

The National Coalition *for* **Public Education**

July 8, 2015

Re: Oppose the A-PLUS Act and Voucher Amendments to H.R. 5, the Student Success Act of 2015

Dear Representative:

The undersigned organizations write to express our strong opposition to the inclusion of any provision in the Student Success Act that would create or lead to a private school voucher. Specifically, we oppose the incorporation of the A-PLUS Act or any version of an amendment that would allow Title I dollars to flow to private school institutions.

The A-PLUS Act allows a state to use federal resources for *any* educational purpose permitted by state law. This means that a state with a school voucher program could redirect the bulk of its federal resources away from public schools towards private, religious schools as long as the state indicates they intend for the resources to assist “disadvantaged” students. The state would have complete discretion to distribute the dollars to any education entities they deem fit under state law regardless of the quality of these institutions and their ability to serve students who are struggling academically.

Vouchers divert desperately-needed resources away from the public school system to fund the education of a few, select students, with limited, if any, real impact on student academic achievement. Instead of providing equal access to high quality education or setting high standards for accountability, voucher programs have proven ineffective, lack accountability to taxpayers, and deprive students of rights provided to public school students. The “choice” in voucher programs lies with the schools – not with students or parents. Private schools may turn students away for a variety of reasons, while public schools are open to all.

Vouchers do not improve academic opportunities. According to multiple studies of the District of Columbia, Milwaukee, and Cleveland school voucher programs, students offered vouchers do not perform better in reading and math than students in public schools. Moreover, voucher programs offer little accountability to taxpayers. Private school voucher programs usually do not require participating private schools to comply with the same teacher standards, curriculum, reporting, and testing requirements as public schools.

For these reasons and more, we oppose the inclusion of any amendments that would permit a state to direct federal funding to private schools. The Student Success Act should ensure that public dollars remain invested in public schools for the benefit of all students.

Thank you for your consideration our concerns.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers In Action
AASA: The School Superintendents Association
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
AFL-CIO
American Federation of School Administrators
AFSCME
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
American Humanist Association
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
Americans for Religious Liberty
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Anti-Defamation League
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Association of Education Service Agencies
Association of School Business Officials
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Center for Inquiry
CLASP
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of the Great City Schools
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Disciples Justice Action Network
Education Law Center-PA
Equal Partners in Faith
Feminist Majority Foundation
Hindu American Foundation
GLSEN
Institute for Science and Human Values
Interfaith Alliance
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

July 8, 2015

Page 3 of 3

League of United Latin American Citizens
National Alliance of Black School Educators
NAACP
National Association for Bilingual Education
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Black Justice Coalition
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Organization for Women
National PTA
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition
National Rural Education Association
People For the American Way
Secular Coalition for America
School Social Work Association of America
Southern Education Foundation
Texas Faith Network
Texas Freedom Network
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice & Witness Ministries