



Senate Education Subcommittee

S.935 – Opponent Testimony

January 18, 2022

Sherry East, President of The South Carolina Education Association

Chair Massey and members of the Senate Education Subcommittee on S.935,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to S.935. I am Sherry East, President of The South Carolina Education Association.

The SCEA opposes S.935 and Education Scholarship Account Vouchers. Vouchers cost our students by taking taxpayer dollars from Public Schools to send students to private schools.

The majority of students—over 94% of South Carolina’s students—go to Public Schools. When money leaves our Public Schools to cover private school vouchers, consequences for the many students who remain include larger class sizes, reduced arts and extracurricular opportunities, and fewer sports programs. In addition, if many students who qualify leave, it could even threaten Title Funding in a school or district.

As a high school Science teacher, I am proud to provide the best possible education for *all* students. Public Schools educate *all* students without discrimination, while the private schools accepting vouchers can pick and choose their students. These schools can deny students on the basis of disability, behavior, language spoken at home, religion, and more.

In particular, with this bill, the choice of some families to use a private school voucher directly takes public dollars from the local Public School. According to our state constitution, public dollars should never be used for private schools.

Further, if student returns to public schools after taking a voucher, the money doesn’t “follow the student” back to the Public School. This means that Public Schools would essentially end up paying twice for these voucher-return students.

However, the most important thing to remember is the reason we’re all here today. All students deserve to receive a high-quality education. Expanding vouchers will take public money from public schools and the majority of South Carolina’s students who attend and will continue to attend Public Schools. Voucher schemes like S.935 hurt the ability for us to educate all students.

Vouchers are untested, unaccountable, unaffordable, and unconstitutional. They are dangerous for Public Schools. For these reasons, I urge you to oppose S.935.

