



## CALL TO ACTION

March 1, 2019

### Education Savings Accounts (Vouchers), Charter Schools and Diversity Plans/Open Enrollment Bills Are Not for Iowa

**Vouchers**, [SF 372](#), a subcommittee of Sens. Behn and Zaun voted yes and Sen. Celsi declined to sign the report, moving this bill forward to the Senate Education Committee. This bill would provide an education savings account, AKA voucher, to parents of nonpublic and home schooled students, about \$4000 per student. They can bank anything not spent to use for college tuition later. UEN is registered opposed. The bill is in the Senate Education Committee (listed below.) Talking points:

- There is already much school choice in Iowa education; open enrollment within district, virtual program within district, open enrollment out of district that is regulated (see HF 6 below), open enrollment out of district in the remaining 325 districts, open enrollment to one of two public virtual academies, nonpublic schools, competent private instruction (home school with support) or independent private instruction (home school without support.) The additional benefit of one more choice for a few parents has larger consequences for the rest of students and communities in Iowa.
- There is not a level playing field, since nonpublic schools are not required to administer state testing, accept all children, provide transparency of expenditures, or locally elected school board representation.
- It's expensive, over \$250 million. Public schools are facing budget reductions to live within the low per pupil increases set by the legislature in 9 out of the last 10 years. It would be better to invest the \$250 million in public schools, either adequate per pupil funding or to address ELL weighting, a weighting for children from low-income families, or specifically address new technology or other instructional improvements.
- There is not enough oversight on home school students today. Adding a profit motive to keep some children home could be dangerous.
- Public dollars should not be used for nonpublic purposes through this process. Iowa already spends over \$60 million to support nonpublic and home school.
- This is a shift in resources to nonpublic education primarily serving urban residents. Most rural Iowa school districts do not have nonpublic schools, but they are desperate for adequate per pupil increases in public school funding.

**Charter Schools**, [HSB 213](#), would allow three kinds of charter schools; locally developed charters approved by school boards, charter school with school boards in partnership with charter school providers approved by the State Board of Education, or charter schools founded by private entities if approved by the State Board of Education, without local board approval or support. The bill has been assigned a subcommittee of Reps. Dolecheck, Staed, and Moore with a hearing scheduled at the Capitol for 1:30 P.M. in the House Lounge on the second floor. The bill is in the House Education Committee (listed below.) UEN is opposed to this bill. Talking points:

- The purpose statement of this legislation sounds exactly like what public schools would like to be able to do: innovative instruction, freedom from regulation, better methods of measuring student achievement, innovative budget practices, staff ownership and responsibility, etc. With almost 30 years of charter school history in our country, shouldn't public schools be able to learn from those practices that have worked without sacrificing the local control of school boards and risking the closure and disruption of failed charter schools?

- The funding doesn't work: AEA flow through needs to get to the AEAs since they don't have taxing authority. The per pupil supplements (TSS, PD, EICS are higher or lower than the state supplement cost per pupil.) High school programs, especially CTE, college credit programs, and innovative and engaging courses, typically cost more than the average per pupil cost. Loss of elementary economies of scale in a district could force reductions of high school opportunities for the students remaining.
- Rural school district economies of scale would be at further risk if charter schools drain students, resulting in less opportunity and course choices for those remaining in the public school.
- Urban center politics, responding to tight budgets or changes in attendance center boundaries to balance socioeconomic status, or closing an attendance center for efficiency (to live within the budget) would all create motivational entries for some impacted parents and staff into charter school status. This is the opposite of local control provided by locally elected school board members.

**Diversity Plans and Open Enrollment**, [HF 6](#), popped up on the House Education Committee Calendar for Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, at 4:00. This bill would impact five school districts, Des Moines, Davenport, Waterloo, West Liberty and Postville, and prohibit their ability to regulate open enrollment out based on voluntary diversity plans. A companion bill, [SF 199](#), already approved by the Senate Education Committee, is on the Senate Calendar. UEN is registered opposed. Reach out to House Education Committee members (listed below) and ask for their opposition. Talking points:

- There is already much school choice in urban districts; open enrollment within district, virtual program within district, open enrollment out of district that is regulated, open enrollment to one of two public virtual academies, nonpublic schools, competent private instruction (home school with support) or independent private instruction (home school without support.) The additional benefit of one more choice for a few parents has larger consequences for the rest of the community.
- Low income and minority students are already allowed to open enroll out. Higher income families who have the means can choose to move to their district of choice.
- These diversity plans have served districts with large minority populations well. Without this practice, the concentration of poverty and minority would increase among those remaining in the district. Higher concentrations of poverty and minority elevate the cost of education and the challenges of success and opportunities for students. The health of the inner city becomes the economic development driver of the broader community.
- The current practice preserves the democratic alignment of voters and services. If one or two families choose to leave, there's little disruption. But if thousands were to open enroll out to the suburbs, there's a remaining disconnect between parent voters who typically have a dog in the fight in voting for school board members, supporting bond issues, PPEL votes and showing up for PTO meetings and volunteering in the school.
- Suburban districts already struggle with hefty property tax bonds to keep up with residential enrollment growth. This additional enrollment would add to suburban property tax challenges.

Contact us with any questions, feedback or suggestions to better prepare your advocacy work:

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Find out who your legislators are through the interactive map or address search posted on the Legislative Website here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find> Click on any Senator or Representative within the Legislative website to find their office phone and email address. To call and leave a message at the statehouse during session, the House switchboard operator number is 515.281.3221 and the Senate switchboard operator number is 515.281.3371. You can ask if they are available or leave a message for them to call you back.

**Key Committee Contacts (every name is linked to their legislative page within the table to find their email address, home address and phone numbers):**

<b>Senate Education Committee Members:</b>	<b>House Education Committee Members</b>
<p><a href="#">Amy Sinclair</a> (R, District <a href="#">14</a>), Chair  <a href="#">Chris Cournoyer</a> (R, District <a href="#">49</a>), Vice Chair  <a href="#">Herman C. Quirnbach</a> (D, District <a href="#">23</a>), Ranking Member  <a href="#">Jerry Behn</a> (R, District <a href="#">24</a>)  <a href="#">Claire Celsi</a> (D, District <a href="#">21</a>)  <a href="#">Jeff Edler</a> (R, District <a href="#">36</a>)  <a href="#">Craig Johnson</a> (R, District <a href="#">32</a>)  <a href="#">Tim Kraayenbrink</a> (R, District <a href="#">5</a>)  <a href="#">Mark S. Lofgren</a> (R, District <a href="#">46</a>)  <a href="#">Amanda Ragan</a> (D, District <a href="#">27</a>)  <a href="#">Ken Rozenboom</a> (R, District <a href="#">40</a>)  <a href="#">Jackie Smith</a> (D, District <a href="#">7</a>)  <a href="#">Annette Sweeney</a> (R, District <a href="#">25</a>)  <a href="#">Zach Wahls</a> (D, District <a href="#">37</a>)  <a href="#">Brad Zaun</a> (R, District <a href="#">20</a>)</p>	<p><a href="#">Cecil Dolecheck</a> (R, District <a href="#">24</a>), Chair  <a href="#">Tedd Gassman</a> (R, District <a href="#">7</a>), Vice Chair  <a href="#">RasTafari I. Smith</a> (D, District <a href="#">62</a>), Ranking Member  <a href="#">Holly Brink</a> (R, District <a href="#">80</a>)  <a href="#">Molly Erin Donahue</a> (D, District <a href="#">68</a>)  <a href="#">Tracy Ehlert</a> (D, District <a href="#">70</a>)  <a href="#">Joel Fry</a> (R, District <a href="#">27</a>)  <a href="#">Ruth Ann Gaines</a> (D, District <a href="#">32</a>)  <a href="#">Mary Ann Hanusa</a> (R, District <a href="#">16</a>)  <a href="#">Lindsay James</a> (D, District <a href="#">99</a>)  <a href="#">David Kerr</a> (R, District <a href="#">88</a>)  <a href="#">Monica Kurth</a> (D, District <a href="#">89</a>)  <a href="#">Mary Mascher</a> (D, District <a href="#">86</a>)  <a href="#">Heather Matson</a> (D, District <a href="#">38</a>)  <a href="#">Ann Meyer</a> (R, District <a href="#">9</a>)  <a href="#">Norlin G. Mommsen</a> (R, District <a href="#">97</a>)  <a href="#">Tom Moore</a> (R, District <a href="#">21</a>)  <a href="#">Sandy Salmon</a> (R, District <a href="#">63</a>)  <a href="#">Jeff Shipley</a> (R, District <a href="#">82</a>)  <a href="#">Art Staed</a> (D, District <a href="#">66</a>)  <a href="#">Sharon S. Steckman</a> (D, District <a href="#">53</a>)  <a href="#">Skyler Wheeler</a> (R, District <a href="#">4</a>)  <a href="#">Cindy Winckler</a> (D, District <a href="#">90</a>)</p>