

# Decline to sign Initiative 22

## Initiative 22: Invests in Private Schools & Risks our Kids' Future

Initiative 22, just like Amendment 80 from last year, is an unnecessary, duplicative, and misleading proposal that could devastate funding for our public schools, while costing taxpayers millions of dollars. Disguised as a way to protect school choice, which Colorado families already have, this proposed amendment to the Colorado Constitution takes a permanent first step towards creating a voucher system, which would use taxpayer dollars to bankroll elite private school tuition.

Voucher systems divert critical resources from already-underfunded public schools and funnel them to unaccountable private schools that do not have to meet state education standards or teach scientifically sound curriculum. These schools can and do openly discriminate against children with special needs or disabilities or families that don't fit their economic, religious, racial, or ideological standards.

Amendment 80 was opposed by the Colorado Education Association, Colorado PTA, Stand For Children, ACLU of Colorado, AFT Colorado, Colorado Fiscal Institute, the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE), AFSCME, Advocates for Public Education Policy (A4PEP), Business and Professional Women of Colorado, Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, League of Women Voters Colorado, Soul 2 Soul Sisters, Bell Policy Center, United for a New Economy, Colorado Democratic Party, American Association of University Women, Colorado WINS, Colorado AFL-CIO, and New Era Colorado Action Fund.

### By the numbers:

- School choice already exists in Colorado and has been legally protected since 1994. Public schools are already serving 95% of our kids and families, and we shouldn't support measures that jeopardize the education of the majority of our kids to benefit the few.
- Voucher programs adopted in other states are costing taxpayers millions above the projections. Money diverted from public schools to pay exorbitant private school tuition will have to come from cuts to essential public services like public safety, transportation, and health care.
  - Arizona Voucher Program Projected Cost: \$65 million per year
    - Real Cost: \$550 million (year 1) & \$850-950 million (projected year 2)
  - Ohio Voucher Program Projected Costs: \$439 Million
    - Real Cost: \$452 million
  - North Carolina Projected Costs: \$10.8 million per year
    - Real Cost: \$144 million per year
- Voucher programs primarily benefit families who *are already using private schools*, creating subsidies for the wealthy few:
  - In Arizona, 80% of students receiving vouchers were already in private schools, as well as 89% of students receiving in New Hampshire and 75% of students in Wisconsin.
- While voucher programs increase costs for taxpayers, it's at the expense of our children's education.
  - Studies show that students using vouchers were not keeping up academically with public school students and that students who used vouchers to attend private schools fared worse on state exams compared to their closely matched peers in public schools.
  - Voucher programs in DC, Indiana, Louisiana, and Ohio have all resulted in learning LOSS for students who participated in voucher programs. In Ohio and Louisiana, that learning loss was greater than the learning loss impacts of Covid or Hurricane Katrina.

A properly funded, high-quality education system for all Colorado's kids is critical to strong, prosperous communities and to our state's future. Initiative 22 is not about choice, since Colorado families already have the ability to send their child to the school that best fits their needs. It's about creating a voucher program that will funnel money to exclusionary, expensive, and unaccountable private schools at the expense of our kids' education and our public schools. **Decline to sign Initiative 22** and help us keep it off the ballot.