VOUCHER RESEARCH & RESOURCES

(Updated February 7, 2022)

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 (HB60): OPPOSE

JUST OFF THE HEELS OF SB47 VOUCHERS, WHY DO WE NEED YET ANOTHER VOUCHER?
 Barely one year ago, the Georgia General Assembly narrowly passed SB47 vouchers, a “Special Needs” voucher that expanded taxpayer funded subsidies to students with disabilities and students with a 504 plan (which can cover a temporary broken toe). SB47 immediately took effect in July 2021 and has only been implemented for six months. As of February 2022, Georgians have no data or reports to assess whether SB47 has led to improved student outcomes or higher academic achievement as voucher proponents claim.

PUNISHES PUBLIC SCHOOLS STRAINED UNDER COVID
 At a time when public schools need it most, HB60 targets public schools that did not offer 100% in-person learning since the COVID pandemic to subsidize private school vouchers. (Lines 114-116) In the last 14 days, all Georgia counties report high transmission of COVID, which equals 100 cases per 100,000 people in the last 7 days. See Georgia Department of Public Health Daily Status Report
Indeed, both public and private schools have not fully reopened due to COVID concerns. 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, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES**

HB60 proposes diverting 95% of the statewide average funding per full time equivalent (FTE) student – an amount equal to roughly $6,000 – plus an additional $500 per year for transportation. (Lines 214-218)

But 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.

Given the broad expansion of HB60 eligibility and current costs, the cost of subsidizing so many more students to attend private schools would be devastating to Georgia’s rural school systems where private school is often not an option.

**SUPPORTS PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND RICH FAMILIES WITH NO ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE PUBLIC**

HB60 covers expenses for private school field trips, uniforms, private tutoring, computers and supplies, etc. Yet, it offers no new transparencies or safeguards despite recommendations made by the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts with respect to a previously enacted voucher. Instead, HB60 calls for a Parent Review Committee made up of parents who receive the voucher – rather than the public – to resolve voucher related disputes. (Lines 300-307)

Just as disturbing, 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 HB60. 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. (Lines 160-162)

**STRIPS FEDERAL PROTECTIONS FROM STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

HB60 qualifies students with Section 504 plans under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. But by accepting an HB60 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. For good measure, HB60 includes an affirmative waiver of federal protections. (Lines 163-167)

**FOSTERS FALSE HOPE FOR THE HAVE-NOTS**

Voucher bills like HB60 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.
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.


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