

## DKG Under the Gold Dome

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ **ALERT FOR ACTION!** ◀ ◀ ◀ ◀ ◀ ◀

**TO:** All GSO Sisters  
**FROM:** Laura Croom,  
Chair, GSO Educational Law & Policy Committee  
**RE:** **Legislative Action Requires YOUR Input**  
**DATE:** February 18, 2022



I know you are very busy, but hopefully you will be on Winter Break next week. We have to be the voice for children and public education. We will never be able to ensure our stories are considered in Atlanta. Instead, we will sadly validate the story that many legislators tell us, "We never hear from public educators. They must be fine with what we're doing."

I need you to take 15 minutes of your time. That's it.

I am asking every member to take time to write a brief email and/or make a phone call (phone calls are better) to your local House Representative and share your own feelings (whatever they are) about the proposed VOUCHER bill: [HB 60](#).

The author of this bill is working heavily to put this to a vote on the House Floor before Crossover Day on March 15. Find your local [HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE HERE](#) AND PLEASE CALL OR EMAIL HIM/HER IMMEDIATELY.

### Remember the 6 Rules for Engagement:

1. **Please do NOT forward somebody else's email to your state representative ... INCLUDING THIS ONE!** Speak from your own heart and don't allow legislators to say you are just sending form letters to them without thinking for yourselves.
2. **Be nice.** Thank them for their service to Georgia. Show them why educators are a class act, and don't let them say we cannot express our concerns and hopes professionally and articulately. We have a right to ask fair and rigorous questions like the ones below, but we shouldn't be rude about it.
3. **Tell them you have [read the bill](#) for YOURSELF.** Then tell them your own feelings about it.
4. **Tell them who you are, whom you serve each day in our schools, what you do for a living specifically ...** and then remind them that you are ALSO parents, taxpayers, and VOTERS in the 2022 election.
5. **Tell your own feelings about the state of Georgia sending taxpayer money to private schools** who don't have to show citizens how they spent it or how well they served children.
6. **Be nice.** Close with professionalism, thank them for their service, and share your expectation that they listen to ALL their stakeholders before making a decision on a vote.

## THE VOUCHER BILL

### [HB 60:](#)

This is an educational "savings account" voucher program, and public taxpayer funds awarded in the program would be subtracted from the school system's allotment sheet ... and sent to private schools and/or private tutors, or to be used for the family's college tuition. It could be used to purchase computers and equipment for their private use with NO INTERNET FILTER PROTECTION requirements to protect our children.

Please don't just take my word for it, [read the bill](#) for yourself. PLEASE ASK YOUR HOUSE REP if he/she has read it personally as well, not just listened to talking points from the author of the bill.

### Who Qualifies for the Voucher?

- Students in the lowest quartile of even high performing schools as published on the CCRPI! **Yes, you read that right: Students from high performing schools can qualify.** The language is confusing. On first read, it looks like only students from the bottom quartile in the state can apply. But on further reading, it is the bottom quartile OF SCHOOLS WITH SIMILAR SCORES as the student's school, which could be a high-performing school. We will leave it to you to decide why it would be written that way ... **or**
- Students from households that make approximately \$100,000 a year or less (below four times the poverty level) ... **or**
- A student with ANY form of IEP, regardless of the reason or disability ... **or**
- A student who is EITHER a 504 student for listed conditions ... or ... just has a letter from a doctor saying the student has ADHD. If the student enrolls in the private school, he/she LOSES ALL FEDERAL PROTECTION RIGHTS under IDEA/504 ... **or**
- Students in systems who did not have 100% face-to-face instruction for at least a semester in the previous year ... **or**
- Foster children and children of active-duty military personnel.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The parents taking vouchers from this bill can use up to 50% of the public voucher money to pay **for their children's college tuition** after they graduate.

Teachers at private schools accepting public money **don't have to be certified.**

If a significant percentage of parents using these vouchers for college tuition are in upper economic status levels, what is this law accomplishing? Who is it helping?

The Georgia Legislature passed a dramatic expansion to private school vouchers **just last year** (Special Needs Vouchers). This program has NEVER been evaluated in its existence. Why would legislators want to pass another one if they don't know how current ones are performing?

### WHAT ACCOUNTABILITY?

The author of this bill, Republican House Representative Wes Cantrell, says the bill has higher accountability for private schools than public schools because the parents get to decide.

But he has declined to add accountability measures to protect both the children and the public citizens who would fund his bill, measures that would require the individual PRIVATE schools to post ANNUALLY their individual school's fiscal audits and budgets to the public and voters for scrutiny ... just like public schools are required to do.

Private schools are also NOT bound by anti-nepotism laws, and private school board members are NOT elected by or accountable to the people who would be funding these vouchers.

It's a fair question to ask your local House Representative who believes in transparency and accountability:

## **Why can't I review the individual annual audits of private school boards using my tax money?**

The law would require that the Department of Audits only audit the overall state voucher program, but the individual private schools and their boards (boards not accountable to the public voters) don't have to show voters how well they used the funds ... or even how they used the funds.

If fraud, waste, abuse, negligence, or nepotism occurs at an individual private school, the law will not require that you be given the right to review a private school's individual financial reports.

The fact is, there are wonderful private schools in Georgia, but there are also very poorly run private schools.

Shouldn't you be able to review the same amount of data on those schools as you can with public schools?

**Why would any legislator NOT want to hold those schools equally accountable for the tax dollars they accept?**

## **A FAIR QUESTION:**

With all that our children and educators have been through and achieved since 2020, what other uses could the Georgia Legislature get out of millions in taxpayer funds they propose to send to private schools?

- Increasing counselors and mental health support for children in public schools?
- Increasing school nurses?
- Increasing social working services?
- Improving school safety for children and educators?
- Bolstering remedial and acceleration funds to last after federal funds have disappeared ... so that we have lasting change and support for children in the next decade?
- Improving funding for transportation and technology for the 21st century world?

**Contact YOUR HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE ...**

**... If you don't speak up, they will let others speak for you.**

Find your local [HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE HERE](#) and call him/her today!