



TCASE

Contact: Andrea Chevalier
713-294-1720
andrea@tcase.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VOUCHERS HARM THE RIGHTS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In 2020, Governor Abbott [used](#) federal coronavirus relief funds to create the Supplemental Special Education Services (SSES) grant program to “offset learning disruptions related to COVID-19” for students served by special education.

In his State of the State address, Abbott alluded that the SSES program was an “education savings account” (ESA) for students with disabilities and indicated he’d like to expand it to all students. Abbott made “education freedom” an emergency item, allowing a voucher to fast-track through the legislature.

“ESAs will not provide ‘education freedom’ to *all* students because private schools do not have to follow the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that protect students with disabilities,” said TCASE Executive Director Theresa Parsons. These laws afford parents and students rights and remedies, like due process and a complaints mechanism.

To justify an ESA, Gov. Abbott claimed in his address that Texas public schools are well-funded, but Texas is 42nd in the nation in per student funding and has been cited multiple times by the federal government for failing to maintain financial support for special education funding. The Texas Education Agency reported last year that in 2020 districts spent almost \$2 billion more on special education than the state and federal funding they received for it.

“The SSES program was originally sold as a way to support students with disabilities. Converting this program to an ESA for all students tells me it was a smoke screen to usher in vouchers,” said TCASE Director of Governmental Relations Andrea Chevalier.

The Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education (TCASE) is a professional membership association comprised of about 1,300 school district leaders charged with special education in Texas public schools.

###