

## **Voucher Expansion Rejected by the Georgia Senate in a Bipartisan Vote**

The voucher tsunami creating chaos across the nation is being turned back in some states by legislation and in other states by litigation. A March 25, 2022 report from Public Funds Public Schools describes the Georgia Senate's rejection of voucher expansion in the peach state.

In Ohio, the Ohio Coalition for Equity and Adequacy of School Funding's Vouchers Hurt Ohio initiative will eliminate the EdChoice voucher scheme. Voucher opponents in other states have won court decisions.

## **Major Victory for Georgia's Public School Students: Senate Rejects Voucher Bill**

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In a major win for public education advocates, the Georgia Senate rejected legislation last week that would have established an expansive new education savings account (ESA) voucher program. The bill, SB601, failed in a vote of 29-20, with both Democrats and Republicans rejecting it.

SB601 would have diverted taxpayer dollars, which are urgently needed to bolster public education in Georgia, to private schools. Under the now failed legislation, all students enrolled in Georgia's public schools—even for just six weeks—would be eligible for a voucher of up to \$6,000 per year to be used for private education expenses, including private school tuition and fees, textbooks, curriculum, and transportation. Students with disabilities who used a voucher would lose crucial rights and protections under laws including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Over \$130 million was funneled to private schools last year through Georgia's existing voucher program for students with disabilities and the state's tax credit voucher program. A recent audit of the tax credit program, conducted by the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts, found it lacked state oversight and transparency in the use of public funds. Defeat of SB601 is an important step in ensuring that public dollars remain in Georgia's already underfunded public schools.

The [Fund Georgia's Future](#) campaign, a statewide advocacy effort to ensure that Georgia's public schools receive the funding they need to successfully educate all students, played an instrumental role in blocking the bill. The coalition, which includes the [Georgia Budget and Policy Institute \(GBPI\)](#), [Deep Center](#), [Southern Education Foundation](#), [Georgia Appleseed Center for Law & Justice](#), [Southern Poverty Law Center](#), the [Intercultural Development Research](#)

[Association](#) and the [Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda](#), opposes the diversion of public funds to private education through vouchers and other means.

“The Senate’s vote is a victory and a result of senators hearing from the people of Georgia,” said Stephen Owens, policy analyst at GBPI and a member of the Fund Georgia’s Future coalition.

“Both Democrats and Republicans across our state recognize that we need a just public education system with full and fair funding and vouchers have no place in this future.”

Public Funds Public Schools will continue to monitor and analyze voucher bills introduced in Georgia and across the country during current legislative sessions. Learn more about voucher legislation introduced in your state by visiting the [bill tracker](#) on the PFPS website.

[Georgia Budget and Policy Institute](#) is a leader of the [Partnership for Equity and Education Rights \(PEER\)](#), *a state-driven network fighting for education equity, an end to ongoing divestment in public education, and racially-just public schools. PEER believes strong public schools are essential to strong communities: our schools belong to the parents who support them, the educators and staff who work in them, the students who learn in them, and the communities they anchor. PEER is convened by* [Education Law Center](#).

The [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) partners with Education Law Center on the Public Funds Public Schools campaign.

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