



QUICK FACTS

School Vouchers

January 2022

AAUW advocates opposition to the use of public funds for nonpublic elementary and secondary education and to charter schools that do not adhere to the same civil rights and accountability standards as required of other public schools.

High-quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society and the key to economic prosperity, college and career readiness, and gender equality. Open and nondiscriminatory in their acceptance of all students, American public schools are a unifying factor among the diverse range of students with or without disabilities, LGBTQ students, and students from different racial, ethnic, and religious groups in our society. Vouchers undermine education for all by diverting desperately needed resources away from the public school system to fund the education of a few students at private or religious schools that are not proven to improve academic achievement or adhere to students' civil rights.

School funding typically comes from a combination of three sources: local, state, and federal funds. Federal funds are targeted to closing achievement gaps in student populations, including for students with disabilities, low-income students, and minority students. There are no existing federal funds that can easily be turned into [universal vouchers](#) to pay private tuition for all students currently in public schools.

Though state and local funding for education varies greatly, state governments provide about [47%](#) of public education funding, with another 45% of funding coming from local governments. However, at least 29 states were [providing less funding](#) per student in the 2015 school year compared to 2008, before the recession took hold. Funding at the local level also decreased in 19 states over the same period. Though public education funding has improved in most states since 2015, some states have [continued to cut funding](#) as well as income tax rates, thus generating even less revenue to support their public school systems.

Given the severe education budget crisis at all levels, it is both impractical and unwise to gamble limited funds on vouchers for a few students. The government should use

these funds to make public schools stronger by supporting programs that have been shown to improve student outcomes, such as teacher training, smaller class sizes, expanded support services, and improved facilities. Diverting [critical resources](#) from public schools, which educate 90% of America's students, is not a fiscally sound investment.

Repeated studies of voucher programs show that vouchers do not result in better outcomes for students. Recent studies of both the [Louisiana](#) and [Ohio](#) voucher programs revealed that students who used vouchers actually performed worse on standardized tests than their peers who are not in the voucher programs. Repeated studies of the voucher programs in [Indiana](#), the [District of Columbia](#), and [Milwaukee](#) revealed similar findings: Students who are of

