UEA HB 215 Issue Brief

Funding for Teacher Salaries & Optional Education Opportunities

UEA opposes House Bill 215 (Substitute 3):

- Educator salary increases are tied to the passage of a private school voucher (lines 194-197).

- “Accountability” for scholarship recipients is to submit an annual “portfolio” without defined minimum expectations. The portfolio may be completed by the student or the parent, and the program manager is prohibited from disclosing the contents of the portfolio. Private schools have no accountability to demonstrate student performance or achievement (lines 369-374).

- The “enrollment preference” for lower-income families to receive a scholarship does not exclude higher-income families from qualifying. All recipients could be high-income families subsidizing their child’s private education with public tax dollars (lines 401-414).

- The $8,000 scholarship is nearly double the current weighted pupil unit (WPU) value of $4,038 public school students receive (line 352).

- Parents are required to waive federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) rights for special education services (lines 378-387).

- Approved scholarship expenses are extremely broad and include everything from private school tuition to extracurricular fees, transportation, afterschool programs, tutoring, and “any other expense for a good or service...the program manager approves” (lines 292-326).

- Private schools with at least 150 students must require employees to submit to a fingerprint-based criminal background check and ongoing monitoring (lines 832-841). Schools with fewer than 150 students or other “service providers” have no background check requirement to work with students.

- Scholarship students reentering public school must return the balance of the scholarship funds to the program rather than having the money follow the student into the public school (lines 969-973).

- There are no provisions to require private schools or service providers to be:
  - Accredited
  - Use curricula aligned to Utah core standards
  - Use statewide standardized assessments
  - Employ professionally licensed teachers and administrators

- Private schools and private educational service providers are not subject to the same professional and ethical standards as public school educators and cannot be disciplined by the Utah Professional Practices Advisory Commission for misconduct.