

SCHOOL VOUCHER PROPOSALS

Social Policy Resolution

CA01.06.26



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Adopted by the 2001 Churchwide Assembly.

Resolved

To adopt the following "Social Policy Resolution on School Voucher Proposals" to guide the public policy advocacy ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, with the understanding:

- a. that "school voucher proposals" refer to public policies in which government financially assists parents who choose to enroll their children in private and parochial elementary and secondary schools; and
- b. that this assistance in many proposals is dependent on parents' financial need;

To direct public policy advocacy offices related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to:

- a. evaluate school voucher proposals on a case-by-case basis to determine if they represent a reasonable hope for educational reform that would benefit children and youth who live in poverty or are otherwise disadvantaged;
- b. make their determination about specific proposals in light of the following goals. These goals, where applicable, also may be used to evaluate other proposals for educational reform. To what degree does the proposal:
 - provide public schools the support and resources necessary to fulfill their tasks?
 - increase equal access to high quality education for all, especially for children and youth who live in poverty or are otherwise disadvantaged?
 - enhance the ability of families — especially families living in poverty and other situations of hardship — to select the right high quality education for their children?
 - allow participating schools, including religious ones, to maintain their distinctive character and mission?
 - protect against all forms of invidious discrimination against students?
 - ensure just, equitable, and long-term viable sources of funding?
 - provide eligible families sufficient and accurate information on participating schools?
 - ensure ways for measuring the educational achievements of students in participating schools?
 - establish means to evaluate the positive and negative results of the program and in light of these results to consider if the program should be continued, modified, or ended;

- c. consult with, among others, persons in their locale connected with public schools and with private schools, including ELCA affiliated schools (for example, parents and children, teachers, and administrators), and community advocacy organizations, and draw upon their knowledge, experience, and judgment in evaluating proposals and making their determination; and

To direct the Division for Church in Society to publicize the availability of this social policy resolution as well as other division resources on educational choice to assist members in their consideration of proposals for school vouchers and educational reform.

This social policy resolution was archived by a majority vote (773-13) of the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Phoenix, Arizona, on July 29, 2025 (CA22.01.05.) As archived, this social policy resolution is maintained as a historical document and does not represent current ELCA social teaching.