



8639

Greenville Herald-Banner
Greenville, TX
Circ 9665

MAR 22 2003

Legislators hear support for vouchers

Special to the Herald Banner

AUSTIN — Testifying before the Texas House Committee on Public Education, the Texas Public Policy Foundation's director of education research said Tuesday that the time for school vouchers is long overdue.

"The great myth is that vouchers are some kind of experiment," said Chris Patterson. "When Texas established the public schools in 1876, it did so using a voucher system. And there have been programs operating in Vermont and Maine for the last 150 years."

The public education committee was considering legislation that would create a voucher pilot program in Texas. The Foundation will next month release a collection of new reports on school choice and vouchers that cover the spectrum of political and ideological positions on the issue.

Patterson said 10 states offer school choice options to parents and children — either as vouchers, tax credits or tax deductions. She noted that research by the RAND Corporation and others have shown real, long-term academic gains resulting from school choice programs, especially for under-achieving and disadvantaged students.

"Vouchers will offer Texas students the opportunity to attend the schools that will best meet their needs," she said. "Texas has improved public schools dramatically over the past two decades, but some children are still left behind. The voucher program proposed today offers new hope to those children."

Patterson said legislators "can give children renewed hope for the best educational opportunities possible" by supporting school choice.

"Vouchers do not hurt public schools, and have in fact been shown in many cases to help



Capitol News

improve them," she said. "Research on the effects of school choice in Edgewood ISD and Milwaukee, as well as in Florida, Arizona and Michigan, find that public schools definitely improve when they are forced to compete for students and dollars."