

EDUCATION

What is Trump's voucher program? How it could impact local schools

**Jesse Collings**

Worcester Telegram & Gazette

Updated July 24, 2026, 2:03 p.m. ET

Key Points

The plan would provide a tax credit of up to \$1,700 for donations to organizations that provide vouchers to students.

President Trump says it is a way to help students afford alternatives to struggling public schools.

Opponents, including teachers unions, say it would mostly help wealthier students who have never attended public school.

WORCESTER – Massachusetts has until the end of the year to opt into the federal government's school voucher program, one of the main stated focuses of the Trump administration's [policy on education](#).

Last July, as part of Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," the federal government [created a school voucher policy](#) that will grant tax credits for donations to nonprofit school voucher programs. Each state has the ability to opt in or out to the program, with a deadline set for Jan. 1, 2027.

What is a school voucher?

A school voucher can provide free or reduced costs for students attending a private institution. Through the act enacted by the Trump administration, if a state chooses to opt into the program, it will allow private donors to receive a tax credit of up to \$1,700 from the federal government on their next tax bill if they donate to an

official nonprofit organization that provides vouchers for students. The nonprofits can either be directly affiliated with a particular institution or a third-party group.

Vouchers can also be used to provide educational enrichment activities beyond typical school tuition or expenses, such as after-school programs, summer programs and tutoring.

According to the Trump administration, families that make up to 300% of the median family income could be eligible for a voucher. In Worcester, that would mean any student with a family income up to \$391,200 per year would be eligible for a voucher.

Why is this a focus of the Trump administration?

Trump and members of his administration have been outspoken about seeking to provide alternative education options beyond the standard geography-based public school system. When Trump signed the [Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families](#) executive order last January, he wrote that students need different opportunities beyond public school options to succeed.

"Parents want and deserve the best education for their children. But too many children do not thrive in their assigned, government-run K-12 school," the order states. "When our public education system fails such a large segment of society, it hinders our national competitiveness and devastates families and communities."

The tax credit will give greater incentive to sponsor private school vouchers, which the administration states will allow more students to attend a school outside of the public school system.

How would this impact Massachusetts?

If Massachusetts chooses to opt in to the voucher program, the state would be responsible for administration and oversight of the official nonprofit voucher programs that will administer the vouchers. The state would also be responsible for monitoring compliance with federal requirements to deter waste, fraud and abuse.

While the state would be responsible for officiating the nonprofits, it could not reject nonprofits unless they fail to comply with looser federal regulations. That means nonprofits that provide vouchers for private institutions that may violate state regulations for public schools – such as LGBTQ+ rights, accessibility and other standards – would remain eligible for the voucher program.

How would this impact public schools?

Critics of the program have said that by providing tax credits to those who donate to private institutions, money will be diverted away from public schools. The Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, an independent policy firm, [issued a report last week](#) that stated the voucher program would move Massachusetts away from supporting public education in favor of wealthier, private schools.

"Massachusetts became a national leader in education by choosing to strengthen public schools, making equitable investments to close opportunity gaps, and ensuring every child has the opportunity to succeed," the report states. "The federal administration's voucher program asks Massachusetts to embrace a fundamentally different vision – one where educational opportunity depends on private fundraising rather than direct public investment and democratic accountability."

A successful implementation of the voucher program would also lead to more students attending private schools over public schools, which would exacerbate issues of declining enrollment, already a major topic in Massachusetts and particularly in Worcester County.

More: [Where did all the kids go? Most districts in Worcester County see declines in enrollment](#)

Since the state funding formula for local districts is heavily tied to student enrollment figures, if more students leave to attend private schools through the voucher program, that will lead to a decrease in funding for local districts.

What are officials saying?

The decision to opt in to the federal program will be made by Gov. Maura Healey.

Healey has said little about the topic publicly, but different groups have been urging Healey in both directions.

In May, a letter written by state Sen. Ryan Fattman, R-Sutton, urged Healey to opt in.

"This program will allow federal dollars – funded entirely by private taxpayer donations – to support K–12 students across the commonwealth beginning in tax year 2027," Fattman stated. "Under this federal program, every U.S. taxpayer may receive a dollar-for-dollar federal tax credit of up to \$1,700 for donations to Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) that fund scholarships for K-12 education expenses."

Major labor unions, including the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts, have urged Healey to opt out. In a [letter written by the AFT Massachusetts](#), the union stated that when enacted in other states, the vast majority of students benefiting from the vouchers have been wealthy students who never attended public school, not struggling students seeking an alternative.

"In states that currently have programs like this, outside analysis has shown time and again that wealthier families are much more likely to benefit from this shift of public money into private schools," the union stated. "Not only is public money subsidizing the education of some of the wealthiest students, most of it is going to students who have no record of ever attending a public school. These families aren't moving their children from a public school to a private school because they now have the resources or choice to do so. These families are receiving vouchers for the children who have always been enrolled in a private school. In Arkansas, 95% of voucher recipients had no record of public school enrollment. In Florida and Iowa, that number was 87%."