

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 14, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to express our strong disapproval of your recent Executive Order (Order), so-called “Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families.” We urge you to withdraw this harmful federal overreach and instead prioritize investments in public education.

We share the concerns that you expressed in your Order about the alarming findings published in the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The fact that students' performance as measured by NAEP has still not recovered to pre-pandemic levels and was stagnating even before the pandemic should set off alarm bells for every concerned parent, teacher, and business across the country. Unfortunately, your Order does not address the core concerns driving these findings and threatens to worsen outcomes for students, particularly rural and low-income students, across the country. Instead, this Order fulfills a key promise of Project 2025, which gives a step-by-step guide, beginning on page 346, for how to defund public education, reduce educational equity, and erode church-state separation through voucher programs.

Your Order directs the U.S. Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Bureau of Indian Education, and the Department of Defense to prioritize funding for private and charter schools—including faith-based institutions—and to provide guidance to states about how they can use federal taxpayer dollars to funnel money into private schools via “voucher” programs. While we agree with your Order’s stated purpose, that every student must have access to a high-quality, public education, the recommendations outlined in your Order do the opposite of that stated purpose and may lead to the violation of numerous federal statutes and legal precedents.<sup>1</sup> The overwhelming majority of American children attend their local public school.<sup>2</sup> The federal government should be investing in robust funding to support and strengthen our public schools rather than redirecting resources to unaccountable, privately run secular and religious schools.

Ensuring access to high-quality public schools is essential for the success of our communities, our economy, and our democracy. Public schools are required to educate all students regardless of income, race, health, sexual orientation, English language proficiency, disability, and academic ability. The majority of school-age children in the United States receive a public school

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<sup>1</sup> Amdt1.3.7.3; *Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty v. Nyquist*.

<sup>2</sup> NCES - Public School Enrollment

education, with approximately 49.6 million students enrolled in public pre-K – 12 schools nationwide in 2022.<sup>3</sup> School vouchers redirect critically needed funding and resources from neighborhood public schools to unaccountable and too-often for-profit schools – worsening and perpetuating existing systemic inequities in our pre-K-12 public education system.

Additionally, there is no credible evidence that school voucher programs lead to improved student success.<sup>4</sup> In fact, research suggests they lower academic achievement.<sup>5</sup> Unlike public schools, private schools and privately run charter schools lack critical public oversight and accountability mechanisms for both academic and spending outcomes.<sup>6</sup> These institutions are also less likely to provide services to individuals with disabilities, Black and brown students, and students from rural communities.

This Order is the Administration’s first step to divert billions of dollars away from our public school system, which is also the only system that guarantees every student’s civil rights and religious freedom. Private schools do not offer these same protections, and these schools both can and do discriminate in some of their hiring or admissions practices on the basis of religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other protected classes.<sup>7</sup>

This Order is a strategy to attempt to circumvent core Constitutional principles and divert public funds into religious schools, since most voucher funds go to private religious schools.<sup>8</sup> The Framers of the U.S. Constitution contemplated this possibility of taxpayer-funded religion and vehemently opposed it. Writing in 1779 to establish freedom of religion in Virginia, Thomas Jefferson argued that “to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical.”<sup>9</sup> The Framers held that forcing taxpayers to pay for religious schools was inappropriate government coercion, and they later enshrined this opinion in the Bill of Rights.

We are concerned that this scheme to take over the state apparatus and divert public funds to private religious schools violates the religious freedom of every taxpayer, who will be compelled to fund schools of any faith. Religious education is best left to houses of worship and private institutions that are funded with voluntary contributions, free from federal funding and state entanglement. Such an approach preserves funding for public education and ensures that religious institutions can educate students free from excessive government entanglement with religion.

To that end, we request answers to the following questions by February 20, 2025:

1. How will your Administration prioritize investments in our nation’s public schools?
2. What authority do you have to redirect federal appropriations for the purposes of enforcing this Order?

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<sup>3</sup> [NCES - Public School Enrollment](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Vouchers | NEA](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Research on school vouchers suggests concerns ahead for education savings accounts](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Research on school vouchers suggests concerns ahead for education savings accounts](#)

<sup>7</sup> [The new and radical school voucher push is quietly unwinding two centuries of US education tradition](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Billions in taxpayer dollars now go to religious schools via vouchers](#)


<sup>9</sup> [Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom](#)

3. How will this Order affect (a) states that already have private school voucher programs established and (b) states that have not enacted a private school voucher program?
4. How will these changes affect the quality of education of students in rural communities?
5. How will your Administration protect taxpayers from being forced to fund religious schools through these voucher programs?
6. How does your Administration plan to secure the funding necessary to simultaneously fund two separate school systems, one for private schools that pick and choose their own students and another for public schools open to all?
7. How will receipt of federal funds shape the policy and practices of schools that may not presently comply with federal civil rights laws but will be required to do so once they receive federal funds? Will you ensure that all schools receiving federal funds comply with civil rights laws?
8. Research consistently shows a strong correlation between teacher quality and improved student achievement. Will your administration ensure that teachers at private schools accepting federal funds are subject to the same requirements as public school teachers within the state?
9. With receipt of federal funds come obligations regarding the education of children with disabilities. What steps will be taken to ensure that private schools comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 so that all reasonable accommodations can be made and children with disabilities are not discriminated against?
10. What steps will be taken to ensure that parents of children with disabilities understand that by attending a private school, they forfeit their right to a “free and appropriate public education” as guaranteed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act?
11. How much did the Project 2025 policy agenda shape this executive order and any upcoming executive actions to divert public school dollars into private vouchers?

As Members of Congress, we remain committed to equipping every student, teacher, parent, and community with the resources they need to succeed. Ensuring that the federal government continues to invest in our nation’s public schools is fundamental to this effort. We believe that this Order and any similar efforts to expand school voucher programs run counter to the federal government’s responsibility to serve American students and violate the principle that public schools are a public good that must provide equal access to educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their background.


Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to receiving your prompt response and answers to our questions.

Sincerely,



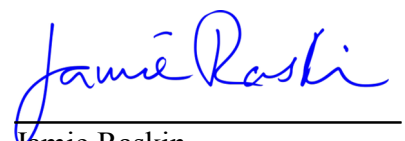
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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



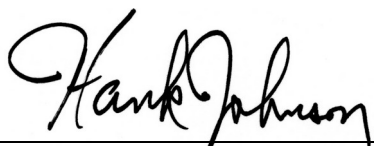
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



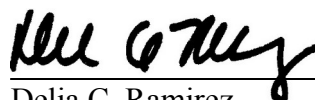
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Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



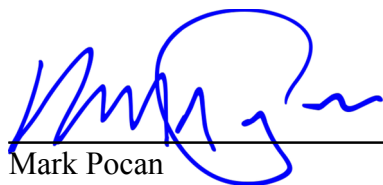
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Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



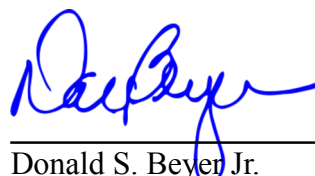
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Alma S. Adams  
Member of Congress  
Ranking Member,  
Subcommittee on Higher  
Education and Workforce  
Development



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Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



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Summer L. Lee  
Member of Congress



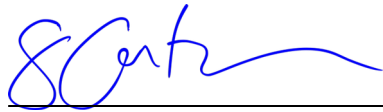
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Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



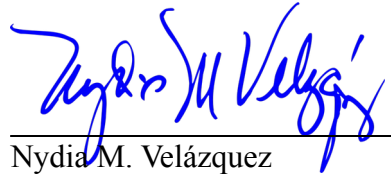
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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



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Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



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Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



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Bill Foster  
Member of Congress



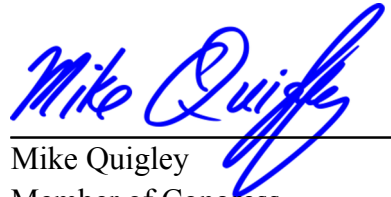
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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



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Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



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Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



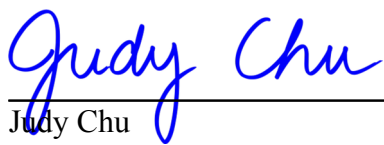
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Andre Carson  
Member of Congress

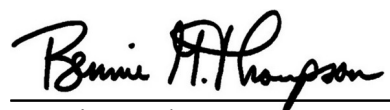


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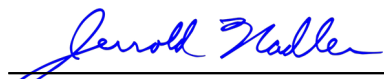
Betty McCollum  
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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



Jim Tokuda  
Member of Congress



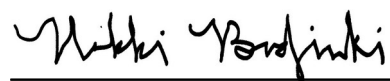
Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



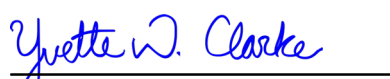
Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress



Nikki Budzinski  
Member of Congress



Laura Friedman  
Member of Congress



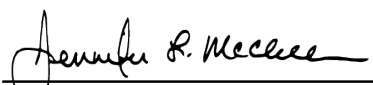
Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



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Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



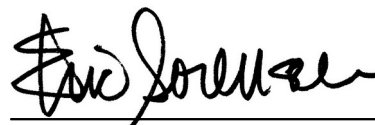
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Valerie P. Foushee  
Member of Congress



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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



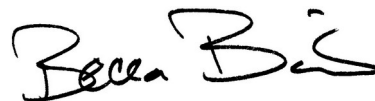
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Eric Sorensen  
Member of Congress



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Robert J. Menendez  
Member of Congress



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Becca Balint  
Member of Congress



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Cleo Fields  
Member of Congress



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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress