

March 12, 2025

Dear members of the committee:

My name is Virginia Clinton-Lisell and I'm an associate professor of Educational Foundations and Research at the University of North Dakota. I am sharing this testimony as a private citizen and not speaking on behalf of UND. I am submitting this testimony to inform the committee as to the research evidence on how public funds for private school tuition (through vouchers or educational savings account). I am mentioning my position to clarify that I am an expert in the field of education research. I have been involved in training or practice of education research for almost twenty years and have over 60 peer-reviewed publications.

Below are main findings from recent journal articles on the topic in italics.

*Based on 8 years of student data from 45,000 students in Indiana, vouchers lead to private schools "pushing out" low performing students into public schools. This led to lower overall performance in public school. The authors concluded that state funds for private tuition worsens education for the students who struggle the most in school.*

Waddington, R. J., Zimmer, R., & Berends, M. (2024). Cream skimming and pushout of students participating in a statewide private school voucher program. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 46(4), 795-803.

*This is an analysis of a voucher system in Louisiana for low income families and how it lead to a drop in English Language Arts and math scores on standardized exams for students who received vouchers.*

Mills, J. N., & Wolf, P. J. (2017). Vouchers in the Bayou: The Effects of the Louisiana Scholarship Program on Student Achievement After 2 Years. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(3), 464-484. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373717693108> (Original work published 2017)

*The patterns noted in Louisiana were similar in Indiana in a voucher program for low-income students. According to this study's analysis, students who received vouchers performed worse on mathematics assessments.*

Waddington, R. J., & Berends, M. (2018). Impact of the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program: Achievement effects for students in upper elementary and middle school. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 37(4), 783-808.

*This is a synthesis of 39 studies on the enrollment of students with disabilities in public and private schools in 31 states with public funds for private tuition. Based on these results, there is substantially lower percentages of enrollment of students with disabilities in private schools than public. The authors cite evidence that private school administrators discourage parents of*

*students with disabilities from enrolling, not allow students with disabilities to enroll, and remove students with disabilities who are enrolled.*

Senese, J., & Winters, M. A. (2024). School choice and students with disabilities: Evidence from administrative data. *Remedial and Special Education*, 07419325241262699.

*This is a report from the Economic Policy Institute that explains how public funds for private tuition harm funding for public schools. It includes an excel spreadsheet that calculates the impact of an individual student.*

Wething, J. (2024). *How vouchers harm public schools* Calculating the cost of voucher programs to public school districts. <https://www.epi.org/publication/vouchers-harm-public-schools/>

*Similarly, this is an analysis of how Arizona's educational savings account program has been much more expensive than estimated. Over 5,000 public school teachers in Arizona could have been hired to help address teacher shortages with the net cost of ESAs.*

Griffith, M., & Burns, D. (2024). Understanding the Cost of Universal School Vouchers: An Analysis of Arizona's Empowerment Scholarship Account Program. *Learning Policy Institute*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED642536>

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Virginia Clinton-Lisell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Virginia Clinton-Lisell