



FAITH & FREEDOM COALITION

February 21, 2020

Senator Ted Cruz
127 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Bradley Byrne
119 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Cruz and Representative Byrne:

On behalf of the more than 2 million members and supporters of the Faith & Freedom Coalition, I write in support of your legislation, S. 634 and H.R. 1434, the Education Freedom Scholarships and Opportunity Act. This legislation would help parents from all economic levels secure the best education available for their children and expand opportunities for individuals interested in a career in the skilled trades that will go a long way in addressing the worker shortage faced across the country.

By creating a federal tax credit for taxpayers that donate to scholarship organizations supporting elementary and secondary education as well as secondary and post-secondary workforce training, the Education Freedom Scholarships and Opportunity Act will drive increased investment in our students and our workers. By allowing for scholarships to give elementary and secondary students a personalized education experience, as well as scholarships for career and technical education, apprenticeships, certifications, and other forms of workforce training for postsecondary students, it not only incentivizes voluntary investment in our students, but will also energize a new era of opportunity in education and provide a brighter future for all Americans. All of this is accomplished without creating a new federal program.

The Act helps low- and middle-income students afford tuition expenses or to pay for the workforce training needed to secure a stable, high-paying job. Combining scholarships for K-12 education with scholarships related to career and technical education, apprenticeships, and other forms of workforce training is one of the most compelling aspects of this bill. Also, the Act clearly prohibits federal control of education and ensures that nothing in the bill will be construed to permit, allow, encourage, or authorize any increased regulation or control over any aspect of a participating educational provider, scholarship granting organization, or workforce training organization. This allows all education providers to be able to participate, without fear of federal control.

Today, over half a million families are participating in private school choice programs in 26 States, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, and even more Americans support these programs (according to the Harvard Kennedy School's *2019 Education Next* survey, tax credit scholarships for low-income students to attend a private school were supported by 58% of respondents). Yet, in many States, thousands of students are on tax credit scholarship waitlists (in Florida, 14,000 students were recently freed from scholarship waitlists but over 50,000 students remain on waitlists in Pennsylvania).

The reason the demand for these scholarships is so strong is that the empirical case for school choice is overwhelming. The vast majority of credible evidence shows that school choice programs improve academic outcomes for not only the program participants but also the students in public schools; save taxpayers money; and reduce racial segregation. For example, in Washington, D.C., the Opportunity Scholarship Program students had vastly higher graduation rates (OSP students graduated at a rate of 91%, a 21-point increase from those who didn't receive scholarships, and 30% higher than D.C. Public Schools) as well as increased academic achievement (OSP boosted reading scores by 3.7 months of learning over 3 years).¹

The States have served as the laboratories and clearly demonstrated both the enormous demand for these scholarships as well as how successful they are in aiding low-income students to graduate and succeed. It is time for the federal government to expand this reform. While some parents are struggling just to pay for groceries and often have no choice but to send their children to a public school that might not serve them best, the Education Freedom Scholarships and Opportunity Act is a great step in the right direction to address this deficit in educational opportunities in our neediest communities.

Thank you for considering the views of our members and supporters. If we can be of any help, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Timothy R. Head
Executive Director

¹ Wolf, Patrick, Babette Gutmann, Michael Puma, Brian Kisida, Lou Rizzo, Nada Eissa, and Matthew Carr. *Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Final Report* (NCEE 2010-4018). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.