



NEWS RELEASE

Group Files Petition to Repeal Latest Costly Voucher Scheme

Support Our Schools Nebraska says LB1402 ignores the will of the voters, will hurt local public schools, and discriminate against kids

April 30, 2024 – Nebraska voters will decide if they want the state to use public tax dollars to pay for private schools under a petition filed today by a coalition of Nebraska public school advocates.

Support Our Schools Nebraska filed ballot language with the Secretary of State to begin circulating a referendum petition seeking the repeal of LB1402, legislation that imposes a costly voucher scheme on taxpayers and denies Nebraskans their right to vote on using public funds to pay for private schools. Last summer, more than 117,000 Nebraskans signed a successful referendum petition to put the repeal of LB753, a similar private school funding scheme, on this November's ballot.

"LB1402 was passed to silence voters, and their voices need to be heard and respected," said Jenni Benson, a Support Our Schools Nebraska sponsor and the president of the Nebraska State Education Association. "Last summer, Nebraskans took decisive action in support of our public schools and grassroots democracy. With everyone's help, we can again gather enough signatures to put this latest voucher scheme on the November ballot so Nebraskans are not denied their right to vote."

Benson said that last weekend the coalition contacted its 1,800 volunteers to ask if they would be willing to circulate petitions again to keep public funds for public schools. "98% of those who replied said they were ready and willing to once again gather petition signatures to keep vouchers out of Nebraska," said Benson.

Once the ballot language is reviewed, petitions will be printed and the group will begin collecting the 60,000-plus signatures needed by mid-July to put the issue to voters on the November General Election ballot.

"Taxpayers cannot afford to pay for two school systems," said Benson. "Our public schools educate 9 out of 10 kids in Nebraska—and strong public schools support a strong Nebraska and a strong economy. Diverting millions of public tax dollars to fund private schools will hurt our public schools as well as other essential public services and infrastructure. Other states that have bought into these tax voucher schemes ended up damaging their local public schools. This is not the future we want for our young people and our communities."

Nebraska voters have rejected public funding of private institutions at the ballot box three times previously, and surveys show that the [majority of Nebraskans continue to oppose giving public tax dollars to private schools](#).

The group is inviting Nebraskans to join the effort to protect their local public schools by visiting [Support Our Schools Nebraska](#) for more information, to donate and/or sign up to volunteer – and by signing the petition once it is printed and available.

LB1402 would provide a direct appropriation of public dollars to fund private schools. The initial cost to Nebraska taxpayers is \$10 million. In states with similar voucher schemes, [the cost to taxpayers has grown exponentially and public schools have suffered severe funding and program cuts as a result.](#)

Private schools are not bound by the same laws, regulations, and requirements as public schools. Unlike public schools, which are required to serve all children, private schools can and do discriminate against students, families, and staff. Under LB1402 these practices will be subsidized by the state.

- LB1402 will drain available funding from Nebraska's public schools and give it to unaccountable private schools that can discriminate against kids.
- LB1402 will lead to funding cuts that will weaken Nebraska's public schools, will hurt kids, and will particularly harm our rural communities. More than half of Nebraska's 93 counties have no private schools.
- Vouchers do not help all children. Receiving a voucher does not mean that a private school will accept that student. The only "choice" lies with private schools. Unlike public schools, private schools can pick and choose the students they want to enroll, and these private schools can remove students at any time without providing an alternative education option.
- LB1402 lacks public transparency and accountability.
- Private education should continue to be privately funded.

Taxpayer dollars should be invested in strengthening our public schools, which are open to all children, subject to state curriculum standards, and supported by the vast majority of Nebraskans in annual polls.

The petition addresses the creation of the new voucher plan only and does not include other sections of LB1402.

For more information and to sign up to volunteer and/or donate to the cause, visit:

<https://supportourschoolsnebraska.org>