



NYS Education Groups say NO to Federal Tax Credit Voucher Program, Urge Hochul to Opt Out After Reviewing Regulations

The New York State Educational Conference Board (ECB) and other education groups urge Governor Hochul to decline participation in the federal tax credit voucher program. The proposed rules released by the Treasury Department and IRS on Oct. 1 confirm the serious concerns ECB raised last year, including many poison pills, and leave many unanswered questions.

Because the rules are not yet final and guidance on eligible expenses has not been released, opting in by the January 1 deadline would mean committing New York to a program whose terms are still unknown.

If New York opts in, the state will take on the responsibility of overseeing this voucher program, but with no ability to set standards for participating schools, determine which organizations may operate here, limit how the funds are spent or protect students from discrimination. Taxpayer dollars could flow to private schools that may select and remove students based on disability, academic performance, religion or other factors wholly unacceptable to New Yorkers, and New York State could not require basic reporting on how those funds are used or which students they serve.

The program's income limits do not prioritize families with the greatest need, and nothing in it is designed to strengthen the public schools that educate the vast majority of New York's children. Where public schools struggle, it would do nothing to remedy underlying problems — it would instead only deprive them of students and resources.

Every family has the right to choose the school that is best for their child, but that choice should not come at the expense of public school students.

We collectively urge Governor Hochul to say NO to this federal tax credit voucher program, and at a minimum, delay any opt in decision for at least one year.

Public schools remain the hub of our communities and provide free, inclusive educational opportunities for all students. New York should not undermine that promise of our public schools by opting into this voucher scheme.

New York State Council of School Superintendents Executive Director Charles Dedrick said, “The Governor should immediately allay the concerns of public schools, that serve the vast majority of students and announce that she is declining to participate in the voucher tax credit law. Public dollars should go to public schools, and this program will weaken our public schools while propping up private and religious schools.”

New York State School Boards Association, Executive Director Robert S. Schneider added, “The New York State School Boards Association implores the Governor not to opt New York State into the federal education tax credit program — which is simply a voucher by a different name. The newly released regulations prohibit New York from ensuring that these dollars will enhance the educational experience for all students in our state. Rather, they make clear that the intent of this program is to bolster the private education industry. Public schools are the cornerstone of American democracy. They provide every child, regardless of background, income, ability, or circumstance, with access to a free and appropriate education. New York must resist the urge to opt into a program that will divert public dollars away from public education.”

New York State Parent Teacher Association, President Patricia Frazier offered, “On behalf of the parents, families, and educators of our 2.6 million school children, we urge Governor Hochul to listen and not opt into the federal tax credit voucher program. We have seen devastation in other states who have implemented vouchers, and this will cause irreparable harm to our schools. As expected, the regulations are unclear and leave many questions unanswered. Worse yet, this decision must be made even before final regulations are promulgated. How can NY opt into a program, giving up control and oversight to the federal government, even before we know what the final rules are? As we enter this coming legislative season, our collective energy must be on uplifting ALL our great students, not on this questionable voucher program.”

School Administrators Association of New York State, Executive Director Jenn Carlson states, “The federal Scholarship Tax Credit program is primarily structured to support educational choice outside of the traditional public school system. While federal law allows scholarship funds to be used for certain eligible educational expenses for public school students, the program was not designed around the operation or needs of public schools. SAANYS believes New York should remain focused on strengthening and investing in its public education system and urges the Governor not to elect New York’s participation in the federal program.”

Rural Schools Association of New York, Executive Director Heather Zellers offered, “RSA is concerned that the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit will deepen inequities for New York’s rural school districts. Without the ability for the state to set guidelines that align with New York’s priorities or guarantee support for public school students, our rural districts risk being left further behind as public funds are diverted from our schools.”

Association of School Business Officials of New York, Executive Director Brian Cechnicki stated, “As stewards of public funds in school districts, school business officials are especially attuned to the needs of financing and operating public schools. One of the most important aspects of this work is proper planning and program design. Despite the release of proposed regulations, they neither fully answer important implementation questions nor will be completed before the opt-in deadline. Now is not the time to adopt such an incomplete and ill-conceived program, and we ask that the governor reject opting in.”

New York State United Teachers, President Melinda Person added, “The proposed regulations confirm exactly what we have warned from the beginning: New York must reject this federal voucher scheme. The regulations are loaded with poison pills. If New York opts in, the state would be prohibited from setting standards for scholarship granting organizations, deciding which organizations can participate or limiting the types of schools and expenses that receive these tax dollars. New York puts its name on the program, but Washington writes the rules. This isn’t local control. It is a one-way door into a federally designed voucher program, one that could use public resources to support schools that discriminate, while stripping New York of the ability to provide the protections New Yorkers expect. Governor Hochul should make clear now that New York will not walk through that door.”

Conference of Big 5 City School Districts, Executive Director Jennifer Pyle offered, “The Conference of Big 5 School Districts, representing the Buffalo, New York City, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers, Albany, Mount Vernon and Utica City School Districts, and nearly half of the public school children in the state, strongly urges the Governor to reject participation in the Federal Tax Credit Voucher Program. This initiative will divert scarce resources away from school districts already struggling with longstanding fiscal capacity issues and exacerbate the glaring inequities currently in place. We implore the Governor to consider the implications of a program for which there are still a plethora of unanswered questions. Our high need urban school districts are already faced with staggering structural deficits, and this measure would enlarge these gaps. All children in New York State should be afforded an opportunity to succeed. This measure would place public schools at a disadvantage and should be rejected.”