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Montana PTA's Position Statement on Tax Credits for Scholarship Contributions for Non-Public and Potentially Unaccredited Schools

Chartered 95 years ago, Montana PTA is the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the state of Montana. We represent approximately 6,500 parents and child advocates in local PTA units across our vast state. We are strictly a non-partisan organization whose sole purpose is to promote the welfare of children and youth in schools.

Today's public schools are struggling to carry out basic educational services. Yet demands are being placed on schools to improve student achievement, without sufficient resources being provided to support these critical charges. Every dollar taken out of the public school system, for whatever reason, weakens the public education on which the vast majority of our state's children rely.

Montana PTA understands the many and diverse complications arising from our state and national drop-out crisis. However, we feel that SB282 does not substantiate claims of a direct correlation between decreasing drop-out rates to non-public school tax credits. Furthermore, allowing schools unaccredited by the state of Montana to receive such monies is opposed to our premise of school accountability.

The PTA has played an important role, since its founding, in assuring that public funds are used only for public schools accountable to taxpayers. Montana PTA realizes that the public school system must adapt to the needs of children and society, but does not believe that tuition tax credits, deductions and vouchers provide viable means to an improved climate of education. In fact, the Montana PTA feels that this practice would undermine the system of public education in Montana.

Please keep the public school system in Montana strong. Despite many challenges and decreasing funds, the free public education our children count on is the best place for public tax money. Help keep kids enrolled and successful in schools accredited by the state.