



March 30, 2012

The Honorable Janice K. Brewer
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Dear Governor Brewer,

On behalf of the thousands of teachers and public education employees working in Arizona's public schools—as well as the members of the Arizona Education Association across the state—I respectfully and earnestly request your veto of HB2626 (expansion of empowerment scholarship accounts). HB2626 represents the wrong policy for Arizona at a time when we must make the best public policy decisions for our students with the limited resources we have at our disposal.

As AEA President, I have been proud to work in concert with members of your staff and the education community to shape and promote your Arizona Ready plan for Arizona's public schools and students. I have attended meetings you have held with public school teachers from across Arizona. At no time have you shared a priority to improve Arizona's public schools by diverting the limited resources we have to private schools. Sadly, that is exactly what HB2626 will do. The lack of a fiscal note attached to this bill is deceptive. HB2626 provides funding to students already in private schools, constituting a drain on the state's general fund. Further, HB2626 will inevitably lead to a depletion of financial resources available to public schools which will still be obligated to maintain their same infrastructure with fewer students enrolled.

Furthermore, HB2626 represents no accountability for the use of taxpayer funds diverted to private schools. Arizona's taxpayers enjoy significant accountability for the public funds that support our public schools. Recent legislation has increased the rigor of public school curricula, student assessments, school ratings based on student performance, and teacher and principal evaluations. All of these policies represent higher accountability to Arizona's taxpayers and families. HB2626 undermines that very accountability. Private schools may offer viable education alternatives for Arizona's students as parents elect to exercise choice, but those schools bear no obligations for the accountability measures to which every public school is subjected.

Additionally, HB2626 runs counter to the improvement strategies that voters repeatedly call for in elevating the quality of education in Arizona. Survey after survey over the past decade has shown clearly that parents and taxpayers want public schools well-funded; by contrast, they associate no value with voucher schemes. HB2626 may shield its nature behind a clever title, but it is indeed a voucher scheme at a time when Arizona's voters demand and our public schools deserve better.

For the reasons stated above and others, the Arizona Education Association respectfully requests that you veto HB2626.

The members of the Arizona Education Association stand ready to deliver on their commitment to great public schools for every Arizona student.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Andrew F. Morrill'.

Andrew F. Morrill, President
Arizona Education Association

AEA's MISSION

AEA...
*keeping the
promise of
quality
public
education*