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**OPINION**

# Voucher plans are giving up on our education system

Few will benefit from a voucher system while causing harm to our underfunded schools



Students raise their hands as third grade teacher Anjelica Turner teaches about character traits on Monday, Aug. 15, 2022, at Back Elementary in Rowlett, part of Garland ISD. This should be a special session focused on public education, concentrating on how to ensure our booming economy is used to fund our schools, raise our test scores, and pay our teachers, writes Chris Wallace and several chambers of commerce and organizations in Texas. (Juan Figueroa / Staff Photographer)

By Chris Wallace  
1:30 AM on Oct 16, 2023



What is being a Texan if not embracing the pride and determination that made our state great? Boasting the [eighth-largest economy in the world](#), 30 million people, 11 consecutive Governor’s Cups, record-making corporate relocations and low unemployment, nothing can stop our Texas Fight except, it seems, supporting public education for the next generation.

The grit and determination that began nearly 200 years ago is ingrained in the hearts of Texans today, which is why the [voucher programs](#) proposed in the third special session, essentially giving up on our public education system, are so disheartening.

Texas has the talent, resources and ability to transform our constitutionally guaranteed public education into the best school system in the world. Our elected officials should be asking what can be done to strengthen the institutions responsible for educating Texas’ future workforce, rather than spending their time subverting them.

With over 5.5 million students in public schools in Texas, the voucher system proposed by lawmakers would be utilized by only thousands, while causing detrimental harm to the students left in continually underfunded public schools.

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## Opinion

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Any plans to stop the investment needed in our public schools will put students in rural communities at a larger disadvantage. Rural schools will bear a disproportionate amount of the burden from any system that restricts funding, and with few local private schools, they will still be educating the same number of students. Similarly, any voucher program will not make top-tier private schools available to a student of lower income but rather primarily serve as a tax-funded subsidy to wealthier families who already have their children enrolled in private schools.

Voucher advocates may say funding schools and vouchers are separate, but as long as in Texas, “the funding follows the child,” our public schools and the communities they serve will lose, as millions of dollars are siphoned to unaccountable private institutions. According to the Texas Private Schools Association, there are roughly 100,000 open seats in private schools across Texas. There are also approximately 330,000 students currently attending private schools. Assuming every current and available private school seat is filled through a voucher, that would create a \$4 billion loss in classroom funding overnight — growing every year.

The businesses making up the thriving economy of which Texans are so proud are worried, and that worry grows with each passing year. They need a larger, more educated workforce. We need more doctors, welders, teachers, accountants, bakers and nurses, but instead of investing in that need and the system already set up to fulfill it, the vouchers proposed would move tax dollars to unregulated and unaccountable private schools. School vouchers are bad for businesses, bad for our communities and bad for the future workforce in Texas.

This should be a special session focused on public education, concentrating on how to ensure our booming economy is used to fund our schools, raise our test scores and pay our teachers. We should be putting our energy and our resources toward guaranteeing each Texas student has a funded classroom and a bright future.

*Chris Wallace is president and CEO of the North Texas Commission. He co-wrote this column with the Allen Fairview Chamber of Commerce, the Asian Chamber of Texas, the Coppell Chamber of Commerce, the Colleyville Chamber of Commerce, The Colony Chamber of Commerce, the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, the Denison Area Chamber of Commerce, the Denton Chamber of Commerce, the DeSoto Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Dallas Inc., Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Garland Chamber of Commerce, the Granbury Chamber of Commerce, the Grapevine Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Celina Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Keller Chamber of Commerce, the Greenville Chamber of Commerce, the HEB Chamber of Commerce, the Kaufman Chamber of Commerce, the Lewisville Chamber of Commerce, the McKinney Chamber of Commerce, the Mesquite Chamber of Commerce, the North Dallas Chamber of Commerce, the North Texas LGBT Chamber of Commerce, the Plano Chamber of Commerce, the Princeton Lowery Crossing Chamber of Commerce, the Richardson Chamber of Commerce and the Temple Chamber of Commerce. They wrote this column for The Dallas Morning News.*

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Chris Wallace

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