

Dear Speaker Bowers and Members of the Arizona House of Representatives,

It is undeniable that strong public schools make a strong state. A uniformly well-educated population is central to our democracy: it serves as a gateway to opportunity, prepares citizens to be fully participating members of society, and strengthens our economy and way of life. Despite recent investments, Arizona's public schools remain severely underfunded, creating major impediments to our state's economic and societal growth. We owe it to our state's future to ensure that all children in Arizona have a well-resourced, thriving public neighborhood school.

This year, the Arizona Legislature is advancing a record-breaking number of bills that represent a coordinated attack on our state's public schools and the families who choose them. Together, these bills seek to undermine public education as we know it. They divide communities and weaken our nation's greatest gateway to opportunity. The following bills comprise just a slice of that coordinated assault:

Bills that defund public education:

- ▶ **Massive ESA & STO voucher expansions defunding public schools (SB1452, SB1118, SB1041):** Together, these massive ESA and STO voucher expansions will siphon up to **\$1 billion** more from our local public schools, gutting teacher pay, slashing arts and sports programs, and stealing special education funding from the over 1 million children who choose to attend their neighborhood public schools. Arizona voters said #NoNewVouchers a mere 2 years ago.
- ▶ **Tax cuts aimed at cancelling Prop 208 classroom funds (SB1783, SB1108, SB1109):** These bills slash taxes to deliberately counteract the efforts of teachers, parents, and citizens who collected signatures during a pandemic to ensure public school classrooms receive desperately needed funding. By creating massive tax breaks for upper-income Arizonans, they seek to ensure Prop 208 funds never make their way to teachers or students.

Bills that devalue and diminish locally controlled public schools:

- ▶ **SB1058** would mandate teachers to publicly post all lesson plans, resources and materials for every class, every day, without deviation, for a year in advance. This would add significant administrative red tape and costs; stifles the innovation, individualization and differentiation that are required for optimal learning; and reduces student-centered teacher availability.
- ▶ **SB1400** would require schools to give elective credit for private lessons and sports clubs. This has major equity implications, since access requires private payment, and would disincentivize the funding of music, fine arts, physical education and highly certified special area educators in local public schools.
- ▶ **SB1683** would establish "transportation support grants" for parents who send their children to choice academies. While local district buses sit in disrepair,

parents would be able to use taxpayer dollars to hire limos and private buses — even though charter schools already receive additional funding for transportation. Much of this funding would go to untested and unregulated private transportation companies, posing dangers to our children.

▶ **SB1685** bans attendance boundaries for district schools, further eroding the value of the neighborhood schools that serve as anchors for local communities. School districts in which enrollment exceeds capacity would be required to set up admission lotteries. The State Board of Education would be forced to use public dollars to “design a public awareness effort to explain school choice options in this state” that may include “public and private partners” and includes ESA vouchers.

We, the undersigned, represent Arizona parents, business leaders, community organizations, nonpartisan advocacy groups, statewide educators, voters from the three major political parties, and concerned citizens from diverse walks of life. We vehemently oppose these attempts to defund and diminish the public schools that Arizona families overwhelmingly choose and rely upon. Voters have clearly spoken in favor of increasing funding for public education and stopping irresponsible private school vouchers; it is your duty as their representatives to heed their voices.

The bills listed above stand in direct defiance of that duty. We call upon our elected representatives in the Arizona Legislature and Governor Doug Ducey to immediately abandon these multi-pronged attacks and instead do what they were sent to the Capitol to do: respect their constituents’ values, promote their constituents’ interests, and move Arizona forward.

Respect the people of Arizona. Fund our public schools.

