*Testimony of*

***Kate Dias***

***Connecticut Education Association***

*Before the*

***Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee***

*Re:*

***HB 5101 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TAX CREDIT FOR EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND***

***OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP***

*March 6, 2024*

Representative Horn, Senator Fonfara, and members of this esteemed committee, my name is Kate Dias and I am the President of the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA represents educators in over 150 school districts across Connecticut.

CEA strongly opposes HB 5101, which is another attempt after last year’s attempt to fund private elite schools through tax credits. Tax Credit Scholarships are private school voucher programs masquerading as a tax credit. Whether called a voucher, tax credit scholarship, or education savings account, programs like this are handouts to wealthy taxpayers and private schools like Choate, Taft, and Gunn.

Here is what concepts like tax credit scholarships and vouchers do:

**Promote segregation**: This type of program was conceived of as a way to circumvent *Brown v. Board of Education* and subsidize the cost of White parents sending their children to private schools with controlled enrollment policies.

**Starve public schools of funds:** They drain resources from public schools by reducing the amount of revenue available to fund ECS, special education, and other key programs that support local schools.

**Falsely promote choice:** These programs subsidize wealthy families who can already afford private education. They do not help low-income families who do not have income to pay additional tuition costs out of pocket or who don’t have tax liability sufficient to benefit from the credit.

**Cause a decline in academic achievement:** Numerous studies have shown that vouchers don’t improve academic achievement and, in many cases, result in worse achievement. Studies of long-standing programs in Milwaukee, Cleveland, and Washington, D.C. showed no improvement in reading and math. Studies of programs in Indiana, Louisiana, and Ohio showed diminishing performance.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Subsidize wealthy families and corporations:** Only those with significant tax liability (and therefore significant income) can benefit. Some programs are structured to provide the benefit to corporations or the third-party pass-through entity. In the end, it is the same shift of resources from those in need to the wealthy.

**Reduce transparency and public oversight:** Where programs like this have been put into place, little oversight has followed, resulting in fraud and profiteering. Additionally, public funds are redirected to schools without public oversight or elected school boards. In some cases, they are redirected to sectarian schools resulting in the state subsidizing religious perspectives in violation of the separation of church and state.

In summary, CEA strongly opposes schemes to shift the cost of private K-12 schools to taxpayers via concepts like tax credit scholarships, education savings accounts, vouchers, or any other similar mechanism. We urge this committee’s rejection of HB 5424 and thank you for your consideration.

1. See: R. Joseph Waddington & Mark Berends, Impact of the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program: Achievement Effects for Students in Upper Elementary & Middle School, 37 *J. of Policy Analysis & Mgmt*. 4, 738-808 (Aug. 2018); Atila Abdulkadiroğlu, Parag A. Pathak, & Christopher R. Walters, Free to Choose: Can School Choice Reduce Student Achievement?, 10 *Am. Econ. Journal: Applied Econ*. 1, 175-206 (Jan. 2018); David Figlio & Krzysztof Karbownik, Evaluation of Ohio’s EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, Competition, & Performance Effects, *Fordham Inst.* (July 2016); U.S. Dep’t of Educ., Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Two Years After Students Applied (June 2018); Megan Kuhfeld, et al., The Pandemic Has Had Devastating Impacts on Learning. What Will It Take to Help Students Catch Up?, *Brookings Inst.* (Mar. 3, 2022), as cited in NCPE *Opposing Private School Vouchers: A toolkit for Legislators and Advocates, (Feb. 2023).* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)