

Good afternoon Education Reform Committee members!

I am a parent of 3 small children in Dubuque, Iowa. My husband and I own our home and pay property taxes. My children attend Prescott Elementary School, a Title I Elementary School, in the Dubuque Community School District (DCSD). We purposely chose the neighborhood we live in and are very active in our children's school and their education.

My husband and I both graduated high school at a public high school. We plan to have our children go through PreK-12th Grade in DCSD schools.

I believe the proposed school voucher is not what Iowa should do. Iowa has difficulty completely funding the public schools it already has and I am very concerned that if the voucher program is signed into law that our public schools will have to make even more cuts to their budgets.

As I mentioned already, my children attend Prescott Elementary School. I have a Preschooler, a 2nd Grader, and a 3rd Grader there. My children's original home school was Fulton Elementary School. Unfortunately, due to the state not funding public schools completely, DCSD had to permanently close Fulton's doors at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. I was very active at Fulton before it closed and I helped the closing to go as smoothly as possible. The sad reality is public schools are not fully funded and it does not make financial sense to fund private school vouchers. The permanent closure of Fulton is only one example of how the State of Iowa is not fully funding public schools.

Iowa already has a wide range of school choice options for parents and students, including: in district transfer, district-to-district public school open enrollment, charter schools, strong non-public schools, home school options, publicly funded School Tuition Organization tax credits. Parents should have the choice to enroll their child in a private or religious school, but not with public taxpayer funds.

I believe we should use public dollars for public schools, period. The public's investment should be used to support public community schools which are open to all students regardless of race, religion, gender, socio-economic status and disability. These same expectations do not exist for private educational institutions in our state.

This bill creates incentives for outside entities and private organizations to establish a private school in our district, without consent of our locally elected School Board. Private schools are then given freedom from regulations that our school district must follow. Why not instead give our public schools flexibility and funding to be innovative?

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 are transparent with all expenditures and decision-making. 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.

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.

Please do not allow the proposed School Voucher Program to come to fruition. It is not a good fit for Iowa students and Iowa families.

Thank you for your time and your consideration!

Your constituent and fellow Iowan,  
Cathy Brimeyer  
2226 Jackson Street  
Dubuque, Iowa 52001  
563-543-5488  
cathybrimeyer@gmail.com