

California State PTA

Legislation Team Study Committee Report

Initiative 1991 (25-0014)/Establish Education Savings Account and Repeal Blaine Amendment

REQUIRES STATE PROVIDE ANNUAL PAYMENTS TO STUDENTS ATTENDING RELIGIOUS AND OTHER PRIVATE SCHOOLS. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND STATUTE.

[Text of Initiative](#)

February 2026 Status: Gathering Signatures

SUMMARY.

Requires state to deposit yearly voucher payments (\$17,000 initially, adjusted annually) into Education Savings Accounts for California residents in grades TK-12 attending religious and other private schools anywhere in the United States. Payments will come from General Fund and property tax revenues that currently fund public schools.

The proponent, Kevin McNamee, must collect signatures of 874,641 Californians registered to vote no later than [June 25, 2026](#).

The California State PTA Director of Legislation has appointed Carol Kocivar, Heidi Brewington, Linda Tsang and Luca Grecu-Klaus to a study committee to make recommendations on this issue.

The Attorney General of California Title and Summary

The Attorney General of California has prepared the following [title and summary](#) of the chief purpose and points of the proposed measure:

REQUIRES STATE PROVIDE ANNUAL PAYMENTS TO STUDENTS ATTENDING RELIGIOUS AND OTHER PRIVATE SCHOOLS. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND STATUTE.

1. Requires state to deposit yearly voucher payments (\$17,000 initially, adjusted annually) into Education Savings Accounts for California residents in grades TK-12 attending

religious and other private schools anywhere in the United States. Payments will come from General Fund and property tax revenues that currently fund public schools.

2. Eliminates constitutional prohibition on state funding of religious and other private schools.
3. Prohibits state regulation of private school curriculum.
4. Prohibits building, safety, or health standards for home schools that are stricter than standards applied to homes or similar businesses.

Note that the Attorney General Title and Summary describes what the initiative actually does. The attorney general discarded the summary suggested by the proponents, “**Children’s Education Opportunity Act**”, which is designed for political appeal.

BACKGROUND

Initiative # 25-0014 is not new in its intent to use public money to pay for private and religious schools. It is similar to past voucher style proposals that were defeated by the voters in California:

- [California Proposition 174](#) (1993) Education. Vouchers. Initiative Constitutional Amendment.
- [California Proposition 38](#) (2012) State Income Tax Increase for Education Funding Initiative.

Initiative # 25-0014 represents not only a major shift in how California funds education, but also a significant change in the long established relationship between government and religion. Since the adoption of the Bill of Rights, the United States has upheld the principle of a “wall of separation between church and state,” a concept articulated by Thomas Jefferson. Allowing public education dollars to flow to religious schools would mark a substantial departure from this foundational principle.

In 1875, Congressman James G. Blaine’s proposed amendment was adopted in [California's constitution in Article XVI, Section 5](#):

“Neither the Legislature, nor any county, city and county, township, school district, or other municipal corporation, shall ever make an appropriation, or pay from any public fund whatever, or grant anything to or in aid of any religious sect, church, creed, or

sectarian purpose, or help to support or sustain any school, college, university, hospital, or other institution controlled by any religious creed, church, or sectarian denomination whatever.”

Former U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos supported repealing the Blaine Amendment because, in her view, the separation of church and state in education restricts parents’ freedom to choose what they believe is best for their children. She also argued that it limits families’ ability to freely exercise their religious beliefs.

In California 545,740 students were enrolled in [private school](#) in the 2024 -2025 school year. That is about 8.5% of all students attending school. About 45,000 children in California are [homeschooled](#).

In states where vouchers and or tax credits are used, most of the students who use them [already attend private and religious schools or homeschool](#).

Nationwide effort to expand school choice

This initiative is part of a nationwide effort to expand school choice by using public money for private and religious schools. In one of his first acts as president in 2024, President Trump issued an executive order to [Expand education opportunities for American families](#). This proposed using federal funds for private school choice. In July 2024, Republicans in Congress [passed the first federal tax credit scholarship program](#), permitting taxpayer funding to private and religious schools. This will apply to donations made starting in 2027 and [allows states to decide whether to opt in to the choice provision](#).

This is part of the [Conservative Agenda Project 2025](#). “As the next Administration executes its work, it should be guided by a few core principles, including:

“Advancing education freedom. Empowering families to choose among a diverse set of education options is key to reform and improved outcomes, and it can be achieved without establishing a new federal program. For example, portability of existing federal education spending to fund families directly or allowing federal tax credits to encourage voluntary contributions to K–12 education savings accounts managed by charitable nonprofits, could significantly advance education choice.”

Fiscal Impact

Summary of estimate by Legislative Analyst and Director of Finance of fiscal impact on state and local governments:

- **For the state:** increased costs, likely ranging from several billion dollars to more than \$10 billion per year, primarily driven by payments for students enrolled in private schools (or homeschooling). The state could pay for these costs using revenues it currently spends on public schools or other state programs.
- **For public schools:** reductions in state funding based on the number of students leaving public schools. This reduction could range from a few billion dollars to more than \$16 billion per year and is separate from any reduction the state might make to pay for its own costs. Public schools would likely respond by spending less on staff, supplies, services, and other activities.

CALIFORNIA STATE PTA AUTHORITIES

Authorities to oppose
Resolution

Tuition Tax Credits * Adopted by the Board of Managers October 1982

WHEREAS The California State PTA believes public education is the cornerstone of our American democracy and that the preservation and strengthening of public education is essential to our nation's survival as a free democratic society; and

WHEREAS The Federal Government has abdicated its responsibility to America's future by slashing funds for public education while increasing support for private schools; and

WHEREAS The current administration has proposed massive subsidies for private schools in the form of tuition tax credits; and

WHEREAS This support of private schools violates our democratic principles as set forth by our founding fathers; and

WHEREAS The California State PTA firmly believes that public funds must be used only by those agencies accountable to the public; now therefore be it

RESOLVED That the California State PTA urge its districts, councils, units and members to communicate with their Senators and Representatives regarding their grave concerns about the continual undermining of American public education; and be it further

RESOLVED That the California State PTA make known its opposition to tuition tax credits in the strongest possible terms.

Position Statement

Education: Parental Choice In Public Schools 2021

Adopted January 1989 – Reviewed and deemed relevant May 2021 – Education Commission

California State PTA believes it is important for parents, educators, and community members to acknowledge that no one educational program is best for all students. Schools and parents together must address the different ways students learn and how the public school system can provide the best education for all students. PTA supports public education, and has historically opposed and continues to oppose any tuition tax credit system or voucher that would allow public funds to flow to private/parochial schools.

PTA supports parental choice within the public school system. Parental choice may be defined as giving parents the right to select their children's schools from among a range of possible options. California State PTA believes options can be created within the public school system. PTAs should work with their local school districts in seeking creative ways of providing alternative programs. PTA believes that parental choice should be based on the educational needs of individual students with consideration for the child care needs of families.

Any system of "choice" supported by California State PTA must meet the following criteria:

- Availability of adequate and objective information, in a variety of languages as needed, about all public schools so that parents can make informed decisions about their children's schooling;
- Student admission is based on a fair, equitable and timely process at all schools;
- Equal access to educational opportunities including standards based curriculum and instruction, and high expectations for student achievement;
- Racial/ethnic/socioeconomic diversity of receiving or sending schools/school districts must be considered and maintained; and
- Parents have opportunities for meaningful involvement in their children's schools.

PTA encourages parents to work with their school districts to develop enriching educational opportunities and instructional programs for all students.

Education: Opposing Vouchers, Tuition Tax Credits and Deductions as Systems of Education Aid Adopted November 1991 – Reviewed and deemed relevant May 2021 – Education Commission

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. These funding methods would have a detrimental effect on our public school system.

California State PTA recognizes that changes must be made within the public schools to provide an equitable and excellent educational opportunity for every child. However, vouchers, tax credits, deductions and other diversions of public funds do not provide the means for bringing about improvements in our public schools.

California State PTA supports our system of public education as the major vehicle for preparing children for the future perpetuating the basic values of a democratic system of government. This system must be strengthened, must continue to be accountable to the public and must be supported by adequate public funds.

Authorities to oppose
National PTA
Position Statements

Public School Choice

The National PTA opposes any private school choice proposal and/or voucher system that diverts public funds to private or sectarian schools. Public dollars carry the responsibility for providing public access, governance, and accountability. The National

PTA believes that public support of any school must not be allowed to detract or divert money from the continued operation of a viable system of public education.

Role of Religion in Publicly Funded Educational and Social Services

Finally, National PTA opposes government funding of pervasively sectarian organizations and other organizations and programs that discriminate based on religion in employment or delivery of services (including by making religious instruction, worship, or proselytization part of their services or programs)

PROPOSERS & OPPOSITION

At this time, there is no list of proponents and opponents for this 2026 initiative. However, a similar initiative was recently introduced and defeated in the California legislature, “The Education expenses: School Choice Flex Account Act of 2025.” SB 64 Grove. The list of supporters and opponents is as follows:

SUPPORT

California Catholic Conference
Californians for Equal Rights Foundation
Children’s Educational Opportunity Act
Fresno Christian Schools
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association
Mom Army
Our Duty
Silicon Valley Association of Conservative Republicans
St. Francis Parish School
Stand Up Sacramento County

Oppose

California School Employees Association
California State PTA
California Tax Reform Association
California Teachers Association
CFT - A Union of Educators & Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO

Arguments for and against voucher initiatives

[California Legislative Analysis of SB 64 voucher initiative.](#)
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION March 19, 2025

Arguments in support of vouchers. Proponents argue that these programs empower parents by providing them with choices about where and how to educate their children, and provide students, particularly at-risk or underserved students, with better education options. They also argue that free-market competition among public and private schools improves overall school quality through competition. Interestingly, some note that arguments in favor of school vouchers shifted over the years, with less discussion about the effects of vouchers on student achievement and more discussion about both the value of choice as a right in itself and the beneficial competitive effect of voucher programs on public schools.

Arguments in opposition of vouchers. Opponents argue that voucher programs divert public dollars to private schools, but without the same accountability or special education requirements as public schools. They express concerns that voucher programs divert motivated parents and students from underfunded public schools, leaving behind a larger number of disadvantaged students with fewer resources. Opponents also point out that it may be difficult for lower-income families to benefit from voucher programs, as the amount of money available through a voucher may not always cover the full costs of private school. Some raise concerns about public dollars funding religiously-affiliated private schools as a potential violation of the constitutional separation of church and state, as well as the potential for religious discrimination. Finally, some argue that these programs may potentially benefit only a small number of children without providing the comprehensive reforms needed to strengthen the entire public education system.

PTA ANALYSIS

The California State PTA has consistently opposed efforts to use public money to support private schools. This is based on the long history of PTA supporting public education. This initiative will severely reduce the state's ability to provide students with a quality public education.

Examination of key components of initiative:

1. Public money for private schools .

This initiative requires the state to deposit yearly voucher payments (\$17,000 initially, adjusted annually) into Education Savings Accounts for California residents in grades TK-12 attending religious and other private schools anywhere in the United States. Payments will come from General Fund and property tax revenues that currently fund public schools.

The independent legislative analyst estimates severe financial impact on public education.

- **For the state:** increased costs, likely ranging from several billion dollars to more than \$10 billion per year, primarily driven by payments for students enrolled in private schools (or homeschooling). The state could pay for these costs using revenues it currently spends on public schools or other state programs.
- **For public schools:** reductions in state funding based on the number of students leaving public schools. This reduction could range from a few billion dollars to more than \$16 billion per year and is separate from any reduction the state might make to pay for its own costs. Public schools would likely respond by spending less on staff, supplies, services, and other activities.

2. Religion in Schools.

Eliminates constitutional prohibition on state funding of religious and other private schools.

This provision eliminates the historic separation of church and state in the California Constitution.

National PTA opposes government funding of pervasively sectarian organizations and other organizations and programs that discriminate based on religion in employment or delivery of services (including by making religious instruction, worship, or proselytization part of their services or programs).

The PTA supports instruction **about** religion, in the context of literature, philosophy, and history as well as in the comparative study of religions. However, believes that public schools shall not engage in religious instruction, whether it is instruction in specific religious practices, or imposing religious values in curriculum. The responsibility for a

child's religious upbringing rests exclusively in the home and with the religious instructors designated by the family.

3. Accountability for Public Funds

Prohibits the state from regulating private school curriculum.

This initiative creates a massive transfer of public funds to private and religious schools that are not accountable to California on how the money is spent. There are no requirements, for example, to ensure:

- Availability of adequate and objective information, in a variety of languages as needed, about all public schools so that parents can make informed decisions about their children's schooling
- Student admission is based on a fair, equitable and timely process at all schools;
- Equal access to educational opportunities including standards based curriculum and instruction, and high expectations for student achievement;
- Racial/ethnic/socioeconomic diversity of receiving or sending schools/school districts must be considered and maintained; and
- Parents have opportunities for meaningful involvement in their children's schools

4. Equity: no extra support for students who need more support

This initiative does not address extra funding required to educate high-needs students. This includes English Learners, low income students, homeless, foster youth, and children with special needs.

Without dedicated funding, a large number of students are at risk of losing access to services they need. For example, students placed by their parents in private or religious schools are not covered by federal special education law (IDEA) in the same way public school students are.

Under [IDEA](#), children whose parents place them in private or religious schools **do not have an individual right** to receive the special education and related services they would receive if enrolled in public school. Instead, they are eligible only for equitable services, which are limited **and not** guaranteed for every child. Parents have very limited procedural rights.

Most of the money would pay for wealthier students who already attend private and religious schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **California State PTA oppose Initiative 25-0014 - that REQUIRES STATE PROVIDE ANNUAL PAYMENTS TO STUDENTS ATTENDING RELIGIOUS AND OTHER PRIVATE SCHOOLS. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND STATUTE.**

1. California State PTA shall be actively involved in the campaign to defeat this initiative.