



May 27, 2026

Governor Maura Healey,
Massachusetts State House, 24 Beacon St.
Office of the Governor, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Healey,

The **American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts** represents over 25,000 educators and staff working in public schools, universities, libraries, and health offices across the state. Our members work as teachers, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, librarians, custodians, cafeteria workers, faculty, maintenance staff, and more.

AFT Massachusetts districts include many of our state’s Gateway Cities plus a number of vocational schools and educational collaboratives throughout Massachusetts. Students in these districts are already being disproportionately impacted by the reckless agenda of the Trump Administration—from devastating budget cuts to attempts to eliminate critical safeguards to protect the rights of our most vulnerable students.

Massachusetts continues to deal with the fall out of the reconciliation act President Donald Trump signed into law on July 4, 2025.¹ Erroneously dubbed “One Big, Beautiful Bill” by the President and his supporters, this bill has been anything but beautiful for working families, seniors, veterans, and children across the Commonwealth.

A signature component of the Trump Administration’s agenda to dismantle public education was included in this bill—a federal school voucher program that would take effect in 2027. This scheme, a hallmark of The Heritage Foundation’s *Project 2025*, threatens to gravely undermine public education in the Commonwealth and across the United States.²

We urge you to publicly and unequivocally opt-out of what is nothing more than an attempt to publicly-subsidize the education of children attending private schools.

¹ H.R.1 - 119th Congress (2025-2026): An act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of H. Con. Res. 14. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1/text>

² Stanford, Libby. “Project 2025 and GOP Aim for Universal School Choice. What Would That Look Like?” EdWeek, 19 Aug. 2024, <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/project-2025-and-gop-aim-for-universal-school-choice-what-would-that-look-like/2024/08>.

School voucher campaigns have been a critical component of efforts to [undermine public education for decades](#). In the wake of **Brown v. Board of Education**, a number of Southern states began offering “scholarship grants” for families opting to send their children to private schools.³ While proponents tout parental choice, they conveniently overlook that vouchers are a product of the anti-integration movement and continue to have the same results on public education—widening opportunities gaps and increasing racial and economic inequity.

The most recent iteration of this plan provides individuals who donate to scholarship granting organizations (SGOs) a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. These SGOs distribute the money as vouchers to students to pay for private school tuition and fees. SGOs operate in voucher states with very little oversight or accountability.⁴ While local proponents continue to claim that these funds will help families pay for after-school programming, the guidance from the federal government to date makes it very clear that, under [U.S. Code § 530](#), the funds can only be paid out to schools that provide elementary or secondary education (kindergarten through grade 12).

To qualify for a scholarship, students must come from households earning no more than 300% of their county’s median income and be eligible to attend a public school. Hampden County has the lowest threshold at \$213,918, while many other counties are above the \$300,000 mark—including Middlesex County (\$392,541), Essex County (\$305,649), Norfolk County (\$392,217), and Plymouth County (\$342,603).⁵

As we await formal rules for this program, the questions and framework laid out in [Notice 2025-70](#) issued by the Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service raise a number of red flags, specifically around accountability. **Under this framework, states would be prohibited from issuing their own guardrails or holding SGOs to specific accountability or evaluation measures.**⁶

In states that currently have programs like this, outside analysis has shown time and again that [wealthier families are much more likely to benefit](#) from this shift of public money into private schools. Not only is public money subsidizing the education of some of the wealthiest students, [most of it is going to students who have no record of ever attending a public school](#). These families aren’t moving their children from a public school to a private school because they now have the resources or choice to do so. These families are receiving vouchers for the children who have always been enrolled in a private school. In Arkansas, 95% of voucher recipients had no record of public school enrollment. In Florida and Iowa, that number was 87%.⁷

As we have seen in states with existing programs, this harmful initiative would divert much-needed funds away from public schools to private education. Since funding for

³ “The Racist Origins of Private School Vouchers.” Center for American Progress, 12 July 2017, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/racist-origins-private-school-vouchers/>.

⁴ “Federal Tax Credit Scholarship Program Included in P.L. 119-21, the FY2025 Reconciliation Law.” Congress.gov, 26 September 2025, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48724>.

⁵ Median Household Income Data by County, 2024. U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/MA/INC110224>

⁶ Department of the Treasury. Notice 2025-70. November 2025. Internal Revenue Service, <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/n-25-70.pdf>.

⁷ National Coalition for Public Education, editor. The Federal Tax Credit Voucher Program: A Landscape of Risks for Public Schools and Students. December 2025, <https://www.ncpecoalition.org/obbba>.

public education is largely determined by student enrollment, any shift in enrollment would result in less overall funding for public schools. An Economic Policy Institute [analysis](#) found that a 5% decline in enrollment resulted in \$12-\$31-million-dollar total loss for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District in Ohio.⁸ In states like [Arizona](#), this has resulted in the actual closure of public schools.⁹

Communities are already struggling to meet rising costs. Districts are facing unprecedented financial pressure from escalating special education expenses, transportation costs, staffing shortages, and inflation-driven increases in basic operating expenses. As a result, schools are eliminating teaching positions, reducing student support services, increasing class sizes, and scaling back academic and enrichment programs. These cuts disproportionately impact our most vulnerable students and undermine long-term educational outcomes. In many communities, they also erode trust between families and the public education system. At a time when our districts are already facing fiscal crises of unprecedented proportions, this could very well push many districts past their breaking point.

Unlike public schools, private schools can refuse to admit students with disabilities, multilingual learner needs or those with disciplinary records—shutting out children with disabilities and many students of color, who face discipline at more frequent and severe rates as their white peers. Shifting public dollars to private schools that are allowed to select what criteria they base admissions on, including income, religion, sex, test scores, and more, is publicly funded discrimination.

Opening the door to this voucher program threatens our state’s standing as number one in education. Not only have studies shown that [school voucher programs do not lead to better educational outcomes](#), they have actually been shown to have a detrimental impact on student outcomes. In Alabama, Florida, Maryland, and Tennessee, voucher students consistently perform worse than their peers in public schools. In Louisiana, 86% of voucher students do not meet state standards. While in Arkansas, voucher students perform at the same levels of their peers—meaning the public schools are being drained of millions of dollars for voucher students to simply meet the same state averages.¹⁰ According to the [National Coalition for Public Education](#), vouchers have the same detrimental effects on student math performance as a months-long closure after a natural disaster does.

Vouchers do not advance civil rights, they weaken them, while disproportionately [harming students of color](#), those from low-income families, and students with high needs the most.¹¹ With some of the most ardent supporters of vouchers being groups like The Heritage Foundation, Americans for Prosperity, and the American Legislative Exchange

⁸ Economic Policy Institute. How vouchers harm public schools. December 2024, <https://www.epi.org/publication/vouchers-harm-public-schools/>.

⁹ Welner, Kevin. The Federal Tax Credit Program is Not Offering Free Money for States. 2025, <https://www.ncpecoalition.org/obbba>.

¹⁰ Southern Education Foundation. “Here is the Truth: School Vouchers Just Don’t Work.” <https://southerneducation.org/legislative-issues-in-the-south/school-vouchers-an-overview/>.

¹¹ EdTrust, et al. Federal and State School Vouchers: Impacts on Student Civil Rights. December 2025, <https://www.idra.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Federal-and-State-School-Vouchers-Impacts-on-Student-Civil-Rights.pdf>.

Council (ALEC), it's no wonder that these systems have shown to [actively accelerate segregation](#).¹²

Because voucher programs lack quality and robust accountability standards, taxpayer money often ends up funding fraud and abuse. These programs typically have minimal or no curricular or testing requirements, academic standards, or teacher certification mandates to ensure students are receiving a quality education. Many public schools and districts are required to have standards for all of the above and more. A [recent incident in Missouri](#), where voucher data was exposed, recently highlighted the lack of scrutiny that exists and will continue to exist under this federal voucher program.¹³

Finally, it is worth pointing out that private education vouchers are wildly unpopular with voters. Even with this latest spin, public sentiment continues to be negative. In 2018, both [Arizona and Kentucky](#) voters overwhelmingly rejected the use of school vouchers.¹⁴ That's why lobbyists for private schools and religious school advocates here in Massachusetts and beyond are shifting their messaging. This is no longer a voucher plan; it's a *scholarship plan*.

Contrary to the messaging campaign spread by proponents, [this is not a way to bring federal tax dollars back to Massachusetts residents](#). For every dollar that gets diverted to this program, that is a dollar lost in revenue—with expected costs to reach upwards of \$51 billion a year.¹⁵

It is disheartening to see the misinformation being spread by proponents here in the Commonwealth. Just like previous efforts to allow for a reckless expansion of charter schools, these lobbyists and “activists” are using the same arguments of needing to support parental choice and providing options to all students. Under this plan, the only people given the power to make choices would be the SGOs operating with nearly non-existent guardrails and the private school admissions offices.

Allowing this program to operate in the Commonwealth means our state would be playing an active role in the Heritage Foundation's efforts to fully implement Project 2025, which argues for eliminating two critical funding sources through the US Department of Education (US ED) and funding voucher programs in their place.

Historically, the role of the federal government in public education has been to level the playing field by creating equity of opportunity for all students. To that effort, Title I Grants to local school districts and IDEA Special Education State Grants have helped ensure millions of low-income and special needs students receive the public education they deserve. In the last fiscal year, the federal government spent \$33.4 billion on these two

¹² The Century Foundation. Why Private School Vouchers Could Exacerbate School Segregation. <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/private-school-vouchers-exacerbate-school-segregation/#:~:text=Because%20private%20schools%20can%20place,percent%20of%20public%20school%20parents>.

¹³ “Missouri private school voucher data exposure sparks fight over MOScholars accountability • Missouri Independent.” Missouri Independent, 27 April 2026, <https://missouriindependent.com/2026/04/27/missouri-private-school-voucher-data-exposure-sparks-fight-over-moscholars-accountability/>.

¹⁴ ProPublica. Despite Trump's Win, School Vouchers Were Again Rejected by Majorities of Voters. <https://www.propublica.org/article/school-vouchers-2024-election-trump>.

¹⁵ Welner, Kevin. The Federal Tax Credit Program is Not Offering Free Money for States. 2025, <https://www.ncpecoalition.org/obbba>.

programs combined. Siphoning off [funding from our neediest students in order to cover vouchers](#) to private and religious schools goes against the very objectives of the US ED and is the antithesis of the values we purport to uphold here in the Commonwealth.¹⁶ It would be nothing short of state-sanctioned segregation.

Article 46, Section 2 of the Massachusetts Constitution is very clear: “No grant, appropriation or use of public money or property or loan of credit shall be made or authorized by the Commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof for the purpose of founding, maintaining or aiding any infirmary, hospital, institution, primary or secondary school, or charitable or religious undertaking which is not publicly owned and under the exclusive control, order and supervision of public officers or public agents authorized by the Commonwealth or federal authority or both.”

Public education is an important tenet of our democracy. As we face so much uncertainty at the federal level, we must use all resources at our disposal to ensure every student in the Commonwealth has the ability to access the quality public education they’re afforded under the Massachusetts Constitution.

We look forward to hearing from you directly about your decision to opt-out of the dangerous proposal.

Sincerely,

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Brant Duncan, Secretary-Treasurer
American Federation of Teachers
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Assabet Valley Federation of Teachers
Local 3199

David Adams, President
Billerica Federation of Teachers
Local 1677

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¹⁶ “Project 2025’s Elimination of Title I Funding Would Hurt Students and Decimate Teaching Positions in Local Schools.” Center for American Progress, 25 July 2024, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/project-2025s-elimination-of-title-i-funding-would-hurt-students-and-decimate-teaching-positions-in-local-schools/>.

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