



Contact: Natalie Bayer/Karey Harwood
Tel: 919-382-2823/919-332-2613
Email: info@publicschoolsfirstnc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUBLIC SCHOOLS FIRST NC OPPOSES SCHOOL VOUCHER BILL

False Promise of “Opportunity Scholarship” is a Subsidy for Private Schools

Raleigh, NC—April 16, 2013—Public Schools First NC strongly opposes H.B. 944, a school voucher bill introduced last night. The bill, which aims to spend \$90 million of taxpayer money over the next two years to subsidize private school tuition, takes money away from already underfunded public schools—with little accountability to taxpayers.

Vouchers are a failing proposition all around: they fail to help the students who most need them, they provide little benefit for the students who do use them, and they drain resources from the one public institution best situated to educate all children: the public schools.

Evidence shows that the intended recipients of voucher programs are seldom the students who make use of them. Even lower to middle income families who try to use the \$4200 voucher will still be left with a tuition balance they cannot afford. Vouchers are more likely to be used by who would be able to choose private schools anyway.

“What many people don’t realize is that vouchers are an effort to educate our kids on the cheap,” said Nick Rhodes, Public Schools First NC Board Member. “Currently North Carolina spends only about \$8400 per child to educate students in the public schools, which ranks us 48th nationally in terms of per pupil spending. Now the proponents of this bill are saying our kids can be educated for half that amount. Why don’t our kids deserve a high quality education?”

While designed to address student achievement problems, evidence shows that vouchers fail to produce this desired result. The oldest-running voucher program in the U.S. (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) demonstrates unequivocally that students who leave the public schools do not perform any better in private or religious schools.

“H.B. 944 is a blatant attempt to tear apart our communities by privatizing education. Vouchers offer the illusion of greater parental choice, but private schools are under no obligation to accept all students, and can even have a religious affiliation,” said Yevonne Brannon, Chair, Public Schools First NC. “Using public dollars to fund schools that cannot serve *all* students violates the NC Constitution, and is a misuse of public tax dollars. This is a cynical approach to strengthening education and will result in a public school system that is highly segregated by income and race.”

Public education systems build strong communities. School systems are a tool of economic development; public schools are an anchor for our cities and towns. However, vouchers drain resources from the one institution that must accept and educate all children who walk through their doors: the public schools. The North Carolina Constitution guarantees a sound basic education to all children. A \$90 million giveaway from the public schools will have real and serious consequences for the quality of instruction that public schools will provide. The most disadvantaged students are the most likely to remain in public schools, which will be asked to do ever more with less.

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About Public Schools First NC:

Public Schools First NC (PSFNC) is a group of citizens, parents, teachers, businesses and organizations joining together to advocate for a first-rate public education system for all North Carolinians. To learn more or to join our organization, please visit: publicschoolsfirstnc.org.