

March 29, 2011

TO: All Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee

FROM: Ted Kirsch, President, AFT Pennsylvania

RE: Senate Bill I – Vouchers

Position: Please Oppose

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At a time when the legislature is considering a budget proposal that cuts over \$1 billion dollars in state funding from our public schools, the General Assembly should not consider spending \$1 billion for a tax-payer funded voucher program for private and corporate-run schools that are accountable to no one. The private schools, not the parents, have the choice of whether to accept or deny admission to voucher students. The voucher schools can exclude students based on gender, church affiliation, ability, behavior, special learning needs or disability status. Public school must and should continue to take everyone.

If state funding for K-12 education is cut and vouchers drain dollars from public schools, the result will be higher property taxes and cuts to public school programs that are proven to work. Pennsylvania has been identified by the Center for Educational Policy as the only state in the nation to make across the board academic gains in our elementary, middle and high schools.

The voucher bill advocates rely on myths rather than research and data to claim that vouchers will raise student achievement and give poor students the same choices wealthier parents already enjoy. Research (RAND Corp.) has found that “no overall statistical significant differences” between low-income public school and voucher students.

Please vote no on Senate Bill I.