



March 8, 2018

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 170,000 bipartisan members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to cosponsor the Public Funds for Public Schools Act (H.R. 4269) and oppose any private school voucher schemes that deplete resources from the public school system.

AAUW has long opposed diverting public funds to private or religious elementary and secondary schools because these schools are not always required to abide by all federal civil rights laws, including Title IX and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Additionally, schools that accept vouchers do not always face the same public accountability standards that are required of all public schools. For example, private voucher schools do not have to comply with the same teacher standards, curriculum, or testing requirements of public schools.

The bottom line is that voucher programs have proven to be ineffective, are not accountable to the taxpayers, and deprive students of rights provided in federally funded public schools. As a result, research has identified serious efficacy and accountability problems with in these schools. The objective evidence does not support spending millions of dollars of precious taxpayer funding on private school voucher programs. Congress would better serve *all* children by using funds to make our public schools stronger and safer, rather than creating a new voucher program.

Voucher schemes can take the form of tuition tax credits, in which individuals or corporations receive a tax credit in exchange for giving money to an intermediary organization, often called a “scholarship organization,” providing the “scholarship organization” the necessary funds to support a student’s tuition at a private school. Rather than collecting taxes and then giving a portion to a private school in the form of a voucher, the government forgoes those tax dollars so long as they go to a private school. But the end is the same—money funneled to private schools and away from public schools.

The Public Funds for Public Schools Act would stop any individuals from receiving a federal charitable tax deduction for contributions to voucher nonprofits that were already reimbursed with a state tuition tax credit. This bill would ensure that the federal government is no longer able to sanction a tax shelter for Americans who opt to enrich themselves by donating money to state voucher programs. Further, it would redirect funding into the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act, the foundational federal funding stream that supports the education of students with disabilities in our public schools.

Public schools are a unifying factor among the diverse range of communities in our society and accept all students. They are the only schools that must meet the needs of all students and do not turn children or families away. They serve all children, including those with physical, behavioral and intellectual disabilities, those who are gifted, and those who have learning differences. The Public Funds for Public Schools Act will stop individuals from profiting from their donations to voucher programs that deplete resources from the public school system. Congress must ensure that public funds continue to support public education and that the recipients of these funds adhere to all civil rights laws.

Cosponsorship and votes associated with these issues may be included in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record for the 115th Congress*. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Pam Yuen, senior government relations coordinator, at 202/785-7712.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah J. Vagins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Deborah J. Vagins  
Senior Vice President, Public Policy and Research