

Education Minnesota

Despite Supreme Court setback, Education Minnesota pledges to resist spread of private-school vouchers in Minnesota

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ST. PAUL, Minnesota. June 30, 2020 – The conservative majority of the U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday voted to join the far-right effort to siphon taxpayer money from public schools for all and spend it on religious schools that can, and do, discriminate based on religion, gender and the special needs of certain students.

In the case, *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, the court voted 5-4 to say that states offering certain kinds of vouchers to students in private schools cannot exclude religious schools from such programs. In the process, the court overturned Montana's so-called Blaine amendment to its constitution. A similar amendment is in the Minnesota Constitution.

The following statement may be attributed to Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota.

“No matter what we look like or where we come from, our families and neighborhoods are stronger, safer and healthier when we come together. Our public schools have helped lead the way, keeping our communities connected even as they've kept students at home to stop the spread of COVID-19. Our public schools are more than a place where kids take tests, they are part of what ties our communities together and, during normal times, a place where childhood happens.

Unfortunately, Betsy DeVos and a small network of right-wing billionaires have used their power to bring cases like this, which are intended to starve the schools for every child by shifting taxpayer money to unaccountable religious schools that serve only the children their administrators accept.

In Minnesota, we need to keep our communities strong and ensure all our public schools have the resources they need to provide a high-quality education and be full partners in their communities, white, Black and brown, urban, suburban and rural.

Our union of educators will continue fighting for high-quality schools for every child, with trusted counselors, small class sizes and more educators who look like the students they teach. Today's ruling was a setback, but we will continue to resist the plans of Betsy DeVos and her pals to expand taxpayer vouchers for religious schools across America.”

The court's decision on Tuesday does not require Minnesota, nor any other state, to provide vouchers for students to attend religious schools, but it does mean that if the Minnesota Legislature authorizes

any state funds for private schools, religious schools may not be denied these funds solely because they have a religious affiliation or offer religious instruction.

About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota's members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota's public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota's community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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