



Urban League of
Philadelphia

*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.*

To: Members of the State House and State Senate Education Committees

From: Andrea Curtis, CEO/Executive Director of the Urban League of Philadelphia

RE: OPPOSITION TO VOUCHERS (HB2696/SB1230)

September 30th, 2020

My name is Andrea Curtis. I am the CEO and Executive Director of the Urban League of Philadelphia. I strongly urge you to vote no on HB2696/SB1230 "Back on Track" that would create education saving accounts (ESA).

Education Saving Accounts are just voucher programs that can be used for additional education expenses beyond just private school tuition. Voucher programs have been tried in other states with [disastrous consequences](#) for students, but specifically for minority students. These programs lack accountability, divert much-needed resources from public schools, adversely affect students with disabilities, exacerbate educational segregation, and do not improve any student's academic outcome.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare how fundamental public schools are to children and communities. Instead of using \$500 million from the state's COVID-19 fund, we should be using that money to fulfill our state's constitutional promise that every child is awarded a fair and decent education.

In Philadelphia, our students are learning in classrooms filled with asbestos and mold, and the school district is now projecting a [\\$1 billion loss in funding over five years](#). Instead of incentivizing children to leave the public school system, the legislature should be using these funds to invest in the public good of public education. We need to be investing in the critical infrastructure needed for students to go back to learning in their classrooms. Without additional funding, Black and Brown children in Philadelphia will continue to be harmed by our legislature's lack of empathy and understanding of urban poverty.

These bills must be rejected. I urge you to oppose HB2696/SB1230.

Andrea Curtis

CEO and Executive Director of the Urban League of Philadelphia