



May 29, 2017

Senator Joyce Woodhouse
Chair Senate Finance Committee
Assemblywoman Maggie Carlton
Chair Assembly Ways and Means
Nevada Legislature, 79th Session

Re: SB506

Dear Chairs and Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committee members,

Educate Nevada Now and its partners supported parents who brought the lawsuit, *Schwartz v. Lopez*¹, where the Nevada Supreme Court permanently struck down SB302 (2015), holding that the use of public school funds to pay for education savings accounts (ESA) is unconstitutional. ENN supported this litigation because we believe that a robust public education system is the key to #NevadaStrong community where every child has the opportunity to succeed.

Private school vouchers undermine public education. The Nevada Constitution requires the Legislature to “provide for a uniform system of common schools . . .”² and to “provide for [the] support and maintenance [of the common schools] by direct legislative appropriation from the general fund.”³ Private school subsidies, whether in the form of vouchers or tax credits, divert scarce public funds from public schools, which are insufficiently funded. SB178, which begins the path towards a FULLY funded weighted funding formula, only makes a down payment of 5% of the overall need of public education of \$1 billion. Nevada should first strengthen public education, which benefits Nevada children at every income level, before supporting private school subsidies, which primarily benefit Nevada children who are fortunate to have well-off parents.

Private school vouchers will re-segregate Nevada’s public schools, with the most needy attending public schools. That is not the kind of community that Nevada’s Founders envisioned when they established a system of “common schools” in our Constitution that would create a better Nevada civic community.

#VouchersHurt all Nevadans, and for that reason we urge the Legislature to respect settled law, SB302 vouchers are unconstitutional. Please do not support SB506’s attempt to “fix” SB302 vouchers.

Respectfully submitted,
Sylvia Lazos, Policy Director
Amanda Morgan, Legal Director

¹ *Schwartz v. Lopez*, 132 Nev. Adv. Op. 73, 382 P.3d 886, 891 (2016).

² Nev. Const. art. XI, § 2.

³ Nev. Const. art. XI, § 6.1.