

Board of Directors

The Rev. Dr. Richard S. Gilbert,
President
Donald Odell, Secretary
John E. Keevert, Treasurer
Kenneth Bollerud
The Rev. Dr. Tom Davis
Larry Gambino
Robert Herman, Esq.
Damaris McGuire
The Rev. Sam Trumbore
Barbara Zaron

Clergy Advisory Board

The Rev. Kaaren Anderson
The Rev. Kenneth I. Applegate
The Rev. Dr. Lynn Ashley
Rabbi Henry Bamberger
The Rev. Johanna Barrett
The Rev. Michelle Bogue-Trost
The Rev. Ben Bortin
The Rev. Stephen C. Butler
The Rev. Dr. Thomas A. Chulak
Rabbi Matthew Cutler
Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson, D.D.
Rabbi Joshua M. Davidson
The Rev. Larry A. Deyss
The Rev. Linda Dolby
Rabbi Debora S. Gordon
The Rev. Dr. Paula J. Gravelle
Rabbi Daniel Gropper
The Rev. Margaret Hart
Rabbi Alan J. Katz
Rabbi Lawrence A. Kotok
The Rev. Robert C. Lamar
The Rev. Dr. William A. Lasher
The Rev. Christopher Luedde
Pastor Alexandra S. Lusak
The Rev. John Magisano
Rabbi Linda Motzkin
The Rev. Dr. Hugh Nevin
The Rev. Larry Phillips
Rabbi Daniel Polish
The Very Rev. David Robinson
Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld
Rabbi Jonathan Rubenstein
Rabbi Scott Shpeen
The Rev. Bruce Southworth
The Rev. Dr. Charles H. Straut, Jr.
The Rev. Scott Taylor
The Rev. David Weissbard
Rabbi Michael A. White
The Rev. Robert A. White

Executive Director

Robb Smith

11082016

**MEMORANDUM IN OPPOSITION TO
EDUCATION TAX CREDITS AND VOUCHERS**

Interfaith Impact of NYS (IINYS) opposed the Education Investment Incentives Act (A02551A) considered by the Assembly in 2015 and the similar but not identical Education Investment Incentives Act (S1976A), which the Senate passed. We will be opposed to an EIIA, education voucher, or any similar end run around the NY State Constitution's prohibition of taxpayer aid to private schools operated in whole or part by any religious denomination.

IINYS is concerned that the educational scholarship and program tax credit would allow individuals to divert money from the tax stream and send it to favored schools, scholarships and other programs, including religious programming, with no public oversight. The massive, up-front tax credit of 75% in the Assembly bill or 90% in the Senate bill for donations up to \$1 million will benefit primarily wealthy donors, have a disproportionate effect on school funding, and divert donations from other charities that do not offer tax credits.

We are further concerned about the separation of church and state as defined in the NYS Constitution. The EIIA may allow some individuals to circumvent Article XI, Section 3, which states, "Neither the state nor any subdivision thereof, shall use its property or credit or any public money, or authorize or permit either to be used, directly or indirectly, in aid or maintenance, other than for examination or inspection, of any school or institution of learning wholly or in part under the control or direction of any religious denomination, or in which any denominational tenet is taught."

The proposed tuition tax credit will allow some families who have children in religious schools to make an end run around the NYS Constitution.

New York needs to fully fund its public schools. The State should provide quality, integrated primary and secondary education that allows equal opportunity for each child to develop to his or her fullest potential, including provision for those with special needs. A strong public school system (in which academic freedom, diversity and multi-cultural educational opportunities are protected) is fundamental to the democratic form of government and the development of good citizenship. The both versions of the Education Investment Incentives Act unfairly favor wealthy individuals and corporations and subverts this primary mission.

Policy Recommendation: *Interfaith Impact believes that a program of educational tax credits or vouchers not only threatens religious liberty but also lacks accountability and is therefore not in the public interest.*

November 8, 2016