

2021 ISBA RESOLUTION NO. 5

IN OPPOSITION TO DIVERTING PUBLIC DOLLARS TO PRIVATE OR PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS INCLUDING VOUCHERS, THE GRANTING OF TAX CREDITS FOR SCHOLARSHIP DONORS, OR AMENDING ARTICLE IX, §5, IDAHO CODE, ALSO KNOWN AS THE BLAINE AMENDMENT

WHEREAS, the Idaho State Constitution provides for “the free and thorough public education for children”; and

WHEREAS, the Idaho State Constitution as amended by the Blaine Amendment ensures the separation of church and state in Idaho by prohibiting the flow of public money to private or religious institutions for education; and

WHEREAS, school districts and charter schools receiving public funds from the legislature are required to meet accounting and student achievement standards to receive those funds; and

WHEREAS, an additional layer of state oversight would have to be created to account for the use of public money distributed to either individual families or to private or religious institutions; and

WHEREAS, language found in House Bill 590 heard in the 2018 legislative session allowed for funding of a myriad of things for which public school students do not receive funding. Expenses such as uniforms, tutoring, summer program fees, special after-school programs, and anything approved by the State Board of Education could be deductible; and

WHEREAS, Idaho’s students have increasing access to a wide variety of school choice options in the state of Idaho, and parents are free to choose educational services through Idaho’s public education system or educational options in the private sector; and

WHEREAS, in other areas of the country that have adopted voucher programs, student achievement has suffered, especially among those children receiving vouchers; and

WHEREAS, no statement of fiscal impact has been generated.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Idaho School Boards Association oppose any effort to divert public dollars to private or parochial schools, grant tax credits for scholarship donations, or amend the Constitution of the State of Idaho, Article IX, §5, Idaho Code, also known as the Blaine Amendment, to allow public dollars to finance private or parochial education in the K-12 education system of the State of Idaho.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

School choice is an integral part of public education in the state of Idaho. Public school choice includes charter, magnet, alternative, and virtual schools in addition to traditional public schools where dual language, classical, harbor, international, Montessori, Career Technical, STEM, and STEAM programs are offered. These programs are an integral part of what public education already offers across Idaho, funded by state tax dollars. Idaho's current investment in our children's public schools ranks 51st in the country. Reducing the general fund by offering a tax credit for donations to scholarship programs or diverting already scarce resources to provide vouchers to private schools will further erode funding to current public schools all across Idaho. If our state constitution is changed, Idaho's investment in public education will become even smaller as our taxes will be siphoned off to unaccountable private and parochial schools. We oppose amending The Idaho State Constitution, Article IX, §5, Idaho Code, also known as the Blaine Amendment, for the reasons outlined above. Idaho already has substantial choice in its public school system. A voucher, tax-credit, or scholarship program will cause irreparable harm to the existing system of public schools, and will likely harm overall student achievement.

Submitted by Boise School District No. 1

Recommendation of the ISBA Executive Board: Do Pass

Michelle Lippert will address the ISBA Executive Board's Recommendation