



VOUCHER RESEARCH & RESOURCES

(Updated March 25, 2021)

Georgia Budget and Policy Institute

- [School Vouchers: Myth vs. Fact](#)
- [What Are School Vouchers?](#)
- [Resources on School Vouchers](#)
- [Hundreds of Millions of Dollars at Stake for a Failed Policy | Bill Analysis: House Bill 60 \(LC 49 0301\)](#)

Southern Education Foundation

- [Georgia's Public Schools Would Lose \\$45 Million in First Year, \\$2.5 Billion Over 10 Years Under Voucher Proposal](#)
- [Analysis of Tax Credit Scholarship Academic Outcomes and State Income Participation Requirements across the United States](#)

Maureen Downey (Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

- [Brace yourselves. More voucher bills on state agenda](#) (2/10/2021)
- [Proposed bill: Give vouchers to students whose schools didn't offer 100% in-person classes](#) (2/16/2021)
- [OPINION: Why are GOP lawmakers vouching for vouchers?](#) (2/24/2021)

GAE'S POSITION (SB47): **OPPOSE**

STRIPS FEDERAL PROTECTIONS FROM STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

SB47 qualifies students with Section 504 plans under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. But by accepting an SB47 voucher to pay for private school, students with disabilities forfeit their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which only kick in at federally funded schools.

EXPANDS ELIGIBILITY TO THE POINT OF THREATENING RURAL COMMUNITIES

SB47 expands voucher eligibility by adding more than 7,000 new ailments and diseases to the list of medical conditions that qualify students for existing "special needs" private school tuition subsidies.

SB47 qualifies students with:

- disorders identified by the National Institutes of Health's Genetic and Rare Diseases (GARD) Information Center affecting an estimated 25 million to 30 million Americans, and
- individuals with any other conditions approved by the Georgia Board of Education upon parent/guardian request.

The total number of students receiving the existing special needs voucher was 5,203 during the 2019-2020 school year. With an average annual voucher amount of \$6,734, the existing voucher cost Georgians \$35,576,322. ([Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program End of School Year Report 2019-2020 School Year](#))

Given the broad expansion of SB47 eligibility and current costs, the cost of subsidizing so many more students to attend private schools would be devastating to Georgia's rural schools systems where private school is oftentimes not an option.

UNDERMINES TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In a public school, a Section 504 plan is reviewed every year to determine if it is still necessary or should be changed. *No such review exists under SB47.* Once eligible – even if the condition or disability is resolved – a student can keep his or her state-paid private school tuition voucher until 21 years of age, from preschool to high school graduation, for up to 17 years.

SUBSIDIZES PRIVATE SCHOOL TUITION AND FEES

As long as parents of students receiving SB47 vouchers complete a "satisfaction survey," the state funds can be used to pay for private school fees, tuition, uniforms, field trips, and "other materials, services, or activities as authorized by the department [of Education]."

FOSTERS FALSE HOPE FOR THE HAVE-NOTS

Voucher bills like SB47 are most often utilized by wealthy families in metro Atlanta as a way to lower their existing private-school costs. Seldom do voucher programs actually benefit lower income, in need families. Georgia's largest private school beneficiary of vouchers - the St. Francis School in Roswell, Georgia - sets tuition as high as \$24,000 a year with another \$7,000 in fees.

GAE'S POSITION (HB60): OPPOSE

(HB60 was not brought to the House floor for a vote before Crossover Day. It is no longer a viable bill.)

PUNISHES PUBLIC SCHOOLS STRAINED UNDER COVID

At a time when public schools need it most, HB60 targets public schools that do not offer 100% in-person learning since the COVID pandemic to subsidize private school vouchers. Meanwhile, both

public *and* private schools have not fully reopened due to COVID concerns.

Only 9 of Georgia's 159 counties are not categorized with high transmission indicators and cases of COVID among students is at an all-time high. HB60 unfairly hurts public schools that want to reopen the school building but cannot due to the high level of COVID transmission in the community.

ENDANGERS GEORGIA'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM FURTHER

Since 2003, Georgia has slashed \$10.2 billion from public education. Meanwhile, Georgia spends far less per student on public education than the national average, and must reckon with \$383 million recently cut from the FY 21 budget due to Covid-19.

SUPPORTS PRIVATE SCHOOLS WITH NO ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE PUBLIC

HB60 covers expenses for private school field trips, uniforms, private tutoring, computers and supplies, etc.

HB60 offers no new transparencies or safeguards despite recommendations made by the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts with respect to one existing voucher. In fact, HB60 undermines transparency and accountability by calling for a Parent Review Committee to resolve voucher related disputes.

VOUCHERS AND RACIAL INEQUITY

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VOUCHERS AND RACIAL INEQUITY

(Courtesy of [Georgia Budget and Policy Institute](#))

Although school choice advocates often allude to the expanded options available through vouchers, ESAs and tax credit programs, the research shows that these programs tend to *increase* racial segregation.

- Historically, private school vouchers have been used to get around mandates to integrate. Voucher programs created more segregation due to “White Flight”, the practice of White students using vouchers to self-segregate in majority-White private schools, thus leaving behind greater numbers of minority students all concentrated in, generally, low-income public schools.[1]
 - o Georgia has long been a battleground for school privatization programs. Starting in the middle of the 20th century, Georgia was one of many states that resisted desegregation by directing state funds toward private schools.
 - o In 1961, at the peak of the fight for school desegregation, Georgia passed a bill to provide grants using state taxpayer dollars for students to attend any non-sectarian private school. This law authorized around \$218,000 to finance the scholarships of more than 1,500 mostly white students in private schools.
 - o From the mid-1960s to 1980, Georgia was one of six southern states that saw a private school enrollment increase of over 130,000 mostly white students.
 - o These historical attitudes still persist today as researchers have found that white households with children attending schools with large concentrations of nonwhite schoolchildren are significantly more likely to support school vouchers.^[2]
- The risk of racial segregation is especially potent where choice laws do not have adequate protections built into the law[3]

Private school vouchers would also send students to private schools that are much less diverse overall when compared to public schools.

- Consider in the 2017-2018 school year, Black students represented 36.7% of public school enrollment while only 11.8% of private school enrollment. Similarly, Latinx students represented 18.6% of public school enrollment and only 4.3% of private school enrollment.[4] A significant number of schools are also segregated in Georgia, with nearly 7% of private schools being 100% white, 21% being over 90% white, and nearly 47% of these schools being 75% white.[5]

Even today, voucher programs in Georgia overrepresent the state’s white students and diminish educational opportunities for students of color; the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship’s enrollment

consists of 53 percent white students, while the statewide average of white public school students is 39 percent.

HB60 would impact metro Atlanta school districts that enroll a high percentage of Black students by financially penalizing them for not reopening schools in-person this year.

[1] Ford, C. & Partelow, L. (2017). The Racist Origins of Private School Vouchers. *Center for American Progress*. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2017/07/12/435629/racist-origins-private-school-vouchers/>

[2] Brunner, E.J., Imazeki, J., and Ross, S.L. (2006). Universal vouchers and White flight. *Economics Working Papers, University of Connecticut*. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1038&context=econ_wpapers.

[3] Mickelson, R.A., Bottia, M., Southworth, S. (2008). *School Choice and Segregation by Race, Class, and Achievement*. Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/school-choice-and-segregation-race-class-and-achievement>

[4] Source: Georgia Department of Education, FTE Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender – Fiscal Year 2018-3 Data Report, March 1, 2018

[5] Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Private School Universe Survey (PSS)", 2017-18.