THE MISSISSIPPI MISTAKE

January 7, 2026

Dear Caucus Members,

We as the undersigned organizations, stand together asking for your commitment to stand in support of public schools and vote NO on any bill that takes money away from public schools and moves it to private schools.

Mississippi's public schools are the backbones of our communities, our economy, and our children's futures. "School choice" and "school freedom" bills may sound appealing on the surface, but the reality is clear: shifting public dollars into private hands will defund public schools, harm rural communities and local economies, reduce accountability, and leave the most vulnerable children behind.

"School Choice" Would Lead to Fewer Resources for Public Schools

- **Mississippi spends roughly $12,175 per student.** By definition, the "money follows the student" model takes those dollars away from public schools, unless new legislative funding is added to replace those lost dollars.
- **Universal school choice would cost Mississippi taxpayers $597.8 million.** $443.7 million of that money—or 74% of the total program cost—would pay for students who are already participating in private education and who are primarily from wealthy families.

"School Choice" Causes Economic Harm to Rural Communities

- **Public schools are the economic backbone of small towns.** Reduced funding would lead to layoffs from the largest employers in many rural counties, providing stable jobs for teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, and support personnel, impacting the economic health of local communities.

"School Choice" Creates the Illusion of Choice but Leaves Students Behind

- **Private schools do not have to accept all students.** They can deny admission based on discipline history, academic achievement, religion, or other factors.
- **Rural students are underserved.** Private options are scarce outside metropolitan areas. Only 28% of rural students have a private school within five miles of their public school.
- **Affordability limits choice.** Without tuition caps, private schools can raise tuition to match the voucher amounts. Families in high-income counties will have greater access to private schools, while those in lower-income counties will be priced out.

Finally, unlike public schools, private schools do not have to meet accountability standards. Public schools have strict academic accountability measures in place to ensure student achievement. The 'Mississippi Miracle' exists because public schools met and exceeded high

expectations. Private schools want public funds without ANY level of accountability to maintain their ‘autonomy.’

Sincerely,

Mississippi Association of Educators

Parents for Public Schools

Mississippi Center for Justice

Mississippi Black Women’s Round Table

One Voice

Southern Poverty Law Center

Mississippi for a Just World

Mississippi Urban League

MS NAACP State Chapter

Mississippi Poor People’s Campaign

Mississippi Impact Coalition

MS American Civil Liberties Union

Children’s Defense Fund Southern Regional Office

Southern Rural Black Women’s Initiative

People’s Advocacy Institute

Mississippi Votes

Springboard to Opportunities