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The Honorable Governor Gary Herbert
Utah State Capitol Complex
350 North State Street, Suite 200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Dear Governor Herbert:

On behalf of more than 18,000 Utah educators, the Utah Education Association is asking you to veto a bill that we believe is poor policy for public education.

HB 4003 Sub 1 Special Needs Opportunity Scholarship Program shifts public money to private schools through a voucher-like scholarship program using income tax credits.

During this time of economic uncertainty, it is irresponsible to create a six-million dollar tax credit program before it is clear how state budgets will be impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. We know that there will be unprecedented levels of student learning and emotional needs when school resumes in the Fall, and it is critical that funding remain in place to support students. The creation of a new tax credit during an economic crisis leads us to conclude that the historic education budget passed during the 2020 General Session remains, rightfully, in place.

It is critical to recognize that private schools are not required to provide the same level of disability services to students as public schools which must comply with all federal IDEA protections. Additionally, private schools may deny admission to any student they choose whereas public schools serve all students.

Finally, it is significant to note that HB 4003 passed by the narrowest of margins because *legislator opposition to the bill increased* between the original passage of HB 332 and the passage of HB 4003. In addition, all education stakeholders were opposed to HB 4003. Voters resoundingly defeated vouchers in 2007 and we believe the strong bipartisan opposition to HB 4003 in both the House and the Senate indicate the very divisive nature of this policy.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully,

Heidi Matthews
President, Utah Education Association

cc: Tami Pyfer
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