



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

File #: RS2024-188, **Version:** 1

A resolution opposing expansion of the Education Savings Account program in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Tennessee General Assembly approved, by a single vote, the implementation of an Education Savings Account ("ESA"), or "school voucher" program, in Davidson and Shelby counties; and

WHEREAS, the school voucher program was also expanded to Hamilton County in 2023; and

WHEREAS, currently, the school voucher program provides approximately \$9,000 for students to attend schools on the list of ESA-approved schools, which can be used toward tuition, textbooks, uniforms, and other approved educational expenses; and

WHEREAS, the proposed expansion of the school voucher program in Tennessee, which allows for \$7,075 in public funding for students to attend private or home schools, will also tie up additional state funds, with an estimated annual cost of \$141.5 million; and

WHEREAS, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools receives nearly a quarter of its budget from federal and state funding, and much of the remaining funding comes from the Metropolitan Government through property taxes; and

WHEREAS, when combined with recently updated state funding calculations based on student enrollment, an expanded voucher program could mean less funding from the state and more funding required from local sources, which may necessitate an increase in property taxes; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee currently ranks 46th among all states in education funding in the United States; and

WHEREAS, research from the Brookings Institute shows that school voucher programs lead to an increase in new private schools which are funded almost exclusively by vouchers and quickly close. In addition, many existing private schools raise tuition after voucher programs are instituted; and

WHEREAS, the Brookings Institute has also found mixed evidence on whether school voucher programs actually improve student attainment or performance; and

WHEREAS, in addition, it is unclear whether there will be sufficient oversight or accountability for schools enrolled in the school voucher program and whether students will be subject to state testing or retention requirements; and

WHEREAS, generally, private schools are subjected to less oversight and regulation than public schools, and not all students are able to choose which private school they attend. Instead, private schools have the ability to turn away students and only admit who they want; and

WHEREAS, public funds should stay in public school systems and not be used to fund private and parochial schools; and

WHEREAS, instead of expanding the school voucher program, the Tennessee General Assembly should eliminate the program and use the funds to properly invest in public schools across Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee General Assembly should reject the expansion of school vouchers and rescind legislation that authorizes school vouchers in Davidson, Shelby, and Hamilton counties.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. The Metropolitan Council hereby goes on record as opposing expansion of the Education Savings Account program in Tennessee and further opposing the defunding of public schools in Tennessee.

Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.