

July 2, 2025

U.S. Representative Gabe Evans
1229 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Evans,

As local elected officials representing communities across CO-08, we write urging you to oppose any effort to create a national private school voucher program that would [redirect taxpayer dollars](#) from our public schools to private schools serving the wealthy.

A national private school voucher program would not provide “choice” for working Coloradan families. Instead, a national private school voucher program would give the wealthy a multi-billion-dollar handout. It would devastate Colorado’s underfunded public education system and leave working-class students and families in our state worse off.

I. Public Schools Thrive with Adequate Investment

Approximately 90% of American students and 94% of students of color [attend](#) public schools. They teach children and young people the fundamentals of civic engagement and provide special education services, adult role models, and extracurricular activities. Local public schools also contribute to vibrant communities by providing gathering spaces, polling places, hometown sports teams, and locations to hold adult education classes, health clinics, and other needed community services.

For decades, Coloradans have [demanded investments](#) in their chronically underfunded public schools. But instead of providing such investment, a national private school voucher program would create a multi-billion dollar government handout to corporations, private schools, and the wealthy. H.R. 833/S. 292 would cost 55% of the \$18 billion that Congress appropriated for Title I funding for high-poverty schools, but as explained below, would largely benefit the [10% of students](#) not enrolled in public schools.

Sustained investment in public schools as well as [evidence-based programs](#) and services improve the lives of students and their families. Coloradans know this and that is why efforts to privatize or close local public schools through the Trojan horse of “school choice” [failed](#) last November at the ballot box. Creating a national private school voucher program would subvert the clear will of taxpayers and voters across the political spectrum in Colorado who value their local public schools.

II. School Vouchers Are a Discriminatory Handout to the Wealthy And Do Not Improve Educational Opportunities for Students

Because private schools choose their students, private school voucher programs fund schools to which working-class communities and communities of color have limited access. Proponents of voucher programs, created to avoid the desegregation mandates of *Brown v. Board of Education*, have [explicitly stated](#) that the goal of school vouchers is to maintain a discriminatory and unequal system of education. A national private school voucher program would promote that discriminatory goal in several ways.

To begin with, current [proposals](#) to create a national private school voucher program provide no protections or assurances against discrimination, departing from prior, smaller-scale, federally-funded voucher legislation. Private schools routinely [discriminate](#) in admissions and treatment of students and families based on disability, LGBTQ+ status, religion, English fluency, race, and other characteristics and are not held to the same standards as public schools, where students and families are legally protected from discrimination based on these characteristics.

In addition, private school voucher laws limit educational access and opportunity more broadly. Unlike public schools, which by law must educate anyone in their communities, private schools routinely set selective enrollment criteria and admit or expel students based on ability to pay, disciplinary record, academic performance, or for no reason at all. Religious private schools—which account for [77% of private school enrollment nationwide](#) and are explicitly required to be included in current national school voucher [proposals](#)—often require students to follow their religious customs, excluding students from other faiths or students whose identities conflict with religious tenets, such as LGBTQ+ students or single-parent-led families.

For most families, elite private schools are prohibitively expensive. In 2021, the average private K-12 school cost \$12,790 with the average private high school costing \$15,344 and top boarding schools costing more than [\\$60,000](#). Current national private school voucher program proposals provide no assurances that participating working-class families would be able to access private school for free, and would therefore [subsidize](#) families who already have the financial means to pay for private school. For example, in Arkansas, 95% of the state's school voucher recipients did not previously attend public schools and in Arizona, the state's wealthiest families used Education Savings Accounts at *five times* the rate of the state's poorest families. Moreover, research indicates that many voucher-receiving private schools use new voucher programs as an excuse to raise tuition—further blocking working-class families of all [backgrounds](#) from these schools.

In states that adopted widespread private school voucher programs, private schools have opened to exploit working-class families who are unable to access more elite private schools. These schools feature teacherless classrooms and midyear closures that lay bare the predatory landscape that working-class families must navigate when deciding their children's educational future and where to spend [vouchers and household funds](#). When these high-risk schools close midway through the school year,

they not only disrupt the lives of students and their families, they also force public schools to unexpectedly enroll students without the resources to educate them.

III. Private School Voucher Programs Defund Public Schools, Which Serve 95% of Coloradan Students

[Beginning in the civil rights era](#), Congress took historic steps to provide access to quality education to all students—regardless of race or income—by passing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act; creating Title I funds for high-poverty schools, Title III to fund English Language Acquisition for students, the National School Lunch Program, free early learning through Head Start; and by promising to fund a portion of the cost of educating students with disabilities.

But since then, lawmakers in other states have reversed historic progress by diverting funding from public education to private schools, setting off [a wave of public school closures](#) across the country that has harmed rural, working- and middle-class students who rely on public schools. School closures have proven negative [academic](#), [attendance](#), [behavioral](#), and economic consequences for students. Furthermore, when the only school in the neighborhood closes, whole communities lose an important gathering place, access to civil, social, and civic services, and representation on their [local school board](#).

Creating a private school voucher program will cut programs essential to Coloradans across the state and your districts. And such a program would compound the devastation to regular Coloradans from the massive cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, and Pell grants in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Essential public programs would shrink as billions in public funding would go to [private schools](#)—another instance of the megabill’s redirection of public funds from working Coloradans to the wealthy and well-connected.

Rather than committing billions of dollars for tax breaks for the wealthy, we urge you to invest in Coloradans and fund under-resourced public schools instead.

Sincerely,

Steve Douglas, *Mayor of Commerce City*
Peter Padilla, *Mayor Pro Tem of Brighton*
Karem Bigelow, *Mayor Pro Tem of Thornton*
Renee Chacon, *Commerce City Council Member*
Kristi Douglas, *Commerce City Council Member*
Emma Pinter, *Adams County Commissioner*
Renee Lovato, *Adams County School Board President*

Lori Goldstein, *Adams 12 School Board President*
Amira Assad-Lucas, *Adams 12 School Board Vice-President*
Paula Battistelli, *Adams 12 School Board Vice-President*
Janet Estrada, *Commerce City School Board Vice-President*
Mandy Thomas, *27J School Board Vice-President*
Starr Trujillo, *27J School Board Director*
Tracie Alvarado, *27J School Board Member*

