

Resolution Opposing Public and Private School Choice Programs That Undermine Public Education

WHEREAS, the Board of Aldermen of the City of Pearl, Mississippi, recognizes the fundamental role of strong, accessible, and adequately funded public schools in providing educational opportunities for all children; and

WHEREAS, the State of Mississippi, through the work of the Mississippi Legislature, the Mississippi Department of Education, the State Board of Education and local school boards, has established nationally recognized standards and measures for accountability in public education; and

WHEREAS, vouchers eliminate public accountability by channeling tax dollars into private schools that do not face state-approved academic standards or accountability measures, do not make budgets public, do not adhere to open meetings and records laws, do not publicly report on student achievement, and do not face the public accountability requirements contained in major federal laws, including special education; and

WHEREAS, Mississippi's public schools serve the vast majority of the state's students, including those most vulnerable, and represent a cornerstone of community cohesion; and

WHEREAS, "school choice" initiatives-including vouchers, education savings accounts (ESAs), tax-credit scholarship programs, and tax credits for donations to private schools-redirect critical public funds away from local public school districts and instead subsidize private, unaccountable education providers; and

WHEREAS, numerous studies have shown that voucher and ESA programs do not reliably improve student outcomes and more typically result in lower performance when compared to traditional public schools; and

WHEREAS, vouchers and other choice programs divert critical public resources to pay private school tuition for students, including many who already attend private schools; and

WHEREAS, the diversion of these resources weakens the financial viability of public school systems, and undermines the public's trust in the state's commitment to a quality education for all students; and

WHEREAS, vouchers are an inefficient use of taxpayer money because they compel taxpayers to support two school systems: one public and one private, the latter of which is not accountable to all the taxpayers supporting it; and

WHEREAS, the Pearl Public School District is the lifeblood of the Pearl community, attracting young families and economic development, and providing the local camaraderie and team spirit that foster the high quality of life our citizens enjoy; and

WHEREAS, the state of Mississippi provides no funding for K-12 facilities, and the citizens of Pearl have elected to raise their local taxes to ensure smaller classes, world-class facilities, and excellent academic, athletic, fine and performing arts, and other programs; and

WHEREAS, out-of-district students' families do not pay local property taxes in our community, and allowing out-of-district students to attend Pearl Public Schools will create large classes and crowded classrooms, and the citizens of Pearl will be responsible for further raising our local taxes to add classrooms to accommodate out-of-district students; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Aldermen of the City of Pearl, Mississippi:

1. **Opposes** the establishment or expansion of school choice programs- whether public or private-that divert public funding or support from our community's traditional public schools;
2. **Urges** Pearl's legislative delegation, the Mississippi State Legislature, and the Governor to oppose school choice and invest in strengthening public education by fully funding the state's school funding formula, supporting teachers and staff, and expanding services that directly benefit students and families within the public school system;
3. **Supports** efforts to ensure accountability and transparency in all publicly funded educational programs, and opposes the use of taxpayer dollars to subsidize private education without equivalent oversight, accountability, or student protections;
4. **Commits** to advocating for policies that prioritize public education as a public good open to all children in Pearl and across Mississippi.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Aldermen of the City of Pearl, Mississippi, this 10th day of September, 2025.

ATTEST:

KELLY SCOUTEN, CITY CLERK




JAKE WINDHAM, MAYOR