



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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GOVERNOR

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VETO MESSAGE FROM THE
GOVERNOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
REGARDING HOUSE BILL 1 OF THE
2026 REGULAR SESSION

I, Andy Beshear, Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, pursuant to the authority granted under Section 88 of the Kentucky Constitution, do hereby veto the following:

House Bill 1 of the 2026 Regular Session of the General Assembly in its entirety.

As Kentuckians, we love our public schools. They are anchors in our communities and a big part of our individual and collective identity. During weekdays, we drop our kids at the bus stop or the school door, knowing hard-working teachers, counselors, aides, and more want the best for them. On weeknights, we fill the gyms for basketball games and the libraries for school meetings. And in our toughest of times following historic flooding or deadly tornados, our schools serve as lifelines, providing food and shelter to people in need. In many counties our public schools are our largest employer.

Throughout our history, Kentuckians have been firm that public dollars should only be used for public education. In fact, our Kentucky Constitution has a specific provision that requires "voter approval" for such dollars to be used elsewhere. In 2024, our General Assembly followed the required process, asking the people of Kentucky if they wanted to spend public dollars on private or charter schools. The answer was a resounding no. The effort was defeated by 30 points! That was the same margin of victory as Donald Trump in Kentucky. It was rejected in all 120 counties, both rural and urban, by significant margins.

The message was clear. Don't divert public dollars. Fund our public schools.

As Governor, I've heard the message. I've proposed teacher raises, Pre-K for All four-year-olds, and dollars for technology and continuing education. I have funded major renovations to our career and technical education centers. I pushed for more money for transportation and I have worked to provide more mental health programs for our students.

Yet time and time again, the Republican supermajority in Kentucky's General Assembly has failed our public schools and shirked its constitutional duty to sufficiently fund them. Every budget cycle, the supermajority fails to provide necessary resources, and instead repeatedly passes bills that would divert needed dollars to private or charter schools. The Kentucky Supreme Court has struck down each of those bills as unconstitutional, including in a unanimous decision on the very day this bill was filed.

With House Bill 1, the supermajority is at it again, wanting to use a federal tax credit to divert public dollars to private schools. While the Kentucky Constitution says that's up to the voters, the bill allows the Secretary of State – an office with no public education or taxation duties – to decide. They believe he is also anti-public education and will implement the credit.

It is time to listen to the voters. It is time to serve our children and not private and corporate interests. To recognize we serve the people of Kentucky, and they overwhelmingly oppose these efforts.

I recognize my veto today will be politicized. Some will attack “teachers’ unions,” as if they are malevolent actors when, in reality, they are our neighbors and friends who have taken on critical jobs despite the low pay. They should be appreciated instead of attacked.

Others will say I refuse to buck my political party, as if some edict has been sent to all Democrats on this or any issue. For those who don't know my record, as Attorney General I sued both Democratic and Republican presidents when they were wrong, and as Governor I have voiced my criticism and given credit to presidents of both parties.

I am, quite simply, standing up for my conviction that if we want to ensure every child gets a world-class education, the answer is not diverting students and dollars from public education, but providing sufficient resources to fix public education. If you believe a charter school can do better because it has more flexibility, then provide our public schools with more flexibility. Don't hamstring them with requirements you don't put on other schools and then blame them in direct comparisons.

As a product of Kentucky's public schools, I will not lose faith in our system.

For these reasons I am vetoing House Bill 1.

This, the ^{13th} day of March, 2026.



Andy Beshear
Governor