districts, the legislature would be creating yet another inequity among Iowa school districts. We applaud you for recognizing and mitigating the existing inequities in transportation costs and per pupil spending. Creating this inequity seems counterproductive to your goals. Rather than diverting tax dollars to private entities, it is imperative to provide our public school with the resources they need. Public school funding has not kept up with costs in recent years. Our public schools need additional funding, not fewer resources. We believe that Iowa public schools provide a strong educational experience for all students. And that taxpayer funds should only be used for public education. Senate File 2349 does not serve the majority of the families of Iowa and we encourage you to vote no on this legislation. David Tominsky, President Cindy Garlock, Vice President Jennifer Borcharding, Director Nancy Humbles, Director Dexter Merschbrock, Director Jennifer Neumann, Director Marcy Roundtree, Director

Name: Nancy Rabe

Comment: I absolutely oppose using taxpayer funds for private school in the form of scholarships or in any other form. Iowa already underfunds public schools.

Name: Phyllis Peter

Comment: I strongly oppose SF2349. I have problems with several parts of the bill, but am addressing one part in my comments here. Asking teachers to post curriculum months in advance is so impractical. I want to point out that you can legally homeschool in Iowa by filling out a one page form. Why do homeschoolers have complete freedom to teach anything but we are asking public schools to demonstrate lesson plans months in advance? Parents already have the option to opt out of certain books, etc. These asks of our professional teachers are demoralizing and driving people away from the profession. Please remove this unnecessary piece of this bill.

Name: Anne Braverman

Comment: I strongly oppose the bill SF2349.

Name: Jill Swanson

Comment: I am writing in opposition to this bill. Many are characterizing this as parent choice. Parents already have a choice in Iowa. They can send their kids to public schools, private schools or homeschool. Public dollars belong to public schools. Period. Private schools can discriminate and don't have to provide services for kids with learning disabilities. This bill will do nothing but further decimate Iowa public schools, which is a major draw for families choosing Iowa as a place to live. If we continue to decimate our public school system, the consequences for the state as a whole will be devastating.

Name: sam blatt

Comment: I am in opposition of SF2349. No vouchers! We need public dollars to go to public goods and services, not private ones. With that, we need fully funded public services! We also don't need to lower education standards and need to keep the requirements as is.

Name: Christie Wicks

Comment: Vouchers will harm public schools. Public schools are the lifeblood of every community. Giving public money to private schools is incredibly shortsighted and harmful. VOTE NO on Vouchers/ESAs.

Name: Wendi Peterson

Comment: I am writing in opposition to SF2349. Public money should only be for public schools. Any schools that receive public money should be required to follow all special education laws and should not be able to discriminate against any protected classes. This "scholarship" program is a way to divert funds away from already EXTREMELY underfunded public schools. This will hurt all districts, but rural districts will see a bigger impact as they do not have access to private schools and they will have less money to fund their schools.

Name: Mike Keller-Wilson

Comment: Public money for public schools.

Name: Pamela Molde

Comment: Thank you so much for offering real school choice to parents. This is our money & it should be a parent's choice on where to send their child to school, even if they are low income. This is good for all schools as competition drives improvement. Please add CPI homeschoolers as an amendment to this bill.