

## DISCLAIMER

Electronic versions of the exhibits in these minutes may not be complete.

This information is supplied as an informational service only and should not be relied upon as an official record.

Original exhibits are on file at the Legislative Counsel Bureau Research Library in Carson City.

Contact the Library at (775) 684-6827 or [library@lcb.state.nv.us](mailto:library@lcb.state.nv.us).

Committee Secretary

**Testimony re SB 376, Senate Finance Committee  
Washoe County School District**

Dr. Dotty Merrill, Senior Director  
Public Policy, Accountability & Assessment  
April 10, 2003

Chairman Raggio, members of the Committee, and staff

For the record, my name is Dotty Merrill. I am here this afternoon on behalf of the Washoe County School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 376. *[clarification re: Supreme Court case]*

In the many debates surrounding public education—high standards, testing, charter schools, equity versus excellence—no issue seems to polarize the discussion more than the subject of vouchers.

For both sides in the debate on school vouchers, there can be little doubt about one thing: No one really knows much at all about how vouchers might work for large numbers of Nevada's school-aged children because the number of programs available for study in the nation is limited and the research on them is thin. In other words, with Senate Bill 376, you won't know what you're getting until all your money has been spent.

In a democracy, public policy gives shape to decisions about the use of tax dollars and accountability for results. Voucher programs propose something very different, however.

By taking money from public schools and awarding it to private concerns, the voucher program proposed in SB 376 comes without any of the accountability that is demanded of publicly funded institutions. Private schools accepting the vouchers as proposed in this bill do not have to obey the state's open meeting laws that apply to all public schools.

- ☐ They do not have to hire certified teachers.
- ☐ They do not have to require a college degree of their teachers.
- ☐ They do not have to meet the demands for "high quality teachers" as contained in No Child Left Behind.
- ☐ They do not have to release information on employee wages and benefits.
- ☐ They do not have to report student data—test scores, attendance, dropout rates.
- ☐ They do not have to make adequate yearly progress as required by public schools in No Child Left Behind.
- ☐ Have you ever seen an accountability report for a private school in Nevada? ~~It shouldn't come as a surprise that the answer is "no."~~

**Testimony re SB 376, Senate Finance Committee**  
**Washoe County School District**  
**April 10, 2003**

To turn over funds from public schools to private ventures that operate outside the domain of public accountability simply creates an incentive for those who want to flee tougher accountability standards that exist in the public schools.

Senate Bill 376 contains <sup>at least 15 of which describe</sup> 24 pages, ~~and 10,892 words describing~~ how a private school may become a voucher school and how it will receive funding.

We cannot find one word in this proposal about accountability expectations or even about requiring private schools to teach Nevada's academic content and performance standards.

We cannot find one word in this proposal about requiring private schools to meet the academic achievement expectations required of the public schools in this state, either with the administration of NRTs or the administration of CRTs.

We cannot find one word in this proposal about accountability for student academic performance or achievement, about student attendance, or about funding for instruction.

We do find that this void speaks for itself.

The Trustees and Superintendent of the Washoe County School District strongly urge you to vote against passage of Senate Bill 376. Its proposals are simply bad public policy.