



## Why Rhode Island Should REJECT the TRUMP Tax Credit Voucher Program

Rhode Island's public schools are a cornerstone of our democracy, serving all students with transparency and public accountability. Opting into the federal tax credit voucher program would divert scarce public funds to private schools with fewer standards and protections—a model historically used to evade desegregation and one that continues to undermine the inclusive mission of public education.

### VOUCHERS BY ANOTHER NAME

This voucher scheme includes tax credits for Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) which directs funds to private school scholarships, education savings accounts (ESAs), and tax-subsidized homeschooling. Regardless of the mechanism, the effect is the same: public funds are redirected away from public schools and into private systems beyond public oversight.

### WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

NEARI unequivocally opposes the Trump Administration's nationwide voucher scheme disguised as scholarship granting organizations and its broader efforts to dismantle public education and undermine democratic, locally governed school systems.

- **No proven academic benefit.** There is no credible evidence that vouchers improve student achievement or strengthen public schools through competition. Increased investment in public education does improve outcomes..
- **Little to no accountability.** Entities receiving taxpayer-supported funds face minimal requirements related to curriculum, assessment, financial transparency, or public reporting opening the door to mass fraud, waste, and abuse.
- **Loss of student protections.** Students with disabilities who attend private schools lose key rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including enforceable Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- **Higher costs and constitutional concerns.** Voucher programs rarely cover full tuition, shifting costs to families, while subsidizing private—often religious—schools raises concerns about church–state separation and the cost of maintaining two education systems.

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## WHY THIS MATTERS FOR RHODE ISLAND

Public schools educate roughly 9 out of ten students. Every dollar diverted through voucher-style tax credits is a dollar unavailable for classroom instruction, special education, student supports, and educator staffing. These programs weaken public education while benefiting a limited and select population.

For these reasons, Rhode Island students and families deserve representation in decisions that impact their public schools. Any program that diverts public funds away from public education must include strong safeguards, transparency, and legislative oversight.

## CALL TO ACTION

To protect public education and ensure democratic accountability, legislators and stakeholders should **SUPPORT H.B. 7163 and S.B. 2139**, which require **annual General Assembly approval** and establish safeguards before any participation in the federal tax credit voucher program. These measures ensure that Rhode Island's education policy remains accountable to the public and aligned with the state's commitment to equity and opportunity for all students.

NEARI looks forward to working with lawmakers, education partners, labor allies, and community stakeholders throughout the 2026 legislative session to advance policies that strengthen public education, protect workers and retirees, and ensure every Rhode Island community has access to fully funded, high-quality public services.

For questions, partnership opportunities, or additional information regarding bill support or opposition, please contact NEARI Government Relations Director Alex Lucini at [alucini@neari.org](mailto:alucini@neari.org).

## ABOUT NEA RHODE ISLAND

The National Education Association Rhode Island (NEARI) is a union and professional organization with a proud history of serving Rhode Island since 1845. NEARI is 12,000 members strong, we are classroom teachers; education support professionals; higher education faculty, staff, and graduate assistants; municipal and state workers; and retirees. We are affiliated with the National Education Association (NEA) and RI AFL-CIO. Learn more at [www.neari.org](http://www.neari.org).

