



875 E. Pontiac Drive
Murray, Utah 84107-5299
Tel: 801-266-4461
Fax: 801-265-2249
myUEA.org

Heidi Matthews, *President*
Renee Pinkney, *Vice President*
Brad Bartels, *Executive Director*
Michael Harman, *NEA State Director*
Mindy Layton, *NEA State Director*

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Governor Gary Herbert
Utah State Capitol Complex
350 North State Street, Suite 200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Dear Governor Herbert:

On behalf of more than 18,000 Utah educators, the Utah Education Association is asking you to veto a bill that we believe is poor policy for public education.

HB 332 Sub 3 Special Needs Scholarship Amendments shifts public money to private schools and providers through a voucher-like scholarship program using income tax credits and with little accountability to taxpayers. Private schools may deny admission to any student and parents will be required to acknowledge that a private school may not provide the same level of disability services as provided in a public school (lines 523-524). Parents must also acknowledge that acceptance of the scholarship has the same effect as waiving a student's right to federal IDEA protections (lines 527-529). Furthermore, the legislation ignores students in rural areas where private schools do not exist while subsidizing urban and suburban families. Finally, the Carson Smith Scholarship program currently exists for families of special needs students and has not reached full capacity. Rather than duplicating administrative efforts, any effort to increase access to private providers for special needs students should utilize the Carson Smith program.

We opposed the original bill and substitutes. Although substitutes improved the substance of the bill they did not address the fundamental problem of funding private schools and private providers with public dollars. Voters resoundingly defeated vouchers in 2007 and we believe that the bipartisan opposition to HB 332 in both the House and the Senate indicate the divisive nature of this program.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully,

Heidi Matthews
President, Utah Education Association

cc: Tami Pyfer, Education Advisor to the Governor
Karen Peterson, Education Policy Specialist
Dr. Brad Bartels, Executive Director
Renee Pinkney, UEA Vice President
Dr. Sara Jones, UEA Director of Education Excellence and Government Relations
Chase Clyde, UEA Director of Government Relations and Political Action
Jay Blain, UEA Director of Policy and Research