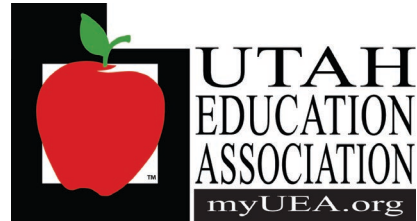


UEA Issue Brief

SB177: Scholarships for Special Needs Students



SB177: Scholarships for Special Needs Students, sponsored by Senator Lincoln Fillmore, shifts public money to private schools through a voucher-like scholarship program using income tax credits. It requires the State Board of Education to oversee the program, including the selection of a scholarship granting organization. It creates a nonrefundable corporate or individual income tax credit for certain program donations.

UEA's Position: OPPOSE

The UEA opposes Senate Bill 177 for the following reasons:

- SB177 diverts funds away from school districts to private providers with **little taxpayer accountability** just as SCHOOL VOUCHERS would have done. (Vouchers were resoundingly defeated by voters.)
- SB177 creates new work for the State Board of Education without funding. Under provisions of the bill, USBE must:
 - Qualify students for the scholarships;
 - Qualify schools for the program;
 - Conduct background checks on each scholarship-granting organization officer and employee;
 - Provide a tax credit certificate form for use by the scholarship granting organizations;
 - Conduct the proposal process (RFP) for the scholarship granting organization; and
 - Monitor and audit the scholarship granting organization.
- Private providers may deny student admission for any reason and require parents to waive their federal IDEA (special education law) rights.
- SB177 ignores students in rural areas where private schools do not exist.
- SB177 is the wrong way to fund special education. The legislature should fully fund the public education system for the benefit of all students, including those with special needs, rather than shifting funds to private providers.

March 7, 2019