



SB 16-154

My name is Cindra Barnard, I reside in Douglas County Colorado. Mr. Chair, committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I am representing Taxpayers for Public Education and will speak in opposition to SB 16-154, Income Tax Credits for Non-Public Education.

Education is a basic right. Tax credits, as well as vouchers, defund and threaten the very existence of a fair, appropriate and equitable public education system that meets the needs of all children.

Our public schools in Colorado are underfunded. Are we so unwilling to fund our public schools that we will effectively rely on private schools to educate the chosen few who can afford a private school education?

Tax credits ignore economies of scale. The state will likely not see a savings from students leaving their community schools. When one student leaves a classroom, the lights are still on, a teacher is still teaching and savings are not realized. What does occur is less revenue for the remaining students in the class room. Less revenue equates to loss of programming which can greatly impact the education of our kids. The tax credit program thereby reduces and harms choice--the choice of a high quality community school. A choice, research shows, the vast majority of parents make for their children.

This program would lead to socioeconomic segregation and discrimination. The roughly \$3600 given for tuition does not come close to covering private school tuition. The program diverts public monies to private institutions that may discriminate on the basis of socioeconomic status, religion, academic ability, athletic skill, special education needs, as well as sexual orientation. There is no credible evidence that tax credits actually provide any educational benefit.

The full choice model of education assumes that schools serve no public interest beyond that represented in the choice of parents as individuals. Adults who are not parents of school-age children are assumed to be indifferent to education and in how others invest their taxes for schooling. The full choice model assumes that vital public services should be financed on a user-pays-the-cost basis, with little regard for how those choices affect others. The choice model has nothing to do with equality of opportunity, or an ethic of caring for others, or of justice.

The tax credit transfers embedded in this bill are tax incentives that have no bearing on the education of children. While the fiscal impact of this bill is unknown, the education tax credit, coupled with business tax incentives, would have a major impact on the general fund.

Tax credits are back door vouchers that lack accountability, are financially flawed and are by their very nature discriminatory.

On the positive side, discussions are taking place to increase education funding by reducing the negative factor. I don't know if this will indeed happen. I do know, however, that SB 16-154 will further starve our children of the education they so rightly deserve. How are we as a society to succeed if we continue to legislate the underfunding of education for the majority in the interest of giving an unnecessary tax break to a very few?

I urge you to vote in opposition to SB 16-154, Tax credits for non-public schools.

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