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September 9, 2025

U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we urge you to VOTE NO on the SOAR Act Improvements Act (H.R. 5181), which would expand the District of Columbia voucher program and provide \$60 million in annual funding through 2032. Votes on this issue may be included in NEA's Report Card for the 119th Congress.

Under the current formula, the \$60 billion SOAR budget is divided equally among public, private, and charter schools. Under this bill, the voucher program's share would rise from one-third (\$20 million) to one-half (\$30 million) and public schools' share would drop from one-third (\$20 million) to one-sixth (\$10 million); charter schools would continue to receive one-third (\$20 million).

H.R. 5181 is yet another effort to weaken an essential pillar of democracy—in this case, public education. DC public schools educate 50,000 students while private schools in the voucher program serve just 2,000 students. In other words, half the program's funding would go to just 4 percent of DC's students—a huge injustice, especially when the DC voucher program does not produce the results the "R" in SOAR represents.

Numerous studies—by the Government Accountability Office, U.S. Department of Education, and others—have documented that the DC voucher program does not improve academic performance, increase parents' satisfaction, or increase parents' involvement with their children's schools. The findings of a rigorous, [congressionally-mandated study](#), released in May 2018 by the Institute of Education Sciences, are typical. Researchers found that DC students who used vouchers to attend private schools performed significantly worse in mathematics—10 percentage points—than a control group of students who applied for the program but were not chosen through a lottery. Voucher students also scored lower in reading.

Many schools participating in the DC voucher program deprive their students of important legal rights and protections as well as religious freedom—three-quarters are affiliated with a specific religion. Several schools explicitly state that they cannot accommodate students with disabilities or that they can only accommodate those whose needs do not present "undue hardship" to the school.

Instead of addressing the many shortcomings of the DC voucher program, H.R. 5181 would relax accreditation, evaluation, and reporting requirements still more. The addition of non-resident board members, another provision of the bill, would limit the power of DC residents to shape the school system that educates their children.

The push to divert taxpayer dollars from public to private schools has a long and sordid history. After the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, some districts closed their public schools. Then, to get around the court's ruling against segregation, states used the money to provide vouchers for private, white-only schools. To this day, private schools can—and do—limit admission based on any number of factors: sex, religion, disability status, and more. Public schools, in contrast, admit and serve all manner of students.

Taxpayer dollars should go only to public schools that are accountable to the public and open to all students—not private schools that can pick and choose their students.

For all these reasons, we urge you to VOTE NO on the SOAR Act Improvements Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Johnson Trinca', written in a cursive style.

Kimberly Johnson Trinca  
Director of Government Relations  
National Education Association