



June 10, 2019

Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20015

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we write to share our opinion of the FY2020 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill and its treatment of the District of Columbia's private school voucher program. While we never support such programs, we are pleased that the committee has included language requiring any private school participating in the D.C. program to give students the fundamental civil rights protections public school students receive. The program still has significant shortcomings, however.

Numerous studies of the D.C. voucher program—by the Government Accountability Office, the U.S. Department of Education, and others—have documented serious shortcomings. The rigorous, [congressionally-mandated study](#), released in May 2018 by the Institute of Education Sciences, is typical. It found that D.C. students who used vouchers to attend private schools performed significantly worse in mathematics—10 percentage points—than a control group of students who applied for the program but were not chosen through a lottery. Voucher students also scored lower in reading.

Whether they're called vouchers, education savings accounts (ESAs), or tuition tax credits (TTCs), the impact is the same: robbing the public schools that educate 9 out of 10 of our nation's students of scarce funding and resources. Private schools are not accountable to the public, can deprive students of religious freedom, and often fail to protect civil rights. Taxpayer dollars should go only to public schools open to all students, not private schools that can pick and choose their students based on economic status, academic achievement, or even gender.

We appreciate the committee's work on this important issue and the inclusion of strong civil rights protections, but are disappointed that the bill allows the D.C. voucher program to continue. We will continue to work to ensure that scarce education funding is used to support public schools that educate the overwhelming majority of the students in our nation's capital.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association