



June 11, 2026

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I urge you to cosponsor the **Keep Public Funds in Public Schools Act** and oppose private school voucher schemes that redirect public resources away from public schools that serve the vast majority of students.

AAUW supports policies that provide equitable, high-quality K-12 education. For this reason, AAUW has long opposed the use of public funds for private or religious elementary and secondary schools that are not required to meet the same civil rights and accountability standards as public schools.

Public Schools Serve All Students

Public schools are the foundation of America's education system and a cornerstone of our democracy. They are open to all students and are required to serve every child in their communities. They educate nearly nine in ten students in the United States, including the vast majority of students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, and students from low-income families. When public schools are weakened, the students most likely to be harmed are those who already face the greatest barriers to opportunity.

The Federal Voucher Program Created by P.L. 119-21

The federal voucher program created by P.L. 119-21 is scheduled to take effect in 2027. Under the program, individuals may contribute up to \$1,700 per year to any Scholarship Granting Organization and receive a dollar-for-dollar federal tax credit. Those organizations may then distribute the money for private K-12 tuition and related educational expenses.

This is a voucher program, even though it is structured through the tax code. Instead of sending money directly to private schools, the federal government gives up public tax revenue so taxpayer dollars can be redirected through private organizations to pay for private school expenses. The program does not include an overall cap on the amount of federal tax revenue that can be diverted, and it lacks basic public oversight requirements.

Civil Rights and Student Protections

AAUW is deeply concerned that this program will weaken public education, reduce public accountability, and leave some students and families with fewer protections against unfair treatment. Voucher-funded private schools may not be held to the same civil rights and public accountability rules as public schools. Voucher-funded schools — including schools with religious admissions or conduct requirements — may be able to deny admission, services, or equal treatment based on sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy or parenting status, or family structure, while avoiding the same civil rights accountability required of public schools.



Students with disabilities face particular risk. Public schools are required to provide students with disabilities with a free appropriate public education — meaning the services and supports they need to access learning — along with other protections under federal law. Private voucher schools may not be required to provide the same services, accommodations, support, or the same ability for families to challenge decisions about their child's education.

Vouchers Do Not Guarantee Real Choice

Private schools can choose whom to admit, may not meet every child's needs, and may charge more than a voucher covers. In rural communities, private school options may be limited or nonexistent — but vouchers can still drain resources from local public schools.

State Voucher Programs Show the Risks

State voucher programs show why these concerns matter. Research on voucher programs in Louisiana, Indiana, and Ohio found that students who used vouchers performed worse academically than their peers who remained in public schools. In several states, large shares of voucher recipients were already attending private schools or being homeschooled, meaning public dollars often subsidize private education that families were already using rather than expanding access for students in public schools.

Costs can also grow quickly and far exceed initial projections. Arizona's universal voucher program now costs roughly \$1 billion annually, creating serious concerns about state finances and public school funding. These outcomes show why public money should come with public oversight: weak guardrails invite waste, fraud, and abuse, leaving taxpayers with little information about how money is used or whether students are receiving a quality education.

AAUW Urges Cosponsorship

The **Keep Public Funds in Public Schools Act** would repeal the federal school voucher program created by P.L. 119-21. AAUW supports this bill because public funds should strengthen public schools — the schools that serve all students, protect students' rights, and are accountable to the public.

Cosponsorship and votes associated with this legislation may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record* for the 119th Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-728-3300 or kissellm@aauw.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Meghan Kissell".

Meghan Kissell
Senior Director, Policy & Member Advocacy