

Estimating Florida's HB1 Universal Voucher Cost in First Year

The HB1 proposed legislation in Florida would further expand the already substantial voucher program, pulling an estimated \$4 billion in state aid from public school districts to private education in 2023-24 though Florida Empowerment Scholarships with the cost increasing annually. Estimates of the cost of this program at the district and state level were made based on a variety of assumptions described below.

The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship program, providing \$568 million in vouchers in 2021-22, is also poised for expansion, but estimates for that program are not included here.

Current FES Voucher Students

We calculate **\$1.1 billion in state aid for current voucher program students** in 2023-24.

This amount is the actual state aid funding that was sent to private education through the voucher program, based on Final Calculations from the FLDOE [FEFP calculations](#) for 25,203 McKay Scholarship students and 98,860 FES students, a total of 124,063 students. (These two forms of scholarships are now combined under FES)

This is a conservative estimate for 2023-24, as 2022-23 FES voucher costs are already at \$1.4 billion without this new proposed legislation in place.

Note: A per pupil rate is calculated for current voucher students to estimate the cost of the expansion with HB1 vouchers, which at the state level averages to \$8,515 per pupil based on the FLDOE FEFP data files linked above.

New Public Students to FES Voucher Students

The HB1 legislation proposes to lift income restrictions for students to receive vouchers. We calculate **\$890 million for additional current public school students moving to private** education through the voucher program in 2023-24 with the removal of this income restriction.

Approximately 12% of public school students in Florida who are eligible for vouchers based on the current income restrictions are using them. Assuming a similar 12% rate of participation within the higher income group of public school students, this results in 104,477 students at a per pupil rate of \$8,515. Estimates for student household income at the district level are from the 2016-2020 [ACS education tabulation](#) for public school children.

Private Students to FES Voucher Students

Along with removing income restrictions fully, the HB1 legislation removes any requirement that students have attended a public school in Florida in the past. We calculate that **\$1.9 billion in state aid would go to private school vouchers in the initial year to serve students already in private schools.**

This is based on estimates that 75% of the current 292,022 private school students not receiving FES vouchers would participate in the voucher program. We use the 75% amount by referring to the trends in Arizona with their new universal voucher program. In Arizona, as of 1/30/2023, [46,500 students](#) have applied for vouchers with a [reported 80% of applicants](#) already attending private schools (37,200 students). Based on [NCES Private School Universe Survey 2020](#) estimates, there were 59,107 students in private schools in Arizona. Thus, after 4 months of the state accepting enrollments for their universal voucher program, 63% of students already in private schools were participating in the voucher program – reaching at least 75% by the end of the school year in Arizona is highly likely.

Estimates of private school students are from the FLDOE 2021-22 count of 416,084 total private school students from “[School Choice Overview](#)” presented to the Florida House of Representatives Choice and Innovation Subcommittee on 1/19/23 minus the 124,063 voucher students in the FLDOE FEFP Budget data files for 2021-22.

This is a conservative estimate, as ALL families currently enrolled in private schools could apply for the voucher program with this new proposed legislation, and have little incentive not to, as it will reduce or eliminate the parent/guardian’s own tuition payments to fund the student’s private education. The funds are also allowed to be used for other supplementary education payments, not simply tuition.

Home Education Students to FES Voucher Students

The HB1 legislation allows students participating in a home education program to begin receiving vouchers. An estimated ***\$85 million in vouchers would be added to support the 10,000 students in home education programs*** permitted to be funding in the first year.

Based on the legislation, the 10,000 student limit would be relaxed in the second year and then fully removed by 2027, which means this cost will substantially increase since 152,109 students already were enrolled in home education in Florida in 2021-22 (per the FLDOE School Choice presentation). There is little reason for parents/guardians to not apply for this government benefit for homeschooling, and this offers further incentive for the number of homeschooled students to increase.