

Chair Roblan and Senate Education Committee members,

My name is Ross Swartzendruber. I am a taxpayer and parent of three children in the Salem-Keizer School District. I am writing in opposition to SB 437, which establishes an education savings account program.

Public schools were created by communities and states for a civic purpose, to build and sustain democracy. Educating the younger generation about how to live and work with others is a public responsibility, shared by all. Education savings account programs (vouchers) undermine public education, circumvent our state constitution and always fail when put to a popular vote.

The first voucher program in the U.S. started in Milwaukee, WI, in 1990, through legislative action. By 1998, religious schools were allowed into the program. Based on Wisconsin state tests, voucher schools performed no better than public schools. Competition failed to improve public schools, drained funding and weakened them. The program resulted in high staff turnover, low student proficiency and cost between \$40-50 million.

No evidence was found by a Congressionally-mandated evaluation that the Opportunity Scholarship Program, a Washington, D.C. voucher program, affected student achievement.

In 2006, the Florida Supreme Court ruled their opportunity scholarship grant (vouchers) unconstitutional.

Any existing U.S. voucher programs were installed by legislatures circumventing their own constitution and the will of the voters. As legislators, I'm sure you're aware that the public overwhelmingly opposes funding religious schools regardless of the program name; education savings account, opportunity scholarship or voucher. Voters have repeatedly made it clear that they do not want religious schools to receive public education funding.

Please vote no on SB 437.

Ross Swartzendruber
3655 Zena Rd NW
Salem, OR 97304