

VOUCHERS PRESS CONFERENCE

State Capitol Rotunda

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Jerry Jordan, President, Philadelphia Federation of Teachers



I know it's June, but I want us all to remember a critical day in February that set us on a new, better path forward for all of our young people.

On February 7, 2023, Judge Renée Cohn Jubelirer ruled definitively on an issue that those of us who have been in this fight for a while know in our bones: the way we fund public education in this commonwealth is unconstitutional. It is immoral.

- And Judge Jubelirer has now, with finality, ordered Executive and Legislative branches of government to address this decades-long system of neglect.

So it's a bit—no, a lot—troublesome to me, to our 13,000 members, to the advocates standing here today, and to all who care deeply about the future of public education in our great commonwealth, that we would be standing here once again to rally against a voucher scheme that would siphon money from public education.

It is outrageous to think that, instead of moving full steam ahead with the urgency that this moment requires, there are voucher bills floating about the legislature—bills that actively take money from public education rather than adhere to Judge Jubelirer's ruling.

So let me just remind us all what vouchers do NOT do:

- Vouchers do not reinvest in a system of public education that for decades has been underfunded
- Vouchers do not provide desperately needed resources for all students across the commonwealth regardless of their race, their gender identity, their religion, or their disability
- Vouchers do not remediate the toxic school buildings that are quite literally poisoning our young people

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- Vouchers do not actually address student outcomes and achievement
 - And Vouchers certainly do not address the inequities in school funding that they are purported to address

I could go on.

But let me tell you just some of what vouchers DO:

- Voucher programs often discriminate against students based on myriad of factors
- Vouchers go, half the time, to students whose families earn more than \$200,000
- Vouchers go, a majority of the time, to students who would already be attending private schools
- Vouchers do, unequivocally, wreak havoc on school districts and decimate public education—the research is clear on this

It is incumbent upon every lawmaker in our great Commonwealth: every State Representative, every State Senator, and Governor Josh Shapiro to double down on their commitment to enacting what Judge Jubelier ordered on February 7th.

It is time to fully fund public education in Pennsylvania—not only because a judge ordered it so—but because our children and educators need and deserve it. This is the future for our children, our grandchildren, and every Pennsylvania resident.

Thank you.