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December 29, 2025

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of California State PTA, representing over 550,000 members across nearly 3,200 local PTAs throughout the Golden State, **we write to express our strong support for your continued opposition to school voucher programs and to urge you to formally reject the federal government's invitation to participate in the newly established national school voucher tax credit program.** We are confident that California, under your leadership, will once again stand firm in protecting public education.

California State PTA is partnering with National PTA on this urgent request. As the nation's oldest and largest child advocacy organization, National PTA has worked with school communities and decision-makers to solve the most challenging problems in our nation's history for over 125 years. With a presence in every state and 18,000 local units nationwide and abroad, National PTA represents millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders. State PTAs nationwide are making the same request of their governors: to reject participation in the federal voucher program. As the largest state PTA in the country—and deeply invested in the success of California's 6 million public school students—we are proud to join this coordinated national effort. We write to you today not as adversaries, but as partners who share your commitment to strengthening public education. We recognize and appreciate your longstanding opposition to school voucher programs. As you stated during your first gubernatorial campaign, "Vouchers and for-profit charter schools have no place in this state." California State PTA wholeheartedly agrees, and we commend your consistent advocacy for investing in public schools rather than diverting funds to private education.

At PTA, our mission is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Our association strongly supports educational choices within public schools to meet the needs of all students and believes parents and families should be involved in all aspects of public-school choice plans. However, there is a difference between public school choice programs and the use of taxpayer dollars for private school voucher programs.

California State PTA has a longstanding, formally adopted position opposing any education voucher proposal that would divert public funds to private schools, as well as tuition tax credits and deductions for private school expenses. Our official position statement declares: "California State PTA opposes any education voucher proposal that would divert public funds to private schools. California State PTA also opposes tuition tax credits and deductions for elementary and secondary school tuition and other education-related expenses." PTA has historically opposed and continues to oppose any mechanism

that would allow public funds to flow to private or parochial schools, while strongly supporting meaningful parental choice within the public school system.

We write today to share our association's deep concerns for the new national school voucher tax credit program established under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) in July 2025 and scheduled to launch in 2027. Because of these concerns, which we have outlined below, we urge you to formally reject the federal government's invitation to participate in the program.

First, as you know, the vast majority of children in California attend public schools, and this new federal voucher program will divert desperately needed funding away from these schools.

With approximately 6 million students in our public education system—more than any other state—California has the most to lose from funding diversions. Many of these schools are already working to meet the diverse needs of all students, and any funding loss would force cuts to programs and educational opportunities, resulting in decreased educational quality. Not only would this be devastating for public schools and the families served by them, but it could undermine the record investments your administration has made in public education, including your commitment to \$23,000 per-pupil spending. The reality is that our public schools need more, not less, investment to meet the diverse needs of students right now.

Second, although marketed as "choice" for parents, the national voucher program will not offer any genuine choice to families in California.

Under the program, private schools would be allowed to reject students with disabilities—or any other students that those schools wish to avoid, including based on a student's academic ability, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Families who do not sign appropriate "statements of faith" or who do not have family compositions that align with the school's preferences may also find their child rejected. Additionally, in some communities, like California's 343 rural school districts, there would be no "choice" at all for parents when non-public options are hundreds of miles away. Moreover, the cost of attending private school almost always exceeds the voucher's value, making the "choice" unaffordable and out of reach for many families. In fact, research has shown that the families most likely to use a voucher are families who can already afford to send their kids to private schools: 70% of the students who have been receiving vouchers are those already attending private schools in states that already have voucher programs.

Third, the reality is that even well-intentioned voucher programs have proven to be ineffective in improving students' academic achievement.

Repeated studies of voucher programs across the country have shown that the deployment of vouchers does not improve students' academic achievement. In fact, opting into the program could actually result in worse test scores for California students. For example, studies of several long-standing voucher programs in the District of Columbia, Milwaukee, and Cleveland revealed that the students who received vouchers showed no improvements in reading or math over those not in the program. Studies of other voucher programs—across states like Louisiana, Indiana, and Ohio—similarly revealed that the students who used vouchers were performing worse academically than their public-school peers. While our students right now are facing real academic challenges, opting into a costly and ineffective program is not going to be the best solution for California's families and schools.

Fourth, we are concerned that the new national voucher program lacks the necessary safeguards to ensure the credibility and accountability of the program to taxpayers.

As you may be aware, the federal legislation establishing the program, unfortunately, did not include any meaningful measures to encourage oversight, transparency, or accountability that would ensure the program works effectively as intended and would operate without the mismanagement or abuse of taxpayer dollars. As one example, the legislation did not require schools that accept vouchers to adhere to any standards for school quality, like accreditation, or enforce any teacher qualifications. Additionally, the program does not require schools that accept vouchers to report on their academic performance, a key safeguard to ensure transparency for families in understanding how a school is performing. Because there are very few guardrails on how voucher money could be spent, we remain concerned that opting into the program will encourage waste, fraud, and abuse in the use of taxpayer funds.

Fifth, the program will deprive students and families in California of essential rights and protections.

Private schools receiving vouchers under the program would not be required to abide by federal laws that protect students and families. People across California would be stripped of protections, including First Amendment, due process rights, civil rights, and other student protections and parents' rights under the law. Students with disabilities and their families would be particularly underserved by the program, as schools receiving vouchers would not be required to abide by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Families would be forced to relinquish their child's rights under IDEA, including a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, resulting in a marked decline in educational quality for these students. As mentioned earlier, these schools would also be allowed to deny students with disabilities admission entirely, leaving these families without any genuine choice when seeking a quality education for their children.

Sixth, the national voucher program will be particularly damaging for California's rural schools.

Rural communities often rely on their public schools not only for educating their children but also as centers of resources and programs for the entire community. Public schools are also frequently the largest employers in rural communities. Any decrease in funding for a rural school has a rippling impact, as every dollar counts. In fact, because the margins for operating a public school in rural communities are incredibly small, the departure of even a few students can have a magnified impact and leave a rural school with fewer resources to educate children and serve the community. Moreover, in rural communities, there are often no realistic private school options when non-public options are hundreds of miles away. If California opts into this program, rural communities, children, and families will be especially hard-hit.

Finally, as the nation's largest state, California has an opportunity to lead.

Your administration has championed public education investment, including record per-pupil spending and initiatives like community schools, universal meals, and literacy programs. Additionally, California voters have twice decisively rejected school voucher initiatives—Proposition 174 in 1993 and Proposition 38 in 2000—with both measures failing by wide margins. The people of California have made their position clear, and we urge you to honor that mandate by rejecting this federal program. California can send a powerful message to the nation that we will not allow federal policy to undermine our commitment to all students. Your public rejection of this program would reinforce California's position as a defender of public education and serve as a model for other states facing the same decision.

It is for these reasons that we urge you to publicly and formally reject the federal government's invitation to participate in the newly established national school voucher tax credit program.

California State PTA stands ready to support your administration in communicating this decision to California families and in continuing our shared work to strengthen public education across the state. We recognize that meeting the needs of all students requires ongoing investment and innovation in our public school system—not diverting resources to private institutions that lack accountability and accessibility for all children.

We recognize that changes are needed in the public school system to provide equitable and excellent educational opportunities for every child. However, vouchers, tax credits, deductions, and similar funding sources do not provide the means to improve our schools. We urge you to continue rejecting efforts that would undermine our public schools and the millions of families they serve. It is during this challenging time that our nation's public education system must be strengthened, and public dollars must remain invested in public schools, for the benefit of all students and for the future of our nation.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to California's public schools and the families they serve. We look forward to continuing our partnership in advocating for every child's potential.

Sincerely,



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