

**EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY FOR
AMERICAN FAMILIES, STUDENTS, AND WORKERS**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

—————
OCTOBER 25, 2023

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Serial No. 118-FC15

Printed for the use of the Committee on Ways and Means



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U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

55-065

WASHINGTON : 2024

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United States House Committee on
Ways & Means
CHAIRMAN JASON SMITH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 18, 2023
No. FC-16

CONTACT: 202-225-3625

**Chairman Smith Announces Hearing on Educational Freedom and
Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers**

House Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Jason Smith (MO-08) announced today that the Committee will hold a hearing to examine education tax policy that will empower students, families, and workers with the freedom to pursue the American dream. The hearing will take place on **Wednesday, October 25, 2023, at 10:00 AM in 1100 Longworth House Office Building.**

Members of the public may view the hearing via live webcast available at <https://waysandmeans.house.gov>. The webcast will not be available until the hearing starts.

In view of the limited time available to hear the witnesses, oral testimony at this hearing will be from invited witnesses only. However, any individual or organization not scheduled for an oral appearance may submit a written statement for consideration by the Committee and for inclusion in the printed record of the hearing.

DETAILS FOR SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS:

Please Note: Any person(s) and/or organization(s) wishing to submit written comments for the hearing record can do so here: WMSubmission@mail.house.gov.

Please ATTACH your submission as a Microsoft Word document in compliance with the formatting requirements listed below, **by the close of business on Wednesday, November 8, 2023**. For questions, or if you encounter technical problems, please call (202) 225-3625.

FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS:

The Committee relies on electronic submissions for printing the official hearing record. As always, submissions will be included in the record according to the discretion of the Committee.

The Committee will not alter the content of your submission but reserves the right to format it according to guidelines. Any submission provided to the Committee by a witness, any materials submitted for the printed record, and any written comments in response to a request for written comments must conform to the guidelines listed below. Any submission not in compliance with these guidelines will not be printed but will be maintained in the Committee files for review and use by the Committee.

All submissions and supplementary materials must be submitted in a single document via email, provided in Word format and must not exceed a total of 10 pages. Please indicate the title of the hearing as the subject line in your submission. Witnesses and submitters are advised that the Committee relies on electronic submissions for printing the official hearing record. All submissions must include a list of all clients, persons and/or organizations on whose behalf the witness appears. The name, company, address, telephone, and fax numbers of each witness must be included in the body of the email. Please exclude any personal identifiable information in the attached submission.

Failure to follow the formatting requirements may result in the exclusion of a submission. All submissions for the record are final.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

The Committee seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you require accommodations, please call 202-225-3625 or request via email to WMSubmission@mail.house.gov in advance of the event (four business days' notice is requested). Questions regarding accommodation needs in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats) may be directed to the Committee as noted above.

Note: All Committee advisories and news releases are available on the Committee website at <http://www.waysandmeans.house.gov/>.

###

OPPORTUNITY FOR AMERICAN FAMILIES, STUDENTS, AND WORKERS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2023

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:06 a.m., in Room 1100, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Jason T. Smith [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Chairman SMITH. The committee will come to order.

It is a pleasure to be back where we have our own committee hearing. And hopefully, at some point this afternoon we will be breaking and electing a speaker, and we will just recess in that meantime and we will come back. But we will try to get as much as we can throughout this field hearing—throughout this committee hearing.

For my Republican colleagues, we cleaned out this room after all the activity that has been in here in the last few days, and it is back to normalcy.

Parents today have serious concerns about their children's access to affordable, quality education. The demand from parents to improve their school options is real, and it is easy to understand why. After all, kids are not learning at the pace that they should be. ACT scores, for example, are at the lowest level in 32 years, with the lowest performing students testing at levels last seen over 40 years ago. Math scores have seen their biggest decline in 50 years, and, in too many cases, what kids are being taught has more to do with a political agenda than reading, writing, or math.

Parents all over the country have said, "Enough," and are voting with their feet. Private school enrollment has grown 55 percent. Homeschool has grown 30 percent. The first full school year after COVID, charter schools saw an influx of 240,000 new students. Congress should be listening to parents and helping reduce the financial barriers blocking them from taking full charge of their children's education.

One approach is expanding 529 accounts, which have a successful track record, to empower parents to make the educational choice that best fits their kids' needs. In 2017, Republicans took the first step and allowed 529 accounts to cover K through 12 education tuition up to \$10,000. But 529 accounts could also be amended to cover other educational costs like books, tutoring to help kids catch up after multiple years of forced virtual schools, educational therapies for students with disabilities, and supplies for the many families now choosing to homeschool.

These 529 accounts could also help address America's skilled labor shortage by expanding to cover skilled trade or licensing programs. By 2030, America will have a skilled labor shortage of over 2 million. This issue has come up again and again at our field hearings and when the committee considered an FAA extension earlier this year.

Artificial intelligence cannot fix an air conditioner, repair a car, or put plumbing in a house. America needs more skilled labor. Helping more students learn a trade or skill will put them on a path to financial well-being and help small businesses find the labor that they need. To be clear, these are good-paying jobs, and students and parents need more options—one more.

Traditional four-year colleges and universities have a long history of hiking tuition rates and saddling families with debt. Moreover, these institutions regularly show themselves to be unhealthy environments. Look no farther than the indefensible behavior we have seen in the past few weeks by professors and college administrators in refusing to condemn the repulsive views expressed by some students and professors defending and championing the Hamas terrorist who ruthlessly murdered over a thousand Israelis.

These and other actions raise the question of whether such institutions serve the public good in a way that merits all of the special provisions they currently enjoy, from the 501(c) tax exempt status of the colleges themselves to favorable treatment of their multi-billion dollar endowments. This committee should consider ways to hold these institutions accountable. Between the soaring cost of college and schools' increasing rejection of shared values, is it any wonder why parents and students might want to look elsewhere for an education?

In addition to 529 accounts, this committee should also look at what other types of solutions might exist to expand student access to more education choices and give parents more affordable options for their children to get a quality education.

We know Democrats will trot out tired talking points about how this is a smokescreen for helping the wealthy. I would ask my Democrat colleagues, why would we deny families a shot at a better life?

I would also note that an expansion of 529 accounts to cover additional K through 12 educational expenses and homeschooling expenses was included in the bipartisan SECURE Act, which was reported unanimously out of this committee in 2019. But sadly, when it came for the House to consider and pass the SECURE Act, Speaker Pelosi and the Democrat leadership pulled those bipartisan provisions out of the bill.

Right now, we have an entire generation of students facing a bleaker future because of the school they attend. Washington has to recognize what families already know: the status quo is not working for many children in this country.

I look forward to finding solutions that put parents in charge of their kids' future.

Chairman SMITH. I am pleased to recognize the ranking member, Mr. Neal, for his opening statement.

Mr. NEAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It has been 22 days since the House of Representatives had a speaker. In that time, our Republican colleagues have left the body paralyzed, and we are no closer to averting another Republican government shutdown. Today's hearing is a tangentially-related distraction from a party that doesn't seem to achieve what they are best at, and that is cutting taxes for wealthy people.

Democrats on this committee want to get to work, so much so that we have offered to help our colleagues out of their problem and to find a bipartisan pathway forward. Instead, it is another week of chaos. There is no pretending that this is business as usual. The majority has embroiled the country in a manufactured crisis with the latest leaving the House of Representatives for more than three weeks with a standstill. They have thrown away the work of the American people because they are busy fighting with one another, putting candidate after candidate up, apparently no closer to consensus.

Meanwhile, outside the Capitol complex, the American economy is humming. President Biden and congressional Democrats will take a bow of thank you. The first and second largest years of job growth in American history have happened, respectively, over the last two years. Wow. That Federal Reserve report this week in the Beige Book tells the story. Overall job growth is at a 40-year high, where we have had the longest stretch of subpar 4 percent unemployment in 50 years.

From 2019 to 2022, low-wage workers experienced the fastest real-wage growth they have had since 1979, amid relentless wish-casting for a recession from our colleagues. Experts, however, just aren't seeing it. Rather, estimates for economic growth are consistently being revised upward, the latest 3.5 percent and, likely in the fourth quarter, to be 4 percent.

Legislation changes lives, and our current reality is proof. Our progress was made possible by the American Rescue Plan, the Inflation Reduction Act, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and more. Democrats are rebuilding the economy from the bottom up and the middle out to spread opportunity to workers. And it is working.

In the year since the Inflation Reduction Act was signed into law, more than 170,000 clean energy jobs have been created, with 9 million expected on the way over the next decade. Republican congressional districts are taking advantage of the Inflation Reduction Act. The landmark law is ushering in good-paying jobs that don't require a traditional four-year degree and offer unparalleled opportunity for workers to reap the economic benefits of a growing clean economy.

Last month, Joe Biden announced a new initiative to train young people for high-demand skills that will drive the clean energy economy. The American Climate Corps will give the next generation these opportunities at the start of their careers. We haven't seen this type of sweeping potential for job creation in a long time. Bolstering this success is what Congress should be doing.

And I will use the opportunity to remind all again there is no historic role for the Ways and Means Committee to be involved in an impeachment proceeding. We should be on to doing the work of the American people as they have requested. There are plenty of

new and innovative ways to harness economic mobility for the mutual benefit of all Americans.

Today, we want to highlight, while Democrats innovate, Republicans apparently are still bent on infighting. We stand ready to assist our Republican colleagues in moving forward with an agenda that will benefit all members of the American family.

With that I yield back the balance of my time and welcome our witnesses.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Neal. I would like to—the record reflect that chaos was created in this House of Representatives 22 days ago, when 208 Democrats, 100 percent of the Democrats voting, and 8 Republicans vacated the Speaker of the House.

I would love to introduce the witnesses.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. NEAL. Would the chairman please—

Ms. SANCHEZ. Can I enter into the record—

Chairman SMITH. I yield to the ranking member.

Mr. NEAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So unless there has been a reversal of history here, the move to vacate the speaker's chair did not come from the Democratic side. The move to vacate the speaker's chair—and everybody in America knows this, you can't put a spin on this—where the move was offered and then, in the end, the stubborn position of those members who insisted that the chair be vacated, on our side we have not had that experience in the 35 years I have been here.

Chairman SMITH. We have not had that experience in Congress, but 208 Democrats, 100 percent of the Democrat Party, voted to vacate the chair.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman SMITH. I will introduce the witnesses.

Dr.—

Ms. SANCHEZ. I ask unanimous consent.

Chairman SMITH. You are not recognized. I am introducing the witnesses. I will now introduce our witnesses.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Once again the chairman is trying to silence voices—

Chairman Smith. You are out of order and not—

Ms. SANCHEZ [continuing]. On this committee.

Chairman SMITH [continuing]. Recognized. You are not recognized.

Ms. SANCHEZ. What are you afraid of, Mr. Chairman?

Chairman SMITH. You are not recognized. You will have your moment.

Dr. Corey DeAngelis is a senior fellow—

Ms. SANCHEZ. Afraid of one Brown woman.

Chairman SMITH [continuing]. At the American Federation of Children.

Hera Varmah is the communications and events assistant at the American Federation of Children.

Jerome Redmond is president and CEO of the American Truck Training.

Sharon Sedlar is a parent and founder of Pennsylvania Families for Education Choice.

And Girard Melancon is board chair for the National Skills Coalition.

Thank you for joining us today. Your written statements will be made part of the hearing record, and you have five minutes to deliver your remarks.

Dr. Corey DeAngelis, you may begin.

**STATEMENT OF COREY DEANGELIS, SENIOR FELLOW,
AMERICAN FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN**

Mr. DEANGELIS. Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, and distinguished Members of Congress, thank you so much for the opportunity to be here today. I am here to testify in support of expanding education freedom through tax credit scholarships such as those included in the Educational Choice for Children Act and through 529 expansion. These proposals would supercharge the parental empowerment already being unleashed at the state level, most notably in red states, and expand opportunities to families in all states.

We are in the middle of a school choice revolution. Ten states have gone all-in on school choice in the past two years. In other words, every single family in those states can now take their children's education dollars to the education provider of their choosing. Even more states are expanding or passing new programs. You can still take your children's education dollars to their assigned public school. If you like your public school, you can keep your public school, but for real this time. If not, you can take those—that funding to the education providers—private education providers that best meets their needs.

The momentum is on the side of education freedom. The latest Real Clear Opinion Research polling from June of this year finds 71 percent of Americans support school choice, with supermajority support among Republicans, Democrats, and independents. That support surged by 7 points since April of 2020. These trends are no accident. The power-hungry teachers' unions held children's education hostage to secure multiple multi-billion-dollar ransom payments from taxpayers, but they overplayed their hand and awakened a sleeping giant: parents who want more of a say in their kids' education.

The teachers' unions engaged in fearmongering every step of the way. The American Federation of Teachers, for example, threatened safety strikes in 2020, lobbied the CDC to make it more difficult to reopen schools in person, and their boss, Randi Weingarten, called the President's plan to reopen schools "reckless, callous and cruel."

Chicago Teachers Union deleted a tweet claiming that the push to reopen schools is rooted in sexism, racism, and misogyny. They threw everything at the wall to see what would stick. Yet one of their board members was caught vacationing in Puerto Rico in person, while still railing against going back to work in person. Evidence showed that in-person school did not spread COVID, but school closures were a super-spreader of COVID loss, learning loss.

The unintended benefit of remote learning, which we really should have just called "remotely learning," because not a lot of learning was going on, was families got to see what was going on

in the classroom. Parents who thought their kids were in a great public school started to see another dimension of school quality that cannot be captured by a standardized test: whether the school's curriculum aligns with their values.

School choice is a win-win solution. Public schools upped their game in response to competition. Twenty-six of the twenty-nine studies on the topic find positive effects of school choice competition on outcomes in the public schools. The most recent peer-reviewed meta analysis from 2022 on the subject found the same relationship. School choice is a rising tide that lifts all boats.

The most advantaged already have some form of school choice today. They can already afford to pay out of pocket for private school tuition and fees or move to the nicest neighborhoods that just so happen to be assigned to the best "public schools." I am sure many of the members on this committee either went to private school, sent their own kids to private school, or both. President Biden did both. I am glad his family had those opportunities, but politicians shouldn't pull the ladder up from behind themselves and fight against school choice for others.

Funding students directly allows more families to have access to educational opportunities. School choice, in that sense, is an equalizer. We already fund students directly when it comes to Pell Grants for higher ed. This program allows funding to follow the student to the public or private, religious or non-religious higher education provider of their choosing. The same goes for taxpayer-funded initiatives like pre-K programs, including Head Start. The same goes for food stamps, and Medicaid, and on and on and on. We should apply the same logic to K through 12 education.

Education funding is meant for educating children, not for propping up and protecting a particular institution. We should fund students, not systems. Why would you support funding individuals directly when it comes to higher ed and pre-K and everything else, but oppose it only for those in-between years of K through 12 education? Well, it is because choice is the norm with higher education, pre-K, and just about every other industry, but choice threatens an entrenched special interest only when it comes to those in-between years of K through 12 education. So, of course, they fight as hard as possible against any change to the status quo.

The power imbalance between families and the government school monopoly is finally shifting. For far too long in K through 12 education, the only special interests represented the employees, the adults in the system. But now, thankfully, the kids have a union of their own: their parents. Elected officials will be wise to listen to them and free families from the clutches of the teachers' unions once and for all. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. DeAngelis follows:]

Testimony Before the United States House Committee on Ways & Means Regarding “Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers”

Prepared for: United States House Committee on Ways & Means

Prepared by: Corey DeAngelis, Ph.D.

Affiliations: Senior Fellow, American Federation for Children; Visiting Fellow, Hoover Institution at Stanford University

Date: October 25, 2023

Opening Statement

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, and Distinguished Members of Congress,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here today.

I'm here to testify in support of expanding education freedom through tax credit scholarships such as those included in the Educational Choice for Children Act and through 529 expansion.¹ These proposals would supercharge the parental empowerment already being unleashed at the state level, most notably in red states, and expand opportunities to families in all states.

We're in the middle of a school choice revolution. Ten states have gone all-in on school choice in the past two years. In other words, every single family in those states can now take their children's state-funded education dollars to the education providers of their choosing.² Even more states are expanding or passing new programs.

You can still take education dollars to your assigned public school: if you like your public school, you can keep your public school. If not, families in those states can take their education dollars to a private education provider that best meets their needs.³

The momentum is on the side of education freedom. The latest RealClear Opinion Research polling from June of this year finds that 71% of Americans support school choice, with supermajority support among Republicans, Democrats, and independents. That support surged by 7 points since April 2020.⁴

These trends are no accident. The power-hungry unions held children's education hostage to secure multiple multi-billion-dollar ransom payments from taxpayers. But they overplayed their hand and awakened a sleeping giant: parents who want more of a say in their children's education.

¹ HR 531 - Educational Choice for Children Act. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/531/cosponsors>

² The Children Win in North Carolina. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/north-carolina-universal-school-choice-roy-cooper-tricia-cotham-434f588e>

³ Can the GOP Become the Parents' Party? The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/can-the-gop-become-the-parents-party-education-schooling-arizona-republican-school-choice-classroom-savings-11656359844>

⁴ New Poll: School Choice Support Soars from 2020. American Federation for Children. Retrieved from <https://www.federationforchildren.org/new-poll-school-choice-support-soars-from-2020/>

The teachers unions engaged in fearmongering every step of the way. The American Federation of Teachers threatened⁵ “safety strikes” in 2020, lobbied⁶ the CDC to make it more difficult to reopen schools, and their boss – Randi Weingarten – called⁷ the president’s plan to reopen schools “reckless,” “callous,” and “cruel.” Chicago Teachers Union posted then later deleted a tweet⁸ claiming, “the push to reopen schools is rooted in sexism, racism and misogyny” yet one of their board members was caught vacationing in Puerto Rico in person while they were still railing against going back to work in person.⁹ Evidence showed that in-person school did not spread COVID-19¹⁰, but school closures were a super-spreader of learning loss.

The unintended benefit of remote learning – which really should’ve been called “remotely learning” – was that families got to see what was happening in the classroom. Parents who thought their children were in great public schools started to see another dimension of school quality that cannot be captured by a standardized test: whether the school’s curriculum aligns with their values.

School choice is a win-win solution. Public schools up their game in response to competition. Twenty-six of the 29 existing studies on the topic find positive effects of private school choice competition on outcomes in the public schools.¹¹ The most recent peer-reviewed meta-analysis on the subject found the same relationship.¹² School choice is a rising tide that lifts all boats.¹³

The most advantaged already have some form of school choice. They can already afford to pay out of pocket for private school tuition and fees or move to the nicest neighborhoods that just so happen to be assigned to the best “public” schools. I’m sure many of the members on this committee either went to private school, sent their own kids to private school, or both. President Biden did both.¹⁴ I’m glad his family had those opportunities. But politicians shouldn’t pull up the ladder from behind themselves and fight against school choice for others. Funding students directly allows more families to access education options. School choice is an equalizer.

We already fund students directly when it comes to Pell Grants for higher education. This program allows the funding to follow the student to the public or private, religious or non-religious, higher education provider of their choosing. The same goes for taxpayer-funded pre-K programs such as Head Start. The same goes for food stamps and Medicaid.

⁵ Teachers union threatens ‘safety strikes’ before Biden speech. Politico. Retrieved from <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/28/aft-strikes-school-reopening-384133>

⁶ Top teachers union lobbied CDC on school reopening. Fox News. Retrieved from <https://www.foxnews.com/us/top-teachers-union-lobbied-cdc-on-school-reopening>

⁷ ‘Reckless, callous, cruel’: teachers’ chief denounces Trump plan to reopen schools. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/17/trump-teachers-reopening-schools-coronavirus-randi-weingarten>

⁸ Chicago Teachers Union deletes tweet claiming school reopening push ‘rooted’ in sexism, racism. New York Post. Retrieved from <https://nypost.com/2020/12/07/chicago-teachers-union-deletes-tweet-claiming-school-reopening-push-rooted-in-sexism-racism/>

⁹ Chicago Teachers Union leader is blasted for pushing to keep schools closed because classrooms are ‘unsafe’ while she vacations in Puerto Rico. Daily Mail. Retrieved from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9105697/Teachers-union-leader-blasted-pushing-schools-closed-vacations-Puerto-Rico.html>

¹⁰ Oster, Emily. *Washington Post*. “Schools are not spreading covid-19. This new data makes the case.” Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/11/20/covid-19-schools-data-reopening-safety/>

¹¹ The 123s of School Choice. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/research-library/?report=the-123s-of-school-choice-2/>

¹² Jabbar, H., Fong, C. J., Germain, E., Li, D., Sanchez, J., Sun, W. L., & Devall, M. (2022). The competitive effects of school choice on student achievement: A systematic review. *Educational Policy*, 36(2), 247-281. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0895904819874756?journalCode=epxa>

¹³ Wolf, P. J., Greene, J. P., Paul, J. D., & Ladner, M. (2023). Education Freedom and Student Achievement: Is More School Choice Associated with Higher State-Level Performance on the NAEP? *Journal of School Choice*. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2023.2183450>

¹⁴ Biden, Pelosi, other top Dems sent kids to private school but oppose school choice. Fox News. Retrieved from <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-pelosi-top-dems-sent-kids-private-school-oppose-choice>

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We should apply the same logic to K-12 education. Education funding is meant for educating children, not for protecting a particular institution. We should fund students, not systems.

Why would you support funding individuals directly when it comes to higher education and pre-K (and everything else), but oppose it only for in-between years of K-12 education?

Choice is the norm with higher education, pre-K, and just about any other industry. But choice threatens an entrenched special interest only when it comes to K-12 education, so, of course, they fight as hard as possible against any change to the status quo.

The power imbalance between families and the government school monopoly is finally shifting. For far too long in K-12 education, the only special interests represented the employees – the adults – in the system. But now, the kids have a union of their own: their parents. Elected officials would be wise to listen to them – and free families from the clutches of the teachers unions once and for all.

School Choice Myth-Busting¹⁵

Myth #1: School Choice Defunds Public Schools

The teachers' union's main argument against allowing families to take their children's education dollars elsewhere reveals their misguided mindset. They argue that school choice "defunds" public schools. But the reality is that the funding doesn't belong to the public schools in the first place. If anything, public schools defund families. School choice initiatives just return the money to the hands of the intended beneficiaries of the funding—the children and their families.

But wait. Why would giving families a choice "defund" public schools, anyway? Their main argument is an admission that its advocates understand many families aren't satisfied with their residentially assigned government schools. The best schools would welcome the competition. Shrieking in fear about allowing families to choose your competition suggests otherwise. It turns out the main argument "against" school choice is one of the best arguments in favor of allowing families to have exit options.

If the public schools were meeting the needs of families, then opponents of school choice would have nothing to fear.

In fact, surveys find fewer than half of the families with students in public schools would keep their children in them if given meaningful options to educate their children elsewhere.¹⁶ This year, Gallup found that trust in the public school system reached an all-time low, with only 26% of Americans saying they have a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in public schools. Only 9% of Republicans reported a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in public schools.¹⁷ No wonder opponents of educational freedom fight so hard to prevent families from having an exit option.

Another problem with that argument is that public schools financially benefit when they lose students to school choice competition. U.S. public schools spent over \$17,000 per student in the 2019-20 school year.¹⁸ Public schools are only partially funded based on enrollment counts, meaning they can keep substantial amounts of funding for students who leave to private schools. Imagine if Walmart were able to keep large portions of your grocery funding each week even after your family started shopping at Trader Joe's. That would be a fantastic deal for Walmart. Public schools should be happy they get to keep any money at all for students they no longer educate.¹⁹

Myth #2: School Choice Would Destroy Public Schools

A related myth is that school choice would "destroy" public schools. But the children who remain in public schools are generally better off because school choice competition incentivizes public schools to improve. A large body of evidence suggests competitive pressures from private school choice leads to improvements in outcomes for children who remain in the public school system. This is likely because public schools tend to

¹⁵ School Choice Myths. American Federation for Children. Retrieved from <https://www.federationforchildren.org/school-choice-myths/>

¹⁶ DiPerna, P., Catt, A. D., & Shaw, M. (2019). 2019 Schooling in America: Public Opinion on K-12 Education, Busing, Technology, and School Choice. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED600665>; Support for School Choice Surges as Schools Start. American Federation for Children. Retrieved from <https://www.federationforchildren.org/support-for-school-choice-surges-as-schools-start/>

¹⁷ Historically Low Faith in U.S. Institutions Continues. Gallup. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/508169/historically-low-faith-institutions-continues.aspx>

¹⁸ National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics. Table 236.55. Total and current expenditures per pupil in public elementary and secondary schools: Selected school years, 1919-20 through 2019-20. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_236.55.asp

¹⁹ DeAngelis, C. A., & McCluskey, N. P. (Eds.). (2020). School choice myths: Setting the record straight on education freedom. Washington, DC: Cato Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.cato.org/books/school-choice-myths>

change their approaches for the better to avoid losing any of the funding associated with students who choose to leave.

Twenty-six of the 29 studies on the topic find statistically significant positive effects of school choice competition on outcomes in public schools.²⁰ A peer-reviewed systematic review of the evidence from 2013 similarly found that 20 of 21 studies revealed positive effects of private school competition.²¹

School choice is a rising tide that lifts all boats.

More recently, the most comprehensive meta-analysis of the evidence on this topic found statistically significant positive effects of school choice competition on public schools overall.²² As a result of competitive pressures, students do not even have to participate in school choice programs to benefit from them. This body of evidence is generally positive. But the right of families to choose the educational setting that works best for their own children should not hinge on the competitive response of a government-run institution. And besides, these kinds of arguments aren't used to prevent advantaged families from choosing the school that works best for their children. They should not be used to take similar opportunities away from less advantaged families, either.

Myth #3: School Choice Leads to Inequities

Opponents of educational freedom argue that school choice leads to “inequities.” But trapping disadvantaged students in public schools that have been failing them for decades exacerbates inequities. Funding students directly leads to more equality of opportunity by allowing more children to have educational options. Advantaged families already have some form of school choice. They are more likely to have the resources to pay for private education out of pocket or to purchase a residence that is assigned to the best public school in the area. Inequities are inherent in the public school system because of the artificial barriers to accessing the best schools that residential assignment creates.

Parents have been fined or even thrown in jail for lying about their home address to get their children into better “public” schools.²³ Advantaged families can even buy attendance at some top public school districts that charge tuition for students living outside their attendance zones.²⁴ In this way, many public schools are not “public” in any meaningful sense of the word. They are not open to the public because they discriminate on the basis of ZIP code. They are not true “public goods” because they are excludable and rivalrous.²⁵

Allowing the money to follow the child to the best educational setting leads to more equality of opportunity because it allows less-advantaged families to access alternatives. School choice is an equalizer.

²⁰ The 123s of School Choice. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/research-library/?report=the-123s-of-school-choice-2/>

²¹ Egalite, A. J. (2013). Measuring competitive effects from school voucher programs: A systematic review. *Journal of School Choice*, 7(4), 443-464. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2013.837759>

²² Jabbar, H., Fong, C. J., Germain, E., Li, D., Sanchez, J., Sun, W. L., & Devall, M. (2022). The competitive effects of school choice on student achievement: A systematic review. *Educational Policy*, 36(2), 247-281. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0895904819874756?journalCode=epxa>

²³ Her Only Crime Was Helping Her Kids. The Atlantic. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/09/her-only-crime-was-helping-her-kid/597979/>

²⁴ Some People Are Buying Their Way Into Top Public Schools. That's Not How School Choice Should Work. Reason Magazine. Retrieved from <https://reason.com/2019/06/21/some-people-are-buying-their-way-into-top-public-schools-thats-not-how-school-choice-should-work/>

²⁵ Is Public Schooling a Public Good? An Analysis of Schooling Externalities. Cato Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/public-schooling-public-good-analysis-schooling-externalities>

Myth #4: School Choice Is Unaccountable

Defenders of the status quo will argue that school choice is unaccountable. But school choice comes with the strongest form of accountability that exists: Families can vote with their feet to institutions that best meet their needs and take their money with them. Underperforming private schools shut down. Underperforming government schools get more money. Private schools are directly accountable to families.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, private schools fought to reopen; public schools fought to remain closed. The main difference was one of incentives. Private schools understood families could take their money elsewhere.

If the government schools are so much more accountable than private schools, their defenders should have nothing to worry about. And why do the same politicians making this argument send their own children to the private schools, if they are so unaccountable? Actions speak louder than words.

Myth #5: Public Funds are for Public Schools

There are no such thing as “public” funds. They are all taxpayer dollars. And tax credit scholarship programs like the proposal included in the Educational Choice for Children Act are all funded by private donations. As the U.S. Supreme Court²⁶ ruled in *ACSTO v. Winn* (2011), private dollars remain private until they “come into the tax collector’s hands.”

The same people making this argument support programs that allow “public” dollars to be used at private institutions for every other level of education and every other industry. We fund students directly with taxpayer dollars when it comes to Pell Grants and the GI Bill for higher education. With each of these programs, the funding follows the student to the public or private, religious or non-religious, higher education provider of their choosing. The same goes for taxpayer-funded pre-K programs such as Head Start. We also fund individuals directly when it comes to other taxpayer-funded initiatives such as food stamps and Medicaid.

We don’t force low-income families to spend their food stamp dollars at residentially assigned government-run grocery stores. Instead, families are allowed to choose to take the funding to Walmart, Trader Joe’s, Safeway, or just about any other provider of groceries. The same freedom ought to exist for K-12 education.

Myth #6: School Choice is Bad for Teachers

The concerns of public school teachers reaching into their pockets to pay for supplies each year are understandable. But the problem isn’t with their private and charter school competition. The problem is that their monopolistic employer doesn’t have any meaningful incentive to spend money wisely, on the most important educational resource in the school: the teachers in the classrooms.

²⁶ Docket Watch: The Constitutionality of School Choice Tax Credits (*Gaddy v. Georgia Department of Revenue*). The Federalist Society. Retrieved from <https://fedsoc.org/commentary/fedsoc-blog/docket-watch-the-constitutionality-of-school-choice-tax-credits-gaddy-v-georgia-department-of-revenue>

The current system does not prioritize classroom teachers because it has no real incentive to do so. Inflation-adjusted U.S. public school current spending per student increased by 155% between 1970 and 2020.²⁷ Average U.S. public school teacher salary only increased by 9% in real terms over the same period.²⁸

Without competition, the money goes to administrative bloat and staffing surges. Kennesaw State University professor Ben Scafidi found that the U.S. increased public school spending per student by 27% from 1992 to 2014. Real teacher salaries dropped by 2% over the same period.²⁹ Between 2000 and 2017, student elementary and secondary school enrollment increased by about 7%. Over the same period, the number of teachers in the system increased by about 8%, the number of principals and assistant principals increased by about 33%, and the number of school district administrative staff increased by about 75%.³⁰

Five studies have found that private and charter school competition lead to higher teacher salaries in public schools.³¹ Competition in the market for goods and services benefits customers. Competition in the labor market benefits employees.

Myth #7: School Choice Would Defund Rural Schools, and those Families Don't Have Any Other Choices

Opponents of education freedom will present two logically incompatible statements when claiming rural geography is a legitimate barrier to school choice. On the one hand, they will claim that rural constituents will not benefit from school choice programs because “the public school is the only option.” However, in the next breath and with a straight face, they claim that school choice will defund their fantastic rural public schools.

Obvious questions arise. If the rural public schools are so great, why would they worry about losing students? But more importantly, if it's true that the public school is the only option, it cannot lose any per-pupil funding because students have nowhere else to go. If anything, opponents in rural areas should be the last ones arguing against school choice on the basis that it would “defund” their schools.³²

As Florida has increased its scholarship programs over the past two decades, the number of private schools in the state's rural areas has increased from 69 in 2002 to 120 in 2022. Although more than 70% of Florida students are eligible for private-school scholarships, the share of students in Florida's rural private schools has grown by only 2.4 percentage points since 2012.³³

The truth is that rural families benefit from school choice as much as any others do. More options are better than none, and supply isn't fixed. If you put taxpayer-funded education dollars in the hands of parents, new private education providers will sprout up to meet demand. What's more, with an increasing number of

²⁷ National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics. Table 236.55. Total and current expenditures per pupil in public elementary and secondary schools: Selected school years, 1919-20 through 2019-20 Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_236.55.asp

²⁸ National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics. Table 211.60. Estimated average annual salary of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools, by state: Selected school years, 1969-70 through 2021-22. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_211.60.asp

²⁹ Scafidi, B. (2017). Back to the Staffing Surge: The Great Teacher Salary Stagnation and the Decades-Long Employment Growth in American Public Schools. *EdChoice*. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED583004>

³⁰ Growth in Administrative Staff, Assistant Principals Far Outpaces Teacher Hiring. Education Next. Retrieved from <https://www.educationnext.org/growth-administrative-staff-assistant-principals-far-outpaces-teacher-hiring/>

³¹ School choice benefits teachers too. Washington Examiner. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/school-choice-benefits-teachers-too>

³² The Little Red Schoolhouse Could Do With a Little Competition. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/school-competition-savings-account-rural-district-private-choice-charter-florida-teachers-union-achievement-education-gap-11671218190>

³³ Special report: Separating fact from fiction about rural school choice. Reimagined. Retrieved from <https://www.reimaginedonline.org/2022/11/special-report-separating-fact-from-fiction-about-rural-school-choice/>

school choice programs, including ECCA, that have multiple, flexible uses, every family stands to benefit, even those in rural areas with limited numbers of physical school buildings.

School choice is popular among Republican voters in rural areas. Eighty-eight percent of Texas Republican primary voters supported it on the 2022 ballot, up 9 points since 2018.³⁴ Among the 200 Texas counties with fewer than 100,000 residents, support remained at 88%. The same applies in other states. A 2022 poll from Iowa found that “the strongest net favorability” for education savings accounts “was from Iowans in rural communities,” who were 21.8 percentage points likelier to support than oppose the program.³⁵ Polling by the University of Texas at Austin from June 2023 found that 66% of Texans in rural areas support school choice, whereas support among Texans from suburban and urban areas was at 55% to 59%, respectively.³⁶

The nine most rural states, according to Census Bureau data, all have some form of private school choice. West Virginia has the second-most-expansive education savings account program in the nation, behind Arizona. Maine³⁷ and Vermont³⁸ are home to the oldest private-school voucher programs in the country—both passed in the 19th century—which were specifically designed for students in rural areas without public schools. Lawmakers figured out, over a hundred years ago, that not having a lot of education options was a good reason to expand opportunities, not to restrict them.

Myth #8: School Choice Segregates

Public schools are already segregated, and the most advantaged families already have education options. Funding students directly allows more families to access education opportunities.

For example, as Professor Anna J. Egalite wrote³⁹ about her peer-reviewed evaluation of Louisiana’s private school choice program, “82% of student transfers made possible by the Louisiana Scholarship Program reduced racial stratification in the voucher students’ former public schools, a clear win for desegregation efforts in the state of Louisiana.”

Dr. Egalite also summarized the overall findings of the evaluation: “A third of all voucher transfers resulted in more integrated public and private schools, an additional 57 percent of transfers had mixed effects (positive effects in one sector, negative effects in another), and just 9 percent of transfers had negative effects.”

Conflating voluntary schooling decisions with forced segregation is disingenuous and minimizes real harm done by heavy-handed government in the past.

As 50CAN’s Derrell Bradford⁴⁰ has pointed out, “The current system leaves America’s public schools more segregated now than they were 40 years ago.” He also wrote, “In many states, it’s a crime for parents to send

³⁴ 2022 Republican Primary Ballot Propositions. Texas GOP. Retrieved from <https://texasgop.org/republican-primary-ballot-propositions/>

³⁵ Iowans (Especially Rural Iowans) Support ESAs. Iowans for Tax Relief Foundation. Retrieved from <https://itrfoundation.org/iowans-especially-rural-iowans-support-esas/>

³⁶ June 2023 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll. The Texas Politics Project at the University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved from <https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/set/support-or-oppose-establishing-voucher-educational-savings-account-esa-or-other-%E2%80%99school-choice-0>

³⁷ Maine – Town Tuitioning Program. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/programs/maine-town-tuitioning-program/>

³⁸ Vermont – Town Tuitioning Program. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/programs/vermont-town-tuitioning-program/>

³⁹ The Effect of Louisiana’s Voucher Program on School Integration: A Response to The Century Foundation. Education Next. Retrieved from <https://www.educationnext.org/effect-louisianas-voucher-program-school-integration-response-century-foundation/>

⁴⁰ The Left Defends the Legacy of Redlining. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-left-defends-the-legacy-of-redlining-11623615965>

their children to a school for which they are not zoned, regardless of whether or not another school can better serve a student's individual needs. Families desperate to enroll their kids in better public schools frequently lie about where they live to enroll their children in a public school outside of their school district. In some states school officials hire off-duty police to follow kids home and make sure they're living in the correct school district or school zone. This isn't what public education is supposed to be.⁴¹

Some segregationists even sided with the teachers union in the 1950's in their opposition to private school choice.⁴¹ As pointed out in *The Wall Street Journal*, "As early as 1955, economists such as Friedman began touting vouchers as a strategy to expedite integration. Virginia's segregationist hard-liners recognized the likely outcomes and began attacking school choice as an existential threat to their white-supremacist order."⁴² School choice is an equalizer.

Today's evidence shows private school choice initiatives lead to racial integration. Six out of the seven existing studies on the topic find that private school choice integrates.⁴²

Myth #9: School Choice is a Trojan Horse that would lead to Private and Home School Regulation

Some claim to support the idea of parental education rights but suggest that school choice will place an undue burden on private and home education. Those making this argument are missing the forest for the trees. Amid an educational crisis, we cannot make perfect the enemy of the good. The movement to empower parents should take incremental wins even if they don't automatically change the education status quo. Opposing giving families a choice to accept the funding or not only cements the government school monopoly. It is no coincidence that teachers union boss Randi Weingarten has repeated this same fear-mongering argument — she wants to protect her interests at the expense of children and their families.⁴³

The reality is, government already can regulate private and home education without school choice. Oregon outlawed private education in 1922.⁴⁴ That was not done because of a school choice program — it was because authoritarians wanted to control the minds of other people's children. Thankfully, three years later, the U.S. Supreme Court⁴⁵ overturned that bigoted law in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), when the court famously remarked that "the child is not the mere creature of the State."⁴⁵

Today, in New York, private schools must provide an education that is "substantially equivalent" to what is offered in public schools, which basically defeats the purpose of private education.⁴⁶ New York also has one of the worst homeschooling laws in the nation when it comes to onerous regulation, and the state doesn't have any private school choice programs. Massachusetts and Rhode Island also have some of the least homeschool-friendly laws in the nation - according to the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) — and they don't have any private school choice programs, either. Iowa, Indiana, and Oklahoma — on the

⁴¹ School Choice's Antiracist History. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/school-choice-antiracist-history-integration-funding-segregation-11634568700>

⁴² The 123s of School Choice. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/research-library/?report=the-123s-of-school-choice-2/>

⁴³ Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/rweingarten/status/1539288376934903809>

⁴⁴ Pierce vs. Society of Sisters. Oregon Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/packets/1#:~:text=The%20Oregon%20Compulsory%20Education%20Bill,guardians%20who%20broke%20the%20law>

⁴⁵ Pierce v. Society of Sisters. Oyez. Retrieved from <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1900-1940/268us510>

⁴⁶ NY adopts new guidelines for cracking down on religious schools. New York Post. Retrieved from <https://nypost.com/2022/09/13/ny-state-education-board-approves-new-nonpublic-school-oversight-rules/>

other hand – each have universal school choice programs and some of the most homeschool-friendly laws in the nation.⁴⁷ The Educational Choice for Children Act has also been endorsed by HSLDA.⁴⁸

It's more likely that government overreach will happen in the future if millions of kids are stuck without exit options today, the status quo is further entrenched, and future generations continue to support more government involvement going forward. We might as well give families a choice to accept the funding or not, which will build a bigger coalition for individualized education. Politics is all about organized interests fighting for what they want. Supporters of private and home education freedom will be more likely to succeed in fending off any future calls for regulation if they have a bigger tent – a broader coalition – to fight against government overreach. Getting more families to benefit from private and home education – through access to school choice initiatives – would also make the concept of private education more mainstream. If the concept of private education is more mainstream, the rest of society should be less likely to call to regulate it out of existence in the future.⁴⁹

We should all be vigilant in watching out for interference in individualized education, and fight against it together. We should be sure to read the bills and call for amendments if onerous regulations are included. If the government tried to interfere with individualized education today, without school choice, school choice advocates would oppose it. If the government tried to do so in the future, with school choice, we should do the same thing and fight back, together.

No school choice program forces any families or schools to accept the money. It's all voluntary. Families can make their own decisions about whether to accept the money. Families should feel free to reject the funding if they want, but they shouldn't have the power to force others to spend their children's taxpayer-funded education dollars at government schools.

"ESA students" can be defined separately from "homeschool" students in the law (as in Arizona). If parents accept the funding, their child is an "ESA student," which is considered separately in the law.

As Thomas Sowell once said, "there are no solutions. There are only tradeoffs." There are potential costs and benefits of every policy change. Those fear-mongering are focusing on one possible cost of giving families a choice without realizing that there are large guaranteed costs of opposing that choice and cementing the status quo. The real costs of cementing the education monopoly outweigh the possible future costs of giving families a choice.

⁴⁷ Homeschool Laws by State. Home School Legal Defense Association. Retrieved from https://hsllda.org/legal?gclid=Cj0KCQjw84anBbCtARIsAIS-xcieWSFWHjtyVIMwxePyVlhcqsq4FWFq4PgHILUjQ_QQhQuXjdLF_VcaAmSKEALw_wcB

⁴⁸ Endorsements for the Educational Choice for Children Act (ECCA). Invest in Education Coalition. Retrieved from <https://investineducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/ECCA-coalition-endorsements-6-14-23.pdf>

⁴⁹ Should Libertarians Support School Choice? A Soho Forum Debate. Reason Magazine. Retrieved from <https://reason.com/video/2023/08/24/should-libertarians-support-school-choice-a-soho-forum-debate/>

School Choice is a Political Winner

Milton Friedman⁵⁰ once said, the way that that you solve problems is not “to elect the right people. The important thing is to establish a political climate of opinion which will make it politically profitable for the wrong people to do the right thing.”⁵¹

School choice has emerged as a clear winner among constituents across many types of districts. In last year’s midterm elections, there wasn’t a red wave or a blue wave, but there was a school choice wave. Seventy-six percent of the candidates supported by my organization – the American Federation for Children and our state affiliates – won their races in 2022.⁵¹

Exit polling suggested Florida Governor Ron DeSantis owed his narrow 2018 gubernatorial victory in part to “school-choice moms,” as James Madison Institute’s William Mattox argued in *The Wall Street Journal* that year.⁵²

The latest RealClear Opinion Research polling from June of this year finds that 71% of Americans support school choice, with supermajority support among Republicans, Democrats, and independents. That overall support for school choice surged by 7 points since April 2020.⁵³ A 2022 poll by OnMessage Inc. found that 66 percent of Americans support (only 22 percent oppose) a federal tax credit scholarship program like the one in the Educational Choice for Children Act. That same poll found majority support (over 60 percent) for the program across political parties.⁵⁴

School choice is on the Republican Party platform nationally and is part of the U.S. House Republicans’ Commitment to America Agenda.⁵⁵

Voters do not like hypocrisy. Many of the same politicians who oppose school choice – like President Joe Biden, California Governor Gavin Newsom, Representative Nancy Pelosi, Senator Elizabeth Warren, and North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper – who declared a state of emergency over school choice this year – all sent their own kids to private schools.⁵⁶ A national poll by from 2022 found that voters overwhelmingly responded that they would be less likely to support a candidate who exercise school choice for their own family but oppose it for others.⁵⁷

Glenn Youngkin’s 2021 gubernatorial election in Virginia also demonstrates a political power shift in favor of parental rights in education. Mr. Youngkin, a Republican, won the race against former Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe in a state that went 10 points to President Joe Biden just the year before, in 2020. Mr. McAuliffe was ahead in the polls until he let the mask slip at the final debate, when he said, “I don’t think parents should be telling schools what they should teach.” Instead of backpedaling, Mr. McAuliffe chose to

⁵⁰ Retrieved from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/738162-i-do-not-believe-that-the-solution-to-our-problem>

⁵¹ The School-Choice Election Wave. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-school-choice-wave-midterm-2022-florida-desantis-education-freedom-parents-teachers-unions-illinois-pennsylvania-11668090033>

⁵² ‘School Choice Moms’ Tipped the Governor’s Florida Race. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from https://www.wsj.com/articles/school-choice-moms-tipped-the-governors-florida-race-1542757880?mod=article_inline

⁵³ New Poll: School Choice Support Soars from 2020. American Federation for Children. Retrieved from <https://www.federationforchildren.org/new-poll-school-choice-support-soars-from-2020/>

⁵⁴ New Poll: Invest in Education: Support for Ed Freedom Continues to Soar. American Federation for Children. Retrieved from <https://federationforchildren.org/new-poll-invest-in-education-support-for-ed-freedom-continues-to-soar/>

⁵⁵ Republican Solutions for America’s Education System. Retrieved from https://republicans-edlabor.house.gov/uploadedfiles/republican_solutions_to_american_education_system.pdf

⁵⁶ Biden, Pelosi, other top Dems sent kids to private school but oppose school choice. *Fox News*. Retrieved from <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-pelosi-top-dems-sent-kids-private-school-oppose-choice>

⁵⁷ New Poll: Voters Overwhelmingly Reject Elected Officials Who Are School Choice Hypocrites. American Federation for Children. Retrieved from <https://www.federationforchildren.org/new-poll-voters-overwhelmingly-reject-elected-officials-who-are-school-choice-hypocrites/>

quadruple down on that anti-parent stance all the way up until the night before the election, when he had American Federation of Teachers president, Randi Weingarten, stumping for him. A Virginia mother went on CNN the next day stating that the Randi Weingarten endorsement – the school closer being McAuliffe’s campaign closer – was “the nail in the coffin” moment for her.⁵⁸ Washington Post exit polling indicated that education was the second most important issue in the election, and Youngkin won by 6 points with education voters.

Also in 2021, the National School Boards Association sent a letter⁵⁹ to the Biden administration suggesting some parents protesting at school board meetings should be investigated for “domestic terrorism.” Although the NSBA’s letter intended to silence and bully concerned parents into submission, it had the opposite effect. Most states decided to cut ties with the organization after they sent out the letter.⁶⁰ Parents have real power when they band together and fight back against systems that do not respect their rights.

The success of education freedom supporters sent a message about what constituents in both parties wanted. Shortly before the 2022 gubernatorial election in Pennsylvania, then Attorney General Josh Shapiro changed his education platform on his campaign website to include explicit support for private school choice in the form of Lifeline Scholarships, a proposal championed by Republican lawmakers in the state.

In 2023, Governor Shapiro even went on Fox News to voice his support for private school choice. His public endorsement of school choice was a smart political decision. The latest Morning Consult polling shows that 77% of Pennsylvania parents with children in school support education savings accounts.

Mr. Shapiro attended private schools, as do his children. By supporting the expansion of options for less-advantaged families, he was able to pre-empt Republican accusations of school choice hypocrisy. Pennsylvania parents are also already accustomed to school choice. More than 60,000 state scholarships are awarded to K-12 students to attend private schools in the state each year.⁶¹

Mr. Shapiro wasn’t the only prominent Democrat to come out in support of school choice recently. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, a Democrat, answered a candidate survey just a few weeks before the 2022 gubernatorial election indicating support for a private school choice program that he previously vowed to eliminate.⁶² This year, Mr. Pritzker said he would sign a private school choice bill benefiting low-income families if the legislature delivered it to his desk.⁶³ Two Democratic Representatives – one from North Carolina⁶⁴ and one from Georgia⁶⁵ – switched to the Republican Party largely because of their support for school choice.

⁵⁸ Parents are the new electoral power players. Washington Examiner. Retrieved from

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/community-family/parents-are-the-new-electoral-power-players>

⁵⁹ NSBA concludes review of letter asking Biden’s DOJ to investigate parents under ‘domestic terrorism’ laws. Fox News. Retrieved from <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/nsba-biden-justice-parents-domestic-terrorists>

⁶⁰ State associations leave NSBA following letter to President Biden (2021-2022). Ballotpedia. Retrieved from https://ballotpedia.org/National_School_Boards_Association

⁶¹ Democrat Josh Shapiro Defects on School Choice. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-democrat-defects-on-school-choice-josh-shapiro-pennsylvania-lifeline-scholarship-education-savings-account-teachers-union-election-11663615562>

⁶² Gov. Pritzker Flips on School Choice. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/school-choice-jd-pritzker-gubernatorial-governor-race-election-illinois-charter-public-funding-teachers-unions-11666185999>

⁶³ Gov. J.B. Pritzker says he’ll agree to extend a tax credit program for private school scholarships if legislators send him a proposal. Chicago Tribune. Retrieved from <https://www.chicagotribune.com/politics/elections/ct-pritzker-private-school-tax-credit-20231019-wjff5e56mnefdai5xhtgts2lvi-story.html>

⁶⁴ Education Freedom in North Carolina. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/education-freedom-in-north-carolina-public-schools-democratic-party-switch-cotham-choice-universal-7b9a3a8>

⁶⁵ School choice Georgia Republican on leaving Democratic Party: Policies weren’t ‘benefiting people of color’. Fox News. Retrieved from <https://www.foxnews.com/media/school-choice-georgia-republican-leaving-democratic-party-policies-benefiting-people-color>

The political winds have shifted. Just ask *The New Yorker*, where the author lamented that “education freedom” candidates “fared depressingly well” in the midterms.⁶⁶ Left-leaning Vox author also admitted that school choice has largely become “a litmus test issue for Republicans.”

For far too long in K-12 education, the only special interests represented the employees – the adults – in the system. But now, the kids have a union of their own: their parents. It’s time for politicians to listen to them – and free families from the clutches of the teachers unions once and for all.

⁶⁶ How “Education Freedom” Played in the Midterms. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/how-education-freedom-played-in-the-midterms>

Scientific Evidence of Private School Choice

The best evidence that school choice “works” is the satisfaction of the beneficiaries of the funding – the students and their families. Almost all – 31 of the 33 existing studies on the topic – find that private school choice is associated with higher levels of parent satisfaction.⁶⁷ Eight random assignment studies have found that winning the lottery to use a private school choice program had large positive effects on satisfaction for parents or students.

For example, Howell and Peterson (2002) found that the nationwide Children’s Scholarship Fund increased parent satisfaction by 95% of a standard deviation, and Kisida and Wolf (2015) found that the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program increased the average grade that parents assigned to their child’s school by over a third of a standard deviation.⁶⁸ The latest federal evaluation of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program found that winning a lottery to attend a private school increased students’ reports of satisfaction by 18% after three years, with average scholarship amounts valued at only about a third of the amount the D.C. public schools spent per student.⁶⁹

A peer-reviewed review⁷⁰ of the evidence from 2017 found 19 studies on the topic and concluded that “Results of all these studies show parents who can choose private schools are more satisfied with their child’s school. These studies also find higher levels of satisfaction when comparing choice parents to public school parents.” Similarly, my peer-reviewed evaluation⁷¹ from 2022, using a nationally representative sample, found that, all else equal, “public charter schools and private schools outperform traditional public schools on six measures of parent and student satisfaction.”

My peer-reviewed review⁷² of the evidence, coauthored with Jude Schwalbach, found that “Eight of the nine studies of public charter schools, and each of the eleven studies of private schools, found positive effects on school safety relative to district-run public schools.” For example, Wolf et al. (2010) found that winning a lottery and using a voucher to attend a private school in D.C. increased parents’ reports of school climate by 17% of a standard deviation.⁷³

All six peer-reviewed studies on the topic find that school choice reduces crime. For example, a study by researchers at Harvard and Princeton found that winning a lottery to attend a charter school in New York City reduced the likelihood of incarceration for male students by 100%.⁷⁴ Indeed, winning a lottery to attend a charter school in NYC all-but eliminated the chance of incarceration for male students in the sample. The

⁶⁷ The 123s of School Choice. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/research-library/?report=the-123s-of-school-choice-2/>

⁶⁸ Kisida, B., & Wolf, P. J. (2015). Customer satisfaction and educational outcomes: Experimental impacts of the market-based delivery of public education. *International Public Management Journal*, 18(2), 265-285.

⁶⁹ School choice works — for a third of the cost. Washington Examiner. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/school-choice-works-for-a-third-of-the-cost>

⁷⁰ Rhinesmith, E. (2017). A review of the research on parent satisfaction in private school choice programs. *Journal of School Choice*, 11(4), 585-603. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2017.1395639?casa_token=abCBUTvEvA0AAAAA%3ATE7uB7gM-bY0bInKt_AjKdi4zwujyXRwUCwRbheozL3sJelgIRx90B-GQmVTNT3Q345_76TDwjG4

⁷¹ DeAngelis, C. A. (2022). School sector and satisfaction: evidence from a nationally representative sample. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 33(2), 218-235. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09243453.2021.1993275>

⁷² Schwalbach, J., & DeAngelis, C. A. (2022). School sector and school safety: A review of the evidence. *Educational Review*, 74(4), 882-898. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00131911.2020.1822789>

⁷³ Wolf, P., Gutmann, B., Puma, M., Kisida, B., Rizzo, L., Eissa, N., & Carr, M. (2010). Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Final Report. NCEE 2010-4018. National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED510451>

⁷⁴ Dobbie, W., & Fryer Jr, R. G. (2015). The medium-term impacts of high-achieving charter schools. *Journal of Political Economy*, 123(5), 985-1037. Retrieved from <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/682718>

study also found that winning a charter school lottery reduced reports of teen pregnancy by 59% for female students.

Another study published in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* found that winning a lottery to attend a public school of choice cut crime in half, a 50% reduction, for high-risk male students in Charlotte, North Carolina.⁷⁵

Both of my peer-reviewed evaluations on the subject, coauthored with University of Arkansas Professor Patrick J. Wolf, found large positive effects of private school choice in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on crime reduction later in life.⁷⁶ Our latest study⁷⁷ found that “exposure to the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program is associated with a reduction of around 53 percent in drug convictions, 86 percent in property damage convictions, and 38 percent in paternity suits.” My peer-reviewed study⁷⁸ with Western Carolina University’s Angela K. Dills found that “states adopting charter school laws witness declines in adolescent suicides” and that “private schooling reduces the likelihood that individuals report having mental health issues as adults.”

Five out of the seven studies on the topic find that private school choice improves educational attainment.⁷⁹ For example, a peer-reviewed evaluation of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program found that winning a lottery to attend a private school increased the likelihood of graduating high school by 21 percentage points.⁸⁰ An evaluation of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program found⁸¹ that program participation “increases the likelihood that students earn a bachelor’s degree, with average increases of 1 to 2 percentage points (10 to 20 percent).”

EdChoice’s review of the evidence found that a majority of the 11 studies on the topic found that private school choice improves students’ civic values and practices. None of the 11 studies found negative effects.⁸² My peer-reviewed review of this evidence similarly concluded that all 11 existing studies on the topic found null to positive effects of private school choice on civic outcomes.⁸³ Dr. Patrick J. Wolf’s review⁸⁴ of 21 studies on the topic similarly found that “the effect of private schooling or school choice on civic values is most often neutral or positive.” For example, an evaluation of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship program

⁷⁵ Deming, D. J. (2011). Better schools, less crime? *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 126(4), 2063-2115. Retrieved from <https://academic.oup.com/qje/article-abstract/126/4/2063/1922935>

⁷⁶ DeAngelis, C. A., & Wolf, P. J. (2019). Private school choice and crime: Evidence from Milwaukee. *Social Science Quarterly*, 100(6), 2302-2315. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ssqu.12698>

⁷⁷ DeAngelis, C. A., & Wolf, P. J. (2020). Private School Choice and Character: More Evidence from Milwaukee. *The Journal of Private Enterprise*, 35(3), 13-48. Retrieved from https://journal.apee.org/index.php/Parte3_2020_Journal_of_Private_Enterprise_Vol_35_No_3_Fall

⁷⁸ DeAngelis, C. A., & Dills, A. K. (2021). The effects of school choice on mental health. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 32(2), 326-344. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09243453.2020.1846569>

⁷⁹ The 123s of School Choice. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/research-library/?report=the-123s-of-school-choice-2/>

⁸⁰ Wolf, P. J., Kisida, B., Gutmann, B., Puma, M., Eissa, N., & Rizzo, L. (2013). School Vouchers and Student Outcomes: Experimental Evidence from Washington, DC. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(2), 246-270. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pam.21691>

⁸¹ Chingos, M. M., Monarrez, T. E., & Kuehn, D. (2019). The effects of the Florida tax credit scholarship program on college enrollment and graduation: An update. Urban Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/effects-florida-tax-credit-scholarship-program-college-enrollment-and-graduation>

⁸² The 123s of School Choice. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/research-library/?report=the-123s-of-school-choice-2/>

⁸³ DeAngelis, C. A. (2017). Do self-interested schooling selections improve society? A review of the evidence. *Journal of School Choice*, 11(4), 546-558. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2017.1395615>

⁸⁴ Wolf, P. J. (2007). Civics exam schools of choice boost civic values. *Education Next*, 7(3), 66. Retrieved from <https://www.educationnext.org/civics-exam/>

found that winning a lottery to attend a private school increased tolerance levels between 6.7 and 8.2 percentage points.⁸⁵

Sixty-eight of 73 evaluations on the topic find that private school choice programs save taxpayer money. Seven out of 8 evaluations on the topic have find that private school choice programs lead to racial integration.⁸⁶ Most random assignment evaluations of private school choice programs find statistically significant positive effects on standardized test scores overall or for student subgroups.

Twenty-six of 29 existing studies on the topic find that private school choice competition improves outcomes in public schools.⁸⁷ The most recent peer-reviewed meta-analysis on the subject, published in 2022, similarly found overall positive effects of school choice competition on outcomes in public schools.⁸⁸ A peer-reviewed study⁸⁹ from 2023 also found that “more education freedom is significantly associated with increased National Assessment of Education Progress scores and gains, supporting the claim that choice and competition improves system-wide achievement.” School choice is a rising tide that lifts all boats.⁹⁰

Competition in the market for goods and services benefits consumers: parents and their children. Competition in the labor market benefits employees. The one-size-fits-all government-run school system is a monopoly that has little incentive to spend additional funding wisely. In the same way, the government-run school system is a monopsony in the labor market: educators who wish to work in an elementary or secondary school setting do not have a lot of options other than the government school system.

Lack of choice for employees and little incentive to spend money wisely on the part of the employers both lead to a lack of autonomy and stagnated salaries for teachers. National Center for Education Statistics data show that inflation-adjusted U.S. public school funding per student increased by 152 percent between 1970 and 2019. Public school teacher salaries, on the other hand, only increased by about 8 percent. The money is there, but it’s not making its way into the classroom (Appendix Figure 1).

The money is going towards administrative bloat and staffing surges. Between 1950 and 2015, the number of teachers in the public school system increased 2.4 times as much as the number of students, whereas the number of administrators and all other staff increased more than 7 times as much as the number of students. Between 1992 and 2014, per student funding increased by 27 percent in real terms, whereas average teacher salaries dropped by 2 percent. The number of teachers in the public school system increased by 28 percent and the number of administrators and all other staff increased by 45 percent.⁹¹ More recently, between 2000 and 2019, the number of student and teachers in the public school system increased by about 8 percent,

⁸⁵ Wolf, P., Peterson, P. E., & West, M. R. (2001). Results of a school voucher experiment: The case of Washington, DC after two years. DC After Two Years. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=313822

⁸⁶ The 123s of School Choice. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/research-library/?report=the-123s-of-school-choice-2/>

⁸⁷ The 123s of School Choice. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://www.edchoice.org/research-library/?report=the-123s-of-school-choice-2/>

⁸⁸ Jabbar, H., Fong, C. J., Germain, E., Li, D., Sanchez, J., Sun, W. L., & Devall, M. (2022). The competitive effects of school choice on student achievement: A systematic review. *Educational Policy*, 36(2), 247-281. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0895904819874756?journalCode=epxa>

⁸⁹ Wolf, P. J., Greene, J. P., Paul, J. D., & Ladner, M. (2023). Education Freedom and Student Achievement: Is More School Choice Associated with Higher State-Level Performance on the NAEP? *Journal of School Choice*. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2023.2183450>

⁹⁰ Wolf, P. J., Greene, J. P., Paul, J. D., & Ladner, M. (2023). Education Freedom and Student Achievement: Is More School Choice Associated with Higher State-Level Performance on the NAEP? *Journal of School Choice*. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2023.2183450>

⁹¹ Scafidi, B. (2017). Back to the Staffing Surge: The Great Teacher Salary Stagnation and the Decades-Long Employment Growth in American Public Schools. EdChoice. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED583004>

whereas the number of principals and assistant principals increased by 37 percent and the number of administrative staff increased by 88 percent (Appendix Figure 2).

Five studies on the topic each find that school choice competition leads to higher teacher salaries in public schools.⁹²

⁹² School choice benefits teachers too. Washington Examiner. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/school-choice-benefits-teachers-too>

Appendix Figures and Tables

Figure 1

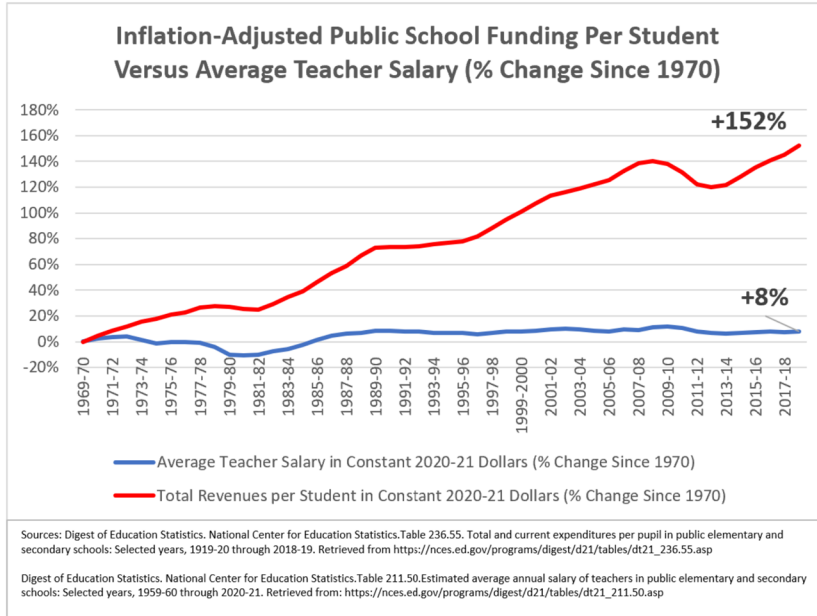


Figure 2

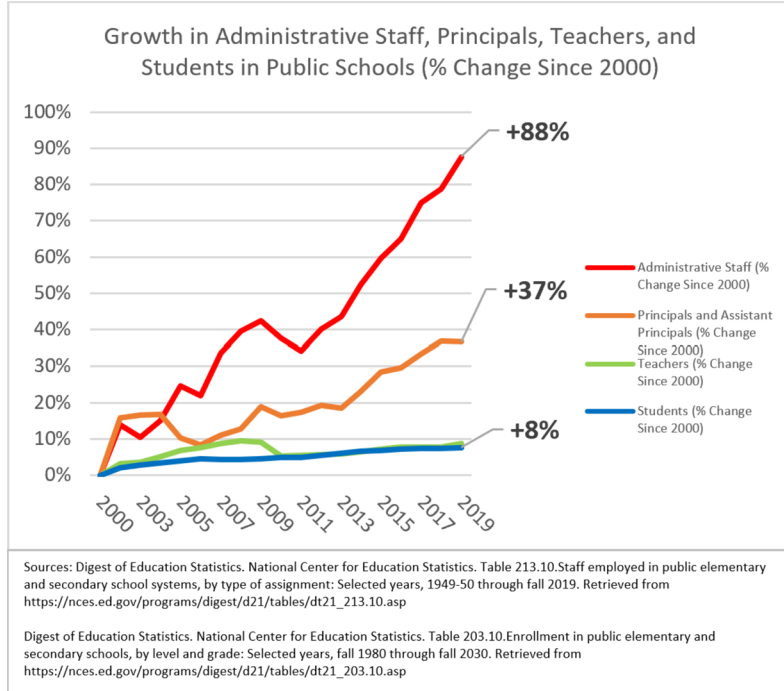


Table 1: Campaign contributions from the American Federation of Teachers to Democrats:⁹³

Year	Percentage
1994:	99.4%
1996:	99.1%
1998:	98.9%
2000:	99.2%
2002:	99.3%
2004:	98.0%
2006:	99.1%
2008:	99.1%
2010:	99.4%
2012:	99.4%
2014:	99.0%
2016:	99.7%
2018:	99.8%
2020:	99.6%
2022:	99.97%

⁹³ American Federation of Teachers. OpenSecrets. Retrieved from <https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/american-federation-of-teachers/totals?id=d000000083>

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. Ms. Varmah is recognized.

**STATEMENT OF HERA VARMAH, COMMUNICATIONS AND
EVENTS ASSISTANT, AMERICAN FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN**

Ms. VARMAH. Good morning, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Hera Varmah, and my story is a testament to the power of school choice to help achieve the American Dream.

I am a proud Floridian and a constituent in Representative Buchanan's district. My home state has not only demonstrated its success within our borders but has also set the standard for numerous other states to begin to embrace the transformative changes we witnessed today. I am one of 12 siblings born to 2 immigrant parents from Liberia and the Caribbean. As of this testimony, my three older brothers have all completed their college journeys: one now works as a mechanical engineer at a Tampa-based firm; the second is pursuing a medical degree; while the third thrives as a chemical engineer at GE Healthcare in South Carolina. Our family's pursuit of education doesn't end there. This year, we have six siblings in six different universities and two more in high school.

After obtaining my bachelor's degree in food science and technology from Florida A&M University, a historically Black land grant university, I now work full-time in education policy with the American Federation for Children, where I am dedicated to helping other students get the same life-changing opportunities that transformed my own family.

Every one of us is well on our way to building fulfilling careers and forging our way towards successful lives. Growing up, I never thought I was smart. I knew my siblings were, but I couldn't even think of a future for myself. School choice changed that. School choice helped me to change schools, first to Academy Prep Center of Tampa and then to Tampa Catholic High School, where I found the right teachers who would work with me, even during their lunch breaks and after school hours, to make sure that I didn't just pass my classes but I excelled in school.

What school choice means to me is a difference between feeling stupid and knowing that I can make it. Without my parents being able to choose the right school that best fit us, we would not be where we are today. Nine out of twelve in our family benefited from the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship. So, when people say that school choice doesn't work, I simply show them my family.

As I discovered in college when I joined the American Federation for Children's Future Leaders Fellowship program, the opportunities that my family received are not available to far too many students in other states. Although polling shows that Americans in both parties support school choice, as Corey said, many states still choose to limit the education options for their citizens. Families in other states deserve the same chances I had. Congress should expand parental choice in education, including through the Educational Choice for Children Act.

In the State of Florida, we are proud to host the largest school choice programs in the entire nation. What started as a modest tax credit scholarship program serving a limited number of students in

2001 has grown into multiple programs available to every family, with over 250,000 students this year alone who have been awarded a scholarship and enrolled in a school of choice. Florida has been a pioneer in the field of school choice for over two decades.

My home state clearly shows that you do not have to choose between supporting students in public or private education. Florida has made significant educational progress, moving from the thirty-fifth to the third and fourth position on the nation's report card, while expanding school choice. Florida has more than twice as many students using school choice scholarships to choose their education than there are in the other 49 states combined. I work every day to ensure that the other students across our great nation can access the same chances I did.

The actor Denzel Washington says, "Don't just aspire to make a living, but aspire to make a difference." Today, thanks to school choice, I don't just aspire to make a difference. I know that I am making one. My purpose is to do all that I can so that my journey, my personal journey, is not a rare one in one million anomaly, but rather, a daily occurrence in the lives of families across the nation.

So, in conclusion, the story of my family's journey is a testament to the transformational impact of school choice. It is a beacon of hope for families striving for a better future. School choice has opened doors and empowered us to reach our fullest potential. So, as you deliberate and you make decisions that will impact the future of education in our nation, I implore you to consider the countless lives like mine that have been changed by this simple yet profound concept. Let us continue to champion and expand school choice, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to access a quality education and reach for the stars. Thank you so much.

[The statement of Ms. Varmah follows:]

How School Choice Helped My Family Achieve the American Dream

Testimony on:

“Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers”

for a hearing before the
House Committee on Ways and Means

Wednesday, October 25, 2023, at 10:00 AM

1100 Longworth House Office Building

Testimony by:

Hera Varmah

School Choice Beneficiary

hvarmah@federationforchildren.org

Good morning, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Hera Varmah, and my story is a testament to the power of school choice to help achieve the American dream.

I am one of 12 siblings born into an immigrant family from Liberia and the Caribbean. As of this testimony, my three elder brothers have all completed their college journeys. One now works as a mechanical engineer at a Tampa-based firm, the second is pursuing a medical degree, while the third thrives as a chemical engineer at GE Healthcare in South Carolina. Our family's pursuit of education doesn't end there. This year, we have six siblings attending six different universities, and two more in high school. After obtaining my bachelor's degree in food science and technology from Florida A&M University, a historically Black land-grant university, I now work full-time in education policy, where I am dedicated to enabling other students to access the same life-changing opportunities that transformed my own family.

Every one of us is well on our way to building fulfilling careers and forging our way toward successful lives. Without school choice, a different story could have been told.

My parents immigrated to the United States searching for a better opportunity. As my siblings and I were growing up, they would stop at nothing to give us the best education possible, one that aligned with our family's values and set us up for success in their adopted country. My parents strongly believed that hard work paired with a strong moral foundation makes education powerful. But budgets were a challenge in a large family, and the local district schools were not a good fit for all of us. Simply put, my family's success wouldn't have been possible without school choice.

Growing up with eleven siblings in one house was a struggle, but we were determined. My parents taught my siblings and I from an early age that odds against you are meant to be broken. Failure was simply not an option. This foundation lit a fire under us to defy the odds. Thanks to the Florida tax-credit scholarship program, we were able to find schools that met our unique learning needs and allowed these dreams to become reality. This scholarship provided the opportunity for my siblings and me that simply would not have existed otherwise.

Without my parents being blessed with the choice of which school to send us to, we would not be where we are today. Nine out of the twelve received and benefited from the Florida tax-credit scholarship. So, when people say that school choice doesn't work, I simply show them my family.

Unfortunately, although polling shows that Americans in both parties support school choice, too many states still choose to limit education options for their citizens. I am proud to be a Floridian and a constituent of Mr. Buchanan, but families in other states deserve the same chances I had.

Congress should expand parental choice in education, including through the Educational Choice for Children Act (ECCA). If the act passes, not only will it help more parents and students in states that already have some form of school choice, but importantly it will also help parents and students in those that lack real school choice. This act would devote \$10 billion annually to empowering parents like mine to select the optimal educational institution or service – offering hope for nearly two million children. The opportunities are endless, and thanks to states like Florida, the potential outcomes are not a mystery.

In the state of Florida, we are proud to host the largest school choice programs in the entire nation. What started as a modest tax credit scholarship program serving a limited number of students in 2001 has grown into multiple programs, available to every family, with over 250,000 students this year alone who have been awarded a scholarship and enrolled in a school of choice.¹ Florida has been a pioneer in the field of school choice for over two decades.

Growing up, I always knew that Florida was a special place for education choice – I saw it in my own home every day. As I have learned more about the policy in my career, I have learned just how fortunate I was. Our state has a variety of school choice programs that cater to the needs of special education students, those who have faced bullying or harassment, and most recently, every family in the state whose children may need another option. A testament to the success of school choice can be found in Miami-Dade, where over 70 percent of students opt for schools outside their designated ZIP code, whether public or private, and public schools are making important

¹ ReimaginED. "More than 100,000 new students: Breaking down the historic growth in Florida school choice scholarships." 11 October 2023. Accessed from: <https://www.reimaginedonline.org/2023/10/more-than-100000-new-students-breaking-down-the-historic-growth-in-florida-school-choice-scholarships/>

gains right alongside their choice counterparts.² The future of education is customized, not one-size-fits-all, and I got to experience that future of education growing up.

My home state clearly shows that you do not have to choose between supporting students in public or private education. As it has expanded parental choice in education, Florida has made significant educational progress, moving from the 35th to the 3rd and 4th position on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), often called the nation's report card.³ As reported in ReimaginED, the publication of Florida's largest education choice provider, Florida has more than twice as many students who are using school choice scholarships to choose their education than there are in the other 49 states combined.⁴ My home state has not only demonstrated its success within our borders but has also set the standard for numerous other states to begin to embrace the transformative changes we witness today. School choice is not a mysterious concept; it represents the crucial opportunity that countless families require. My own family shows the opportunity it can unlock.

My purpose is to do all that I can so that my personal journey is not a rare, one-in-a-million anomaly but rather a daily occurrence in the lives of families across the nation.

The idea of families, even of limited means, being able to choose the right education for their children might seem like an impossible dream to many. To me, it was a given. I did not always realize how fortunate my family was.

When I was in college, I had the opportunity to be part of the Future Leaders Fellowship with the American Federation for Children, which taught me many things. The Future Leaders Fellowship Program brings together college students from across the country who have benefited from school choice programs. We share common experiences, coming from diverse yet often impoverished backgrounds, each finding schools that we needed to succeed and being able to attend thanks to school choice programs. But it was in these conversations that I first began to realize how different

² Matus, Ron. "Miami's Choice Tsunami." *Education Next*, Fall 2023. Accessed from: <https://www.educationnext.org/miami-choice-tsunami-carvalho-competition-transformation-miami-dade/>

³ WQCS. "Florida Ranks 3rd in the Nation in Grade 4 Reading and 4th in Grade 4 Mathematics." 24 October 2022. Accessed from: <https://www.wqcs.org/2022-10-24/florida-ranks-3rd-in-the-nation-in-grade-4-reading-and-4th-in-grade-4-mathematics>

⁴ ReimaginED. "More than 100,000 new students: Breaking down the historic growth in Florida school choice scholarships." 11 October 2023. Accessed from: <https://www.reimaginedonline.org/2023/10/more-than-100000-new-students-breaking-down-the-historic-growth-in-florida-school-choice-scholarships/>

my experiences were in Florida, with its robust programs, compared to others in states that still limited choice. The types of sacrifices and tradeoffs families had to make were serious, but families love their children and will do whatever it takes to help them succeed. Learning these stories, I became committed to changing the future for families like mine across America and realized my calling in public policy.

My experience is not unique, as many of my fellow Future Leaders have realized this calling to make a difference. As college students and now graduates, we have come from humble beginnings and had the opportunity to meet with national leaders, legislators, and advocates. We know our power and are prepared to embrace the future.

The actor Denzel Washington says, “don’t just aspire to make a living, aspire to make a difference.” Today, thanks to school choice, I don’t just aspire to make a difference – I know that I am making one.

Across the country, I have testified before state legislators, spoken on panels, and talked with families like mine about educational opportunities. Each state and community is different, but one thing unites families from coast to coast: They want the best for their children. Too many families in this country cannot fully realize this goal because they can neither afford to move to a school district that meets their needs nor pay for private tuition. Just like my parents stopped at nothing to give my siblings and me a better education, I have devoted my career to doing the same for families across the country whose hopes and dreams should not depend upon luck or family income.

In conclusion, the story of my family's journey is a testament to the transformational impact of school choice. It's a beacon of hope for families striving for a better future. School choice has opened doors and empowered us to reach our fullest potential. As you deliberate and make decisions that impact the future of education in our nation, I implore you to consider the countless lives like mine that have been changed by this simple yet profound concept. Let us continue to champion and expand school choice, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to access a quality education and reach for the stars.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you.
Mr. Redmond, you are now recognized.

**STATEMENT OF JEROME REDMOND, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
AMERICAN TRUCK TRAINING**

Mr. REDMOND. Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, and distinguished members of our—of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of American Truck Training.

We have one location in Oklahoma City that provides professional truck driver training. I am proud to say that our program helps hundreds of people per year get a CDL and go to work. Our mission statement is to go above and beyond for our students. I am proud to say that we help people, regardless of circumstances. And what I mean by that is we help folks from—folks with no high school diploma to folks with maybe some college.

And, in fact, let me frame this up a little bit better. As many of you may know, that—our company, our industry, the trucking industry, is 60,000-plus truck drivers short. And just maybe let that sink in for a minute.

And let me tell you also why I love this industry. Our program, like many other trucking school programs, takes about 4 to 6 weeks, costs about \$5,000, and graduates earn up to about 62 up to \$100,000 per year in their first year, plus insurance benefits.

There are plenty of job opportunities in trucking. These students are typically pre-hired and go to work immediately upon graduation.

Now, I got into this industry in part due to my dad, Hubert G. Johnson, or, as we call him, we call him Pops. And my biological dad, just for context, died when I was one years old from a brain aneurysm. But Pops came into our family. And Pops did work some odd jobs, did janitorial work. He worked as a gas station attendant. And for those of you who don't know what a gas station attendant is, you might just Google it. [Laughter.]

Mr. REDMOND. And for those of you who are laughing, you just told your age, right?

So he was only—he was—his education only got up to the eighth grade, okay? So I say this because in Oklahoma you don't have to have a high school diploma to get your CDL, right? So if—had that been a requirement, he would not have been able to get—feed our family.

So—but before he got his CDL, my mom—him and my mom would study for the CDL exam, and he would say to my mom, “Hattie”—by the way, that is my mom's name—“Hattie, if I can just get my CDL.” I mean, he would say that all the time, “Hattie, if I can just get my CDL.” And he made it seem like we were going to Disney World the next day if we got a CDL or something. And in fact, it was almost—as a kid, I thought it was a magic card that made all your dreams come true. I didn't know.

So—but it was pretty intense and inspiring to see my mother, Hattie, sit there with the CDL manual and read it to my father because his reading, you know, was needing to be improved. And it was the first time in my life I got to see a man shoot for his—go for his dreams and accomplish those dreams. So imagine what kind of difference that made to a young man like myself. So to see him

go through that, and it challenged me to be the good father—like a good father, like he was.

My team at American Truck Training works hard to help people get funding to go to school, but we can't help everyone. There was a gentleman, just for—just real quick I will tell you this quick story. There was a gentleman that came to our school, a nice young man, had three children, oil field worker, got laid off. And he checked-marked all the boxes. I mean, this guy was perfect for the industry, the trucking industry: tremendous work ethic, the whole nine.

But I couldn't find funding for him. It broke my heart. And I looked him in the eye and I had to say no to this young man, and at that moment—and this is why it is burned into my brain—that I vowed to make sure I will find ways to help folks get funding for school. And that is why I support, you know, H.R. 1477, the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act.

This is a solution that is just common sense. It would allow college savings plans to become career savings plans. People coming from my school aren't rich. They are just not. The 529 plans for career training would make them more useful to lower-income families, similar to the gentleman I mentioned earlier. These folks can't raise tens of thousands of dollars for a 4-year degree, and leftover 529 plans could provide a career for second-chance folks, for folks who maybe college isn't what they are meant to do, okay?

So I humbly ask the committee to support this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences with you today.

[The statement of Mr. Redmond follows:]



Statement of

**Jerome Redmond
President and CEO
American Truck Training
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**

Before the

Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives

Hearing on:

Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers

October 25, 2023

Introduction:

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of American Truck Training.

At American Truck Training, we provide professional truck driver training that changes the lives of hundreds of people each year. Our training provides students with the skillset needed to operate commercial motor vehicles safely on our roads and offers a direct path to good paying jobs with leading motor carriers.

Our strong relationships with prominent trucking companies means that our students are typically pre-hired before they even graduate from the training program. Many of our students go on to work for leading national carriers.

At my core, I wanted to lead a company like American Truck Training so that I could help people find rewarding careers that allowed them to provide for their families.

The inspiration for this comes from my father, Hubert Johnson, who worked tirelessly to get his Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and start a career that provided for our family when I was growing up.

My biological father passed away when I was very young. Hubert Johnson, who we called "Pops", married my mother and took on the responsibility of raising my siblings and I. For as long as I can remember, he's always worked to make a better life for his children.

Before my father got his CDL, he worked as a janitor and a gas station attendant in Chicago. While he always worked hard, those jobs weren't always enough to provide for our family.

My father viewed getting a CDL as a ticket to a better job. I can remember him telling my mother, "Hattie, if I can just get my CDL."

Getting his CDL was always going to be a challenge as he'd only finished his education through the 8th grade.

But a job opportunity came up with the city of Tulsa in Oklahoma and an opportunity to use a city truck to train for his CDL.

I can remember my parents sitting at the kitchen table late in the evening with my mother reading my father questions for the written CDL exam.

That image is burned in my brain. It's the first time that I got to see someone in my life go after what seemed like an impossible dream.

Allowing 529 Plans to Pay for Career Training and Credentialing Expenses is Common Sense:

One of the most challenging things I encounter is having to tell a promising truck driving student that I cannot find a way to help them pay for school. For many students, this training is the one thing they need to be eligible for a good job that will help them provide for their families.

It is heartbreaking when we can't take that final step because someone does not have the ability to pay for training.

My team at American Truck Training and I work relentlessly to help people in need find ways to pay for this lifechanging training. One noteworthy story really highlights this dedication.

Recently, a truck driving school in Oklahoma City abruptly closed its doors. Many students at this school had already made down payments on their training, amounting to as much as \$2,500. Those students were left without answers as to whether they'd ever complete their training and saw no path to getting their money back.

They also had no idea if they'd still be able to get the truck driving jobs they so desperately wanted.

While \$2,500 may not sound like a lot to you, losing that amount of money can be devastating for people who are struggling to make rent or pay their bills.

I've been in that situation where I've had to come home to my family to say that I'd lost an opportunity. I know what that feels like. I could not allow myself or my school to operate in good conscience without finding a solution for the students from this other school.

We extended a helping hand to these students who were our neighbors in the Oklahoma City community, some of whom were in tears over their predicament. We found a way to provide tuition credits to students who had paid into their schooling. And most importantly: we helped them complete their training to ensure they'd still have the opportunity to get hired. **All of the students who came to American Truck Training from the closed school completed our program.**¹

This story is just one example of the effort my team makes on a daily basis to provide any help we can to our students. However, it is impossible for us to help everyone who faces challenges paying for training.

¹ I was grateful to be interviewed by KFOR4 in Oklahoma City about what American Truck Training was doing to help these students. That interview is available here: Ashley Moss, "More options for students after truck driving school closes," KFOR4, November 29, 2022, <https://kfor.com/news/more-options-for-students-after-truck-driving-school-closes/>. American Truck Training's tuition offer was posted to our website here: <https://americatrustucking.com/att-is-here-to-help-cdl-university-students-welcome/>

Some people still cannot secure a funding option, and the cost of that is their future job opportunities in the trucking industry. And when they miss out on a trucking career, it is a real loss. To give you an idea of the return on investment available in the trucking industry, here is some information about outcomes for ATT graduates.

Truck driver training typically costs between \$4,000 and \$7,000 and can be delivered in about 4-6 weeks. Once a student earns their CDL and graduates, the student is hired, and that new driver continues their training as a paid employee.

ATT graduates that drive over-the-road or regionally with a preferred carrier will earn an average of \$60,000 to \$100,000 *in their first year* with access to full health benefits, retirement options, and paid vacations and holidays. Some drivers will also have access to sign on bonuses, tuition reimbursement, and other benefits.

I'll reiterate, this is a career where tuition of four to seven thousand dollars and training over four to six weeks connects you to a career with annual salaries of \$60,000-\$100,000 *in your first year*.

That's why I support H.R. 1477, the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act. This proposal would allow for 529 Plans to pay for career training and credentialing expenses, including truck driver training.

This solution is simply common sense. It would allow college savings plans to become *career savings plans*.

For families who sponsor a 529 Plan for their children, grandchildren, or other relatives, this change would give them additional ways to use the funds they were able to set aside to get the education they need for a rewarding career.

While a 2- or 4-year college or university may be the right path for some young adults, others may want a more direct pathway into a good paying job. Or for a student who did not find their preferred career path after attending a college or university, leftover funds applied to career training may offer a second chance at securing that education and credential that could jumpstart their careers.

We've had students in that situation attend our training program at American Truck Training.

A gentleman named Gerald graduated from ATT in 2018. Prior to coming to ATT, he graduated college and had worked in sales for many years. Since he graduated from our program, he's remained in the trucking industry, working for a company called XPO Logistics. At XPO, he's doubled his salary from what he was making in sales prior to getting trained at our program.

Another student who is seeking a new career opportunity with truck driver training is a woman named Alania. She enrolled in nursing school but didn't complete her program due to the length

of the program and responsibilities of life getting in the way. Alania is currently enrolled in our program. She's been pre-hired and has a strong likelihood to make more as a driver than she would have as a nurse.

The solution provided by this proposal can also provide a lifeline for struggling families. For those who face challenges in making their rent or paying their bills, the prospect of saving for a full college experience for their children could be daunting. Even with the best intentions, these families may only be able to set aside a small sum for their children's education.

For these families, the small amount they can save can still put their children on the path to a successful career. Professional truck driver training can be much cheaper and completed over a shorter time period compared to a 2- or 4-year college or university.

Drivers Entering the Industry Today Will Receive Minimum Standard Training at Any Provider:

American Truck Training is a member of the Commercial Vehicle Training Association. CVTA is the nation's largest association of professional truck driver training providers. CVTA membership includes nearly 100 member schools with nearly 400 locations across 46 states. CVTA schools are the largest source of entry-level truck drivers in the nation, training approximately 100,000 students per year. CVTA's membership also includes prominent, reputable motor carriers interested in supporting the training industry to ensure that they will employ safe drivers who operate on our nation's highways.

Through my work at American Truck Training, I became involved with CVTA, and I am proud to currently serve as the Chairman of the Board of Directors for CVTA.

People using their 529 Plan savings to pay for truck driver training can be confident that their money will be well spent, whether they receive training at a CVTA school, National Association of Publicly Funded Truck Driving Schools (NAPFTDS) school, receive in-house training from a motor carrier, or train with another training provider.

That is because the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), within the U.S. Department of Transportation, is enforcing minimum, industry-wide standards governing the delivery of truck driver training.

I've been proud to lead CVTA's work as the Association has supported the implementation of these industry-wide standards for the training of new commercial motor vehicle operators, called 'Entry-Level Driver Training' (ELDT).

CVTA joined 25 other stakeholder organizations to participate in an advisory committee, hosted by FMCSA, that led to industry-wide recommendations on minimum standards for entry-level drivers. Stakeholders from across the industry, including large motor carriers, small motor carriers, owners and independent operators, insurance companies, law enforcement, and training providers were all represented on this committee.

Proper implementation of these standards ensures that students will receive the minimum standard of truck driver training, no matter which kind of training provider they select. This means they will get the training they need to ensure they are hireable by reputable motor carriers and can operate commercial motor vehicles safely on our nation's roadways.

As a result, FMCSA estimates that over the first ten years of implementation, these standards will result in 115 lives saved, 2,364 injuries avoided, and 7,857 property damage only crashes prevented.²

Conclusion:

I'd like to conclude with one final story of a student whose success has really stuck with me. A woman named Yolanda came to American Truck Training on a Saturday over a decade ago. She told me that she wanted to get her CDL, but at the time she did not even have a regular driver's license.

She'd experienced a lot of financial challenges, so she didn't have the funds to pay for our program and financing her training was not an option.

I walked her step-by-step through how she could start training at our program, first by getting her regular driver's license.

It's a method I've used many times over: Give clear steps to students and ask them to report back after each step; and always affirm for students that you are fully committed to helping them succeed.

Yolanda got her driver's license and got approved to receive funding for truck driver training through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. She had everything she needed to start our program.

At first, Yolanda struggled with some of the maneuvers in the truck. But she was one of the most determined students I'd ever had in my program, and her persistence and positive attitude made me confident she could be trained to be safe driver.

If I can tell that your heart is in the right place and that you will be a safe driver, I'm never going to give up on you.

We gave her a little longer in our program than a typical student gets. But that extra training time paid off.

She passed her CDL exam and called us afterwards to let us know she'd stop by the school.

² Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration presentation, November 3, 2022, CVTA Fall Conference

I got our entire staff to stand out in front of the school to congratulate her when she arrived.

When Yolanda arrived and saw the team that had believed in her and stuck with her throughout her training, she broke down in tears. We all ran down the steps to give her a hug and show how proud of her we were.

Yolanda has been a professional driver now for ten years. And she's maintained that bright, positive attitude throughout her time in the industry.

It's people like Yolanda that I think of when I think of why Congress should pass H.R. 1477, the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act.

People like Yolanda don't need for government to take care of them. What they need is an opportunity: a little extra assistance and people in their community who believe in them, lift them up, and help them succeed.

In my work, we do that through training people for successful truck driving careers. Other industries provide similar training that prepares people to succeed in other fields.

In fact, I know that over 600 other organizations from every state in the country support this legislation through an organization known as the Tomorrow's Workforce Coalition. This coalition represents sectors of our economy with numerous career opportunities, including many that, like trucking, do not require a college degree. Through my work with CVTA, I'm proud that we've joined this coalition.

I humbly ask members of this Committee to support this proposal, and to dedicate yourselves every day that you represent our nation here in Washington D.C. to doing things that will help people succeed.

I'll be back home in Oklahoma City working relentlessly to help people like Yolanda make better lives for themselves and their families, and to support our economy along the way.

I hope you'll join me in that effort.

I'm deeply honored you've taken the time to hear from me in today's testimony. Thank you for the opportunity.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you.
Ms. Sedlar, you are now recognized.

**STATEMENT OF SHARON SEDLAR, PARENT AND FOUNDER,
PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES FOR EDUCATION CHOICE**

Ms. SEDLAR. Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Sharon Sedlar and I live in Brentwood Borough, a small town right outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with my husband and six daughters. As a result of a heart-wrenching experience I watched unfold with my youngest daughter, Virginia, I have become a strong advocate for education choice.

In kindergarten and first grade, Virginia was energetic, fearless, quick witted, and smart. When she was seven years old, she looked forward to being a second grader, playing with her friends, having a new teacher, getting that new lunchbox. But it quickly became a literal nightmare for her.

A child reading above grade level, excelling in math, and being considered for the gifted program started to academically stagnate. Seven months of stomach aches, headaches, nightmares, nights of lost sleep, sleeping in my bed for months, almost daily calls begging to come home, countless trips to the school office just to calm her down so that she could get through just one more day. She actually took to keeping a locket on yarn with a folded up picture of her family in it, because she needed us close to her heart.

It was seven months of my husband and I pleading with the district personnel to listen, help, and save my child from further harm, but they wouldn't. And all of Virginia's hard work and perseverance led to a day I will never forget in my dining room one morning when she said, "I just can't go, Mommy. Please don't make me go there." And she was apologizing to me, when it was the adults who had failed her. It broke my heart.

Because of the fortunate existence of some school choice in Pennsylvania, I was able to move her into another education option where she could be given the safety and security she so desperately needed. And I am happy to report that, six years later, while we still deal with profound after-effects of her experience, she has improved. But far too many children across the United States don't have these options, don't have the financial resources, or are denied an appropriate education because of their zip code.

This experience prompted me to start a non-profit called Pennsylvania Families for Education Choice, because I don't want to see another child suffer in an environment that isn't right for them, like Virginia had to. I have personally spoken with families and heard stories from inside and outside of Pennsylvania, stories that both break my heart but also inspire me every day to continue in my advocacy so that one day parents no longer have to fight to ensure what should be a basic right to an education that meets their children's needs.

While Pennsylvania is lucky to have some tax credit program assistance, it is not enough. Out of 139,000 applicants, only 63,000 scholarships were awarded due to an arbitrary program cap, and that means 76,000 children were denied. The average scholarship,

while appreciated, is only about \$2,500. Despite the support of legislators in both parties and Governor Josh Shapiro for some school choice, it is simply not enough.

Passage of programs on a Federal level, like the Educational Choice for Children Act, is a critical step in relief for children and families desperate for refuge, especially on the national front, since some states adamantly block choice pathways. I am grateful to see those in Congress like Representative Kelly and all members who have cosponsored the bill taking this important step.

There is no excuse not to empower every family. We need to demolish barriers now and put power and increased resources into parents' hands to serve each unique child's needs, particularly given so many challenges that our kids face today. Our children's lives go by so quickly, and there is no time to waste in saving our children and their futures. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Sedlar follows:]

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School Choice – A Parent’s Perspective

Testimony on:

“Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers”

for a hearing before the
House Committee on Ways and Means

Wednesday, October 25, 2023 at 10:00 AM

1100 Longworth House Office Building

Testimony by:

Sharon Sedlar

School Choice Parent and Founder,
Pennsylvania Families for Education Choice
sharon.sedlar@paedchoice.org

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means,

thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Sharon Sedlar, and I am sharing my story because school choice saved my daughter's life. No parent wants to see their child struggling, but that's exactly what happened to me. My story is tragically not unique; countless families across the country struggle to find a school or educational environment that their children need. Thanks to hours of advocacy, countless late nights, endless tears, and many tough budgeting decisions for our family, I was able to address my children's needs. Not all families are so fortunate.

That's what motivates me to fight for school choice and why I founded Pennsylvania Families for Education Choice. What first seemed like an impossible task has quickly become a calling for me. None of this would be possible without the love, support, and belief in the mission of my six daughters and husband, who have listened to my speeches and edited my articles in process, patiently helped me learn how to navigate today's technology and media structure, and even volunteered their own computer skills and have publicly shared their personal education choice stories. This experience has provided me with an opportunity to enter spaces where parents are not always welcomed and speak on behalf of parents who have not been heard. I know of too many stories that mirror my own.

Each of us has our "why." This is mine.

At first, my children attended a private elementary school, then we later switched to district school because we felt it was a better environment. In many ways, I love my public school district and the opportunities it provides to children. My first two daughters greatly benefited, and graduated from, district education. But over the years and with subsequent children, things changed.

In Kindergarten and first grade, our youngest daughter Virginia was energetic, fearless, quick-witted, and smart. But in second grade, we noticed a stark difference in her morning behavior after the first few weeks. What started as dragging her feet in the morning quickly transitioned to stomachaches, nightmares, and nights of lost sleep. A child reading above grade level and excelling in math started to academically stagnate. My husband and I suspected that the issue

was rooted in the relationship (or lack thereof) with her teacher, and our multiple requests for classroom transfer were outright denied. A Student Accommodation Plan (SAP) was presented as our only option.

While the SAP seemed to help somewhat in getting her to school on a daily basis at first, the increase in emotional needs at home was noticeable, especially on weeknights when she knew the school day was to come – sleeping in Mom’s bed, nightmares, fear of going to sleep, and many more tears and physical manifestations of anxiety. The SAP needs increased, and in-district art therapy was provided. Soon the Christmas holiday thankfully came upon us, and Virginia was able to unwind, relax and rejuvenate; sadly, her improvement was short-lived.

Virginia’s symptoms worsened. She felt the need to bring a necklace that contained a folded-up picture of the family in it so she could have us “close” to her heart. I can’t tell you how many times I would be asked to come to school during lunch to talk to Virginia. She would beg to come home, and I would convince her to stay, concerned about her level of absences and potential Magistrate referral. The relationship with the school district administration deteriorated as the SAP was continually violated, and instead of listening to our tear-filled pleas for relief and doing everything they could to help my child through crisis, the school became impatient and insisted that the plan be changed. They told me that it was simple “separation anxiety” and that this was common with a youngest child. I reluctantly and regrettably agreed to a stricter approach, second-guessing my instincts, and feeling defeated as a parent. My agreement to the new strategy only made things worse.

One morning in April before school, after seven months of unbelievably hard work and emotional strain on her part, seven year-old Virginia tearfully told me “I just can’t go Mommy. Please don’t make me go there. I’m sorry, Mommy.” She wouldn’t budge. The range of emotions – fear, sadness, and resignation – on this child’s face was heartbreaking to see. She was crumbling right before my eyes. And this child was apologizing for failing - when we were the ones who miserably failed her. Enough was enough, and I knew at that moment that this was the end of our public district school journey. I pulled Virginia out and enrolled her in a cyber charter school within days.

We were blessed that cyber charter school was an option available to Pennsylvania families and that it worked to save Virginia from an increasingly dark place that too many children may never escape. Even now, years later, Virginia still contends with profound after-effects from her experience. But she continues to improve, and her school of choice allows her the safety and security she has come to desperately need. Far too many children, both in Pennsylvania and nationwide, need something different – whether public, private, or home-based – and cannot access it because of family income.

Virginia's story is just one of the reasons that I founded Pennsylvania Families for Education Choice to fight for these rights. I believe no child should have to suffer in an environment that isn't right for them. Now I fight for all children in my state to have education options. In Pennsylvania, we are blessed that legislators in both parties and Governor Josh Shapiro support some public and private school choice, but that is not the case in all states.

Although district schools are a great fit for many children, one size does not fit all. The current education system fails children every single day – emotionally, physically, psychologically, environmentally, and academically. And this isn't just due to the aftermath of COVID. The Nation's Report Card proves that these problems are widespread, and families desperately need options. Regardless of the reason for which we find our nation's K-12 education system in its current predicament, education choice for the children of today and tomorrow is a necessary pursuit we must all undertake.

Parents are their child's first teacher and are the best qualified to make education decisions for their own children. We are there when they are hurt, scared, discouraged, or distressed. We are also there when they are happy, energetic, fulfilled, secure, and healthy. We know what works for our family and individual children, and we need to be able to fulfill our purpose and mission – to raise happy and healthy eventual adults, future society members and productive citizens. This will come to fruition given the correct circumstances and environment, which parents are best designed to decipher, decide, and provide.

But some states don't provide these pathways – as a matter of fact, they adamantly block them. This is why the help of our Congress is desperately needed – so that children like Virginia are not

left to struggle if their state legislature is committed to the state-based status quo that may be failing them.

Through my work with Pennsylvania Families for Education Choice, I have aided countless families navigating their education options and heard from hundreds of parents whose stories both break my heart and inspire me every day. Parents across our state in many different circumstances do whatever it takes to fight for choices for their children – and some of their fights take years, or perhaps are never really resolved, resulting in a lost opportunity to improve a child's life. My hope is that one day parents will no longer have to fight to ensure what should be a basic right – to find an education that meets their children's needs.

While Pennsylvania does have K-12 scholarship tax credit programs, out of 139,000 applications only 63,000 K-12 scholarships were awarded an average scholarship of \$2,534 in the 2021-21 school year. Over 76,000 children were denied due to arbitrary program caps. Passing programs on a federal level, like the Educational Choice for Children Act, will be a critical step toward that child-centered goal. We are grateful to Representative Kelly for being an original co-sponsor, and to all the members who have co-sponsored the bill.

As adults, we can think of a few years as just a short time with lessons learned; but for children, those years mean everything, especially while they're still developing and learning in so many ways. We have no time to waste in helping them. They depend upon adults to make their path as stumble-free as possible. Parents should not be asked to "hang in there" and watch their child suffer while the education system continues to fail our children and limits their choices to succeed based on financial status or ZIP code.

Children are unique and special. They have preferences and needs, strengths, and weaknesses. With my six daughters, I see this reality up close every day. Parents build our lives around our children, and we freely make a myriad of decisions daily on their behalf. Education should not be an exception.

Children shouldn't be asked to "Make it just one more day", or as is the case in some of Pennsylvania's inner-city schools, to simply "Make it to 30" (meaning physically survive through their 20's). Parents shouldn't have to bribe or force their children to get them to enter the school building. And parents certainly shouldn't have to feel as if they need to ask "permission" to advocate for their child within the district system – it should be a willing partnership.

Education choice has been all about my ability as a parent to make the best decision I can for my children as life changes, our community changes, or their needs change. The availability of choice has made all the difference for us, but many other families don't have the same opportunity. As much educational opportunity as possible should be extended to families across the country. One, uniform option simply does not work for everyone.

Our children's barriers must be demolished *now*. It's time for the adults to step up and put them in the center of the conversation and remake education around students, not systems.

Studies of existing programs show overwhelmingly that parents and families are satisfied, outcomes are good, and public district schools are not harmed. Especially as the country continues to strive to recover from generational learning loss after the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no excuse not to empower every family with the options necessary to make the choices that will change their children's lives – and maybe even save them like my daughter was saved.

It is time to put power and increased resources into parents' hands to serve each unique student's needs most appropriately, particularly given the challenges today's students face. Whether continually growing achievement gaps, increased student distress, or the lasting effects of the pandemic, students need immediate options. Passing policy that will help ensure that those options are not limited to certain states, and that children across our great nation will have the chance to learn, is sorely needed and would be live saving for so many.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you.
Dr. Melancon, you are now recognized.

**STATEMENT OF GIRARD MELANCON, BOARD CHAIR,
NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION**

Mr. MELANCON. Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Neal, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Dr. Girard J. Melancon, and I am the director of the National Green Jobs Advisory Council at the National Council for Workforce Education and the board chair for the National Skills Coalition.

My work at the National Green Jobs Advisory Council is focused on future-proofing legacy trades at community colleges, basically taking a diesel engine technician and bringing them into the world of EVs and hydrogen and other sectors along that ways. I recently completed my 10-year tenure at Baton Rouge Community College as the vice chancellor for workforce solutions and have also served as the appointing authority for Democratic and Republican governors in Louisiana Department of Labor and the Office of Juvenile Justice.

I am deeply grateful to the committee for allowing me to provide testimony on this important topic.

Your historical investment has provided so many incentives that were part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act. Combined, these laws will support three million jobs per year over the span of the authorization. Let's repeat that: three million jobs per year. As a workforce development expert, the worst thing you could do is train people where there are no jobs. You are actually providing opportunities and pathways for people for good jobs.

Some of the largest growth is expected in construction, with the demand of nearly 5,000 workers each year; manufacturing, 336,000 jobs; transportation and warehousing, as we heard from here, 257,000 jobs; and utilities, 15,000 jobs per year. Many of these jobs will be in the clean energy and technology sector or supporting those sectors.

According to 2023, the United States Energy and Employment Report, the number of jobs in the—just battery vehicles alone increased by 27 percent. That is only in 2021 to 2022. The growth is almost 17 times faster than the increase in gasoline and diesel vehicles employment over the same period. Additionally, across the period, clean vehicles production and maintenance accounted for more than half, particularly 59 percent, of all new jobs in the automotive industry.

This report also highlights rapid growth of offshore wind, modernization of coal fuel systems, natural gas fuels, petrol, petroleum, and also hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, and natural gas vehicles, and plug-in hybrids.

But we still kind of have a mismatch. We have mentioned all that demand, which is great for training providers to have, because you never want to train anybody for where there is no employment. So we still need to build our infrastructure up to meet the—match that demand.

Without policy modernization, the United States does not have a scale plan to prepare workers. For decades, our nations have—our nation has failed to invest in high-quality, inclusive skills training that supports the career of working people.

In addition, the lack of access to infrastructure, skill-building opportunity that keeps peoples from getting good-paying jobs and infrastructure jobs facing—and, also, we are facing the silver tsunami of our retirees as an aging workforce approaching the end of their working years. We have to meet this demand. For example, in my written testimony, almost—the U.S. would need to invest almost \$17 billion more annually just to reach the average investment of other industrialized countries.

We do know there are several things that work extremely well in workforce development, and these include programs—support of partnerships between local workforce ecosystems through the industry or sector partnerships. They also include bridges between where workers are and what businesses need, and they have an intentional focus on equity.

So a great opportunity that we have that you all have provided investment in before, I would like to talk about the TAACCCT program. TAACCCT has done—has provided much of the financial support for sector partnerships from the private and local and state funding. Still, the Federal Government has historically recognized their value, both defining them by statute, allocating support, and expanding them in George W. Bush Administration, provided \$250 million over the years. That bumped up to the Community Based Job Training Grant in 2011, and where—and then also in the TAACCCT program was birthed out of that at \$1.9 billion.

We have trained an under-tapped 700—community colleges earned more than 320,000 industry-recognized credentials during that time, and more support needs to be generated during that framework. However, since 2007, Congress has since provided a smaller pot of money and these partners through strengthening the community college training grants.

I would like to yield the rest of my time for further questions regarding what we can do as solutions, and thank you so much.

[The statement of Mr. Melancon follows:]

Written Testimony of Girard J. Melancon, Ph. D.
Director National Green Jobs Advisory Council

*Hearing on Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and
Workers*

House Committee on Ways and Means
1100 Longworth House Office Building
October 25, 2023

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Dr. Girard Melancon, and I am the Director of the National Green Jobs Advisory Council (NGJAC) at the National Council for Workforce Education (NCWE) and Board Chair of National Skills Coalition (NSC).

My work with NGJAC focuses on engaging employers to identify the mismatch between workers current skills, or those currently being taught by community and technical colleges. It also focuses on researching and distributing new and existing curricula that support current for-credit and noncredit programs run by community and technical colleges. This brings together colleges, businesses and other workforce stakeholders to integrate competencies needed for clean energy jobs of tomorrow into existing academic and training frameworks and credentials. For example, I have worked with schools to integrate solar Photovoltaic Technology Basics in to existing electrical programs.

I recently completed my 10-year tenure at Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC) as the Vice-Chancellor for Workforce Solutions. I have also served as an appointed authority for Democratic and Republican Governors at the Louisiana Department of Labor and the Office of Juvenile Justice.

I am deeply grateful to the committee for allowing me to provide testimony on this important topic.

Historic investment, historic opportunity

Every day, in communities across our nation, workers seek out opportunities to ensure their families can thrive. At the same time, businesses want to hire skilled workers—people trained for jobs in growing industries. But without access to inclusive, high-quality skills training, workers are locked out of opportunities to succeed, and local businesses can't expand.

A significant portion of good jobs in the US require training beyond high school, but not a four-year degree.¹ Postsecondary education and training have become essential to economic mobility, especially for adults of color. They are also critical to building an inclusive economy — one where workers and businesses who are most impacted by economic shifts, as well as workers who face structural barriers of discrimination or lack of opportunity, are empowered to equitably participate in — and benefit from — a growing economy.

¹ <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/3pathways/>

This challenge is particularly acute within industries targeted by historic federal investments and incentives that were part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the CHIPS and Science Act (CHIPS) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

Combined, these laws will support nearly 3 million jobs per year over the span of their authorization.²

Some of the largest job growth is expected to be in construction, with a demand for nearly 500,000 workers each year, manufacturing at 336,000, transportation and warehousing with 257,000 jobs and utilities with 15,000 jobs each year. Many of these jobs will be in clean energy technology.

According to the 2023 United States Energy and Employment Report (USEER), the number of jobs in battery electric vehicles increased by 27% from 2021 to 2022.³ This growth was almost 17 times faster than the increase in gasoline and diesel vehicle employment over the same time period. Additionally, across this period, clean vehicle production and maintenance accounted for more than half (59%) of all new jobs in the automobile industry.

The report also highlights rapid growth in offshore wind (20%) and other grid modernization (12%), coal fuel (22%) natural gas fuel (24%), petroleum (13%), hydrogen fuel cell vehicles (25%), natural gas vehicles (14%) and plug-in hybrid vehicles (10%).

The jobs created could provide meaningful improvement in workers economic security

These federal investments create the opportunity to boost economic security and job quality, redress long standing inequities, and expand the opportunities for communities and workers across the country.

Policies aimed at training the next generation of infrastructure workers should create equitable pathways to quality jobs. Quality jobs seek diversity in recruitment and hiring, provide good wages and benefits, ensure a safe, fair, healthy, and accessible workplace with a predictable schedule, provide opportunities to build skills and advance within a career, ensure that workers have a meaningful voice, and foster diversity, equity and inclusion so that all workers feel respected and empowered.

Job creation directly related to the IRA will lead to median wages that are 11% higher than the median wages across the workforce and are also more likely to provide workers with health benefits. Wages for those created under CHIPS are 28% higher than the median, and those directly created by BIL are 6% higher.

² <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/news/press-releases/new-research-finds-federal-clean-energy-manufacturing-and-infrastructure-investments-will-support-three-million-jobs-per-year/>

³ <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/2023%20USEER%20REPORT-v2.pdf>

Most of the jobs created will require skills training

Most of the jobs created under these investments will be accessible to workers with skills training and do not require a four-year degree. In fact, according to estimates from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, 60 percent of jobs created through BIL will require six months of training or less and it is expected that much of that training will be delivered by community colleges.

Yet, hiring trained workers for these jobs (as well as the success of planned infrastructure projects) hinges on a new generation of workers having access to the education, skills training, economic supports, and hiring and career advancement opportunities they need to land jobs in the booming infrastructure and clean energy sectors.

The challenge is that while these laws created jobs there is not a dedicated funding source within those laws to address workforce training. To realize this, though, *now* is the time for action to ensure training providers have the ability and purpose to build a pipeline of workers who can access good jobs.

The Problem:

U.S. workers do not, today, have access to the skills necessary to fill these jobs

A key premise that has emerged through this work is that there are many jobs in the green energy sector, yet there is a shortage of skilled workers. Energy workers are aging out and there is also a paucity of diversity among energy workers/electricians (Rewire America, 2023). According to US Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023, and the Interstate Energy Renewable Council (IEREC) Solar Census Survey 2023, approximately 70% of the electricians and green energy sector workers are comprised of white males.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the nation will need at least one million new clean energy workers by 2030. Concomitantly, a climate change crisis is occurring in that the U.S. must move strategically to decarbonize and eliminate nearly all greenhouse emissions from manufacturing, energy, and construction sectors. Where will we find the workers? There is also a major retirement issue facing all legacy crafts with not enough workers to fill the current demand.

The transportation sector is also changing rapidly and experiencing a lack of skilled workers. The number of jobs in battery electric vehicles increased by 27% from 2021-2022 accounting for the fastest energy technology growth (U.S. Energy and Employment Report, 2023). Most community colleges have infused vehicle electrification into automotive technician training programs. The non-fossil fuel vehicle technology sector is also growing rapidly. School buses, farming equipment, semi-tractor trailer trucks, small aircraft and others are becoming electrified or are utilizing hydrogen-electric technology. Hydrogen fuel cell vehicles increased by 25% from 2021-2022. And power plants are moving from traditional fossil fuel generated electricity to

hydrogen fuel cell stationary power. Community colleges do not have the curriculum to change traditional mechanic or heavy equipment programs from diesel to electrification or hydrogen technology. Currently, Cummins, CAT and others have developed training curriculum to reskill their existing workforce. However, the curriculum developed in-house is proprietary.

Training these workers will take investment, policy support and commitment to equity. The strategies to bridge this unprecedented demand and where we are now, though, are well established.

Without policy modernization, the U.S. does not have a scaled plan to prepare workers, either

For decades, our nation has failed to invest in high-quality, inclusive skills training that supports the careers of working people, the sustainability of local businesses, and an economy where everyone can thrive. As a result, people who may want to train for infrastructure careers often face barriers to doing so and projects are often critically understaffed, making it challenging for infrastructure employers to fill job vacancies. In addition to the lack of access to infrastructure skill-building opportunities that keeps people from getting good-paying infrastructure jobs, the sector is facing a “silver tsunami” of retirements as its aging workforce approaches the end of their working years. The additional jobs created by recent federal infrastructure investments will only heighten the demand for trained workers.

If our country is serious about training the next generation of workers, as well as ensuring that federal investments contribute to an inclusive economy, we need to intentionally open the door to millions of workers who want to train for a new career in infrastructure and clean energy—particularly workers of color, and women, who have been long been underrepresented in these sectors.

According to OECD data, the U.S. invests less in workforce policies than nearly every other industrialized country in the world.⁴ The U.S. would need to invest \$72 billion more annually just to reach the average investment of other industrial countries.

The World Economic Forum estimates that the U.S. needs to double its investment in the workforce each year for ten years just to adapt to technological change.

Congress has steadily cut investments in workforce programs, CTE, and adult education programs over the past twenty years.⁵ Congress provided virtually no dedicated funding as part of COVID response, recovery packages to address the needs of our public workforce system. Even funding included in BIL, CHIPS and IRA falls far short of what businesses, communities and workers need.

Without investments in our workforce, training programs, human service providers, community and technical colleges and others in the workforce ecosystem have too few resources to implement the strategies highlighted in this testimony. The strategies we know work.

⁴ <https://data.oecd.org/socialexp/public-spending-on-labour-markets.htm>

⁵ <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CIAW-Invest-in-AW-1.pdf>

Future proofing legacy careers with established strategies: Robust Sector Strategies, career pathway programs and a focus on equity

While the country has failed to make necessary investments in workers, we do know the strategies necessary to do so.

In my experience, strong education and training programs in the energy sector - and beyond - have three key components:

These programs convene and support partnerships between the local workforce ecosystem through industry or sector partnerships, they support bridges between where workers are and the skills businesses need, and they have an intentional focus on equity.

1. These programs convene and support partnerships between the local workforce ecosystem through industry or sector partnership

Sector strategies bring together primary stakeholders in the workforce ecosystem – community and technical colleges and other training providers, businesses and industry associations, community organizations, labor and labor management partnerships, and others – to create industry-led, sector-specific training programs. Programs created under this model engage local employers in order to keep curriculum relevant. These partnerships are designed to create a pipeline where workers can move from recruitment to training programs, and into quality jobs supported by employers engaged in the sector strategies. Additionally, participants in training programs associated with these industry or sector partnerships have access to not only training, but also supportive services that facilitate retention and completion.

The Hampton Roads Regional Workforce Training System (RWTS) is one such program, led by the Hampton Roads Workforce Council in the Hampton Roads region of Virginia. HRWC has a long history of convening and working within the region's partner network to implement sector partnerships. In 2019, HRWC commissioned a study of the regional workforce and talent pipeline, finding that Hampton Roads has a growing labor shortage. Prompted by the report's findings HRWC created the Coalition for Talent Development — a group dedicated to forming sector partnerships in major industries in the region. The coalition organized leaders from local businesses, education and training institutions, municipal government and economic development groups including HRWC to create their first sector partnership in the maritime industry.⁶

Industry partnerships also have the potential to expand access to quality infrastructure careers for people of color and women.⁷ In addition to fostering regional collaboration and expanding training capacity, the RWTS plans to enroll more than 950 people in maritime training programs

⁶ https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/NSC_infrastructurePlaybook_webFINAL.pdf

⁷ <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/08-24-2020-NSC-Roadmap-for-Racial-Equity-Immigration-Special-Edition.pdf>

with Black, Indigenous and other people of color; women, veterans and young people who are neither in school nor working making up 70% of the talent.

2. These programs support bridges between workers' current skills and entry points for training programs and jobs

In addition to engaging businesses and workforce stakeholders in partnerships, strong training programs also meet students where they are in terms of prior educational attainment, demonstrated competencies, flexible options, affordability, and necessary supports. This means programs often support rapid reskilling and upskilling for workers. They help workers efficiently leverage existing expertise and prior learning to then build upon those demonstrated competencies and skill sets. For many workers in these programs it is not a linear pathway to credential attainment, hence there must be flexibility built into the development of these programs in order to meet the needs of workers and businesses.

3. These programs have an intentional focus on equity

Realizing the full equity promise of new jobs and meeting the workforce needs of infrastructure sectors requires local areas to analyze existing demographics within an industry, identify areas on which to focus and to measure and track success advancing those areas on which they focus.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWB) created an Equity Task Force to develop recommendations for reducing inequities in Illinois' workforce and education systems.⁶⁵ In addition to its recommendations to the IWB, the Equity Task Force also identified opportunities for local workforce boards, recognizing the critical role local workforce system leaders and practitioners play in advancing equity. Three of the six recommendations relate to strengthening the delivery of equity advancing career services including: 1) Diversifying workforce system leadership and staff and providing systemwide training on equity, cultural competence, and cultural awareness and humility for those served by the system; 2) Providing funding to, and partnering with, organizations providing culturally specific services with a track record of success in serving target populations; and 3) Prioritizing workforce services that include supportive services.

Successful strategies in practice: North Baton Rouge Industrial Training Initiative

The North Baton Rouge Industrial Training Initiative (NBRITI) is a strong example of a training program and sector strategy, combined with this bridged learning approach, that has focused on equity.

NBRITI has trained over 450 people since 2012. Baton Rouge—located on the banks of the Mississippi river in southeastern Louisiana—is a significant port and major petrochemical center. It is also the home of the ExxonMobil Baton Rouge Refinery, which is the third-largest refinery in the United States and the eleventh-largest in the world.

By 2012, despite the productivity level and size of operations at the refinery, ExxonMobil executives were unable to deny that they were facing a worker shortage—specifically in the areas of welding, pipefitting, and electricity. Even though there was a significant number of individuals looking for work in the Baton Rouge area, the lack of foundational skills needed to begin a career at the refinery was evident.

As a solution, industry leaders sought assistance from Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC)—a two-year academic institution that strives to equip students with the skills they need to be successful in the workforce or transfer to a four-year degree program to continue their education. Together, ExxonMobil, BRCC, and other local partners including the Capital Area Technical College and community-based organizations created the North Baton Rouge Industrial Training Initiative (NBRITI). The goal of this collaborative effort is to train eligible North Baton Rouge residents at no cost to them for well-paying careers through an intensive, short-term training program designed to fast-track them to success.

To become eligible to enroll in the NBRITI, students must go through a screening process, which includes academic testing, drug testing, academic assessments, and interviews. This process helps identify and resolve any existing barriers to success that a potential trainee might face during the length of the program, such as limited access to transportation, unreliable housing, or lack of childcare.

Once enrolled in the program, which is financed with the help of participating companies and partially supported by Louisiana's Rapid Response Fund supported by funding from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds, students receive one-on-one guidance and professional development resources to set them up for long-term success. Students who successfully complete their programs can be immediately employed if they meet the requirements of NBRITI's "Ready to Go!" framework. This means they are consistently punctual, can use hand tools safely and effectively, and are strong team players. Ready to Go! is designed to be a fair and easy system that empowers students to be accountable for their own success.

Partners involved in this training model remain connected and engaged on a regular basis both during and outside the academic year through an Industrial Training Initiative steering committee. Consisting of approximately 40 individuals from various petrochemical and manufacturing service companies, committee members review curriculum content to ensure it is up-to-date, discuss the effectiveness of recruiting techniques, assess job placement rates, etc. Due to consistent stakeholder engagement, student support services, and intensive coursework, NBRITI has proven to be tremendously successful. More than three-quarters (80 percent) of individuals who have been trained through this program have been placed in jobs throughout the community. The NBRITI program has recently built pathways to Exxonmobil's apprenticeship program.

Policy recommendations to meet business and worker need

To realize the impact and opportunity at the center of the BIL, CHIPS, and IRA, Congress must advance policies that meet business demand while also ensuring that workers have equitable access to the education and training necessary to attain quality jobs. To that end, I recommend the following policies for your consideration.

1. Support affordable access to skills training and quality credentials

The cost of attaining a high-quality credential remains an obstacle for many current and prospective students and workers. Nearly half of students cite cost as the most significant barrier to achieving their postsecondary goals.⁸ While grant aid is available to many low-income students and workers, it typically falls far short of covering all education and training-related expenses, including tuition, fees, books, housing, transportation, food, and child care.⁹ Additionally, there remains a gap in the availability of federal student aid for students enrolled in high-quality shorter-term education and training programs – a policy which is sometimes mirrored at the state level further widening the disparity around access. As a result many students cannot afford a credential without taking on debt. Others may postpone their skills training goals or forgo them altogether. In order to address barriers associated with cost I recommend the following.

Create a mandatory funding stream to support business and worker need

Congress should rectify ongoing disinvestment in the workforce system by creating a new mandatory funding stream to support worker access to in-demand credentials. The funds under this proposed program should support Skills Training Grants, a modernized version of Individual Training Accounts currently included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).¹⁰

Skills Training Grants would allow more workers, including many who may not be eligible for Pell Grants, to receive skills training with a broader set of nonprofit program providers like community-based organizations, labor-management partnerships, and apprenticeship programs while also providing workers with resources for supportive services like transportation, housing, child care, and course materials.

Skills Training Grants would also give workers flexible options for training at various stages of their career and to enter into career pathway programs. For example, a worker might use a Skills Training Grant to pursue a training credential at the start of their career, which in turn could support stackable credentials and articulate for credit to be applied to future education or training opportunities at an institution of higher education.

In addition to linkages to in-demand sectors and occupations, Skills Training Grants would be keyed to quality job opportunities. Not every credential leads to good opportunities for workers. Hence, it is essential to ensure that this investment benefits not only businesses but also workers.

Modernize the Work Opportunity Tax Credit by passing the bipartisan SKILL UP Act

⁸ Report: Barriers to Post-Secondary Education: https://cengage.widen.net/s/w52pbrzwm/cg_barrierspostsecedreport_final

⁹ College Board. Trends in College Pricing. <https://research.collegeboard.org/trends/college-pricing>

¹⁰ <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/FinalWIOARecs.pdf>

Congress should also expand the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) to support businesses providing work-based learning to populations currently targeted under the tax credit.

WOTC provides credits of up to \$9,600—totaling nearly \$1 billion claimed by employers each year—to companies for hiring workers such as veterans, the long-term unemployed, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) recipients.

By updating WOTC to provide an additional credit for businesses who hire *and* train workers from these target populations, the credit can help businesses build a pipeline of workers and help workers access skills they need.

Make Pell Grants Tax Free

Congress should pass The Tax-Free Pell Grant Act. This bipartisan legislation before this committee will help low-income students retain more of their Pell Grants, and ensure that community college students and other students attending low cost institutions qualify for the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC).

As currently structured the AOTC often does not benefit students attending low cost institutions, as the credit is largely tied to tuition and cannot help offset the full cost of attendance. This structuring seems counterintuitive given the intent of the AOTC in assisting low-income students. It shouldn't be set up to punish those who choose to attend postsecondary education and training programs that are comparatively lower in cost.

Pass the Bipartisan JOBS Act

One area where Congress can help support affordable access to high quality workforce training is passage of the bipartisan JOBS Act. The JOBS Act would expand Pell Grants to high-quality, short-term training programs that help meet students where they are. Many students enrolled in these programs currently do not have access to Pell, thus impacting access to quality short-term credentials.

This eligibility limitation results in a gap in federal higher education grant aid for students who may have otherwise qualified based on income. It also impacts postsecondary affordability and potentially increases the debt burden for students enrolled in a myriad of programs in sectors such as health care, manufacturing, and IT. Expanding access to Pell will help students and workers who are looking for greater flexibility in how they achieve their postsecondary goals, including the ability to earn a high-quality credential in a shorter time frame.

In addition to lowering the time threshold for Pell Grant eligibility, the JOBS Act would also institute a number of accountability standards that tie programmatic eligibility for these shorter-term programs to quality metrics.

2. Ensure equitable access and success for broadest set of workers

Meeting the demands of industries most impacted by the BIL, IRA and CHIPS - along with industries across the workforce - will mean supporting equitable access to and success in skills training programs for the broadest set of workers. This should include people of color, women and others who have historically been excluded from jobs most impacted by those recent investments.

To accomplish this, Congress should:

Modernize WIOA reporting to support and require data collection and disaggregation that measures equitable impact of programs

Under WIOA, local areas are required, currently, to measure short-term employment and earnings outcomes for workers at six and twelve months after exit. These short-term outcomes do not sufficiently capture how people progress from entry-level jobs, experience wage and skill advancement with an employer, and continue their education to progress along a quality career pathway

To measure if workforce programs are leading to long-term economic gains for workers and businesses, WIOA performance indicators should be expanded to include measures on quality credential attainment, employment and wage outcomes for at least 2-years after program completion, occupation specific job placement and measures on job quality, such as hourly wages and hours worked.

WIOA should also disaggregate all training performance outcomes by race, ethnicity, gender, and other important demographic or socioeconomic factors like English language proficiency, income, and geography, in order effectively evaluate progress toward racial equity goals and the efficacy of the public workforce system for workers of color.

Supporting Career Pathway Programs

Career pathways provide an important gateway for many workers and adult learners seeking a postsecondary credential.¹¹ They combine adult education, occupational skills training, career counseling, and other supportive services, often within the context of a specific industry sector or occupational field. Career pathways support workers in achieving their training and career goals by providing flexible on and off-ramps for students looking to build upon their education and training at their own pace. Workers often pursue career pathways training as the move between employers within the same industry over time. As such, career pathways strategies developed in tandem with multi-firm industry/sector partnerships can provide a systemic approach to expanding training opportunities that can increase economic mobility for large numbers of workers in a sector.

In addition to a dedicated funding source to support quality career pathway programs, the career pathway structure has been integrated as a quality component into a number of laws and

¹¹ <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/building-state-career-pathways-systems/>

grant programs. For workers who have been unemployed or underemployed and claiming public benefits like those provided under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), support services - provided in tandem with training and early employment services - can help move families out of poverty and into careers that offer economic mobility. Career pathways support this through a continuum of aligned services and programs, instead of focusing on immediate employment that moves people off of benefits in the short term. To fully meet worker and business need, however, Congress should modernize TANF to better support connections between the public workforce system and programming and investments states make with their TANF funds.

One example of strong alignment between TANF and skill training is Arkansas' Career Pathways Initiative (CPI), a partnership between the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (DWS), the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE), and the state's community colleges and university technical centers. Using funding from the TANF block grant, CPI aims to ensure more student parents — specifically those receiving TANF, SNAP, and/or Medicaid and/or those with incomes below 250 percent of the federal poverty level — access and complete postsecondary credentials that support them to advance over time to higher levels of education and training in a given occupation or industry sector.

Support and Expand Integrated Education and Training

Congress should modernize WIOA to provide additional support for Integrated Education and Training (IET) models that teach literacy, numeracy, digital skills, and English language skills in the context of training for a specific occupation. IET models are effective in part because they teach foundational skills in a meaningful context that has immediate application in the workplace; enable credential attainment; and can directly increase earning power. Recent research confirms that IET models have positive outcomes for underrepresented workers.¹² While WIOA defined and allowed IET as a Title II activity, it does little to invest in the capacity and delivery of these programs by already under-resourced adult education providers, including those in corrections facilities. As a result, less than five percent of WIOA Title II participants have been enrolled in IET programs nationally,⁴⁵ and states and local partners have struggled to take this approach to scale.

Additionally, IET is supported by the Pell Grant program through a provision known as 'ability to benefit.' Essentially, Pell is largely limited to people who have a high school diploma or equivalency. There is an exception for students who wish to enroll concurrently in an adult education program and a postsecondary education or training program. These students may qualify for Pell if they otherwise meet eligibility requirements and can demonstrate that they have the ability to benefit from this concurrent enrollment model. While this form of IET has strong evidence of success it is still vastly underutilized by colleges limiting access for students. It is important that policies support greater participation from colleges that have IET programs with strong outcomes.

¹² Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, "Better Together: How adult education/CTE collaborations benefit workers and business," National Skills Coalition, January 2019, <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NSC-EL-PASO-Dec2018-Online-FIN.pdf>;

Ensure programs meet needs of adults and young people

In addition to supporting adult learners, WIOA should be a vehicle for supporting young people's education, training and career aspirations. Many young people are experiencing a disconnection from education and work as a result of systemic barriers.

There are over four million young people between the ages of 16-24 who are not working and not in school. Among these so-called 'opportunity youth', there are equity gaps: Black, Indigenous, and Latino youth experience higher rates of disconnection from school and work than white and Asian youth; young people living in rural areas experience higher rates of disconnection than their counterparts in urban and suburban areas.

As part of WIOA reauthorization, Congress should prioritize youth programming that centers racial equity, supports trauma-informed practices, and prioritizes those most in need of services.¹³

3. Invest in industry or sector partnerships that bring together a broad set of practitioners and expand training provider capacity as part of reauthorizations of the Trade Adjustment Act and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Much of the financial support for sector partnership activities comes from private, local, and state funding. Still, the federal government has a history of recognizing their value— both by defining them in statute and allocating resources to support and expand them. The George W. Bush administration provided \$250 million over two years to expand community college training in high-growth industries as part of its Community Based Job Training Grant initiative. In 2011, Congress built on this model by allotting \$1.9 billion to the U.S. Department of Labor's Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program.

The purpose of these grants was to increase the ability of community colleges to partner with employers to offer students industry-aligned curriculum and training programs that could be completed in two years or less. Under the TAACCCT grant, students across 700 community colleges earned more than 320,000 industry-recognized credentials. Mandatory funding for these multi-year grants expired in 2017. However, since then Congress has provided a smaller pot of funding to support these partnerships through the Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant. That program does not have a permanent authorization, and there remains a need for robust funding and an updated authorization to support these community college and business partnerships.

Additionally, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), a bipartisan bill that was signed into law in 2014, aims to increase the role of industry in the public workforce development system. WIOA requires states and local workforce boards to support sector partnerships as a method of workforce improvement at both the state and local levels. Partnerships under WIOA must include multiple employers connected to a local or regional industry, as well as education and training providers. While this provision in WIOA has allowed states to create new partnerships or build upon those that exist, this policy does not contain

¹³ <https://nyec.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/NYEC-WIOA-Recommendations-June-2021.pdf>

targeted funding critical to realizing the impact these partnerships can have on businesses, workers and communities.

[1] Anthony P. Carnevale and Nicole Smith, "15 Million Infrastructure Jobs, An Economic Shot in the Arm to the COVID-19 Recession," Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy, Center on Education and the Workforce, 2021, https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/cew-15_million_infrastructure_jobs-fr.pdf

Chairman SMITH. Thank you, sir. Thank you for your testimony from all the witnesses. We will now proceed to the question-and-answer session.

Mr. Redmond, I first want to say I appreciate your testimony. You made me think of my Grandpa Corb that had a first-grade education who was a truck driver. He hauled water for his neighbors who did not have running water. And he couldn't read. He couldn't read or write, but he would memorize words, and that is how he would drive. But he provided a solid living for my mom's family, and I am very grateful for that. So it really made me think of him.

There is a long-running myth that the road to success in life to a lucrative career and financial well-being must run through a four-year college degree program. We know that a four-year college degree is not necessarily a benefit to everyone. And looking forward, looking around at what is happening on college and university campuses across the country right now, I am not sure who would even want to send their children to be exposed to that.

Based on your years of experience and knowledge of America's workforce and small business needs, can you talk about the impact of expanding 529 accounts to cover technical skills in real-world training?

Mr. REDMOND. Sure. Thank you, Chairman Smith. Easily, actually. We have quite a bit of students—in fact, I just thought of one in my head as you were speaking. Her name is Alania, who is a current student at our school. She went to nursing school at first. It just—it didn't pan out. The—it became expensive. There was other reasons why—that she needed to leave. You know, had she had some type of funding like this 529, she could have just easily paid for trucking school and gotten her CDL.

So I am actually glad to say also, just as of yesterday, she just got pre-hired for our company. And what pre-hired means, for those who don't know, it just means you are conditionally hired at a trucking company ready to go as soon as you graduate. So I think that this, the 529 plan, should be expanded for folks like Alania.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. Dr. DeAngelis, I have a bit of a similar question for you. Can you talk about what you see happening at the K through 12 level in our education system, as well as what is going on across college campuses right now which make expanding 529 accounts to cover homeschooling or technical skills training instead of leaving families stuck with the college or university option make a lot of sense?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes, it totally makes a lot of sense. And look, there has been a lot of learning loss over the past couple of years because of the teachers' unions-endorsed—induced school closures. We basically had two weeks to slow the spread in some places turn into two years to flatten a generation, and the teachers' unions traded in kids' education, two decades of learning, for nearly \$200 billion in so-called COVID relief in March of 2020.

So, with expanding school choice, we could recoup some of that learning loss, but also allow families to choose schools that align with their values and best meet their needs in other ways. Obviously, when parents get more freedom in their kids' education, they are going to attain better results because parents know their kids

better than anybody else, and they care about their kids educational needs than anyone [sic], particularly more than bureaucrats sitting in offices hundreds of miles away.

And, in Florida, where Hera is from, there are 11 studies out of Florida, 10 of them finding statistically significant positive effects of private school choice competition on the outcomes in the public schools, too. So school choice is a rising tide that lifts all boats. And with bottom-up accountability, allowing families to vote with their feet to the providers that best meet their needs and align with their values, you don't even have to switch a school for the public schools to up their game, because instead of labeling parents as domestic terrorists when they are upset about something, instead they will actually have an incentive to listen to those needs of parents before they even take their money elsewhere.

Chairman SMITH. Ms. Varmah, you come before the committee with an inspiring story. Thank you for that. Having experienced the success of the scholarship tax credit program in Florida, similar programs are underway in 20 other states, as well. Based on your experience and on what that program meant for your family, can you speak to how Congress should consider expanding access to more school choice nationwide?

Ms. VARMAH. Yes. Thank you, Chairman Smith. Yes, I think—well, I know that Congress should expand parental choice in education through the Educational Choice for Children Act. This will not only allow the funding to go to states that already have smaller choice programs or have choice programs, but it will go to states that don't have any choice programs.

And this makes a difference—and I always say this, and it sounds dramatic, but this is the difference between life and death for a lot of families. Like, this is—this has saved so many families across this nation. And there are so many stories of parents that I have met and students that I went to school with, where their parents were homeless and they went to school with me. Or my own family, where we came to the United States very, very poor. And it makes a difference between you growing up in poverty, on drugs, going into prison system.

And so this expansion, this will enact—this will allow families and states all across this country to be able to send their kids to school that best fits their needs. And I think that we can all agree that we would want what is best for our children.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. Ms. Sedlar, 529 accounts have been extremely helpful to families looking to cover educational expenses, but we know more can be done. As a parent who has had to weather the storm of finding a better, more suitable school option for your own children, can you speak to how additional financial flexibility would support parents?

Specifically, how would expanding 529 accounts to expenses like tutoring and educational therapy help American families?

Ms. SEDLAR. Thank you for the question.

We all know life throws us curve balls. Things happen that are beyond our control. I don't think we ever saw a pandemic coming our way, but yet it threw our world and our children's lives just into a tizzy for how long? And now we are still bearing the after-effects of that situation.

I would suggest that, in the same vein, you don't know what your child is going to need as they develop. You don't know what course your child's life is going to take, necessarily. And so flexibility is critical in allowing parents—you know, we know our children best. We are the ones who are up with them at night. We are the ones who know their mood swings. We are the ones who know what treats they like when they are having a bad day. You know, we are the ones who are there at ground zero, living with the after-effects and the situations that adversely affect our children's lives. We are the ones best equipped to be able to navigate and quickly provide options to our children when they need them without having to wait for permission or approval from anyone else. And that is critical.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. I now recognize the ranking member, Mr. Neal, for any questions he might have.

Mr. NEAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Melancon, I read the testimony that you offered, and I am pretty pleased with not only the caliber of the testimony, but the commitment you have made to offering a path forward as it relates to clean energy and the agenda that we passed here with the Inflation Reduction Act. This work is in pretty good hands across the country, as testimony has been indicated time and again.

You indicated that this unprecedented transition to a clean energy economy is going to dramatically increase what we ask our current community college's career and technical education systems and trade schools to offer. The IRA, the bipartisan infrastructure bill, and the CHIPS and Science Act will support three million new jobs per year, most of them requiring some training beyond high school, but not necessarily a four-year college degree. That means that we need to train thousands of new electricians, truck drivers, thousands of people who can install and repair panels and turbines, thousands of people ready for advanced manufacturing jobs.

So our clean energy investments depend on connecting workers with the training programs that will launch them into these well-paying, rewarding, and high-quality jobs. I did note the irony earlier of the fact that many of our Republican colleagues across the country and their congressional districts are benefiting more than anybody else from these investments.

So I have been here long enough to remember another time that members of this committee made strategic investments in our community college system, which I and, I believe, most members of this committee are real champions of. As part of the Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009, we set up the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grant program, and that program distributed \$2 billion to community colleges across the country over the course of 4 rounds of grants. The last group of grants went out in 2018, and I hope that we can consider reestablishing that initiative.

Why don't you, Doctor, tell us about what these grants might mean, and the success of the TAACCCT program, and would you consider that a good blueprint for the future?

Mr. MELANCON. Thank you, Representative Neal. Yes, so there are a lot of incentives to bring people in the front—through the

door of community technical colleges. And those would be through, you know, Pell, the Jobs Act, and so forth.

But just as important as you mentioned in the TAACCCT, and what the TAACCCT provided for over 700 community colleges across the nation, like I mentioned, 320,000 credentials, you need infrastructure for them to go into high-quality training, and you need an instructor training and student supports. And that infrastructure not only produces high-quality credentials, but a workforce that is ready to go to work in their communities day one.

So, just like we did in 2018, the world is quite different with all the—all these incentives that Congress has passed in CHIPS, IRA, and the BIL. This is new technology. Our community colleges are not equipped. Even though they are working in sector strategies, they still need the new infrastructure that builds up that. So, like I mentioned before, you still need a diesel engine technician out there that you are seeing for trucks, pumps, standby generators, but also that same diesel tech needs to be trained on the new fuels, EVs, batteries, and thus that needs to be instructor training and labs.

So, in the past, TAACCCT provided—I used TAACCCT to just do that, enhance our labs, also enhance our instructors' tools to meet students where they are to get them to that next level.

So a phase two, a round two of TAACCCT can infuse our community colleges from coast to coast and border to border, providing that state-of-the-art technology to help employers and to help people become from self sufficiency—from dependency to self sufficiency within their communities.

Mr. NEAL. So it is fascinating that labor participation rates have ticked upward since the pandemic. It is pretty extraordinary, given where we were.

And a reminder, on March 11, when Dr. Fauci gave his warning, America lost 22 million jobs in 2 months. Every one of those jobs plus have been returned. And to your point, Doctor, when you consider that right now there are 10 million jobs in America that go unanswered, and the only way we really improve the quality of life in terms of productivity gains is through increasing labor participation rates and giving people a chance, so I appreciate your testimony this morning on behalf of those who still need to get into the workforce.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman SMITH. I now recognize Mr. Buchanan for questions.

Mr. BUCHANAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank all our witnesses for being here today.

I was at a luncheon a couple of years ago at Boys and Girls Club, and they said someone—I have hung onto it—is children make up 25 percent of the population, but 100 percent of the future. So I applaud all of you for what you are doing. I am a blue-collar kid. It just makes such a big difference, a good education.

The second thing is I just mentioned we have got nine, my wife and I, nine grandkids nine and under, with two sons. So we see the struggles even in our environment, but just in general, because of their friends, the struggle parents are going through to figure out what is the best situation for them.

Ms. Varmah, let me mention I just want to recognize you again. You have lived the American dream story. Liberia, the Caribbean. But I got to ask you one—I know you have been active and involved. Florida has gone from 35 to third place, fourth place in terms of the national assessment education programs. Why is that, in your mind?

Ms. VARMAH. Well, thank you, Chair and thank you, Mr. Buchanan, for your question.

I think Corey said this, and I—Corey can kind of—I will yield some of my time to him so he can speak about this, because—talking about the competition aspect of passing school choice programs. And we even had a superintendent in the State of Florida that said that we have to ride this wave because it is coming, whether we want it or not. And parents are going to find the school that best fits their child's needs. And so, if we are not offering that, we are going to be left behind, and they are going to go elsewhere to get that education.

And so, when you look at Florida and you look at how we have gone from thirty-fifth place to third and fourth, it is because we have allowed parents—we have allowed the natural competition. It is just like a grocery store. I like Sprouts better than I like Walmart, but I have that choice. It is the competition. And I think if we look at it as simple as that, we can make some change. But Florida has led the way because we have given parents the chance and we have let them create that natural competition.

I mean, in my own family, me and my four older brothers, we had natural competition. They ran track and I ran track, and I was like, I am going to beat them. And so—

Mr. BUCHANAN. I am sure you did.

Ms. VARMAH. But I still—I want to yield some—I definitely want to yield some time to Corey, because he can definitely talk about that competition aspect.

Mr. BUCHANAN. Let me just—Mr. Redmond, I want to come to you for just a minute. You said there are 60,000 truckers. We need about 10,000 in Florida, I can tell you that, talking to our folks there. They are having to go to Miami. I am in Sarasota, Tampa Bay area. They have got to go to Miami all over, out of state to try to find truckers.

The other thing is I want to tell you about one of the guys that got in the trucking business is Nick in our area, and I know him very well. He started out working in a trucking firm. He eventually got out and got a couple of trucks. Now he has got 100 trucks. He went to college, but he didn't graduate.

There are so many people that start out, and maybe they run a couple of trucks, and then they end up in their own business. I didn't invent the game, but the big part of the game is building equity in a small business. And I see so many people in different specialties in our region, in our area, truckers and others, that start out blue-collar kids and end up owning their own business someday in a specialty so they don't get locked in to making just 50 and 100. They might make 500 someday. God bless them. It is America.

But what are your thoughts in terms—and, by the way, do you have any facilities in Florida? We need you.

Mr. REDMOND. No, I don't, but I have some great friends who own trucking schools in Florida that you might already know.

So—but yes, you know—in fact, that brings up a story similar to yours. There was a gentleman who came to our school, and I remember toward the end of his training he looked me in the eye and he said, “Jerome, I don't know if I am going to be good at this.”

And I have already seen the reports of his training, and I looked at it and I said, “Let me just tell you what is going to happen. You are going to get your—you are going to pass with flying colors because I have seen the reports about you. You are going to—and you are going to literally forget we had this conversation, and I will be congratulating you in a couple of days.”

And that exact thing happened. He came up to me—and the only man that has ever done this to me—picked me up and gave me a bear hug, swung me around once, put me on the ground and said, “Thank you, man, I appreciate it.” Now this guy owns a fleet of trucks and makes over \$250,000 a year.

Mr. BUCHANAN. That is the American story.

Mr. REDMOND. That is the American story.

Mr. BUCHANAN. Not for everybody, but for those that desire—

Mr. REDMOND. Yes.

Mr. BUCHANAN [continuing]. That, have the vision to do that, that is the American story. Thank you.

And I yield back.

Chairman SMITH. I now recognize Mr. Doggett for questions.

Mr. DOGGETT. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

After nine months of Republican chaos here in the House, we are now beginning the fourth week of total paralysis. No legislative action on the floor. And as we enter that fourth week of the paralysis, this committee, for the first time, brings to us an indication of what would happen post-paralysis, an attempt to undermine our public schools.

In fact, we really have before us today the Federal companion to the effort now underway in a special legislative session in the State of Texas. Texas has followed a ready formula for public education. It is called starve our public schools. We are \$4,000 per child below the national average in funding for education. We rank 44, close to the bottom of all states in this regard. The average teacher pay in Texas has dropped more than \$7,000 below the national average.

And it is in this environment that Governor Greg Abbott is holding teacher pay and funding for public education hostage, insisting that there must be a school voucher program. Why, in an overwhelmingly Republican state senate and Republican state house have vouchers not already been adopted? Well, clearly, there is unanimity among house and senate Democrats in Texas against school vouchers, but the only reason they have not been imposed on the state is because of the courageous action of a number of rural Republicans.

I disagree with these particular Republicans on most issues, but I want to put in the record the powerful comments of a couple of them. Dr. Glenn Rogers, a state representative in the Brownwood News, who represents a district that voted 81 percent for Donald Trump, says, “Under the guise of promoting choice, proposed school

voucher programs are a Trojan horse attempt to privatize Texas education system and drain our already under-funded public education of necessary resources for millions of students.”

Proponents of this system try to claim that children are trapped in the public education system they were raised in. This is, frankly, a lie. Vouchers do not increase the number of choices available to a parent. They only serve to finance institutions with taxpayer money.

Now, Dr. Gary VanDeaver—that was from west Texas—is a Republican in northeast Texas. His district only voted 71 percent for Donald Trump. And he writes this in the Paris, Texas—not Paris, France—newspaper: “If I were to use three adjectives to describe myself politically, I would say conservative, Christian, and Texan. In short, I oppose vouchers. As a fiscal conservative, I cannot support creating a second parallel education system. Many of the supporters of school vouchers suggest that public schools should not lose funding as a result. As good stewards of tax dollars, it does not seem that running two systems charged with accomplishing the same task is the conservative approach.” He writes additionally, “Some grow frustrated with some of our public schools, and the response of some people is, give me the money so I can pull my kids and walk away. As Texans, we are not quitters. If you are dissatisfied with your local public school, fix it.”

I agree with them, and I hope their courage under immense pressure there in Texas from a Republican governor who wants to undermine our schools ultimately prevails.

The legislation before us, the companion to what is going on in Texas, the Education Choice for Children Act, would make things even worse. It is a \$100 million tax expenditure on borrowed money. It would provide up to \$5,000 per year directly off taxes. In my hometown of Austin, someone who makes over \$350,000 per year will still be eligible for this deficit-financed tax cut. It is more Republican borrow-and-spend.

I think our public schools are important not only for the academics that they can and should provide as we work to try to strengthen and improve them, but they are, in communities like Paris, Texas and Brownwood and even parts of my own city of Austin, they bind communities together. What we need are Republicans and Democrats working together to strengthen public education, not destroy it through plans like those being considered today.

And I yield back, though I would ask unanimous consent to include both of these articles in our record.

Chairman SMITH. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

School Vouchers: A Slippery Slope

April 3, 2022 at 6:16 am staff writer
Brownwoodnews.com

From the Office of State Representative, Dr. Glenn Rogers:

The right of every child to a safe, secure, and quality education has been a core value of Texas since our independence. Following our independence in 1836, Texas has had six different constitutions, with the current Texas Constitution being amended almost 700 times since 1876. Nevertheless, throughout decades of revision, secession, and reconstruction, our state has never wavered from its promise to provide education to every Texan. Our founders believed that this promise was essential to securing the posterity of our state from generation to generation; however, almost a century and a half later, this value is under attack. Under the guise of promoting choice, proposed “school voucher” programs are a trojan horse attempt to privatize Texas’ education system, and drain our already underfunded public education of necessary resources for millions of children.

You might ask, “What is an educational voucher?” A voucher program is a policy of diverting state and taxpayer resources marked for education to private entities. Generally, this system is found in three varieties: (1) A “universal voucher” system where the state applies a flat rate per student towards the tuition of a private or charter school, (2) A “personal tax credit” where the state government applies a flat rate reimbursement for tuition to a private school, or (3) A “corporate tax credit” where the taxpayers reimburse corporations or individuals who donate to private education funds. Proponents of this system try to claim that children are “trapped in the public education system they were raised in.” This is, quite frankly, a lie. Texas already has one of the most robust “school choice” systems for parents in the nation. Between open-enrollment public schools, private schools, charter schools, homeschools, and online learning, parents have plenty of available options to place their child wherever they see fit. Vouchers do not increase the number of choices available to a parent; they only serve to finance these institutions with taxpayer money.

A common myth about vouchers is that they cover the entire cost of private or charter education. A voucher is a flat rate that pays for a small portion of tuition. The family is then expected to cover the remaining cost out of pocket — an impossible task for many low to middle-income families. The average cost of a private school in Texas is over \$10,000 per student per year. Additionally, attending private school may require substantially more financial resources to

actively participate in the private school culture. The high end of a voucher program may only offer parents \$4,000 towards tuition. This means that families who want to exercise their vouchers are still expected to pay at least \$6,000 per child to enroll them in a private school. The end result is that the majority of Texas families remain in public schools with less funding, whereas more wealthy families who can afford private education outright get a taxpayer-subsidized discount. The same principle is also true with acceptance standards. Even though a parent has an educational voucher, this does not mean a private or charter school must accept their child. Private schools have the discretion to not admit any student based on academic performance, behavioral issues, disability, residence, or income level. Once again, the majority of Texas parents would be forced to keep their children in the public school system that is continually stripped of resources to subsidize education to allow for those who already have the ability to pay and be accepted.

Considering these schools are private or charter, the State of Texas would be funneling money into organizations with little accountability. Private schools do not have to comply with the same transparency standards as a traditional public education. Once these private entities start receiving public funds, the line between private and government regulation begins to blur. Parents who choose private or homeschool education for their children expect a certain level of independence in their education. School boards members are elected and held accountable by the ISD residents, the salaries of superintendents are made a public record by the Texas Education Agency, and all instructional materials are reviewed by an elected State Board of Education. Voucher programs would destroy that independence and create a less transparent education system.

When problems arise within our public schools, the taxpayers and the state have the ability to act. In the 86th Legislative Session, the Texas House passed House Bill 3, which provided sweeping reforms to our education system. During the 87th session, the legislature passed House Bill 1525, which corrected several of the financing problems within our public schools. The legislature also approved Senate Bill 3, banning the teaching of Critical Race Theory in K-12 classrooms and House Bill 25 to prevent biological males competing in women's sports. These conservative victories would not have been possible without an education system that is accountable and transparent at all levels of government.

Granted, recent controversies surrounding public education in some metropolitan areas have dampened the spirit for this vital institution. However, as Texans, it is better that we handle the problems out in the open and not masked behind private authority. As a parent of a high school daughter, I know, firsthand, the desire to

make sure she has the best education afforded to her. I believe there is a need for public, private, home, and charter schools to allow parents the choice to select the type of education that works best for their children. Yet, in order to maintain this balance, we cannot embrace changes that will make our education system less accountable and less than what our founders had intended. Vouchers can only be implemented by raising property taxes and/or defunding our public schools. Neither of these should be acceptable to Texans.

School Vouchers in Texas

- Dr. Gary VanDeaver, Representative, District 1
- The Paris News
- Feb. 5, 2023
- [School Vouchers in Texas | Opinion | theparisnews.com](#)

If I were to use three adjectives to describe myself politically, I would say, “Conservative, Christian, and Texan.” It seems these three adjectives pretty well sum up the guiding principles that drive my policy decisions. Today, there is much chatter in Texas around the topic of public-school vouchers, a system by which the dollars from the state used to fund the public education would be allowed to follow the student to a non-public educational setting of the parent’s choosing. These alternative settings might include private schools, home schools, or some form of virtual instruction. As a former public-school educator/administrator and a current member of the Texas House of Representatives, I am often asked about my position on school vouchers.

In short, I oppose vouchers. One of the primary arguments made in support of vouchers is that they will provide poor, minority children an opportunity to “escape” failing schools and receive the same private-school education their wealthier counterparts receive. The only way I see for vouchers to accomplish that outcome is for the policy to include requirements for the private school to accept all children who request admittance, and to accept the state voucher as full payment. I am not aware of a proposal that would include such assurances.

To fully explain how I arrive at my position on vouchers, I must return to the three adjectives mentioned above.

As a fiscal conservative, I cannot support creating a second, parallel education system. Many of the supporters of school vouchers suggest that public schools should not lose funding as a result. As good stewards of tax dollars, it does not seem that running two systems charged with accomplishing the same task is the conservative approach. Additionally, no voucher plan I have seen would require accountability for the use of those tax dollars as currently required for public schools under the state’s accountability plan which includes STAAR testing and other performance measures.

As a Christian, I believe I am called to be a part of the world without becoming “worldly.” By creating a system that provides an opportunity for upper and upper-middle class families to separate themselves from the rest of society, we are losing our opportunity to be “salt and light”. While I wish to, as much as possible, protect my grandchildren from the evils of the world, my wish is for them to grow up with an understanding that other children might not look like them nor share the same life experiences as them, but are still valuable and precious. Jesus preferred to spend time with those the world called unlovable while shunning the political and religious leaders. As a follower of Christ, it seems that we should be more about providing great opportunities for all children than separating our children from those who look, act, and think differently.

Finally, as a Texan, I do not believe in quitting. As Texans, we enjoy a unique heritage. A heritage that recognizes the value of sacrifice, loyalty, and defending those too weak to defend themselves. William Travis, Davy Crockett, Sam Houston, and so many more great Texas heroes endured extremely difficult times because they were convinced that the opportunities for freedom, liberty, and prosperity in this great state were worth the sacrifice. I am thankful they did not quit. I have to ask myself, where is that Texas spirit today? We become disgusted with the direction of our country and the answer for some people is to secede. We grow frustrated with some of our public schools and the response of some people is “give me money so I can pull my kids and walk away.” As Texans, we are not quitters. If you are dissatisfied with your local public school, fix it!

In closing, I want to make it clear, I fully support a parent’s right to choose the best educational setting for their child. For some children, private school is the best answer, for others home schooling is the best fit. These options must remain available to parents. But as a conservative Christian Texan, I do not believe vouchers provide the solutions to dealing with our challenges and charting a path of opportunity for our youngest Texans.

Mr. DOGGETT. Thank you.

Chairman SMITH. I now recognize for questions the leader and sponsor of the Education Choice for Children Act, Mr. Smith from Nebraska.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to our panel for sharing your insight, everyone on the panel. Your insight is important. Thank you for sharing and dedicating your careers, your lives to bettering the lives of children, and our country as a result.

Let me begin by perhaps agreeing with our ranking member, Mr. Neal, when he says that legislation changes lives and we want to give people a chance. That is why I introduced the bill that I did, the Educational Choice for Children Act, or ECCA. It would create, as many of you know, a Federal tax credit allocated to scholarship granting organizations in each state and the District of Columbia—important to add—to improve educational opportunities for families most in need so that we can empower families, empower students, and empower folks all across America.

Because this would provide a tax credit for donations and operates through independent, non-government agencies, let me emphasize that funding for public education would remain untouched. In Nebraska, we have—we just passed a similar approach. But what I am proposing and what we are proposing in the ECCA is similar to programs already authorized in 21 states and, as I just said, including my home state of Nebraska.

Interestingly enough, a filibuster-proof majority of the state legislature, a bipartisan filibuster-proof majority in the state legislature, passed the state-level bill. And not surprisingly, special interests are now working very hard to undo that, to basically take resources away from folks in need, ultimately, who want to have a brighter future for their children.

And certainly, Ms. Varmah, your very compelling testimony speaks volumes.

But now, with the advent of virtual schooling, advanced homeschooling resources, and proposals like this which provide support not just for scholarships but also to support private supplemental assistance families in every part of my very rural state and—our country can access alternatives.

Parents across the country had their eyes opened, as has been mentioned here earlier, of what goes on in the classroom. And this has brought a lot of folks together concerned about the future of our country and, certainly, as it relates to our children and their future.

I have to say that late last night I received an email from some lobbyists wanting to add comments to today's hearing. And so I hope that our panelists could address a couple of these claims.

Dr. DeAngelis, last night in this email the lobbyist said—they claim that the scholarship or voucher programs are racist, and that private schools can discriminate against students based on race and other factors. Mr. DeAngelis, is that accurate?

Mr. DEANGELIS. They should bring that same energy to the public school system that discriminates on the basis of zip code.

But look, if you look at the origins of private school choice, we have had school choice since the late 1800s in states like Maine

and Vermont, which passed these programs because they were such rural areas they didn't have public schools in some districts. They found out a long time ago—over 100 years ago these lawmakers understood that if you didn't have a lot of choice, that is an argument to expand opportunities with vouchers, as opposed to restricting them.

And then as far as this claim that school choice is racist, look at the evidence today. Seven out of eight studies existing on the topic find that school choice leads to more racial integration because the public school system is already so racially segregated.

And, if you look at support for these programs, you see across ideological lines, across racial lines there is support for funding students as opposed to systems. And again, I will bring up that the nine most rural states in the country already have some form of private school choice, Maine and Vermont included, and lawmakers in these areas—I am from Texas, too—they will say on the one hand that public school is the only option. And in the next breath, with a straight face, they will try to look in your eyes and tell you that this is going to decimate our fantastic rural public schools.

Well, which one is it? If you don't have any other options, you should be the last person arguing this is going to defund your schools. And, if your schools are so fantastic, why would giving families a choice defund those extraordinary institutions? You are really telling on yourselves, and letting the mask slip that you are not confident in your product. I think the rural public schools will be fine in Texas and in other places, as well.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Thank you. Also, I was contacted by this lobbyist claiming or suggesting that public school—only public schools provide the foundation for our democracy.

Mr. DEANGELIS. I mean, look—

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Ms. Varmah—

Mr. DEANGELIS [continuing]. We have 15 percent—

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska [continuing]. Is that accurate?

Mr. DEANGELIS [continuing]. Proficiency rates on the U.S.—in U.S. history for U.S. students. That is—

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Got you.

Ms. Varmah, would that be accurate from your perspective?

Ms. VARMAH. Can you repeat the question? I am so sorry.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. The claim was that public schools, only public schools, can provide the foundation for our democracy.

Ms. VARMAH. No, and I don't agree with that at all. One, when we say the American dream, and you say that someone has to go to—they don't have the choice—if they—if you give them—based off of their zip code they have to go to this school, that is not choice, and that is not the rules of democracy. Our democracy says that we can choose everything else, but we can't choose where we send our kids to. That is a critical time in a kid's life. If I was left in my public school, I wouldn't have lived the American dream. I would have lived the status quo that was in my family. So I wholeheartedly disagree with that, and I think that person should look up the definition of democracy.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Thank you.

Thanks again for this very timely hearing.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. Mr. Kelly is recognized for questions.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you all for being here.

It is incredible. You all have the same story. Maybe a little different version of it, but the same story. Because we know education is the key to everything. And I am fascinated. I know if you are running for governor, please don't tell parents they have nothing to say about their child's education. That is a sure way to lose an election.

I sat on a school board for four years, and I was amazed because when we had public to be heard, the first problem people had was the coach was wasn't teaching—or coaching their child the right way. The second thing was the bus didn't stop close enough to their home. And the third thing was the taxes were too high, not what did it buy.

So this product that we are talking about today, when we talk about a 529, the ability for a parent to invest in his or her child's future is the key to their success and the key to our country becoming stronger every way, every day. I just am amazed by it.

So Mr. Redmond and I were talking before the hearing, and we both were in the automobile business for a while. I am still in it, by the way, and I—the sixth and the twenty-first every month are really important to me and important to the people who we work with because they expect to get paid.

So you were what they called the TO manager, right, which is the turnover. I don't know that people understand that. The TO is the person at the dealership—and it is—there is an old saying, and it goes nobody walks until I talk, and when it is—so whoever it is that is looking at your product, that is the deal.

But the biggest thing that we face in our business right now, and everybody does, is the lack of trained people, educated people. We cannot find mechanics. They are not grease monkeys, they are highly-trained technical people. We cannot find people in the body shop. They are now dealing with composites. They are dealing with all different kinds of products. It is a different world and a different time that requires a different skill.

Ms. Sedlar, when I heard your comments, I got to tell you I can remember going through this with our children, and I can remember my wife one day. We had dropped kids off, and she said, "Listen, I got to go back to school."

I said, "Why? Did you forget to do something for Colin or for Charlotte?"

She goes, "No, no, no, no, no. I mean I am going back to school to finish my teaching degree." And she did, and she did.

I can't think of anything more important than us allowed to actually invest in our child's future. This is incredible.

And, by the way, I—this is not political. I don't know that these kids know what their parents—how they vote or how they think. I think they just think about going to school. What a horrible thing we did for three years is—to isolate those people and take that out of their experience to work with other people.

All of you, all of you are talking about the same thing. Why shouldn't people paying taxes have a choice in where those taxes go?

And, when it comes to education, my goodness, there is no other place in the world where everybody got a chance to get educated. And I wish that was still the case today.

And Ms. Varmah, I—each of you, if you just could give your personal—and I know your testimonies were all great. I want to start with Ms. Sedlar because she comes from the Pittsburgh area, Brentwood. Go Steelers.

If you could just share, because I think your story as a parent is where we need to go. And then Mr. Redmond, Ms. Varmah, and Mr. DeAngelis, Mr. Melancon, all of you.

But if you would, Ms. Sedlar, talk about whenever we had this exchange down here about why, why it is so important to you.

Ms. SEDLAR. I gave life to my children. I made sacrifices for them, and I refuse to allow them to be sacrificed in a system that doesn't work for them. And so that is why I work hard every day to make sure other children don't have to sacrifice either.

So any way we can lighten that load for our children and lighten that load for our families is critical. Because you are right, there are 25 percent of the population, but 100 percent of our future. I don't see any better way to spend our time, our resources, and our focus than on that 100 percent of our future.

Mr. KELLY. Yes, quite a return on the investment.

Mr. Redmond.

Mr. REDMOND. You know, I was thinking of a young gentleman who was about 18, 19 years old who came to our school. Actually, his parents brought him to our school. And college wasn't for him, you know, and they just wanted to know if he was going to be okay driving a truck. And I assured them they would be, that he would be. And as many parents who come to my school, I wink at them and say, "I will take care of him personally," you know, and it makes me proud to say that these young folks who are maybe 18, 19 years old, who really don't know what to do with their lives, but for a small amount of money they can get a CDL and go to work immediately, and gain responsibility because every parent wants their child to be—

Mr. KELLY. Let me ask you real quick. Please tell people what a CDL is.

Mr. REDMOND. Oh, I am sorry. [Laughter.]

Mr. REDMOND. By the way, a CDL is a commercial driver's license. My apologies.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you.

Ms. Varmah.

Ms. VARMAH. Thank you. Besides Denzel Washington, who is my favorite actor of all times—[Laughter.]

Ms. VARMAH. But Dr. Ben Carson comes after that, and that is because of his story.

Mr. KELLY. Amen.

Ms. VARMAH. I wanted to become a neurosurgeon since eight years old because I saw his story. My parents always showed us different—I used to hate it, but now I love that they did—but show us different biographies and documentaries. But watching his story

was similar to mine, because my mom made a lot of sacrifices and because she knew he had a gifted mind and he struggled. And just like him, I didn't think I was smart. And my brother failed the second grade, and he is a chemical engineer, and I am standing in front of you today telling that story.

And so why I am so passionate about this is because we have so many gifted minds, which is the title of his movie, if you have never watched it—well, Gifted Hands, but I say Gifted Minds.

Gifted—we have so many gifted minds that are just not being tapped into because we just send them off, and we write them off, and we say wait 20 years, wait 10 years, wait 5 years, wait 2 years, but we don't have that time. That is—I said this is a really critical time in a child's life, in their academic life. And, if you keep telling parents to wait, they don't want to wait anymore. We don't want to hear that. We want to be able to decide what school we go to. Thank you.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you.

Mr. Pascrell, you are recognized for questions.

Mr. PASCARELL. Good morning, Mr. Chairman. I believe that this hearing today, with the distinguished witnesses that we have invited, and a committee which I think has the good intentions of Americans at heart, we don't go into this with any malice. And we need to understand everyone's position. There are Americans, if you believe in choice, that is your opinion and it should be respected.

So, look, it has been 22 days. And you ousted the speaker for the crime of keeping the government open. So I don't know if you are fit to walk the dog, let alone govern the Congress. In fact, the historic room in which we meet, which has suffered through so many failed speaker votes and unhinged conference meetings has become the symbol for chaos. I hope the chairman will undertake a deep clean here when this is all over, whoever that may be.

But let us set the record straight. And I will come back to our next meeting and agree that I was wrong on the facts that I am going to present if you will have the time to go back over them at no charge. But I ask you to at least digest what I am saying.

When you look back at the record, really, only one party fought to make education more affordable. That is the record. Put the legislation up on the board in your own mind. Only one party created millions of good jobs for skilled workers in a very short period of time. Our landmark American Rescue Plan invested \$122 billion in education resources across our country, including over \$341 million for schools in my district.

And the Inflation Reduction Act was the single largest investment—talk about investments here today—ever in the U.S. industry. We have an historic manufacturing boom, thanks to the actions of one party. In one year, we unleashed \$240 billion in private investment and created over 170,000 new jobs. The law is projected to create more than 1.5 million additional jobs. American factory building is now at nearly \$200 billion a year.

Just a side note, most of you voted no.

Every job lost during the pandemic has been recovered, and the job growth is at a 40-year high. I will stand corrected if you come in with something different. Unemployment is at a 54-year low. I

will stand corrected if you come in with other numbers and you can prove it. The economy is strong.

As a former teacher in the public school, I know the education of our next generation is vital. It is going to be the very bedrock of society. No one denies that. We need to talk about real solutions that do not involve sabotaging our public schools or take those ideas and try to combine them in the public sector, which people are paying for in their tax dollars.

Dr. Melancon—if I can get one question in, Mr. Chairman, before you gavel me.

Chairman SMITH. Proceed. We went over on the last one, a minute and 30.

Mr. PASCARELL. Thank you. Our watershed roads and bridges, the CHIPS program, and the Inflation Reduction Act are expected to create nearly three million jobs per year. What steps should be taken to ensure our workforce is adequately prepared to fill those job opportunities?

Mr. MELANCON. Thank you for the question. So yes, our roads and bridges need to be rebuilt, and we need skilled labor to do that.

And also, with everything evolving around new technology and energy efficiency to meet our decarbonization goals, we also need a workforce to build that technology in factories, but also service the technology that we have out in the field.

The best infrastructures that we do have, that we have throughout our country, are the community and technical college system and also other partners that support the community technical college system, too. So you have unions, you have merit shop apprenticeship programs, and also you have very progressive, community-based organizations that support individuals going through training. And that all needs to be maintained and supported as we move forward.

But if we invest in those activities—TAACCCT did provide a framework of investments for training for individuals who will go unskilled to skilled labor, while investing in that infrastructure to support the demands that our employers have for highly-skilled technology is very much needed.

But further, with this rapid changing of technology and skills in utilization of special materials and equipment and bridges and so forth, the current workers that are out there doing the work need a place to come back to in the rural communities and in the urban setting for skill upgrades, and our community technical college systems provide those opportunities.

Mr. PASCARELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. Mr. Schweikert is recognized for questions.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Chairman, before we move forward, can I get a point of clarity on something? And my apologies, but I think my—our good friend from New Jersey misspoke. He made the comment that we voted to kick out the—our speaker. And if I go back and look at it, it seems as though everybody on that side of the dais voted to remove the speaker, and nobody on this side of the dais did. Is that—is that correct? I just want to clarify that.

Chairman SMITH. That is correct.

Mr. Schweikert.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And forgive me the classic tyranny of the clock. Now, can I—let me—look, and I apologize also to our panel here. As you can see, sometimes the childishness of our politics actually keeps us from actually talking about the actual legislation that you flew all this distance to come and talk about. So let's actually have an interesting discussion.

Dr. Melancon, just for—curious. Did you say Baton Rouge?

Mr. MELANCON. Yes, Baton Rouge.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. I think I have family that has gone to your community college.

Mr. MELANCON. Wonderful, yes.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. I know. I am from Arizona, but part of my family is from—

Mr. MELANCON. Really?

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. I have an unusual fixation particularly on the good gentleman's piece of legislation here, and that is the concept of jobs are changing, and they are changing so fast—maybe other than trucking, but even trucking has its own unique—and it is one of the things that concerns me about, well, these are green jobs, but the fact of the matter is the green job of eight years ago is different than the one today. And with some of the—if you actually read the literature, the next version of photovoltaic panels are dramatically—require different skill sets.

If I have anyone who feels competent, is the government structure the most elegant way to teach people the constantly evolving skill set that is required to work with today's tools?

For my neighbor right next to—sitting next to me, the way I would have repaired a car a decade ago is dramatically different than my wife's Tesla, and it is often one of my fears what we do in legislation is we lock in last generations. It is one of the problems many of us have with the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS Act is we are building last-generation technology in a world where the market is for the next generation. And it is the arrogance of those of us in Congress: we think we know things, but we are always a decade behind.

And I am going to start with Mr. Redmond. Okay, so it is a trucking—it is a commercial driver's license. But what does the world look like a decade from now? Is it autonomous vehicles? Is it different types of technology?

And then move on to others that—if we were to future-proof a piece of legislation like this, what do we need to fixate on?

Mr. REDMOND. Right. I mean, thank you, Congressman. Yeah, technology is changing, exactly what you just said.

We are experiencing—I get that question quite often about autonomy, autonomous trucks. We are light years away from anything that would be considered full autonomy, because right now everyone says you still have to have a truck driver in the truck. That is just the way it goes. But what that truck can do and what you have to teach does change. So you have to make sure that folks are—you know, are trucking schools are up with the times.

But with—kind of to your point, there is going to be other, you know, technicians or other folks' skills that we don't even know about 10 years from now that are going to be—need to be taught

either by us or by the gentleman at his community college. So I think it is important that we keep that in mind as we go toward the future of all of our industries, that we just need to be flexible.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Doctor?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes, I mean, what you are explaining is the Hayekian knowledge problem. Government doesn't have the on-the-ground knowledge for every individual person for their own needs. And this is why I pointed out that school choice is one of the best solutions, putting the power into the hands of the parents, let them choose for their own kids because they know their kids better than anybody else.

So the Educational Choice for Children Act is one way to return that power to the people who are most affected by those decisions, who have the best incentives to make their decisions right for their own kids' education, and to have the most on-the-ground knowledge when it comes to their kids' educational needs. So the school choice is a good solution to this Hayekian knowledge problem.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Thank you, Doctor.

Mr. Chairman, I am going to yield back instead of consuming more time. But, look, if the common goal here is a workforce that prospers in society, I think we are going to have to deal with the reality of the jobs we know today a couple of years from now are going to look radically different. And it is a problem of institutional structures. But even the intellect we have up here, we keep making public policy that is static in a dynamic world, and that is—actually, one of the things I like about the gentleman's legislation is it is not prescriptive. In a way, it actually future-proofs.

So with that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. Mr. Wenstrup is recognized for questions.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank Ranking Member Neal for bringing something up today where he was talking about work, improving quality of life for people. And that really is the bottom line, and it brings out the joy of independence in life. The problem we have is too many of the, for example, poverty legislative policies that have come from Democrats have left people in a life of dependence, whereas our policies are more towards a life of independence for people.

You know, for the last 60 years or so in our country, basically the mantra was if you don't get a four-year degree, then somehow you failed. And—but the four-year degree is not the American dream, by any means. And that was a problem for us.

Look, I am a surgeon. I have nothing against four-year degrees, I have three of them. And there is a lot I can do in the operating room, but I can't build that operating room, I can't make the equipment, I can't fix that equipment. And you know what? That equipment has to get there somehow, doesn't it, Mr. Redmond?

So this is what it takes for America to succeed that is all levels, because education is workforce development. That is what it should be, so that people can live a life of opportunity.

I had an opportunity to go to a college prep Catholic high school. I was allowed to excel there. That is the opportunity that I got. I know a young man, he became valedictorian at that same high

school. He is not Catholic, he is Indian, he is a Hindu. I said, “Why did you go to this school?”

He goes, “I needed a place where I was allowed to excel,” and that opportunity came.

I think of great educators like Jaime Escalante, if you know who that is. Watch “Stand and Deliver” about his life, where he said children will rise to the level of their expectations. People want the choice to go to a place where there are expectations, and therefore opportunity afterwards. That is what choice provides us.

I chair the Select Subcommittee on the Pandemic, and we are looking at things like school closures. And, you know, we had some schools close when the school down the street was open. And no plan, no plan from those schools to catch the kids up. None whatsoever. This is a problem. I remember sitting down with leadership of my local NAACP, and I asked them, “Where are you on school choice?”

“Oh, we are against it. No, we are against it.”

“Where do your kids go to school?” Both of them, their kids were in private schools. The hypocrisy is unbelievable.

I remember during the summer of the riots I met with a group of African American businessmen, some I knew from college, et cetera, and I asked them about what they thought on school choice. And one said, “Oh no, no, no, kids want to go to school where their friends are, and that is what they want to do, and that is what they should do and be able to do.”

Another guy, he played basketball at Xavier. He said, “I don’t want anyone telling me where my kids have to go to school.”

Another one played at the University of Cincinnati. He said, “My parents sent me to Catholic school until fifth grade. I wore the uniform and everything. I begged them to let me go with my friends at the local school.” He said, “I wasn’t there two weeks,” and I said, “Get me the heck out of here,” and I went right back to that school.

That is the reality, folks. And you know what? Choice will make public schools have to be more competitive, and that is what we want.

But, in that vein, so—because I do want to ask a question in my time, but I am so glad to talk about it. I am so passionate about this stuff. I have been involved with a private entity that helps kids get an opportunity to go to private Catholic school starting in fourth grade through high school, through college, even housing where they are mentored, if that is the situation and their parents say, “Our home is not the best place for my child.” These are successful programs. Doctors, lawyers, educators, Super Bowl champions, all of that come out of that—has come out of that program.

But I want to ask Mr. DeAngelis, what is the effect of school choice in rural areas—because I have a large rural population—in the rural areas of the country where there may not be a lot of K through 12 alternatives?

Can you talk about the benefits of the ECCA, the Expanding Community College Apprenticeships program, for these rural areas?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes. If you look at states like Florida, they have rural areas, too. According to Step Up for Students, over the past couple of decades, since they have expanded private school

choice in that state, the number of private education providers has doubled in the rural areas. So, when you build it, they will come.

You put the money into the hands of families, more providers are going to respond to that demand, and especially if you allow for non-private school tuition expenses, as well. It is another good reason why expanding 529 accounts to other expenses would also be a good idea for rural areas, where you don't have to start another brick-and-mortar private school in order to use the program.

And then, look, the worst-case scenario is that nothing changes in a rural area. If you don't have a lot of private options and they don't sprout up immediately, well, then, if you like your public school you can keep your public school, but for real this time. And the public schools will improve in response to competition over time. Ten out of eleven studies from Florida find that. Twenty-six out of twenty-nine nationally find positive effects of school choice competition.

And I have just got to mention, because you mentioned during the COVID era, a peer-reviewed study by Michael Hartney and Leslie Finger in 2021 found that in places that had more Catholic schools nearby, the public schools were more likely to open their doors for business, too. Why? Because they had an incentive because families could actually vote with their feet elsewhere. They thought, well, maybe I should—if I don't want to bleed in enrollment, maybe I should open my doors for business. And they found that after controlling for a ton of different background characteristics, including political persuasions in the areas, as well.

So we have so much evidence on the side of education freedom, and it is just a logical thing to do. The parents are in the best position—decision—position to make these decisions.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you.

I yield back.

Chairman SMITH. Mr. Thompson is recognized for questions.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all the witnesses for being here.

Dr. Melancon, thank you for being here. Thank you for your good work. And I particularly appreciate your comments on the importance of community colleges and vocational and trade schools. I think that is very important.

And I am a product of community college, myself. While I didn't technically go to a trade school, I went to a community college to learn how to weld, and I took that interest in education and what I learned, I used it in my job as the maintenance supervisor for a major winery in my hometown. But it ignited an interest in education for me, and I went on to a four-year college and got a couple of degrees. And it helped me. It helped me—provided more opportunities for me and provided a better living.

So I hope in Congress, in this committee and in Congress in the whole, that we can work together in a bipartisan way to make it easier for young people to pursue these pathways to well-paying jobs.

And I would like to ask you about some of the work we did in this committee last year. You mentioned them in your testimony. We worked hard to ensure that the investments we made last year, particularly the Inflation Reduction Act but also the infrastructure

bill and the CHIPS Act, would improve economic mobility for all Americans. And a big part of your work is identifying what you call the mismatch between workers we need and the skills our current workforce has.

Can you talk a little more about what sort of jobs are being created by the Inflation Reduction Act, and what skills are needed for these jobs?

Mr. MELANCON. Yes, thank you. So, as I mentioned before, what—the Inflation Reduction Act has brought on new technology to legacy crafts. For example, in my state of Louisiana and in Baton Rouge, a lot has gone on to carbon capture technology and a—and the desire to use different forms of hydrogen, more so of the blue-green hydrogen. That has brought on the need for more PV installers, more use for wind and energy. And as a welder, you are building out new infrastructure inside the plant for this new carbon capture technology. You have got to fabricate that equipment for this decarbonization work, and then also on the platforms for the wind turbines.

So that has grown, the desire for—I call it legacy skill crafts, the welders, pipe fitters, instrument techs. But at the same time, those skills need to be upgraded to the different processes. You might be using different materials, different types of composites. And that increased knowledge also increases in pay, a good quality job.

So the beauty of that, of increasing economic base for all in a tight labor market, what we have found out is that employers are willing to take chances on individuals who typically wouldn't receive a referral from the softball team or from the hunting camp. They are willing to work with community college or work in diverse, community-based organizations, and that has opened the door for people to get into these new green jobs, and actually currently manufacturing petrochemical jobs throughout the South.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you. And you mentioned better pay. Do you expect that the jobs created by the IRA, the CHIPS Act, and the infrastructure bill to pay higher wages than average?

Mr. MELANCON. Yes. So it has been documented, I think, at least 11 percent is higher wages.

A majority of these jobs are pretty much—were good jobs. But I think also these jobs that actually tacked on with defined apprenticeship programs—and you pretty much get paid as the credentials you earn. You also increase in pay. So yes, the pay scale has been—increased dramatically—

Mr. THOMPSON. A lot—

Mr. MELANCON [continuing]. With this investment.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you. A lot of the education stuff is out of our lane in this committee. But in general, do you think Congress should increase investment in career and technical education?

Mr. MELANCON. Yes. Like I stated before in my testimony, there has been cutbacks in—since the past 20 years, adult education, CTE programs, and the community technical college has basically received a haircut. At the same time, the mishmash of the labor has also increased, and the demand for high-quality, skilled labor to be forward.

A lot of these crafts still need a base knowledge, and you need to get a base knowledge to go into a—to these employment sectors. And then, from there, the employers can help accelerate their training. But employers can't deal with base knowledge. They actually need to be somewhat productive and safe on the job site.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you. And then, just in closing, do you see the investments we made in the Inflation Reduction Act, the infrastructure bill helping in rural areas?

Mr. MELANCON. Very much so, especially with this community technical college has very—been very strategic of how to leverage their community programs and making them the centers of excellence. For example, you have a CDL driving program with a heavy equipment driving program. Get them dual certified, and they are more able to earn more and be more productive on the job site.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

I yield back.

Chairman SMITH. Mr. Ferguson is recognized for questions.

Mr. FERGUSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And to our witnesses, thank you so much for being here today. We appreciate you all's time and expertise.

I always look at the lens—look at life through the lens of what our people back home really want. And it doesn't matter where you come from or what part of the world you come from here. People want a good job where they can take care of their families. They want to come home to a decent, safe place to live after a hard day's work. They want their children educated, and they want to be left alone by D.C. for—so that they can be who they want to in this great country.

Education is at the forefront of that. We have seen a tremendous growth in jobs, thanks to the manufacturing boom and the technology investment from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. My dear friend from New Jersey referenced this. He didn't call it by name, but we have seen that. And we should be investing more in America, and we should be doing things that make America more competitive around the world.

The key to that, though, is to make sure that we have got a workforce that is ready to go. And I have seen for far too long, when we tell every kid there is only one pathway in education, there is only one way to go, that we wind up with a less competitive global workforce. So investments in trade, technical colleges, the—you know, the charter schools, we need a diversity of options.

We have raised six kids. They have all gone different directions, some into college, some into the military, some into technical schools, everything from, you know, from logistics to cybersecurity to the arts, we have got it covered. And the one thing I can tell you is that sometimes public education was the right choice for a child, sometimes it was private education. But as a parent, I want choices for my kids, just as millions upon millions of Americans do.

Mr. DeAngelis, it was interesting you talked about rural communities, because there is a real challenge when you look at—if you are in a rural community, you have got one choice. It is a public school system, okay? There may—you know, there may be a small private school, but it is the public schools. How important is it that we could use these funds to improve the technology piece of what

we are doing in rural schools, where they may not have the tax base to go in and make the investment that they need to be competitive with other schools?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes, thank you for the question. I will just point out the nine most rural states already have some form of private school choice, West Virginia being one of them, actually, the first state to be the one to go all in on school choice with universal eligibility back in 2021.

But I think it is super important for any of these proposals to allow for non-private-school tuition expenses, as well, to maximize the flexibility and customization on the part of the parent, but also to allow for more innovation in the public school sector and the private school sector, as well.

If you look at the state-level bills that are passing, a lot of them are called education savings accounts that—you can use it like a voucher for a private school, but you could also use it for these micro schools or pandemic pods, or even just homeschool curriculum and other expenses. So it really takes us from school choice to education choice, and maximizes flexibility. And I think that is the way to do it.

Mr. FERGUSON. Thank you.

Mr. Redmond, you told an amazing story about a young man. He must have been pretty stout to pick you up and throw you around. [Laughter.]

Mr. FERGUSON. But you talked about his success in growing a business, and you talked about him. But can you speak for just a minute about the impact that he had on so many other families because he not—because he provided jobs for them?

Mr. REDMOND. So there are two folds to that. Thank you, Congressman, by the way, for that question.

There are two parts to that, to my answer. One is not only did he provide jobs for the folks that work for him, you know, but he also provided mentorship back to some of my students. So whenever I had a student who didn't—was struggling, and wasn't sure they were going to make it, there were times I would sit them down and counsel with them, and I would literally put my cell phone out on the table and call him—I could still do that today—call him, and he will pick up the phone and go, "Brother Jerome, what are you doing." You know, and he is excited, and then he says, "You got another one for me?"

I said, "Yes, sir, I do," and he just explains how he made it, and he even discloses his income, and so on and so forth.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Redmond, one final question. You deal with things that stick to the ground, which are trucks. Do you think a modification of this plan to expand it into other areas, say for airline pilots, do you think that would be helpful, as well?

Mr. REDMOND. Well, anything that is going to help—anything that would help folks utilize these funds for more educational purposes and more choice, I think, is a good thing, you know.

But mainly, you know, I speak mostly for my industry, so—

Mr. FERGUSON. Thank you for that.

I yield back.

Chairman SMITH. Mr. Estes is recognized for questions.

Mr. ESTES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all our witnesses for being here for today's important hearing.

Education, the linchpin of a stable and flourishing life. I am sure each of us here can attest to the power of education in our own lives and have seen numerous examples in our districts of the difference solid education and professional training can make.

But too many of our schools are now failing in their mission to deliver a quality education. In their place, we have seen countless new options arise and grow in popularity, from charter schools to private education to education savings accounts that help with homeschooling expenses. Many of these options cost money. And, as we all know, money is now tight, particularly thanks to Bidenomics. You know, it has been mentioned many times before, since President Biden took office prices have increased 17.7 percent and real wages have declined 3.9 percent.

On top of the economic challenges, there has been a concerted effort by many Democrats to limit K through 12 education opportunities. In recent years, Republican efforts to expand coverage for additional K through 12 expenses in 529 accounts have been thwarted first by Senate Democrats and later by Speaker Pelosi, despite unanimous bipartisan support from this committee.

Expanding coverage of 529 accounts is not only—is not the only way we can make education more accessible and affordable to students and families. There are numerous education tax incentives and tax credits being piloted throughout the country, the most effective of which can be adopted by various states.

In Kansas, for example, we have a tax credit for low-income students scholarship program that incentivizes charitable support for Scholarship-Granting Organizations, or SGOs, that help power private schools. By utilizing this tax credit, Kansans enjoy a reduced tax—income tax liability under state income tax, while helping connect low-income students to a quality education.

The program powers schools like Urban Preparatory in Wichita, a transformative K through 12 private school I visited that serves over 120 students. Last year, they were recognized as finalists for the Yass Prize, which honors new and innovative approaches to education. Ninety-nine percent of Urban Prep students are on scholarship, funded largely by the Tax Credit Scholarship Program for low-income students. Urban Prep, like many other schools across the country, is giving low-income students new opportunities that, without tax credits, would be unattainable.

Dr. DEANGELIS, for many years, children in Kansas have benefited from the tax scholarship programs. However, there is now a growing sentiment that private schools should not be allowed to benefit from these scholarships. Can you explain how these scholarships were derived? Are they comprised entirely of public funds or private funds?

And what are your thoughts on use of public funds only for private—or for public schools?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Well, it is interesting about this argument that public funds are for public schools. Well, there is no such thing as public funds. They are called taxpayer dollars. But then a lot of the people who oppose public funds for private institutions, when it comes to K through 12 education, they support it for higher edu-

cation with Pell Grants; for pre-K, like the Head Start program; with food stamps going to private institutions that are grocery stores; Medicaid dollars that can be used at private, even religious hospitals if you want; section 8 housing vouchers are all good, fine, and dandy when it comes to housing, but not K through 12 education. It is totally strange.

But look, these are private dollars with the Tax Credit Scholarship Program, because they are donations. And, if you look at the Supreme Court precedent on this with ACSTO versus Winn in 2011, they ruled, with common sense, that private dollars remain private until they enter the tax collector's hands. So this isn't public money. That talking point is moot. It is totally garbage if you look at the logical inconsistency with so many people who repeat this but then support public going to private, everything else.

And the beneficiaries of this funding are not the institutions themselves, the private schools, it is the individual families who get a choice in the matter. And, if you like your public school, you can continue to go there. But, if not, families need the choice to be able to take that funding meant for their child to the education provider that works best for them. And that could be a private school, it could be a home-based education option, and so on. But that decision is up to the parents.

Mr. ESTES. Well, that is great. I mean, we have—you know, we have continued to see that the shopping mall approach to education has only led to lower standards in rigor and curricula. Do you think that competition would help public schools move back towards higher standards?

And how will they be able to accomplish these changes and rise to the competition if they have less funds due to the school choice policies?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes. On a per-student basis, the public schools actually end up with more funding per student because they lose some of the funding associated with the scholarship, of course, if a family chooses to leave. But, if not—or even if they do, schools are funded only partially based on enrollment counts. And, if the scholarship is less than the total amount spent in the public schools, they get to keep thousands of dollars for students they are no longer educating.

Just imagine if you stopped shopping at Walmart and you went to the—what is the other grocery store you like? Sprouts or Publix, and Walmart got to keep all your—half your grocery funding in perpetuity. That would be a great deal for Walmart. It wouldn't make a lot of sense. It is similarly a good deal for the public schools. They get to keep any money at all for students they are no longer educating. They benefit on a per-student basis.

And competition is a rising tide that lifts all boats. We see this in every other industry. We see it in K through 12 education, as well. We have so much evidence. If those fearmongering about school choice had any evidence, they would present it. It doesn't exist. Twenty-six to twenty-nine studies are positive. School choice, better outcomes than the public schools.

Mr. ESTES. Great. Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman SMITH. Mr. Davis is recognized for questions.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I also want to thank all of our witnesses.

You know, I strongly support modernizing our tax policy to help students and workers get the education they need. There are so many improvements that we should be making. But rewarding wealthy families for taking their children out of school is not one of those. There are so many amazing charitable organizations. And rather than advancing policy supporting all charities, today's hearing seems to myopically supercharge only giving to those privatized education programs.

Dr. Melancon, thank you for highlighting the importance of a focus on equity in citing the example of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Equity Task Force.

To help employers and workers improve their training, I have two bills with Representative Feenstra that would more than double the amount of non-taxable education and training assistance employers who could provide this to their workers. Specifically, employers could pay for up to \$12,000 for workers to get upskilling and retraining without taxing those benefits. And we are pleased to have worked with Mr. Smith on these issues in the past.

Given your work with a range of businesses and workers, do you see helping incumbent workers improve their skills so they can change with the nature of the jobs as complementary to the other training programs that you mentioned?

Mr. MELANCON. Yes, Congressman Davis, thank you so much, and thank you for your service.

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is a valuable tool for training incumbent workers, especially those who have been kind of left out of the workforce pipeline, so returning veterans, individuals on public assistance. And what I like about what the Work Opportunity Tax Credit does, it incentivizes employers to invest in skills of their incumbent workers.

Employers kind of have a bad trend of firing knowledge and hiring new knowledge. And the Work Opportunity Tax Credit really kind of goes by the old adage, "Reward goes to those who do the work." But it is a cost on the employer, so I am good to see they have some incentives to train, because when you take somebody off production or off billable hours, that is a cost to them. But for them to get some type of benefit for training them to go to training is a huge benefit, and it actually opens this pipeline of a tight labor market because they are hiring now just for will, and then, you know, try to bring them on quickly, and hire, and then train them up on their skill side. And this gives employers a strong benefit for that.

Mr. DAVIS. Let me just say that I support choice, but I want the choice to be as good as the base, and I want the base to be as complementary and as good as the choice.

You are familiar with the Illinois city—I mean city and state junior college or community college system?

Mr. MELANCON. Yes, sir.

Mr. DAVIS. What is the basic difference in the programs that one set of institutions provide and the other institutions provide?

Mr. MELANCON. Well, there is a variety of different schools. So we are actually doing some work with IGEN, and that is the Illi-

nois Green Economy Network. And that is a consortium community college just focusing on greening their curriculum as right now.

So with inside a community college there are centers of excellence, what is inside them. One may have a focus on automotive, another one may have a focus on health care within the same—their district. But really, it is depending on what those employer needs are within that sector. And that really, really drives not only in Illinois, but really, across the country, how there is diversity of skill training that goes across different sectors or at different campuses.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much, and I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman SMITH. Mr. Smucker is recognized.

Mr. SMUCKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to submit for the record and ask unanimous approval to have this included, the roll call for House Resolution 757.

Chairman SMITH. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

Roll Call 519 | Bill Number: H. Res. 757

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OCT 03, 2023, 04:42 PM | 118TH CONGRESS, 1ST SESSION
Vote Question: On Agreeing to the Resolution

Declaring the office of Speaker of the House of Representatives to be vacant.
Vote Type: Yea-And-Nay

Status: Passed

VOTES
★ Yea: 216
Nay: 210
Present: 0
Not Voting: 7
VOTES BY PARTY

PARTY	YEAS	NAYS	PRESENT	NOT VOTING
Republican	8	210	0	3
Democratic	208	0	0	4
Independent	0	0	0	0
Total	216	210	0	7

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
Adams	Democratic	North Carolina	YEA
Aderholt	Republican	Alabama	NAY
Aguilar	Democratic	California	YEA
Alford	Republican	Missouri	NAY
Allen	Republican	Georgia	NAY
Allred	Democratic	Texas	YEA
Amodei	Republican	Nevada	NAY
Armstrong	Republican	North Dakota	NAY
Arrington	Republican	Texas	NAY
Auchincloss	Democratic	Massachusetts	YEA

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Babin</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Bacon</u>	Republican	Nebraska	NAY
<u>Baird</u>	Republican	Indiana	NAY
<u>Balderson</u>	Republican	Ohio	NAY
<u>Balint</u>	Democratic	Vermont	YEA
<u>Banks</u>	Republican	Indiana	NAY
<u>Barr</u>	Republican	Kentucky	NAY
<u>Barragán</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Bean (FL)</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Beatty</u>	Democratic	Ohio	YEA
<u>Bentz</u>	Republican	Oregon	NAY
<u>Bera</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Bergman</u>	Republican	Michigan	NAY
<u>Beyer</u>	Democratic	Virginia	YEA
<u>Bice</u>	Republican	Oklahoma	NAY
<u>Biggs</u>	Republican	Arizona	YEA
<u>Bilirakis</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Bishop (GA)</u>	Democratic	Georgia	YEA
<u>Bishop (NC)</u>	Republican	North Carolina	NAY
<u>Blumenauer</u>	Democratic	Oregon	YEA
<u>Blunt Rochester</u>	Democratic	Delaware	YEA
<u>Boebert</u>	Republican	Colorado	NAY
<u>Bonamici</u>	Democratic	Oregon	YEA
<u>Bost</u>	Republican	Illinois	NAY
<u>Bowman</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Boyle (PA)</u>	Democratic	Pennsylvania	YEA

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Brecheen</u>	Republican	Oklahoma	NAY
<u>Brown</u>	Democratic	Ohio	YEA
<u>Brownley</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Buchanan</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Buck</u>	Republican	Colorado	YEA
<u>Bucshon</u>	Republican	Indiana	NAY
<u>Budzinski</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Burchett</u>	Republican	Tennessee	YEA
<u>Burgess</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Burlison</u>	Republican	Missouri	NAY
<u>Bush</u>	Democratic	Missouri	NOT VOTING
<u>Calvert</u>	Republican	California	NAY
<u>Cammack</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Caraveo</u>	Democratic	Colorado	YEA
<u>Carbajal</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Cárdenas</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Carey</u>	Republican	Ohio	NAY
<u>Carli</u>	Republican	Alabama	NAY
<u>Carson</u>	Democratic	Indiana	YEA
<u>Carter (GA)</u>	Republican	Georgia	NAY
<u>Carter (LA)</u>	Democratic	Louisiana	YEA
<u>Carter (TX)</u>	Republican	Texas	NOT VOTING
<u>Cartwright</u>	Democratic	Pennsylvania	YEA
<u>Casar</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA
<u>Case</u>	Democratic	Hawaii	YEA
<u>Casten</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Castor (FL)</u>	Democratic	Florida	YEA
<u>Castro (TX)</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA
<u>Chavez-DeRemer</u>	Republican	Oregon	NAY
<u>Cherfilus-McCormick</u>	Democratic	Florida	YEA
<u>Chu</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Ciscomani</u>	Republican	Arizona	NAY
<u>Clark (MA)</u>	Democratic	Massachusetts	YEA
<u>Clarke (NY)</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Cleaver</u>	Democratic	Missouri	YEA
<u>Cline</u>	Republican	Virginia	NAY
<u>Cloud</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Clyburn</u>	Democratic	South Carolina	YEA
<u>Clyde</u>	Republican	Georgia	NAY
<u>Cohen</u>	Democratic	Tennessee	YEA
<u>Cole</u>	Republican	Oklahoma	NAY
<u>Collins</u>	Republican	Georgia	NAY
<u>Comer</u>	Republican	Kentucky	NAY
<u>Connolly</u>	Democratic	Virginia	YEA
<u>Correa</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Costa</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Courtney</u>	Democratic	Connecticut	YEA
<u>Craig</u>	Democratic	Minnesota	YEA
<u>Crane</u>	Republican	Arizona	YEA
<u>Crawford</u>	Republican	Arkansas	NAY
<u>Crenshaw</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Crockett</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Crow</u>	Democratic	Colorado	YEA
<u>Cuellar</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA
<u>Curtis</u>	Republican	Utah	NAY
<u>D'Esposito</u>	Republican	New York	NAY
<u>Dauids (KS)</u>	Democratic	Kansas	YEA
<u>Davidson</u>	Republican	Ohio	NAY
<u>Davis (IL)</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Davis (NC)</u>	Democratic	North Carolina	YEA
<u>De La Cruz</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Dean (PA)</u>	Democratic	Pennsylvania	YEA
<u>DeGette</u>	Democratic	Colorado	YEA
<u>DeLauro</u>	Democratic	Connecticut	YEA
<u>DelBene</u>	Democratic	Washington	YEA
<u>Deluzio</u>	Democratic	Pennsylvania	YEA
<u>DeSaulnier</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>DesJarlais</u>	Republican	Tennessee	NAY
<u>Diaz-Balart</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Dingell</u>	Democratic	Michigan	YEA
<u>Doggett</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA
<u>Donalds</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Duarte</u>	Republican	California	NAY
<u>Duncan</u>	Republican	South Carolina	NAY
<u>Dunn (FL)</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Edwards</u>	Republican	North Carolina	NAY
<u>Elzey</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Emmer</u>	Republican	Minnesota	NAY

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Escobar</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA
<u>Eshoo</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Espaillet</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Estes</u>	Republican	Kansas	NAY
<u>Evans</u>	Democratic	Pennsylvania	YEA
<u>Ezell</u>	Republican	Mississippi	NAY
<u>Fallon</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Feenstra</u>	Republican	Iowa	NAY
<u>Ferguson</u>	Republican	Georgia	NAY
<u>Finstad</u>	Republican	Minnesota	NAY
<u>Fischbach</u>	Republican	Minnesota	NAY
<u>Fitzgerald</u>	Republican	Wisconsin	NAY
<u>Fitzpatrick</u>	Republican	Pennsylvania	NAY
<u>Fleischmann</u>	Republican	Tennessee	NAY
<u>Fletcher</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA
<u>Flood</u>	Republican	Nebraska	NAY
<u>Foster</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Foushee</u>	Democratic	North Carolina	YEA
<u>Foxx</u>	Republican	North Carolina	NAY
<u>Frankel, Lois</u>	Democratic	Florida	YEA
<u>Franklin, C. Scott</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Frost</u>	Democratic	Florida	YEA
<u>Fry</u>	Republican	South Carolina	NAY
<u>Fulcher</u>	Republican	Idaho	NAY
<u>Gaetz</u>	Republican	Florida	YEA
<u>Gallagher</u>	Republican	Wisconsin	NAY

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Gallego</u>	Democratic	Arizona	YEA
<u>Garamendi</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Garbarino</u>	Republican	New York	NAY
<u>García (IL)</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>García (TX)</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA
<u>Garcia, Mike</u>	Republican	California	NAY
<u>Garcia, Robert</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Jimenez</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Golden (ME)</u>	Democratic	Maine	YEA
<u>Goldman (NY)</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Gomez</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Gonzales, Tony</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Gonzalez, Vicente</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA
<u>Good (VA)</u>	Republican	Virginia	YEA
<u>Gooden (TX)</u>	Republican	Texas	NOT VOTING
<u>Gosar</u>	Republican	Arizona	NAY
<u>Gottheimer</u>	Democratic	New Jersey	YEA
<u>Granger</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Graves (LA)</u>	Republican	Louisiana	NAY
<u>Graves (MO)</u>	Republican	Missouri	NAY
<u>Green (TN)</u>	Republican	Tennessee	NAY
<u>Green, Al (TX)</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA
<u>Greene (GA)</u>	Republican	Georgia	NAY
<u>Griffith</u>	Republican	Virginia	NAY
<u>Grijalva</u>	Democratic	Arizona	YEA
<u>Grothman</u>	Republican	Wisconsin	NAY

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Guest</u>	Republican	Mississippi	NAY
<u>Guthrie</u>	Republican	Kentucky	NAY
<u>Hageman</u>	Republican	Wyoming	NAY
<u>Harder (CA)</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Harris</u>	Republican	Maryland	NAY
<u>Harshbarger</u>	Republican	Tennessee	NAY
<u>Hayes</u>	Democratic	Connecticut	YEA
<u>Hern</u>	Republican	Oklahoma	NAY
<u>Higgins (LA)</u>	Republican	Louisiana	NAY
<u>Higgins (NY)</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Hill</u>	Republican	Arkansas	NAY
<u>Himes</u>	Democratic	Connecticut	YEA
<u>Hinson</u>	Republican	Iowa	NAY
<u>Horsford</u>	Democratic	Nevada	YEA
<u>Houchin</u>	Republican	Indiana	NAY
<u>Houlahan</u>	Democratic	Pennsylvania	YEA
<u>Hoyer</u>	Democratic	Maryland	YEA
<u>Hoyle (OR)</u>	Democratic	Oregon	YEA
<u>Hudson</u>	Republican	North Carolina	NAY
<u>Huffman</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Huizenga</u>	Republican	Michigan	NAY
<u>Hunt</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Issa</u>	Republican	California	NAY
<u>Ivey</u>	Democratic	Maryland	YEA
<u>Jackson (IL)</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Jackson (NC)</u>	Democratic	North Carolina	YEA

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Jackson (TX)</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Jackson Lee</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA
<u>Jacobs</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>James</u>	Republican	Michigan	NAY
<u>Jayapal</u>	Democratic	Washington	YEA
<u>Jeffries</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Johnson (GA)</u>	Democratic	Georgia	YEA
<u>Johnson (LA)</u>	Republican	Louisiana	NAY
<u>Johnson (OH)</u>	Republican	Ohio	NAY
<u>Johnson (SD)</u>	Republican	South Dakota	NAY
<u>Jordan</u>	Republican	Ohio	NAY
<u>Joyce (OH)</u>	Republican	Ohio	NAY
<u>Joyce (PA)</u>	Republican	Pennsylvania	NAY
<u>Kamlager-Dove</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Kaptur</u>	Democratic	Ohio	YEA
<u>Kean (NJ)</u>	Republican	New Jersey	NAY
<u>Keating</u>	Democratic	Massachusetts	YEA
<u>Kelly (IL)</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Kelly (MS)</u>	Republican	Mississippi	NAY
<u>Kelly (PA)</u>	Republican	Pennsylvania	NAY
<u>Khanna</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Kiggans (VA)</u>	Republican	Virginia	NAY
<u>Kildee</u>	Democratic	Michigan	YEA
<u>Kiley</u>	Republican	California	NAY
<u>Kilmer</u>	Democratic	Washington	YEA
<u>Kim (CA)</u>	Republican	California	NAY

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Kim (NJ)</u>	Democratic	New Jersey	YEA
<u>Krishnamoorthi</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Kuster</u>	Democratic	New Hampshire	YEA
<u>Kustoff</u>	Republican	Tennessee	NAY
<u>LaHood</u>	Republican	Illinois	NAY
<u>LaLota</u>	Republican	New York	NAY
<u>LaMalfa</u>	Republican	California	NAY
<u>Lamborn</u>	Republican	Colorado	NAY
<u>Landsman</u>	Democratic	Ohio	YEA
<u>Langworthy</u>	Republican	New York	NAY
<u>Larsen (WA)</u>	Democratic	Washington	YEA
<u>Larson (CT)</u>	Democratic	Connecticut	YEA
<u>Latta</u>	Republican	Ohio	NAY
<u>LaTurner</u>	Republican	Kansas	NAY
<u>Lawler</u>	Republican	New York	NAY
<u>Lee (CA)</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Lee (FL)</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Lee (NV)</u>	Democratic	Nevada	YEA
<u>Lee (PA)</u>	Democratic	Pennsylvania	YEA
<u>Leger Fernandez</u>	Democratic	New Mexico	YEA
<u>Lesko</u>	Republican	Arizona	NAY
<u>Letlow</u>	Republican	Louisiana	NAY
<u>Levin</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Lieu</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Lofgren</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Loudermilk</u>	Republican	Georgia	NAY

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Lucas</u>	Republican	Oklahoma	NAY
<u>Luetkemeyer</u>	Republican	Missouri	NAY
<u>Luna</u>	Republican	Florida	NOT VOTING
<u>Luttrell</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Lynch</u>	Democratic	Massachusetts	YEA
<u>Mace</u>	Republican	South Carolina	YEA
<u>Magaziner</u>	Democratic	Rhode Island	YEA
<u>Malliotakis</u>	Republican	New York	NAY
<u>Mann</u>	Republican	Kansas	NAY
<u>Manning</u>	Democratic	North Carolina	YEA
<u>Massie</u>	Republican	Kentucky	NAY
<u>Mast</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Matsui</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>McBath</u>	Democratic	Georgia	YEA
<u>McCarthy</u>	Republican	California	NAY
<u>McCaul</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>McClain</u>	Republican	Michigan	NAY
<u>McClellan</u>	Democratic	Virginia	YEA
<u>McClintock</u>	Republican	California	NAY
<u>McCollum</u>	Democratic	Minnesota	YEA
<u>McCormick</u>	Republican	Georgia	NAY
<u>McGarvey</u>	Democratic	Kentucky	YEA
<u>McGovern</u>	Democratic	Massachusetts	YEA
<u>McHenry</u>	Republican	North Carolina	NAY
<u>Meeks</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Menendez</u>	Democratic	New Jersey	YEA

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Meng</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Meuser</u>	Republican	Pennsylvania	NAY
<u>Mfume</u>	Democratic	Maryland	YEA
<u>Miller (IL)</u>	Republican	Illinois	NAY
<u>Miller (OH)</u>	Republican	Ohio	NAY
<u>Miller (WV)</u>	Republican	West Virginia	NAY
<u>Miller-Meeks</u>	Republican	Iowa	NAY
<u>Mills</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Molinaro</u>	Republican	New York	NAY
<u>Moolenaar</u>	Republican	Michigan	NAY
<u>Mooney</u>	Republican	West Virginia	NAY
<u>Moore (AL)</u>	Republican	Alabama	NAY
<u>Moore (UT)</u>	Republican	Utah	NAY
<u>Moore (WI)</u>	Democratic	Wisconsin	YEA
<u>Moran</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Morelle</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Moskowitz</u>	Democratic	Florida	YEA
<u>Moulton</u>	Democratic	Massachusetts	YEA
<u>Mrvan</u>	Democratic	Indiana	YEA
<u>Mullin</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Murphy</u>	Republican	North Carolina	NAY
<u>Nadler</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Napolitano</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Neal</u>	Democratic	Massachusetts	YEA
<u>Neguse</u>	Democratic	Colorado	YEA
<u>Nehls</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Newhouse</u>	Republican	Washington	NAY
<u>Nickel</u>	Democratic	North Carolina	YEA
<u>Norcross</u>	Democratic	New Jersey	YEA
<u>Norman</u>	Republican	South Carolina	NAY
<u>Nunn (IA)</u>	Republican	Iowa	NAY
<u>Obernolte</u>	Republican	California	NAY
<u>Ocasio-Cortez</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Ogles</u>	Republican	Tennessee	NAY
<u>Omar</u>	Democratic	Minnesota	YEA
<u>Owens</u>	Republican	Utah	NAY
<u>Pallone</u>	Democratic	New Jersey	YEA
<u>Palmer</u>	Republican	Alabama	NAY
<u>Panetta</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Pappas</u>	Democratic	New Hampshire	YEA
<u>Pascarell</u>	Democratic	New Jersey	YEA
<u>Payne</u>	Democratic	New Jersey	YEA
<u>Pelosi</u>	Democratic	California	NOT VOTING
<u>Peltola</u>	Democratic	Alaska	NOT VOTING
<u>Pence</u>	Republican	Indiana	NAY
<u>Perez</u>	Democratic	Washington	YEA
<u>Perry</u>	Republican	Pennsylvania	NAY
<u>Peters</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Petterson</u>	Democratic	Colorado	YEA
<u>Pfleger</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Phillips</u>	Democratic	Minnesota	YEA
<u>Pingree</u>	Democratic	Maine	YEA

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Pocan</u>	Democratic	Wisconsin	YEA
<u>Porter</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Posey</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Pressley</u>	Democratic	Massachusetts	YEA
<u>Quigley</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Ramirez</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Raskin</u>	Democratic	Maryland	YEA
<u>Reschenthaler</u>	Republican	Pennsylvania	NAY
<u>Rodgers (WA)</u>	Republican	Washington	NAY
<u>Rogers (AL)</u>	Republican	Alabama	NAY
<u>Rogers (KY)</u>	Republican	Kentucky	NAY
<u>Rose</u>	Republican	Tennessee	NAY
<u>Rosendale</u>	Republican	Montana	YEA
<u>Ross</u>	Democratic	North Carolina	YEA
<u>Rouzer</u>	Republican	North Carolina	NAY
<u>Roy</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Ruiz</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Ruppersberger</u>	Democratic	Maryland	YEA
<u>Rutherford</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Ryan</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Salazar</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Salinas</u>	Democratic	Oregon	YEA
<u>Sánchez</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Santos</u>	Republican	New York	NAY
<u>Sarbanes</u>	Democratic	Maryland	YEA
<u>Scalise</u>	Republican	Louisiana	NAY

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Scanlon</u>	Democratic	Pennsylvania	YEA
<u>Schakowsky</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Schiff</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Schneider</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Scholten</u>	Democratic	Michigan	YEA
<u>Schrier</u>	Democratic	Washington	YEA
<u>Schweikert</u>	Republican	Arizona	NAY
<u>Scott (VA)</u>	Democratic	Virginia	YEA
<u>Scott, Austin</u>	Republican	Georgia	NAY
<u>Scott, David</u>	Democratic	Georgia	YEA
<u>Self</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Sessions</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Sewell</u>	Democratic	Alabama	YEA
<u>Sherman</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Sherrill</u>	Democratic	New Jersey	YEA
<u>Simpson</u>	Republican	Idaho	NAY
<u>Slotkin</u>	Democratic	Michigan	YEA
<u>Smith (MO)</u>	Republican	Missouri	NAY
<u>Smith (NE)</u>	Republican	Nebraska	NAY
<u>Smith (NJ)</u>	Republican	New Jersey	NAY
<u>Smith (WA)</u>	Democratic	Washington	YEA
<u>Smucker</u>	Republican	Pennsylvania	NAY
<u>Sorensen</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Soto</u>	Democratic	Florida	YEA
<u>Spanberger</u>	Democratic	Virginia	YEA
<u>Spartz</u>	Republican	Indiana	NAY

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Stansbury</u>	Democratic	New Mexico	YEA
<u>Stanton</u>	Democratic	Arizona	YEA
<u>Stauber</u>	Republican	Minnesota	NAY
<u>Steel</u>	Republican	California	NAY
<u>Stefanik</u>	Republican	New York	NAY
<u>Steil</u>	Republican	Wisconsin	NAY
<u>Steube</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Stevens</u>	Democratic	Michigan	YEA
<u>Strickland</u>	Democratic	Washington	YEA
<u>Strong</u>	Republican	Alabama	NAY
<u>Swalwell</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Sykes</u>	Democratic	Ohio	NOT VOTING
<u>Takano</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Tenney</u>	Republican	New York	NAY
<u>Thanedar</u>	Democratic	Michigan	YEA
<u>Thompson (CA)</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Thompson (MS)</u>	Democratic	Mississippi	YEA
<u>Thompson (PA)</u>	Republican	Pennsylvania	NAY
<u>Tiffany</u>	Republican	Wisconsin	NAY
<u>Timmons</u>	Republican	South Carolina	NAY
<u>Titus</u>	Democratic	Nevada	YEA
<u>Tlaib</u>	Democratic	Michigan	YEA
<u>Tokuda</u>	Democratic	Hawaii	YEA
<u>Tonko</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Torres (CA)</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Torres (NY)</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Trahan</u>	Democratic	Massachusetts	YEA
<u>Trone</u>	Democratic	Maryland	YEA
<u>Turner</u>	Republican	Ohio	NAY
<u>Underwood</u>	Democratic	Illinois	YEA
<u>Valadao</u>	Republican	California	NAY
<u>Van Drew</u>	Republican	New Jersey	NAY
<u>Van Duyn</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Van Orden</u>	Republican	Wisconsin	NAY
<u>Vargas</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Vasquez</u>	Democratic	New Mexico	YEA
<u>Veasey</u>	Democratic	Texas	YEA
<u>Velázquez</u>	Democratic	New York	YEA
<u>Wagner</u>	Republican	Missouri	NAY
<u>Walberg</u>	Republican	Michigan	NAY
<u>Waltz</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Wasserman Schultz</u>	Democratic	Florida	YEA
<u>Waters</u>	Democratic	California	YEA
<u>Watson Coleman</u>	Democratic	New Jersey	YEA
<u>Weber (TX)</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Webster (FL)</u>	Republican	Florida	NAY
<u>Wenstrup</u>	Republican	Ohio	NAY
<u>Westerman</u>	Republican	Arkansas	NAY
<u>Wexton</u>	Democratic	Virginia	YEA
<u>Wild</u>	Democratic	Pennsylvania	YEA
<u>Williams (GA)</u>	Democratic	Georgia	YEA
<u>Williams (NY)</u>	Republican	New York	NAY

REPRESENTATIVE	PARTY	STATE	VOTE
<u>Williams (TX)</u>	Republican	Texas	NAY
<u>Wilson (FL)</u>	Democratic	Florida	YEA
<u>Wilson (SC)</u>	Republican	South Carolina	NAY
<u>Wittman</u>	Republican	Virginia	NAY
<u>Womack</u>	Republican	Arkansas	NAY
<u>Yakym</u>	Republican	Indiana	NAY
<u>Zinke</u>	Republican	Montana	NAY

Mr. SMUCKER. And this is the roll call on agreeing to the resolution to vacate the House. And my friend, Mr. Ferguson, brought this up. But I do want to make it clear that every single member, Democrat member of this committee, according to this roll call, voted to vacate the speaker's office, and threw the House into chaos, along with no members of the Republican side of this committee.

Eight other Republican members—

Mr. NEAL. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SMUCKER. Sure.

Mr. NEAL. I have cast votes 18 times for speaker of the House, and never once has a Democrat voted for a Republican candidate to be the speaker, nor vice versa. You vote the party line. That is what we did. We voted for Hakeem Jeffries.

Mr. SMUCKER. Yes—

Mr. NEAL. Trying to change this argument—

Mr. SMUCKER. Reclaiming my time—and thank you to the ranking member, but the record is what it is. Every single Democrat member voted to vacate the speaker and, I think, are enjoying the chaos.

But I—but you ought to start thinking about a different narrative. You like talking about this, but we are going to have a new speaker very soon—hopefully, today—and you are going to need to have a new narrative here.

Mr. NEAL. Would the gentleman—

Mr. SMUCKER. No, I need to—I want to get back to this.

This is a really important topic today, and I really appreciate the chairman talking about this today. You know, we want to ensure that every child in America has the opportunity for a great education. And that can mean—that can be a public school. There are great public schools, there are bad public schools. It can be a charter school. There are good and bad charter schools. It can be private schools, whatever it may be. And every policy regarding education that we are considering ought to look at supporting quality schools, no matter where that occurs.

I was the chairman of the education committee in Pennsylvania and, Ms. Sedlar, I so much appreciate your work to ensure that every child does have that access in Pennsylvania. And we worked on these policies. I am proud of what we have done in Pennsylvania, the EITC. And I agree with you, it is not enough, we should be doing more.

Ms. Varmah, your story—education very important to me, as well, and I am a—I have a family of 12 kids. I have 11 siblings, as you do. So we have that in common. But education, very, very critical. And I just want to make a few points.

One is the chairman's bill on 529 is expanding them to career technical—very, very important. We ought to be doing that.

And then, Mr. Smith—Adrian Smith's bill that provides a Federal tax credit for K through 12 is important, as well.

And I talk about in Pennsylvania, you know, we have a lot of really great institutions of higher education: colleges, universities, everything, you know, all types of colleges and universities. And it is a perfect example of why choice works and how it works. Parents decide what is best for their child based on what the child wants

to do, chooses the school that works best for them, and we ought to be applying that in K through 12, as well. And this is what Adrian Smith's bill does. It is very, very important.

And then I want to talk a little bit about workforce development. And I had a similar bill to Adrian's. It also included a workforce development piece. It would create a Federal tax credit for workforce development. So just like the EITC program in Pennsylvania, a company decides or an individual decides to contribute to career technical schools, apprenticeship programs and so on, they receive a tax credit for doing so. I think it is really, really important we do that.

I was a business owner myself for a number of years. I understand today that every business is looking for people. And, by the way, it is really important. We are in a bad fiscal trajectory in the country. I spend time thinking about this. It is really important we get our economy growing. We need workers to do that.

I do want to—a really quick question, Mr. Redmond, do you know how much we spend in the U.S. annually on traditional higher education, on four-year degrees?

Mr. REDMOND. I do not have the answer to that, sir.

Mr. SMUCKER. One hundred and ninety-seven billion. Do you know how much we spend on programs that help support Federal workforce programs and career education—technical education programs?

Mr. REDMOND. No, sir.

Mr. SMUCKER. About \$4 billion annually on WIOA and \$1.4 billion in Federal support. Think about that, \$5.4 billion for career and technical compared to \$197 billion for 4-year degrees. Now, I wouldn't discourage a four-year degree. It is important. But think about the need to reconfigure and rebalance where we place our priorities. So I think it is really important to do this.

I have a bill today, as well, that would create a tax credit. And I think, when you look at the disparity in where we are putting our focus and our Federal dollars—taxpayer dollars, as you had mentioned—it is really important that we pass something like this, as well.

So thank you to each of you for being here today. Your stories are amazing and compelling. Thank you.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. Mrs. Miller is recognized for questions.

Mrs. MILLER. Thank you, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member, and thank all of you for being here today.

As a mother and a grandmother, I know the importance of allowing parents to choose which schools are best for their children and their own unique skills. When I was in college, I made the choice to certify to teach on a secondary level, which means middle school and high school. I learned how to teach English, and history, and math, and all of those things that we really thought was so important, and those have evolved to STEM and STEAM, and other curriculums as we move forward.

Life has its own twists and turns. I ended up in real estate, as opposed to being a teacher-teacher, but I volunteered in the school system for 17 years. And believe me, when you walk the halls of

a middle school, those hormones are alive and well today, just like they were when I learned how to teach all those years ago.

Dr. DeAngelis, thank you for highlighting my state in your testimony and how we provide parents with one of the most expansive education savings account programs in the country. This program is called the Hope Scholarship program, and it has an eligibility rate of 93 percent across all students in my state, making West Virginia a leader in giving parents the opportunity to build an individual learning experience that will work best for their child.

I already think of you as Dr. D. I don't know if that has happened to you before or not.

We have all seen how radical, woke ideology, which really sluffs over history and civics and all of those other things but does include gender and sexual orientation, has made its way into our children's curriculum in school. You know, it is a good thing that parents at least can contain their children's exposure at school—I mean at home.

In your opinion, how do you see school choice as a way to protect our children from the radical and damaging ideology of the left?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes, thank you so much for the question.

Too many schools are focusing on indoctrination, not education. And the best solution to this problem is to allow the families to choose for their own kids. Every other so-called solution from the top down is within the one-size-fits-all system that, by definition, is never going to meet the needs of individual families.

Schooling is a way to outsource partially the raising of your children. And, in the current system that we force families based on their zip code into, you have one group of parents, or even a special interest more likely, controlling the minds of other people's children with that—in that system. The only way forward through freedom, as opposed to force, is from the bottom up, allowing families to choose schools that align with their own values. That is the only way out of this mess where you are not having some parents control how to raise other people's children.

So I think we should all be able to agree, left and right. If you want to go to a school that aligns with your values with this curriculum or that curriculum, it shouldn't matter what that is. But parents should be able to choose for their own children. So I think this is the best solution.

There are other pieces of legislation that could be banning certain concepts or promoting other concepts, and that could be moving the ball in the right direction. But we have seen in so many states, at the state level at least, that this is an unenforceable policy in some cases. We have videos coming out from Accuracy in Media in red states that have banned CRT, for example, where the public school officials are admitting on camera in undercover video that they are going to do it anyway. They are not going to call it CRT, they will call it social emotional learning, or they will call it student mental health services. And, at the end of the day, this should be up to the parents for their own kids, anyway.

Mrs. MILLER. You are so right.

Mr. Redmond, I would really like to meet Pops and Hattie. I know I would want to give them a big hug, because didn't they do a good job? And thank you for being here.

You know, in my home state of West Virginia, as well as across the country, businesses are facing crippling shortages of not having enough people in the workforce, and across all of the major industries. And, for too long, we have been enabling people to stay at home instead of go back to work.

The Biden Administration's failure to address inflation and the rising cost of obtaining education have made vocational and technical colleges increasingly out of reach for my West Virginians who might want to learn high-demand skills in order to enter the workforce. School systems have changed now. I think that they should have allowed to continue teaching life skills in middle school: home ec, shop. Wouldn't it be nice if somebody, when they came there, they knew what a Phillips screwdriver was, or why there were three wires in a box, you know, before they move on in their life? And I think that should happen in middle school.

In your opinion, how would expanding 529 accounts to include workforce training programs like your American training—Truck Training, help our labor force get back to the pre-pandemic employment levels?

Mr. REDMOND. Well, thank you, Congresswoman. It is basically what we have been talking about all this time. It is about giving folks a choice.

You know, I am full of stories. So here comes another. There was a gentleman named Gerald that came to my school who got a four-year degree, but, you know, he didn't have—it was really tough for him to come to school. But he ended up coming to school and utilizing, you know, what he had to, in fact, get his commercial driver's license. And had he had something like 529, it would have been not such torture for him to come to school. If he had that extra something, even if it was half his tuition, it would have been not such a struggle for him.

And I see that all the time, where folks are struggling, trying to make ends meet, and also trying to pay for vocational training, and because, let's face it, like we have all discussed, that—you know, college, just let's be honest, it is just not for everyone, you know, and we got to give folks more opportunities.

And so for—I just don't see the point in anyone who could see that—how this could not benefit the—our country and the folks who need help.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. A quorum call has been called. I intend to proceed with the hearing for as long as possible before recessing for members to vote in the election of a speaker. At that time the committee will stand in recess, subject to the call of the chair, and we will reconvene at the conclusion of the speaker election process.

Ms. Sánchez is recognized for questions.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Yes. I would like to yield 10 seconds to my colleague, Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you very much. I just think it was inappropriate that the gentleman from Pennsylvania suggested that some of us are enjoying the dysfunction around your speaker's election. That it is just—it is beyond the pale.

We came here, just like all of you, to get things done. And we haven't gotten anything done in the last three weeks. We are as

disheartened by this as I am sure the responsible members on your side of the aisle are, as well. And please don't put words in my mouth or my colleagues' mouths.

Thank you, and I will yield back to Ms. Sánchez.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Reclaiming my time, and I couldn't agree with Mr. Thompson more. It is not fun sitting around waiting for you guys to get your act together in terms of election of a speaker.

And I find it incredibly fitting that we are talking about schools and education today, because I would like to start my remarks with a little lesson called personal responsibility.

My dad, who is an immigrant with roughly a sixth-grade education, raised seven children who all went and graduated college. And all of us are public school products. Every single one of us went to public schools. And he didn't have a lot of education, but he was a really wise man because he had a lot of life lessons. And he used to say, when you make a mistake—and we all make many mistakes over the course of our lifetime—but admit it, just admit you made the mistake, learn from it, and be better moving forward.

And yet, repeatedly, my Republican colleagues today have tried to lay the blame for the chaos, the inaction, and the inability for the Republicans to govern, they are trying to lay it at the feet of the Democrats. So I want to correct the record with just a few facts.

First fact: it is a fact that Republicans are in the majority and that they changed the rules this Congress to allow a single member to raise a motion to vacate the speaker. That is a fact.

Second, it was a Republican, Mr. Gaetz of Florida, who actually moved to vacate speaker McCarthy. That is the second fact.

So you poured the gasoline, and you lit the match, and now you are unhappy with the outcome, and you want to blame the Democrats for that? So how is it that we are to blame for a mess that you have created? We voted against the rule change, and we didn't raise the motion to vacate the speaker. You guys are blaming us because we didn't vote for Speaker McCarthy. Well, how many of you ever voted for Speaker Pelosi, or would ever vote for Speaker Pelosi?

It is not the Democrats' responsibility to choose your leader. That is your responsibility. You are the majority. So own your mistakes. Take a long, hard look at yourselves in the mirror, and admit that you screwed up and move on and be better. But you keep screwing up.

And you know, the statement that the chairman made at the beginning of this hearing that the Democrats are to blame for this whole chaos and mess, that is the very definition of a failure to take responsibility for your actions. But that doesn't really surprise me, because it fits this pattern, a pattern whereby Republicans break things and then they try to blame someone else.

So, three weeks after House Republicans ousted their speaker and thus far have failed to elect a new one, here we are. And considering that legislative business on the floor has ground to a halt, today's hearing is hardly business as usual. Instead, the committee is discussing policies that would gut public school funding and abandon civil rights and disability protections for some of our nation's school children. Very nice.

And I consider this hearing to be nothing but a short-sighted attempt to distract American families from the complete chaos that Republicans have embraced while they are in charge of this House. And this is no way to lead, or to govern, or to legislate. With the Republican-controlled House utterly paralyzed by your inaction, I want to look back at what the Democrats managed to achieve when we were in power last Congress with roughly the same margin of a majority.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was a once-in-a-generation investment in safer and more equitable transportation and infrastructure. The CHIPS and Science Act provided billions in grants, loans, loan guarantees, and investment tax credits to rebuild America's semiconductor manufacturing capacity and bolster a domestic supply chain.

And, spearheaded by this tax-writing committee, the Inflation Reduction Act made transformational investments in the fight against climate change. The Inflation Reduction Act is working to deliver lower energy costs for consumers across the U.S., and the law's landmark investments in clean energy are empowering American workers with good-paying jobs.

Dr. Melancon, I appreciate your efforts to help the Department of Energy implement the Inflation Reduction Act. And, considering your expertise leading workforce development initiatives, how specifically has the Inflation Reduction Act improved the energy—the clean energy talent pipeline?

Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, but the last questioner on that side got a minute-and-a-half over. I would like an opportunity to have the witness answer the question.

Chairman SMITH. Ms. Sánchez, I was giving you the time. I did not take anything away. You have up to a minute 30 because the other one went a minute 30.

Ms. SANCHEZ. I appreciate that evenhandedness. It is unusual, but it is appreciated.

Mr. MELANCON. So the Inflation Reduction Act has done a lot on generating new jobs in the variety of factors fighting climate change. For example, the incentives for using many splits and heat pumps have provided one training for current HVAC technicians to learn this new technology, but also provided more opportunities for trucking, transportation, and warehousing of the growth of many splits and the utilization of heat pumps throughout the U.S.

Like I mentioned before, 27 percent growth in the EV sector of automotive that is just from 2021 to 2022. And then also further growth in—once the halo—the hydrogen hubs have now been identified, and they have been awarded through the hydrogen growth of infrastructure throughout the U.S., hydrogen fuel cars and trucks, heavy trucks, will be able to go on the road and be fueled up to meet that technology change.

So that is not taking away from diesel and your standard fuels, but also it is future-proofing the current fuel system that is out there, helping our carbonization goals and workforce goals as we move forward.

Ms. SANCHEZ. I thank you and I yield back.

Chairman SMITH. Mr. Murphy is recognized for questions.

Mr. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would agree we have people on both sides of our aisle that we would like to get rid of. But from that point I will just give a quick story.

My mom—my dad passed away when I was young, and she was hell bent when I was in the fourth grade to send me to Catholic school. And they put me in the fifth grade. And me and Sister Mary Regina after six weeks both decided we would be better back in public school.

I want to give a different perspective on what we are talking about here. The most overused phrase today is the “root causes of all this.” But I would actually like us to go back and look and see why this is. Why is this the big fight between public school, private school, et cetera, et cetera? They used to work in harmony many, many years ago.

Let us take our time capsule back to go to 1965 and the Great Society programs, when Lyndon Johnson began the destruction of the nuclear family. Remember, where does education start? It starts in the home. It absolutely starts in the home. And yes, a single mom helped me as much as she could, but she actually wanted me to have a good education.

So, since that time the nuclear family has been destroyed, destroyed, destroyed—actually disproportionately, sadly enough, in minority communities. And so now what we are doing is that we are having kids who—are having kids who are not then as much—their parent is not much invested in their child as our parents formerly were. That is a number-one reason we are having problems in schools, number one, number one.

And, you know, I still see patients. And I will say I see predominantly Medicaid patients. So whenever I see a child I ask mom, “Is dad involved?” And 80 percent say no, 80 percent say no. And so here we are. The kid can’t even get out of the house with backing, much less go to a school.

Now, yes, that single mother often times wants the best for their child. And regardless of where they are raising that child, they should be able, regardless of their income, where they were raising the child, their poverty level, et cetera, send that child to a place where he or she would have a better life than what they have, period. Point blank.

So my wonderful colleague across the aisle talked about crises that we create, crises. It is—absolutely not. This crisis was created 50 years ago, and now we are managing it further and further and further as we get into this time. Now public schools and so much—I was on the board of trustees of a college. What did they teach? It is called microaggressions. It is called victimization, such to the fact when kids now get out employed, finally are employed, they are getting kicked out in the first two weeks of their job. Business Week, I believe it was, about a month ago, said 12 percent of Gen Zers are getting kicked out, fired in the first 2 weeks because they are being offended.

Let’s go back. And we look at the people who actually caused these problems. Yes, we need a workforce, but we can’t get kids if they quit in junior high school who should have a future doing a good job as a truck driver, as a diesel operator, a mechanic, or somebody getting jobs. But you can’t do that when you have de-

stroyed the family. You can't do that no matter what tax incentive is offered, no matter how much money you pour into a public school. No matter how it is squandered, how much money you spend on a child, it starts in the home. And I don't know how we fix that in Congress, because we screwed it up 50 years ago. And I don't know how you put the genie back in that bottle.

So, you know, guys, I don't have—I am not going to ask a question because I really don't even know where to start with this. But I think our colleges and universities, sadly enough, we are teaching the mantra that everybody has to go get a four-year education.

And by that fact also, so many of our degree programs—physical therapy, nurse practitioner, I can talk about these medical communities—all require doctorates. They are killing kids with tuition when they don't need it. And so we have so many kids just going to college, then at two years they are flunking out and they are going back to community college, which is where they should have started to begin with. But then they have a massive, massive debt required for tuition.

So I applaud you, all of you, regardless of whatever your witnesses are, because I think you are here with the right heart. The problem, sadly enough, is in our home, is in the lack of a desire for a good education in our home, and the structural problems created by the Great Society programs.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back.

Chairman SMITH. Mr. Hern is recognized for questions.

Mr. HERN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing today, and thank you to all the witnesses for joining us here.

Tax advantaged accounts are a tremendous benefit to hard-working Americans. Tax advantaged accounts help Americans save for retirement, future health issues, and children's education. Republicans' Tax Cuts and Jobs Act in 2017 expanded tax advantaged education savings accounts, known as 529 accounts, to include K through 12 tuition. However, Congress can should—can and should do more to help hardworking Americans afford everyday education costs.

At a time when inflation is hurting the American people and the dollar is being stretched thin, 529 accounts need to be expanded to make K through 12 education more affordable. That is why today I am introducing the Student Empowerment Act which allows all students, including public, private, and religious school students to use 529 accounts to cover eligible education expenses such as tutoring, standardized testing fees, and educational expenses that—therapies for students with disabilities, among other educational expenses.

The Student Empowerment Act reincorporates household—homeschooled students as equally to use a 529 savings account for educational expenses, ensuring all families can use these tax advantaged accounts to pay for their children's elementary and secondary education.

In a study from Brookings, average fall 2021 math test scores in grades 3 through 8 were an average .24 standard deviations lower relative to the same grade peers in fall 2019, while reading test scores were an average .14 standard deviations lower. The drop in test scores should be concerning to all Americans, all Americans.

To compare, math scores dropped .17 standard deviations in one year from New Orleans evacuees after Hurricane Katrina.

In a recent study from Tutor.com, demand for tutoring has skyrocketed 105 percent post-COVID as families cope with their children's learning loss. This new data suggests that parents are shelling out more of their hard-earned money to get children back on track. Congress should help these families by easing the financial burden of their children's learning loss. My bill is a step in the right direction, providing families with eligibility to pay for tutoring using a tax advantaged 529 plan.

Mr. DeAngelis, can you tell us why it is a good idea to expand 529 accounts beyond 12 through K to cover eligible education expenses such as tutoring, standardized testing fees, and educational therapies for students with disabilities, among other educational expenses?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Absolutely. Thank you for the question.

Schooling is just one way to get to an education, and some people in the homeschool community would actually argue that schooling, in some ways, if it is not done right, could be antithetical to education. So expanding the expenses to allow for maximum customization on the part of the parents is a great step in the right direction towards empowering parents and empowering families to get the best education for their kid. That could be in a brick-and-mortar school, but tutoring is also—especially with supplemental tutoring, can lead to better outcomes for students, as well, so we should allow for maximum flexibility, customization. This is a really good way to do that.

And the benefits of these types of programs aren't limited to standardized test scores being improved. That is, obviously, a benefit. But another benefit could be academic, non-academic, including reductions in crime later on in life, more of a—less likely to engage in activities that lead to teenage pregnancies as kids, as the previous congressman brought up, as well. There is a study from New York City Harlem Children's Zone that found that getting a—winning a lottery to attend a charter school in New York City reduced the likelihood of teenage pregnancies by 59 percent.

And I have also done a study on the topic from Milwaukee finding that getting a voucher to go to a private school in Milwaukee, following those students later on in life until they were about 25 to 30 years of age, had huge reductions on the likelihood of them committing crimes, and also reduced the likelihood of paternity suits by about 38 percent.

So these are all reasons why we should expand education freedom, not limit it. And you guys are in a great position to do that. And thank you for introducing the bill.

Mr. HERN. I recently read a report that said that you can tie direct incarceration rates back to how people read in the third grade, and so we are certainly not heading in the right direction. We need to do everything in our power to change that.

Ms. Sedlar, in your testimony you say there is no excuse not to empower every family with the options necessary to make the choices that will change their children's lives, especially as the countries continue to strive to recover from the generational learn-

ing loss after COVID-19 pandemic. Do you believe 529 expansion beyond K through 12 tuition to be a worthy option?

Ms. SEDLAR. Of course I do. I think that parents can definitely band together and utilize that functionality to improve their children's education, add on to that children's education.

We have had a lot of success in Pennsylvania with some pods that have remained, some hybrid homeschool situations, so allowing those out-of-the-box modalities are critical in assisting our students.

Mr. HERN. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman SMITH. Ms. Moore is recognized for questions.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and I do want to thank our panel for joining us today for this very important hearing.

I want to ask a question really very quickly of you, Mr. Melancon, with the National Skills Coalition. The Joint Economic Committee said that—we had testimony before that committee that said that there is not really an energy-related something or another, that these really are an aggregation of skill sets that we are already promoting.

Like, you talked about trucking, HVAC workers, and I am wondering—plumbers, electrical workers, welders—how do you—just very quickly, because I have other questions for others what is the plan to take advantage of this critical mass of people who are out there? They don't necessarily know that these energy-related opportunities exist, and to be able to steer people in the direction without wasting a lot of time and money.

Mr. MELANCON. Well, the key opportunity is just bringing exposure. So it is just working the local communities, and working with the employers, and also with the—you know, your K through 12 system, and also with your post-secondary system is expose parents and other young adults about these career pathways.

But traditionally, there are going to be traditional crafts that just have a future side to them, and—like electrical solar and so forth. So it is just bringing exposure.

I am a big fan of the service corps that the Department of Energy has just deployed out on that. That brings exposure to kids and adults about these green opportunities.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Thank you so much for that.

I do want to share with the committee that I hail from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And so, very clearly, I was in the state legislature in 1989 when we voted for school choice. I voted for it, and I am very, very close personal friends with people like Dr. Howard Fuller, with the late, great state Representative Polly Williams, people who took the initiative to put this program together. Back in college at Marquette University, Reverend Father Virgil Blum had me doing research on school choice, so I know an awful lot about it.

Now, having said that, just let me say this. Dr. DeAngelis, I couldn't agree with you more that the biggest problem with public schooling is the feudalistic system that it is based on. You know, if you live in 53206 in Milwaukee, North Division High School, where I went to high school, you know, you are going to get to the

11th grade like I did, and not have a proper chem lab so that you can do the experiments in it. That is the greatest form of discrimination.

What I would say, though, is that school choice compounds that. And when I look at this bill that you are proposing to provide tax credits, this is a different structure than we have in Milwaukee, but what I see here are a couple of things.

First of all, I think when—you have talked on and on and on about being able to align your values with it so that if I am a donor, say I give to the Lutherans—I love the Lutherans because they donate and donate—so if I donate to the Lutherans, there is nothing in this bill that would prevent them from providing these scholarships to Lutherans as opposed to other children, and not discriminating against them.

What I found in Milwaukee, after having voted for this, is that the count day, as you talked about, is that third Friday in September. And what happens is that the choice—the charter schools get the kids in. And, when they find that they have disabilities, or behavioral problems, or other things, they dismiss them after that count. The public school has to take them back, and they get to keep the money for three years after they kick them out.

And so, yes, it does decrease the amount of money that public schools have. Public schools, there is—you know, when we talk about it is not the public's money, well, the public has—they are not elected officials that are on the boards of many of these schools. And I do think that there is a great deal of accountability and accountability problems.

I can see that I am running out of time in more ways than one. But I have been around a long time, and I fought against schools that have had rapists as the principal, everything.

I just want to—before I close, I want to tell you how very proud we are of you, Ms. Varmah.

And I also want to say to you, Ms. Sedlar, you get it. Parental involvement is the basic key ingredient to making sure that your kids succeed. Noticing what they are gifted at, that they are talented at, and kids can succeed in everything.

And, with regard to my other colleagues, I think they are gone for the quorum call, talking about they know what to do because they are grandmothers. Hey, I am a great-grandmother, and I think that every child, no matter where they live, ought to have an opportunity. And you ought not have to siphon money away from the greatest democratizing institution in our country, and that is a public education, that you can walk down the street anywhere you live down the dirt road and learn algebra in the eighth grade. That is where we need to be heading and not, you know, these—oh, I got 30 more seconds. Let me—

Chairman SMITH. No, you are a minute over, and there are only nine of us that aren't at the quorum, counting you and I. We are two of the nine.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Oh, and they need our vote, right?

Chairman SMITH. Yes. So—

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Thank you for your generosity. Thank you for being here. And thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you, Ms. Moore.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Thank you to all my colleagues.
[Laughter.]

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Here, listening to me.

Chairman SMITH. I enjoyed every bit of it.

I want to thank you all. We will recess, subject to the call of the chair, and we will reconvene at the conclusion of the speaker election process.

[Recess.]

Chairman SMITH. The committee will come to order. Mr. Steube is recognized for questions.

Mr. STEUBE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recent years, our education system has failed American children. Math and reading test scores have dropped to their lowest levels in decades, as measured by data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The drop in math test scores was the sharpest decline seen in the last 50 years. Reading scores declined the most for lowering performing students, but the scores dropped all—across all percentiles.

None of this should surprise us, though. Liberal elected officials across the country worked with unions to ensure that schools remained closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. American children, especially those from under-privileged communities, were left behind in order to appease the wishes of union activists.

In my home state of Florida, we have seen a huge influx into the State of Florida, and I talked to a lot of those families, and those families would come up to me at events and say, “The reason that we are here is because we want our children to be in an in-person classroom,” and in Michigan or in New York City, or all these other places where their children were not allowed to be in person, they moved their entire families to Florida just so their kids could be in an in-person classroom.

President Biden and his CDC director worked hand in hand with Randi Weingarten, the head of the powerful American Federation of Teachers Union, to keep schools closed for in-person learning in 2021. Thanks to their efforts, American students missed out on vital in-school experiences, and the declining test scores tell us the objective truth about the destructive effects of their policies.

Facing such a systematic failure of our educational system, American parents, especially those with the financial means, sought alternative options for their children. Charter schools in New York City saw 7.8 percent increase in enrollment between 2020 and 2022. Meanwhile, over 55 percent of private schools saw increased enrollment between 2021 and 2022. Congress must work to empower American families to make the educational choices that make sense for their children.

President Trump’s Tax Cuts and Jobs Act helped tremendously by expanding the use of 529 accounts for K through 12 educational expenses. Looking ahead, we can pass bills like the Educational Choice for Children Act, which would create a Federal scholarship tax credit to help encourage investment and scholarship programs to cover expenses related to K through 12 education. These policies will help American families achieve the educational freedom they deserve and set up our children for future success.

We have seen in Florida, too, my time in the state legislature, where we increased the amount and the ability for the dollars to follow the children in K through 12 education. There is a Classical Academy of Sarasota that is in my district that has a waiting list for children, because parents are yearning and striving for a classical education for our children in a place where true education occurs.

Mr. DeAngelis, in your testimony you note that Randi Weingarten called President Trump's effort to reopen schools in the fall of 2020 as "reckless, callous, and cruel." How did the extended school closures promoted by Ms. Weingarten affect the educational progress of our American students?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes, and Ms. Weingarten pretty much gaslighted the American public before Congress when she tried to lie about their role in keeping schools closed for so long. Twitter, which is now called X, actually slapped a community note on her tweet, which is now a post for basically lying about how to—how they fought to keep the schools closed. They were saying that they actually fought to keep them open.

But this hurt kids in so many ways academically, physically, mentally. And there are six rigorous studies on the topic. I did the first one published in a journal called "Social Science Quarterly," all finding that in places that had stronger teachers' unions, the public schools were less likely to remain open.

So, like, there was so much learning loss. There are reports by Emily Oster and her colleagues in National Bureau of Economic Research finding that in places that had schools closed longer, there was more learning loss. And I think this is basically accepted as fact now, that the teachers unions had a hand in it, and it led to learning loss for kids.

It is time to give families true power. Let them direct their kids' education.

If we didn't have—if we had national school choice all across the country when the pandemic hit, the schools wouldn't have closed as long. And, in fact, a study I cited earlier by Michael Hartney and Leslie Finger found that in places that had more competition, more low-cost Catholic schools in the area, the public schools were more likely to open, too.

Mr. STEUBE. Thank you.

Ms. Varmah—am I pronouncing that correctly?

Ms. VARMAH. Yes.

Mr. STEUBE. As a former state legislator, I was heartened to hear your inspiring story about how the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program helped you and your siblings access the educational opportunities that led to such success. How will legislation like the ECCA help under-privileged youth gain access to essential educational opportunities like you did through Florida's program?

Ms. VARMAH. Thank you for the question.

This will help—this act will help so many families because you are giving the option and the choice to the parents. And parents will know what their problems are. They will know where they stand financially, and they will know that we may—we need to get this child into a certain school.

I know, in my story, my parents knew that the only way out of poverty was through a quality education, a high-quality education. And so they found the best schools, the best schools that were aligned with their values, the best schools that were aligned with pushing us academically, and the curriculums. They loved to have a direct hand in our education.

And they—my mom knew that. I was talking about this earlier. My mom knew that making sure that she controlled our education, that she knew what was best for us would help us in our success in the future. So—

Mr. STEUBE. Well, I want to thank you for being here. I want to thank you for staying during the recess while we elected a speaker. I know there was a lot of talk about that earlier in the hearing, but thank you for your time and thank you for being here today.

I yield back.

Chairman SMITH. Mr. Moore is recognized for questions.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Thank you, Chairman.

So this is an important topic. I have 4 boys 11 and under, and I absolutely love our public school system. And I am doubling—my wife and I are doubling our efforts to get involved and to do everything that we can to make sure that they are successful.

And, at the same time, Utah just passed and just went through their own process to do a school choice program. And again, I am choosing to invest and get every ounce of effort into our public schools. We love it. We love it for all the reasons that we have always loved public schools. And I love that Utah went through this process to create that type of competitive spirit that needs to exist in every industry in the world, in my opinion. As a conservative, I believe that competition is the most important thing that makes everything thrive.

And so—and Ms. Varmah, I love your story that it was successful for you and for others.

Governor Ducey from Arizona is probably one of the most inspiring individuals that I have ever listened to, talked about this particular issue. It wasn't an easy thing to do, and he had to go to every angle of his school boards and his communities and sell this concept, and he is seeing good outcomes.

This is the point. We have to have our states as incubators of success and try these things. It is never going to be implemented perfectly. It is not going to be implemented perfectly in Utah from the very start of this, as we have just gone through this legislative cycle last fall or last spring. But we have to enable states to find these opportunities to do good for their entire—the entirety of their—of the community.

And so I love the perspective that you all bring, and I love that my wife and I and our second grade teacher, Mrs. Hall—I have a boy with special needs, and she is overly emphasizing the—what she can do for him. And she is at her wit's end with my son, who is the greatest kid in the world, but needs extra special care. He has an IEP, he has help that comes in, the aides that come and support him. Our school district is going to lengths to make it so my child can have what he needs.

And so I want a competitive environment that will exist, and I love the balance that Utah is finding. And my colleagues get sick and tired of me talking about how great Utah is, and they need to settle in, because, as we continue to lead the nation in all the important indicators, I will continue to talk about the importance there. And that kind of brings me to two other things.

Mr. DeAngelis, as I talk about, you know, states across the country working to address, you know, these children's instructional needs, we need to be the incubators of innovation and create these ideas. Can you give us any more, from your experience and your engagement on this space, about making education more affordable that hasn't been discussed yet, and what, if anything, that we can do at the congressional level to support that?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes. Look, we spend a lot of money at the K through 12 level already. We spent over \$17,000 per student, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, and that number has increased about 155 percent after adjusting for inflation since 1970.

But the money is not making its way into the classroom in so many states. Over the same period, teacher salaries have only increased by about 10 percent. So the money is going towards administrative bloat, staffing surges because the government school monopoly has no incentive to spend additional dollars wisely unless you allow families to vote with their feet and have that competitive pressure to do a better job.

And, in fact, five studies have found that private and charter school choice competition also leads to higher teacher salaries in the public schools, too.

So this is a win-win solution. It is not us versus them. It is not private versus public versus charter. It is about education freedom and parents choosing for their own kids. And this also leads to better outcomes in the public schools.

Yes, we have had a lot of success in red states—in Utah, for example. Nine other red states have gone universal in just two years alone, in addition to Utah. But we should supercharge those efforts, and we should expand school choice across the nation with the Educational Choice for Children Act.

The new speaker, I am proud to announce, is also a cosponsor on the bill, as well.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Thank you.

Mr. Redmond, one more thing. Utah has a really unique program that they provide tuition assistance, even provide free tuition for juniors and seniors in high school to attend technical colleges. They go get a certification, they learn how to be an EMT, and then they go off into a four-year degree, in a lot of cases. It is a great program.

The 529 plans don't often cover technical education. Is this a limitation? Is this something that we need to be addressing so we can properly fill the jobs of tomorrow?

Mr. REDMOND. Yes, thank you, Congressman. Good question. Absolutely.

I am very much pro-young people who—colleges are just not a good fit for them, you know. So if you take a college—or a kid coming out of high school, it—actually, there are associations and pro-

grams designed to try to acclimate high school students to the trucking industry, for instance, so that way they know that there is a choice, there is something that they can strive for right now that they don't have to spend, you know, 60, 80, 100,000, whatever college is today, or whatever college they go to, or planning or thinking about going to, there is a much more, you know, financially beneficial solution.

So I wholeheartedly endorse and praise anyone who tries to give technical schools a try and let them know what—that that is truly a great option for them.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Thank you.

Chairman, I remain available to all of my colleagues from other states other than Utah to continue to share my best practices on how to truly do things.

And I yield back.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. Mr. Evans is recognized for questions.

Mr. EVANS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss how non-college pathways can help grow and develop competitive workforce.

This is especially important for me, as my home city of Philadelphia has one of the largest Black populations nationwide, yet large disparity exists between educational attainment of Black and White residents. That is why I have been laser-focused on expanding opportunity for individuals to develop additional pathways to the workforce like community and technical college.

I am a proud graduate of Community College of Philadelphia, and I know firsthand how community and technical colleges can provide an affordable option for a wide income spectrum of students to access paying, high-demand jobs.

We must continue to invest and train the next generation of workers to address our workforce shortage and ensure workers have the right to compete.

I want to refer to Dr.

Mr. MELANCON. Melancon.

Mr. EVANS. Can you speak to how community and technical college can help prepare young Americans for job creation by the Democrat infrastructure, transportation, energy investment, and recent legislation?

And how can we ensure these opportunities are going to these communities that have been historically excluded from Federal investment?

Mr. MELANCON. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Evans.

So community colleges do play that very unique role in our communities, one, by having access for all people from K through 12. They may not receive the great K through 12 educational experience, and there has got to be a place in the community where they are just not left off and stuck in remedial classes.

I have seen a lot of growth where community technical colleges were able to do integrated learning strategies. They could take—going to machinists, you have got to do measurements of two thousandths, but if they never got the concepts of fractions and decimals and using precision measurements tools, they will—they can't be a machinist. And I have seen how community colleges were able

to bridge that gap while they are in their machinist program by integrating those strategies.

If a person is English as a second language, ESL training, coming into our communities and looking for growth opportunities for employment, they can get ESL training at that community technical college.

But more specifically, community college helps open doors for diverse communities, for people who don't have a aunt or uncle or a brother working at the manufacturing plant or working at a electrical company. Like I mentioned before, our manufacturing sector and our electrical sector, right, is just—it is what it is, you know, 70 percent White male. And they need—we need more White men in the electrical field, and we need more Black and Brown people in the electrical fields.

But if there is not a way for them to get their basic training and to be employable day one to go work for that electric company, we are leaving out a significant part of our community. And the community technical college plays a very significant role to work closely with business and industry to know what those expectations are on the job, day one, have the training tied to their expectation and curriculum. Just because they are doing industry-based training is one thing, but it has got to be tied to their curriculum.

And they open doors, and businesses are successful, and all of our communities are being successful at the same time, especially in your great city of Philadelphia.

Mr. EVANS. I am concerned that our education and tax training incentives are not well structured to help people who need them. Lots of low-income students have to work, go to class, and have family responsibility, which may be why their classes are part-time. What advice would you give about redesigning financial assistance for students whose path isn't a full-time bachelor's degree in four years?

Mr. MELANCON. Okay. Yes, our jobs act that we have out there is basic Pell, is short-term Pell. Right now, Pell doesn't cover industry-based certifications that is less than—that are non-credit-setting. And a lot of the job opportunities where somebody is working, just—you know, people are working two or three jobs during the day, they don't have time to take a two-year degree to stop what they are doing. They may have—they have other obligations at home they have to meet. But they need to be able to transition into the new growth opportunities.

Updating our Pell Through Jobs Act, making that more flexible for short-term, industry-based certification—not to say with 6 months' worth of training or 200 hours or less will make you a top-notch welder or a pipe fitter, but will help open your door to start your employment. And then, once you start working for the employer, you will get that additional training to be a top-notch welder or a journeyman-level craftsman—or craftsperson, actually. And those are certain things you do.

And then also, certain things we can do is make Pell tax-free on the non—less than—benefits of taxes, make sure that those benefits are not being taxed, and make sure all that money is tax-free for our learners.

Mr. EVANS. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman SMITH. Mr. Feenstra is recognized for questions.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to thank all our witnesses. I greatly appreciate you taking the time. This is such an important topic.

And I am from Iowa, and we have done a lot of different things when it comes to the tax code, and how the tax code can play such an important role in giving kids access to the school of their choice, their parents—the choice that the parent can decide where they want to go. Being chair of Ways and Means in the Iowa Senate, I created a tax credit that encouraged scholarships for organizations that helped lower-income students. And I want to see this continue to be built on at the Federal level.

That being said, Dr. DeAngelis, I just want to ask you, what can—if the Federal Government can do certain things, certain tax credits, how does this play out at state levels? Because to me, being—when I was the chair of our Ways and Means in the State of Iowa, it always helped when I saw a backstop or a Federal Government grant or, you know, a credit, whatever it might be, to say, hey, I can couple with that. Do you see that as we move forward with other states?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes, we have a ton of states. Twenty-one states in the U.S. already have some form of tax credit scholarship programs working out, so Florida being one of them, Iowa being another. So this isn't some, you know, idea that hasn't been tried before. And it has worked out successfully in Florida. I believe they had about—they have about 400,000 scholarships that are—have been given out this year alone. So it is—people want it.

And look, it is all private dollars. I know there might be concerns about, you know, the Federal Government being involved, but these are still private dollars that are donated from individuals. It is not government money, it is individuals' money.

And what I like to point out also in this particular bill, the Educational Choice for Children Act, is that there are explicit anti-government regulation provisions in the bill, as well, to allow for maximum freedom on the part of the providers, the scholarship-granting organizations, and the private schools to not become government entities just because they are involved with school choice.

So I think this is a great move forward for freedom. Every Republican, in particular, should be on board, but it doesn't need to be a partisan issue, either. Look, you look at the voting records. You look at RealClear opinion research. Supermajority support among Republicans, Democrats, and independents from this year. And, in Florida, in their House, when they went all in on school choice this past year, they had four Democrats vote in favor of it in the House. So I hope we could reach across the aisle and also allow for everybody to be involved and to support parental rights and education.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Yes, thanks for those comments, Doctor. I agree, it is not—it should be non-political. It should be based on what the parent wants, should be, what they want best for their child, and they should dictate and decide where that—where it is best that their child earns their education.

Mr. Redmond, you have also done extraordinary work to help people earn their—the skill of truck driving. In the truck-driving industry, do you see a substantial number of employers paying to send their kids to driving school?

And, if so, or if not, what can we do to help that?

Mr. REDMOND. Well, that is a mixed bag there. Some employers try to assist by way of tuition reimbursement. And that is a great program. But unfortunately, the person has to come up with the money first, you know? And then after they graduate and they go to work for that particular company, little by little, maybe \$150 to \$200 a month, it goes back toward their tuition as, like I said, in a form of a reimbursement.

But again, that doesn't solve the problem of someone getting into our program, you know. So we do need more programs. As I mentioned in my earlier statement, that—you know, that is one of the things that kind of touches my heart, is looking a person dead in the eye and saying, "Because you just don't have the money right now I can't help you," and we need to do more to help folks get into school.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Yes. So do businesses help at all? I mean, do they do that or not?

Mr. REDMOND. Not really. I mean, unless they are working for them.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Got you.

Mr. REDMOND. Like say for instance—you get the point. Whereas a company, XYZ Company, may say, "I want to send one of my employees to your school."

Mr. FEENSTRA. Right. So have people already been in the workforce? I think of truck drivers specifically that—you really have to be 21 years of age before you can drive a truck, so from 18 to 21 they already get in the workforce. Do you see that as a problem? All of a sudden it is like, okay, I have been in the workforce. Now I have got to spend a lot of dollars to try to drive a truck. It is prohibitive for me to do that.

Mr. REDMOND. Well, actually, if I may, it is 21 to drive interstate. It is 18 to 20 to be able to drive intrastate.

Mr. FEENSTRA. In some states, yes.

Mr. REDMOND. So yes. Well, in all states. So if you are 18, you technically can drive a semi truck.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Okay, okay. Very good. How about—Mr. Redmond, there are other things that go on when you want a skills or a trade. For instance, buying tools and things like that. Do you see that as a barrier sometimes for kids being engaged in different skills?

And could there be tax credits to allow that to help alleviate some of those costs?

Mr. REDMOND. Sure. I mean, anything that can help alleviate costs would be great for anyone in the trucking industry. So—

Mr. FEENSTRA. Yes, yes. Ms. Varmah, have you seen a growth in state offerings? You know, different incentives?

So I noted this earlier, but do you see that if we can do something at the Federal level, that this will expand to other states going down this path?

Ms. VARMAH. Thank you for the question.

Yes, this would also push the states to also pass their own scholarship programs. But until then, we can't allow these kids to just fail, and to not have access to any quality education. Passing this would allow families to start using that scholarship program until states catch up.

Mr. FEENSTRA. Thank you.

Thank you, I yield back.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you.

The great Ms. Van Dyne.

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to start by responding to my colleague—and I really wish he was here, but my colleague from Texas, his misguided remarks earlier. You know, he seems to have issue with what he describes as a Federal companion to what is occurring in Texas. And I think it is disingenuous, to say the least, that our governor is somehow holding teachers hostage. I would think that the teachers have been holding our children and parents hostage.

But to ensure that Texas families have access to their own taxpayer dollars to send their kids to schools that they want to—this is not government money. The government actually takes individuals' money, and then they get—they think that they get to decide how it is best spent and best spent on children's educations, which is not the case. And bureaucrats should not be deciding children's education; parents should be, and vouchers allow them that opportunity to do so.

The U.S. educational system failed the next generation, as you have so eloquently mentioned, by shuttering classrooms, by masking students, and forcing inappropriate and extreme material in the classroom. What we have seen is its systemic failures, specifically in urban schools. Children's future success should not be limited to the zip code in which they were born, and we are seeing that overwhelmingly.

And I would just love to ask my Texas colleague why he has a problem with students who are born into poor, urban schools that are completely failing them, why he has a problem allowing them an opportunity to go somewhere else where they can be successful. And you did not have an opportunity to respond to his criticism and to his comments, Mr. DeAngelis, and I would love to know, do you have a response for that?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes, thank you so much for the opportunity.

Look, those standing in the schoolhouse door fighting against educational opportunities, those are the people holding children's education hostage. And in Texas, look, they spend over \$15,700 per student in the government-run schools per year. Private school tuition in the state is only about \$10,600 per student per year, a lot less than what they are spending in the traditional school system. That number has increased by about 166 percent after adjusting for inflation since 1970 in Texas.

And Glenn Rogers, a so-called Republican in the House in Texas, was quoted earlier. So I have to point out that he was endorsed by the Texas affiliate of Randi Weingarten's Union, the Texas Federation of Teachers. So he might not be the conservative that he was championed to be.

And look, 88 percent of Texas Republican primary voters support school choice. This is a political winner, but it is also just the right thing to do. It shouldn't be a partisan issue. And look, in Texas, it passed easily through the senate, 18 to 13. But 12 of the Democrats voted against it. And a quick search revealed that 8 out of the 12, at least, either went to private school themselves or sent their own kids to private school. And I don't blame them for that, but they shouldn't stand in the schoolhouse door, pull up the ladder from behind themselves, and then tell less advantaged families that they can't have access to a better education.

I believe the words were said earlier that we should just fix the public schools. Well, one, school choice does fix the public schools from the bottom up, allowing for bottom-up accountability. Look, under-performing private schools, they shut down. Under-performing government schools, they often get more money.

But allowing families to vote with their feet translates that competition into the public sector to low-income families do not want to wait anymore, they don't have time to wait anymore, their kids don't have time to wait anymore. Advantaged politicians who take advantage of private schooling for themselves, they didn't have to wait. Families shouldn't have to wait, either. So let's expand school choice to families in Texas, but let's do it nationwide, too. The Educational Choice for Children Act is the vehicle to do so. Let's not have families wait any longer.

Ms. VAN DUYNE. You mentioned that in private schools it is about \$10,000, and that the government is spending \$15,000, and it is only increased. Where do you see those dollars going?

Mr. DEANGELIS. It is going towards administrative bloat and staffing surges. That means more dues-paying members for the unions. So Randi Weingarten, who makes over \$500,000 a year, really likes that increase in spending going to more staffing. But it doesn't go towards teacher salaries. It doesn't go towards the families for education freedom.

And look, yes, teacher salaries in Texas have been stagnant since 1970, have only increased by about 10 percent after adjusting for inflation. The money doesn't make its way into the classroom. Competition will funnel more of those dollars towards the most important educational resource in the classroom, which happens to be the teacher. So school choice can benefit teachers, too, not just families and parents. It is a win-win solution.

And since 2000, the number of students enrolled nationwide in public schools has increased by about 7 percent, the number of teachers has increased by about 8 percent, the number of principals and assistant principals has ballooned by about 33 percent. The number of administrators since then has increased by about 90 percent.

Ms. VAN DUYNE. So every single time we get these associations in our office they always ask for more money, more money, more money. You have shown that they have gotten more money. Have you seen better results come out from our schools?

Mr. DEANGELIS. No, the outcomes have been flat on the long-term trends on the NAEP, and funding make—it doesn't make its way into the classroom. We have increased the spending by so much. And it is the definition of insanity, trying to do the same

thing over and over again and expecting different results. We have spent more. And, if we are going to spend any more than we already do, which is about over \$17,000 per student nationwide, it should go to people, not buildings. If the public schools are the best option, if you are going to increase funding, let's give more funding to families, not to the institutions, just like we do with higher ed, with Pell Grants. Give the money to the students. Let them choose, just like we do with pre-K, like Head Start. The funding follows the decision of the family.

Ms. VAN DUYNE. I appreciate that.

Mr. DEANGELIS. Let's do that for K through 12.

Ms. VAN DUYNE. And I couldn't agree more.

Mr. DEANGELIS. Thank you.

Ms. VAN DUYNE. I yield back.

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Chairman.

Chairman SMITH. The ranking member is recognized.

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Chairman, Dr. DeAngelis, you used the term a "so-called Republican." What does that imply?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes, thank you so much for the question. I mean, it is—if school choice is on the Republican Party platform nationally, it is on the Republican Party platform—

Mr. NEAL. I know Democrats who are in favor of school choice, too.

Mr. DEANGELIS. And that is why I said—thank you so much for the question—that is why I said it shouldn't be a partisan issue. I—

Mr. NEAL. But you did say "so-called Republican." What does that imply, only that Republicans can be interested?

Mr. DEANGELIS. I think that—

Mr. NEAL. I know a lot of Democrats that send their children to Catholic schools.

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes, the President of the Chicago Teachers Union, Stacy Davis Gates, sends her own kid to private school, too. She should have that opportunity. But other families should have it, too.

And the reality is the Republicans have picked up the football and led on the issue. They have become the parents' party, in a sense. But that doesn't mean Democrats don't have the opportunity to do so, too. It shouldn't be a partisan issue. We should have bi-partisan support for education freedom.

And it is true, a lot of Democrats send their own kids to private school. In Florida, four of them voted for it in the House of Representatives in Florida for universal school choice, the full-fledged program. So it doesn't need to be a partisan issue, it just has been in the short term. Hopefully, in the medium to longer term—or maybe we can have the members of the committee on the Democrat side sign on to the Educational Choice for Children Act. I think that would be fantastic.

We had a great speech from Ms. Moore earlier, saying that she voted for school choice when she was in Milwaukee, in Wisconsin, several decades ago. I thought she was going to next say that she was about to sign onto the bill, as well. I think—

Mr. NEAL. So the—

Mr. DEANGELIS. I think that would be fantastic.

Mr. NEAL. But my point is, since 29 percent of the American people say they are Democrats and 27 percent say they are Republicans, that suggests there is a lot of people outside of the two-political-party structure. So to label this as only a “so-called Republican” criticism, I don’t think that helps any party here.

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes, and I welcome the Democrats to reach across the aisle, to cosponsor the bill, and to support school choice for other families like many of them have supported for their own families. It shouldn’t just be school choice for me, not for thee. It should be for all families in America, regardless of your background, zip code, or income.

And I hope we really can listen to the voters. I mean, supermajority support according to RealClear opinion for school choice among Republicans, Democrats, and independents. So I think, Ranking Member Neal, we can agree that this should not be a partisan issue, and we could—we can move the ball down the field together.

Mr. NEAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman SMITH. Mr. Beyer is recognized.

Mr. BEYER. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and Ranking Member Neal.

Having had 12 years of Catholic education, I am sort of going to stay away from that half of the conversation. I did get a beautiful education. I do worry, though, not for your response about what happens when the most talented and aggressive and high-initiative kids in the public schools leave and leave behind the kids who don’t have the parents that are paying attention, or don’t have the initiative or the background.

And I would love to see any data that shows that school choice raises the salaries of the teachers left behind. That would be a wonderful thing, because you are greatly concerned that all those increases in school funding, that none of it went to the teachers. And I come from Virginia, where our teachers are still not paid at the national average.

But, Dr. Melancon, I was thrilled that you mentioned the Hampton Road Regional Workforce Training System, here in Virginia, as an example of a successful partnership between industry and local government and educational institutions. And I know that has been a really important factor in maintaining the industrial base there, and specifically the defense industrial base, with Newport News Shipbuilding.

Is there anything we can do in the Federal Government to incentivize the creation of programs like this around the country?

Mr. MELANCON. Yes, thank you. And yes, the Hampton Roads project is great. I think they trained over 900 individuals, diverse individuals, in that sector. I think it is over 90 percent job placement for those individuals. A majority of those individuals were TANF and food stamp recipients, but it opened a door of people who had been left out of the manufacturing sector to get a high-growth, high-demand skill to work in the marine and also military specs of manufacturing.

I think that model has been replicated. When we talked about the Trade Adjustment Act, the TAACCCT program for community technical colleges, that was a sector strategy. Similarly, we also

talked about the North Baton Rouge Industrial Training Initiative working with ExxonMobil.

And it is just kind of bringing in a diverse group of people working with contractors who typically do not recruit from those individuals. But once they did, and built a relationship with them, the whole area has succeeded and provided pathways for individuals coming from—just like in Hampton Roads, who are disconnected from high-growth—they might have been a manager at Circle K, got a skill training, and now they are a machinist, a foreman, a supervisor on the manufacturing floor, and that opportunity wouldn't have been opened.

So the investment in Jobs Act, the modernization of WIOA, but further build out and reinvestment, I think, in TAACCCT 2.0, it will provide that infrastructure of that type of sector strategy, where community partners are at the table, businesses are at the middle, community technical colleges, they are providing training and other community supports.

And also, other supportive services are also needed. Child care—but particularly in that type of setting we need child care for shift workers and so forth.

Mr. BEYER. The—

Mr. MELANCON. So the opportunity is there, the demand is there. It is just kind of rebuilding the infrastructure.

Mr. BEYER. Along that line, two years ago we passed a huge apprenticeship bill, bipartisan. And then, in the Inflation Reduction Act there are all kinds of additional incentives for registered apprentices. But you keep hearing from industry that they can't find the people to apply for the apprenticeships in the first place. What can we do to make them more attractive, and to get more people actually engaged in this? And think Switzerland or Germany.

Mr. MELANCON. Yes. So I think the key thing on apprenticeship is just making people aware of those pathways. I think a lot of it—I think, through service, is—once somebody goes to the shop floor, or once somebody is familiar with what a welder does every day—if you don't come from a family of welders, you may not know about the likelihood of being a welder. So I think it is just exposing not only our parents, but also the kids, and also the schools about these pathways, and get them on—get them touching the equipment and showing them about that.

And then also showing about working in the apprenticeship program, because it is agreed upon you pretty much—the more you learn, and more skill that you can be proficient at, the more you are going to earn. And I think it is just still—apprenticeship has been around for a very long time, it is just not a common pathway for people's careers. A lot of people think about going the four-year degree and they will be well off, but there is a whole lot of different opportunities for success.

Mr. BEYER. I know this hearing has been mostly about how tax policy can affect educational freedom, educational choice. One of the things I really worry about in Virginia, particularly, is what are we doing with the energy workers that are being displaced. You know, we had lots of coal miners in southwest Virginia 40 years ago. But with the advent of longwall mining, you needed many fewer miners. And then natural gas came along, so you have got,

you know, a huge congressional district with a lot of unemployed coal miners. And trying to find ways to train them, to put them back to work has proven very difficult.

And with that, I guess I need to yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. Mr. Carey is recognized for questions.

Mr. CAREY. I want to thank the chairman and thank the ranking member for having this very important hearing. But more importantly, I want to thank you guys. We obviously had a busy day today, and I am glad that you were able to stay around and let us ask you a few questions. Hopefully, you got some lunch in between time.

Okay. You know, I am fortunate that my home state of Ohio is a proponent for school choice. It already directs more than \$100 million to private schools through the expansion of our voucher. In the city of Columbus—and I split that with my colleague, Joyce Beatty—At least 25 percent of the city's public school students are now attending charter schools.

Recent legislative changes expanded our scholarship programs, which means every Ohio family, regardless of income or school district, is now eligible for aid to go to a private institution. Ohio families can earn up to 450 percent of the Federal poverty level—that is \$135,000 per family of 4—can receive the full amount of a scholarship offered in year 2324. That is \$8,407 for high school students, that is \$6,165 for K through 8 students.

I am also a proud cosponsor with my colleague Adrian Smith's legislation, the Educational Choice for Children's Act. Additionally, I am cosponsor of the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act.

Central Ohio is booming. We really are. Between Intel coming in on one side of us, we have got Honda building a new battery facility, Honda LG building a new battery facility. We are going to need to be able to fill those positions, and we are going to need to be able to fill it with people that are well trained.

I want to ask Mr. Redmond, and I want to give you as much time as you possibly can. I have been hearing from a bunch of the organizations—as I mentioned, I have been really active in this space—that are part of this Tomorrow's Workforce Coalition which supports the freedom to invest in tomorrow's workforce. And, if I have it right, I believe that the Commercial Vehicle Trading Association is a member of that coalition.

Could you just talk further about how critical this proposal is, and why your group supports it, and who is most likely to benefit from this?

Mr. REDMOND. Thank you. Thank you, Congressman.

Yes, so we absolutely support this action. And in the trucking world, as you may already know, that—there is a great shortage of drivers, you know, a huge shortage of drivers. So we need to do whatever we can to try to help bridge that gap.

You know, I have said once or twice just more or less just in talk, in passing, that I could put—we only have one school in Oklahoma City. I could put an American Truck Training in every state in the country and still not make a dent in the shortage, you know? So we need to do whatever we have to—which includes, obviously, the

529 plan—to give folks an opportunity to use those funds or any other funds that they can in order to go to a program like mine and other trucking schools.

The inflation and all the other things that has happened to our country that has just made it harder for folks, some folks are jumping out of other careers to go into trucking because there is more income. You know, there are a couple of reasons why folks would go out of trucking—I mean out of their current career into trucking. It is because, A, more income, you know; then there are those folks who are just, you know—even those folks who wanted more income, they just can't stop and go to a four-year college and get a degree. They can't stop their lives for four years. So trucking is 4 to 6 weeks, \$5,000, and they come out making very good income, like 60 to \$100,000, like I mentioned before, in the first year.

So—and then there are those folks who are—it is not just so much as a move from another job, it could be just they just want a better life, you know? They are, you know, in poverty. They are trying to figure out what they are going to do with their life. And then, all of a sudden, the opportunity for trucking comes along, and they find out, hey, I have this money—maybe from a 529 or something else, if they—if it were already in place—to be able to spend for school. But it is not like it is \$40,000 for like a college education, it is \$5,000-ish, give or take.

And so, from that standpoint, I think just anything we can do to support something like that is just going to just make—help bridge the gap for truck drivers to get out, to be trained properly, and help our country succeed.

Mr. CAREY. And I will tell you, Mr. Redmond, you were great on the time because we are just about out of time with my line of questioning.

So, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you. Mr. Arrington is recognized for questions.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Chairman, thank you for indulging me here as I walk in the eleventh hour.

And I would like the record to reflect whatever Ranking Member Richie Neal was saying off camera and with the microphone off. This is serious business up here.

I am just curious—and I don't want to take much more of your time, and I apologize for coming in late. The 529 expansion in 2017 to the K through 12—and maybe, Ms. Sedlar, your experience there in Pennsylvania, but anybody can answer this, I just would like to know.

We don't do enough oversight in Congress, in general, to determine whether some program or some policy provision that we have changed has had its desired impact. And so my question is, what has been the ROI on that expansion to K through 12?

And is there—can you articulate that outcome for me?

Ms. SEDLAR. Sure. I do know that I just looked at results recently—and I forget what the publication was—where it demonstrated that private schools do score 12, 15, even as high as 20 points higher than the district schools, than the public district schools have, traditionally. So I would offer that as proof that the programs are working.

And, in terms of oversight, you know, transparency, I think parents, you know, are quite attentive to how their children are being treated and the services being provided to them. So I think, primarily, that proof can be established by their satisfaction with their choice. But I don't want anyone to think the perfect test to be the enemy of the good.

You know, there are things that we can do to improve our children's situations educationally, and I think it is just a matter of having those guidelines in place, making sure they are enforced at the district and private levels. It is not just a private school issue or a charter school issue. It is also a district public school issue in terms of oversight and transparency, as well. So I would ask that we look at all options and all educational models for the benefit of the children.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Any other comments?

Mr. DEANGELIS. Yes.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Sure.

Mr. DEANGELIS. I would just like to say I think the satisfaction point is really important. We are usually always so focused on standardized testing. There are 31 or 33 studies on the topic finding that school choice initiatives, at least at the K through 12 level, have led to higher satisfaction among parents. Eight of those studies used random assignment methodology, gold standard, finding that winning a lottery to attend a private school using a school choice mechanism leads to higher satisfaction.

In D.C., for example, the voucher program here—it has been around for quite some time now—they found that winning a lottery to attend a private school—at a third of the cost of what they are spending in the public schools in D.C.—increased satisfaction substantially and also increased reports of safety for students, as well.

So parents are choosing schools for a lot of different reasons. Some of it is standardized testing and academics, but it is also values, being in a safe environment, and being in a place where the kid is actually interested. Maybe it is the specialized mission of the school that is important. So school quality is multi-dimensional. I think that is why satisfaction is probably the best metric of success that we have.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Well, because I came here late, and just to salvage any goodwill I have left with the remaining members, I am going to do something—we are going to make history together. I am going to give up the balance of my time—look at it ticking away—it is really hard for me to do, but I yield the balance of my time back to the chairman.

Thank you for your indulgence and you too, Mr. Ranking Member.

Chairman SMITH. This is a day of history, for sure.

Mr. NEAL. One minute. [Laughter.]

Chairman SMITH. So thank you, Mr. Arrington.

I want to thank each and every one of the witnesses for your testimony today, definitely very helpful.

Please be advised that members have two weeks to submit written questions to be answered later in writing.

Those questions and your answers will be part of the formal hearing record.

With that, the committee stands adjourned.
[Whereupon, at 4:14 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD



October 25, 2023

The Honorable Jason Smith
 Chair, Committee on Ways & Means
 U.S. House of Representatives
 Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act (H.R. 1477) – 10.25.23 Hearing on "Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers"

Dear Chairman Smith:

Thank you for calling today's hearing to examine "Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers." The Tomorrow's Workforce Coalition (Coalition) and its more than 725 member businesses, trade associations, professional societies and nonprofits are especially thankful for your consideration of the bipartisan *Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act* (H.R. 1477).

The Coalition urges you to advance this beneficial workforce policy as soon as practicable, and we are grateful you invited a coalition member representative, the Commercial Vehicle Training Association, to testify.

As background, H.R. 1477 would expand qualified expenses under 529 plans to include postsecondary skills training and credentialing programs, such as licenses and voluntary, nongovernmental certifications. On September 27, the Coalition sent the enclosed sign-on letter to you and Ranking Member Neal advocating for H.R. 1477 "so that students, families and workers can better access the credentials and skills training that help grow strong, resilient careers."

Representatives Rob Wittman and Abigail Spanberger champion the bill, which 74 bipartisan Members of Congress cosponsor (46 Republicans and 28 Democrats). Seven Republican Members of the Ways and Means Committee also support the proposal.

The bill would establish statutory language—rather than test the uncertainty of future regulation—to ensure that legitimate credentialing and training programs are indeed recognized. The points below further highlight how H.R. 1477 can strengthen the workforce and help build up the economy:

- **The Joint Committee on Taxation scored the bill at \$85 million over 10 years.** The Coalition is pleased that the 2019 *SECURE Act* (P.L. 116-94) expanded 529 plans to include apprenticeship programs and some K-12 tuition, which will cost \$200 million over the same length of time.
- **H.R. 1477 would empower Americans of any educational background**, skill level or age, and would benefit all industries and professions that rely on employees with specific training or credentials.

- **The bill would provide valuable tax-advantaged resources for students and workers**—with or without a college degree—who pursue career growth, mid-career changes or career pathways that diverge from a typical academic degree.
- **Across all accounts nationwide, 529s contain approximately \$450 billion.**¹
- **Approximately 40 million licensed and non-governmentally certified professionals work across the U.S. economy**² and would benefit from increased access to continuing education and training, technical expertise and career specialization.

The *Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act* is straightforward, bipartisan and would support working families by shifting the 529 paradigm from “college savings plans” to “career savings plans.”

Thank you for convening this important hearing, for the opportunity to provide comments and for your attention to the *Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act*. Please email Jeff Evans (jevans@asaecenter.org), director of public policy for the American Society of Association Executives, if you or your staff have questions.

Sincerely,

The Tomorrow's Workforce Coalition

[Member Roster](#) – Updated 10.23.2023 (727 organizations)

CC

The Honorable Richard Neal

Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Kelly

Chair, Subcommittee on Tax Policy

Committee on Ways & Means

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Thompson

Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Tax Policy

Committee on Ways & Means

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

ENCLOSURE

- [9.27.23 Coalition Sign-On Letter](#)
- [Coalition and legislation one-pager](#)
- [H.R. 1477 text](#)

¹ College Savings Plan Network – [2023 Mid-Year Graphic](#)

² Bureau of Labor Statistics – [Current Population Survey, 2022 Annual Averages](#)



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October 24, 2023

United States House Committee on Ways and Means

RE: Hearing to Examine Education Tax Policy,

Sent Via Email to WMSubmission@mail.house.gov

Dear Honorable Chairman Jason Smith, and Members of the United States House Committee on Ways and Means:

We are writing to express our strong support for the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act (H.R. 1477), a bill that will expand career opportunities for American families and workers and help to level the playing field for early career entrants from lower-income families and those with diverse backgrounds.

As you know, the cost of higher education has been rising steadily for decades, making it increasingly difficult for many Americans to afford an undergraduate or graduate degree. This is especially true for students from lower-income families, who are often forced to take on significant debt in order to finance their education. The Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act would address this issue by providing tax advantages for individuals who pursue alternative education pathways, such as highly respected credentialing and certification programs.

These programs offer a more affordable and accessible pathway to a good-paying job, and they are often better aligned with the needs of the modern workforce. By expanding access to these programs, the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act would help to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to succeed in the 21st century economy.

In addition to making education, credentialing, and training more affordable, the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act would also help to level the playing field for early career entrants from lower-income families and those with diverse backgrounds. This is because these programs are often more accessible to these students than traditional four-year colleges and graduate institutions, which often lead to starting a career with increased debt that can take decades to pay off.

For example, many credentialing programs offer flexible scheduling options and online courses, which can be a lifeline for students who are working full-time or caring for family members. Additionally, credentialing programs often have strong relationships with employers, which can help students to secure internships and job placements.

By expanding access to these programs, the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act would help to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to succeed in the 21st century economy.

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Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

William Kruse
Deputy General Counsel, CFA Institute



November 8, 2023

The Honorable Jason Smith
 Chairman
 House Committee on Ways and Means
 1139 Longworth House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
 Ranking Member
 House Committee on Ways and Means
 1129 Longworth House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Neal:

The Exhibitions & Conferences Alliance (ECA), a coalition of the leading professional, trade, and labor organizations from across the face-to-face business events industry, commends the House Committee on Ways and Means for holding its recent *Hearing on Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers*.

ECA strongly supports the Committee's goal of developing tax policies that empower students, families, and workers to pursue the American dream. The business events industry relies on a highly-skilled workforce to deliver the conferences, trade shows, expositions, and other business events that help drive domestic economic growth, support job creation, and empower small businesses from Southeast and South Central Missouri to Western Massachusetts and beyond.

Given the scope of our industry, which contributed \$138 billion in business sales and supported 2.2 million jobs in 2022¹, our future success is dependent on equipping *all* Americans with the education, skills, and training necessary to advance their careers and grow our important sector of the U.S. economy.

That's why **ECA strongly supports H.R. 1422, the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act**. As was discussed during the hearing, this bipartisan legislation would expand qualified expenses under Section 529 savings plans to include postsecondary training and credentialing, such as licenses and professional (nongovernmental) certifications.

By covering tuition, exam, and training costs associated with obtaining workforce certifications and licenses, ECA believes that this legislation would transform 529 plans from college saving plans into *career* savings plans and help workers secure in-demand, good-paying jobs like those that our industry offers. This is particularly important for Americans without a college degree, many of whom comprise the backbone of our industry and enjoy strong middle-class careers.

With the Joint Committee on Taxation scoring the bill at only \$85 million over ten years, the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act represents a relatively small investment that will enable our collective ability to attract, train, and grow the next-generation skilled workforce in our country for many years to come.

¹ Center for Exhibition Industry Research, May 2022

The Honorable Jason Smith
The Honorable Richard Neal
November 8, 2023
Page 2

ECA is pleased to amplify the work of the Tomorrow's Workforce Coalition in this effort. This group of more than 600 associations from coast to coast agrees that the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act will expand access to good-paying jobs while fueling economic growth.

Thank you both for your commitment to providing American workers with opportunities for high-quality skills-based training. Within this context, ECA encourages the Committee to take up and advance the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act as soon as possible.

If you have any questions, or if ECA can provide either of you with additional information and perspective on this important legislation, please contact me by phone at (703) 672-0780 or via email at tommy.goodwin@exhibitionsconferencesalliance.org. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. (Tommy) Goodwin, FASAE, CAE, PMP, CMP
Vice President



November 8, 2023

Representative Jason Smith
 Chair, Committee on Ways & Means
 United States House of Representatives
 1011 Longworth House Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Richard Neal
 Ranking Member, Committee on Ways &
 Means
 United States House of Representatives
 372 Cannon House Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Hearing on "Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers"

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Neal:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record of the October 25, 2023 hearing on "Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers." Americans United for Separation of Church and State writes to express our strong opposition to the private school voucher programs proposed by some members and witnesses at the hearing, including tuition tax credit programs like H.R. 531, the Education Choice for Children Act (ECCA), and voucher-like tax schemes to expand 529 plans and allow coverage of expenses associated with homeschooling and educational materials.

Many speakers claimed voucher proposals would bring about "educational freedom" for families to choose the best educational opportunities for their children. The freedom to choose in voucher programs, however, does not lie with the families, but instead with private schools, which can turn students away for a variety of reasons, often including disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, academic achievement, and economic status. That is why we write to share why we oppose vouchers and voucher-like tax schemes such as expanding 529 plans.

We were dismayed to hear many speakers at this hearing proposing private school vouchers as a panacea to a long list of problems they identified in education: they falsely claimed vouchers would reduce government spending, solve learning loss from the pandemic, end racial segregation, stop "indoctrination" by allowing students to focus on the basics of reading and math, and much more. Yet evidence shows the opposite: private school vouchers cause government spending to skyrocket, fail to improve student achievement, perpetuate discrimination, lack accountability, and violate the religious freedom of taxpayers. In this testimony, we rebut each of the false claims and provide the evidence from existing voucher programs, which shows that they are harmful to American students, schools, and communities.

Instead of funneling public funds to ineffective schemes like the ECCA and 529 plans, Congress should invest in our public schools. Open and nondiscriminatory in their acceptance of all students, American public schools serve 90% of the nation's students and are a unifying factor among diverse communities in our society. Voucher and voucher-like programs siphon limited funding away from public schools to fund the education of a few students at private schools, undermining public education for all. Public funds belong in public schools.

Americans United

With a national network of more than 300,000 supporters, Americans United for Separation of Church and State is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit educational and advocacy organization that brings together people of all religions and none to safeguard the fundamental American principle of the separation of church and state. We protect the right of everyone to practice the religion of their choice or no religion at all, so long as it does not harm others. Since our founding in 1947, we have fought to ensure that public funds go to public schools, not to private, religious schools through vouchers or other funding schemes, because they violate religious freedom and undermine public education.

Public Education Is a Public Good

Public education is necessary to ensure our children can find fulfilling jobs and live happy lives, but it is also critical to creating a functioning democracy. Public education forges common experiences. While it is true that our public schools, like the communities we live in, are far from desegregated, our public education system is one of the institutions where we are most likely to encounter, interact with, and get to know people of different races, ethnicities, religions, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds. Our public schools have laws barring discrimination against students and teachers and must educate all students who come to their doors. Public schools are also secular and so are welcoming to students of all religions and none.

Public schools are not infallible: they face enormous challenges, chief among them a lack of funding, the legacies of racism and segregation, and inequality. But the ECCA and other private school vouchers proposed at this hearing won't fix those problems. Instead, they would make them worse.

Voucher and 529 Voucher-Like Programs Drain Public Funds from Public Schools*The Education Choice for Children Act (ECCA)*

Despite its structure as a tax credit, the ECCA, or H.R. 531, is simply a private school voucher by another name. Under the ECCA, individuals and corporations would receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for donating to scholarship granting organizations (SGOs) that provide vouchers to students to fund private school tuition. In sum, the bill would require the government to forgo \$10 billion per year of federal taxpayer dollars over 10 years, for a total loss of \$100 billion taxpayer dollars to vouchers.

At this hearing, the ECCA's lead sponsor, Rep. Adrian Smith, incorrectly claimed that because the ECCA is "a tax credit for donations and operates through independent non-government agencies [...] funding for public education would remain untouched."¹ This is false. Dollar-for-dollar tax credits like the one created in the ECCA constitute public funding: when the government grants a tax credit, it forgoes taxpayer funding that would otherwise support federal programs, including public education. Therefore, a proper accounting of the ECCA would acknowledge that it redirects \$100 billion of public funds away from public schools and other services to pay for private school tuition.

The ECCA's tax credit structure is a shell game designed to hide that the program is a voucher. And, speakers at this hearing used other euphemisms to obscure that it is a voucher, like "school choice," "educational freedom," and "scholarships."² But the facts remain: the ECCA would funnel public funds away from our public schools to fund tuition for non-public education for a select few students. It is a voucher.

¹ *Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Ways & Means, 115th Cong. (2023)* (Educational Freedom Hearing) (statement of Rep. Adrian Smith, Member).

² See Educational Freedom Hearing (testimony of Dr. Corey DeAngelis, Ms. Hera Varmah, and Ms. Sharon Sedlar, Witnesses).

Expanding 529 Accounts for K-12 Education & Homeschooling

Some witnesses at this hearing proposed expanding 529 plans to both allow coverage for expenses associated with homeschooling, including curriculum, textbooks, online classes, educational therapies, and tuition for additional classes outside the home. Previously, 2017 the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) expanded 529 plans to allow high school expenses of up to \$10,000 a year for public, private, and religious schools. We opposed the 2017 expansion of 529 accounts, and continue to oppose any further expansion of eligibility.

Like a voucher program, expanding 529 accounts drains public funds from public schools. It will give wealthy families a tax break for enrolling—or keeping their children enrolled—in private schools and homeschools. Like the ECCA, this tax break decreases available funding for public education budgets, hurting the 90 percent of students served by our nation's public schools.

Vouchers and 529 Voucher-Like Programs Are Fiscally Irresponsible

Private school vouchers result in skyrocketing costs. Voucher proponents claim that vouchers will cost less than or the same as funding public education, but once voucher programs take effect, costs quickly get out of control, leading to budget shortfalls and even tax increases. The two most prominent state voucher programs in the country are potent examples:

First, Arizona's new voucher program has already cost 1,346% more than lawmakers projected. The fiscal note attached to Arizona's universal voucher program projected the program would cost the state about \$65 million in 2024 and \$125 million in 2025.³ Now that applications are rolling in, the Arizona Governor's Office estimates that the price tag will be more like \$940 million per year.⁴ This will put Arizona in a potential \$320 million budget shortfall in its General Fund, which is used to pay for public schools, transportation, fire, police, and prisons. Second, Florida's voucher program is more than \$2 billion over budget in its first year. The Florida Senate projected that its voucher expansion would cost \$646 million.⁵ But independent researchers estimated that the program would actually cost almost \$4 billion,⁶ and actual costs are already approaching that amount—\$3.35 billion in the first year.⁷

A key reason why vouchers and voucher-like programs are so expensive for the government is that they fund tuition for kids of wealthy families who already attended private schools, creating new funding obligations for the government. This is the case in many existing voucher programs: in Arkansas, 95% of participating voucher students never attended public school;⁸ in Arizona, 80% never attended public school;⁹ and in New Hampshire, 89% of voucher recipients were already in private school.¹⁰ The disproportionate use of voucher programs by kids already in private school means the government

³ [Fiscal Note](#), Ariz. House Bill 2853 (2023).

⁴ Paola Rodriguez, [Hobbs: "The Universal School Voucher Program is Unsustainable as New Cost Projections Come In."](#) *AZPM* (July 26, 2023).

⁵ Lynn Hatter, [Florida Expands Its Voucher Program to Every Student, Regardless of Income](#), *NPR* (Mar. 24, 2023).

⁶ Norin Dollard & Mary McKillip, [The Cost of Universal Vouchers: Three Factors to Consider in Analyzing Fiscal Impacts of CS/HB 1](#), *Fla. Policy Institute* (Mar. 2, 2023).

⁷ Talia Blake, [The Florida Policy Institute Says More Vouchers Are Being Used This School Year](#), *WFSU Tallahassee Pub. Media* (Aug. 17, 2023).

⁸ Ark. Dept. of Educ., [Education Freedom Account Annual Report, 2023-2024 School Year](#), 8 (Oct. 9, 2023).

⁹ Eryka Forquer, [Applications for School Vouchers at Nearly 22,500 So Far, Education Department Says](#), *Ariz. Republic* (Oct. 7, 2022).

¹⁰ Ethan DeWitt, [Most Education Freedom Account Recipients Not Leaving Public Schools, Department Says](#), *N.H. Bulletin* (Mar. 28, 2022).

pays new fees for education that were previously borne by the private sector. This adds up to more, not less, spending.

The ECCA is similarly constructed to allow wealthy families to reap its benefits. Under the ECCA students would be eligible to receive a voucher if their families' income is 300% or less of the area median gross income. In many cases, this would allow families of considerable wealth to use a voucher to subsidize their private school tuition, even if they were previously covering their tuition costs themselves without government assistance. During the hearing, Rep. Lloyd Doggett offered a prescient example from his home district: if applied in Austin, Texas, the ECCA would allow a family making \$350,000 per year to get a taxpayer-funded private school voucher.¹¹

Expanding 529 accounts would also have harmful financial impacts. The original TCJA 529 expansion was estimated by the Joint Committee on Taxation to cost the federal government \$60 million per year. In addition, a substantial amount of funding was likely lost at the state level since a majority of states offer 529 tax deductions or credits as well. Researchers estimate that the 529 expansion that is limited to K-12 private school tuition is costing states over \$900 million per year.¹² By expanding 529 eligibility to homeschooling, this loss is only likely to increase.

Vouchers Are Ineffective

Private school vouchers fail to achieve their most basic goal: improving educational opportunities. At this hearing, Rep. Kevin Hern identified the learning loss experienced by students due to the COVID pandemic and noted that "Congress should help these families by easing the financial burden of this learning loss."¹³ But large-scale studies show vouchers won't alleviate the learning loss caused by the pandemic, they will make it worse.¹⁴ In fact, the impact of vouchers in Ohio¹⁵ and Louisiana¹⁶ caused a larger reduction in students' math scores than those caused by the COVID pandemic.

Other voucher programs in Washington, DC,¹⁷ and Indiana¹⁸ caused slightly less severe but still devastating decreases in math scores, on par with the learning loss inflicted on students by Hurricane Katrina. As one example, researchers estimate that the negative impact of participating in the District of Columbia voucher program may be equivalent to missing nearly one-third of the year of classroom learning.¹⁹

Voucher programs also provide fewer educational resources than the public schools. The most recent Department of Education studies of the D.C. voucher program show that students participating in the program are less likely to have access to English Language Learner programs, learning supports, and

¹¹ Educational Freedom Hearing (statement of Rep. Lloyd Doggett, Member).

¹² Nat Malkus, et al., The Costs, Opportunities, and Limitations of the Expansion of 529 Education Savings Accounts, *Brookings Inst.* (Apr. 12, 2018).

¹³ Educational Freedom Hearing (statement of Rep. Kevin Hern, Member).

¹⁴ Nat'l Coalition for Public Educ., Voucher Impacts on Student Achievement (2023).

¹⁵ David Figlio & Krzysztof Karbownik, Thomas B. Fordham Inst., Evaluation of Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, Competition, & Performance Effects 2 (2016).

¹⁶ Jonathan Mills & Patrick Wolf, The Effects of the La. Scholarship Program on Student Achievement after Four Years 4 (EDRE Working Paper No. 2019-10, May 10, 2019).

¹⁷ U.S. Dep't of Educ., Evaluation of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Two Years After Students Applied (June 2018) (2018 Dept. of Educ. Study).

¹⁸ R. Joseph Waddington & Mark Berends, Impact of the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program: Achievement Effects for Students in Upper Elementary & Middle School, 37 *J. of Policy Analysis & Mgmt.* 4, 738-808 (Aug. 2018).

¹⁹ Ulrich Boser, et al., The Highly Negative Impacts of Vouchers, *Ctr. for Am. Progress*, (March 2018).

services for students with disabilities than students not in the program.²⁰ Likewise, a survey of the private schools in Milwaukee's voucher program found that nearly 35% reported offering no art, music, physical education, library or technology specialist teachers.²¹

Vouchers Are Rooted in Discrimination & Perpetuate Segregation

Witnesses at this hearing falsely claimed that "school choice leads to more integration."²² But evidence proves that private school vouchers like the ECCA lead to more racial segregation, not integration.

First, it is important to understand the segregationist history of private school vouchers, which was unfortunately left out of the witnesses' discussions at the hearing. Modern private school vouchers were first designed in the United States to evade desegregation orders in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*.²³ The initial use of K-12 "scholarships" to attend private schools was meant for white families to escape state desegregation efforts. After *Brown*, lawmakers in five Southern states created voucher programs used to fund tuition for white students at "segregation academies."²⁴

For example, in Prince Edward County, Virginia, officials opened whites-only private schools, gave out taxpayer-funded tuition vouchers, and shuttered the public school system entirely for five years.²⁵ In Virginia and Georgia, legislators and voters approved amendments to their state constitutions to fund "tuition grants"—or vouchers—for families to attend all-white private schools.²⁶ Mississippi and South Carolina followed a similar playbook, passing state laws to use tax dollars to defray the cost of private school for white families seeking to avoid desegregation.²⁷ In 1969, after the U.S. Supreme Court ordered desegregation to move more quickly, the Southern Regional Council, a pro-segregation organization, estimated that 500,000 students enrolled in segregation academies. As a result, the private school population doubled in less than two years.²⁸

Each of these segregation voucher programs were sold using the same language that is being used to sell "school choice" today. Georgia's law claimed to "advance the constitutional rights of school children to attend private schools of their choice in lieu of public schools."²⁹ The Georgia Attorney General argued that the vouchers would "subsidize the child rather than the school."³⁰ The Alabama plan to give money to white students to attend all white private schools was called the "Freedom of Choice Plan" and advocates claimed it "had nothing to do with segregation, but aimed to advance each child's education."³¹ Supporters of vouchers in North Carolina also avoided mentions of race and instead

²⁰ U.S. Dep't of Educ., Evaluation of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Three Years After Students Applied (May 2019), A-11; 2018 Dep't of Educ. Study at 16.

²¹ Erin Richards, Report: Choice Schools Lack Specialty Teachers, *Milwaukee J. Sentinel* (Feb. 13, 2013).

²² Education Freedom Hearing (statement of Dr. Corey DeAngelis, Witness).

²³ See Jon Hale, *The Choice We Face: How Segregation, Race, & Power Have Shaped America's Most Controversial Education Reform Movement*, Beacon Press (2021); Cara Fitzpatrick, *The Death of Public School: How Conservatives Won the War Over Education in America*, Basic Books (2023); Steve Suits, *Overturning Brown: The Segregationist Legacy of the Modern School Choice Movement*, Univ. of Ga. Press (2020); Chris Ford, et al., The Racist Origins of Private School Vouchers, Ctr. for Am. Progress (July 12, 2017).

²⁴ Fitzpatrick at 24.

²⁵ Hale at 34.

²⁶ *Id.* at 25.

²⁷ *Id.* at 24-25.

²⁸ *Id.* at 26.

²⁹ Suits at 15.

³⁰ *Id.* at 42.

³¹ *Id.* at 24-25.

argued that the voucher program would create “competition” that “would stimulate progress in public education” and would “offer all our citizens the broadest possible freedom of choice.”³²

While supporters of school vouchers of today do not directly espouse segregationist intent, research shows that school vouchers increase racial isolation of students. National data continue to show that private schools tend to be more segregated than similarly situated public schools and enroll higher populations of white students compared to public schools. Nationwide, 69% of private school students are white, 9% are Black, and 10% are Hispanic or Latino.³³ In some state voucher programs, segregation rates are even higher. For example, a 2016 study found that Louisiana’s voucher program had a negative impact on integration in private schools.³⁴ In Indiana, the voucher program has been found to disproportionately benefit higher-income white students, many of whom are already attending private schools, with white students making up 60% of the students who received vouchers in the state program.³⁵

Vouchers Strip Students of Civil Rights & Protections

Despite the misnomer of “school choice” in private school voucher programs, it is private schools—not families—who have the real choice. Unlike public schools, which are open to all students, private schools can deny students admission or expel them for a number of reasons, including based on their religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, academic abilities, disciplinary history, or disability. Often, families who receive a voucher will find themselves without a choice at all when private schools refuse to accept their child.

Not only can private schools categorically exclude students, they also do not abide by the same civil rights requirements as public schools, including those in federal civil rights laws such as in Titles IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students who attend private schools do not have the same free speech and religious freedom protections under the First Amendment, the same due process or other constitutional and statutory rights guaranteed to them as in public schools, or the same clear systems for oversight, reporting violations, or enforcing penalties for noncompliance as children and families attending public schools.

For students with disabilities, the consequences of losing the rights and protections provided in public schools are often especially damaging. Private schools accepting vouchers do not provide students with disabilities with the same quality and quantity of services available to students in public schools, including those mandated under each student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). Students who leave the public schools with a voucher forfeit many of the protections provided to students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—including the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) tailored to their individual needs—because they are considered parentally placed in private schools. In many cases, students with disabilities are often categorically excluded from private school voucher programs because private schools cannot adequately serve them.

Another population of students facing disproportionate discrimination in voucher programs is LGBTQ children, and children with LGBTQ parents or families. Many private voucher schools teach anti-LGBTQ

³² *Id.* at 42.

³³ Nat’l Center for Educ. Statistics, [School Choice in the United States: 2019 22](#) (Sept. 2019).

³⁴ Jonathan N. Mills, et al., Educ. Res. Alliance, [How Has the La. Scholarship Program Affected Students? A Comprehensive Summary of Effects After Two Years](#) (Feb. 22, 2016).

³⁵ Ford at 8.

curriculum,³⁶ and promote harmful conversion therapy for LGBTQ students.³⁷ And discrimination against LGBTQ students in voucher programs is widespread: for example, in Florida's voucher program, at least 14 percent of 147,000 participating students received taxpayer-funded vouchers to attend private schools where being LGBTQ was explicitly condemned or unwelcome.³⁸

Vouchers Lack Accountability

Private school voucher programs, including the ECCA and 529 accounts, lack basic oversight and accountability to the taxpayers. A witness at this hearing claimed that parents alone—not government oversight—could serve as “accountability” for voucher programs: “In terms of oversight, transparency—I think parents are quite attentive to how their children are being treated and the services being provided to them. I think primarily, that proof can be established by their satisfaction with their choice.”³⁹ Leaving out adequate accountability measures has been repeatedly tested in existing voucher programs, and it has led to failure. Despite parents' best efforts, their children are often using vouchers to attend low-quality private schools that do not achieve even the most basic standards our public schools are required to meet.

Many voucher schools are permitted to take taxpayer money without implementing any standards for financial accountability, teacher qualifications, testing, or achievement. Some state voucher programs do not even require teachers to hold Bachelor's degrees.⁴⁰ In addition, many states do not require accreditation for private schools, thus, taxpayer-funded vouchers are regularly used to pay for tuition at unaccredited schools.

The ECCA suffers from all of these accountability problems and more: the bill does not require schools or service providers receiving federal taxpayer funds to be accredited, adhere to the same standards for curriculum, teacher qualifications, or school quality, or report any set of state or federal academic accountability metrics, such as reporting on how students are performing in reading or math. The bill also does not include basic financial accountability for the use of government funds. It does not require SGOs to report the amount of contributions received or to disclose the number and average value of scholarships distributed or the number of students participating in the program. In fact, the bill gives the SGO “maximum freedom” and says that the government may not “mandate, direct, or control any aspect of” the SGO in any manner.

This absence of accountability and oversight makes vouchers a ripe target for waste, fraud, and abuse. Indeed, there is a long list of taxpayer-funded voucher programs where funds have been misspent. For example, North Carolina's voucher program has lost an estimated \$2.3 million to fraud by paying out vouchers to schools that are closed and for students who don't exist;⁴¹ in Florida, vouchers were used to spend millions of dollars per year on non-educational items, including \$1.2 million for televisions,

³⁶ Samantha Sunne & Donnell Suggs, [Some Ga. Tax Credit Scholarships Go to Anti-LGBT Schools](#), *The Current* (July 1, 2021) (Georgia private schools that accept vouchers have explicit anti-LGBTQ written policies (15 of 100 participating schools) and teach anti-LGBTQ curricula that would not be permitted in public schools (at least 12 participating schools)).

³⁷ Rebecca Klein, [Millions Of Taxpayer Dollars Are Going to Schools that Push Conversion Therapy](#), *HuffPost* (June 10, 2020) (Florida private schools accepting millions in taxpayer-funded vouchers promote conversion therapy for LGBTQ students).

³⁸ Leslie Postal & Annie Martin, [Anti-LGBT Fla. Schools Getting School Vouchers](#), *The Orlando Sentinel* (Jan. 23, 2020).

³⁹ Educational Freedom Hearing (statement of Ms. Sharon Sedlar, Witness).

⁴⁰ U.S. Gov't Accountability Office, [Private School Choice Programs Are Growing and Can Complicate Providing Certain Federally Funded Servs. to Eligible Students](#), Pub. No. GAO-16-712, 27 (2016).

⁴¹ Kris Nordstrom, [New Analysis Shows Many Private Schools in N.C. Have More Vouchers Than Students](#), *N.C. Justice Ctr.* (June 16, 2023).

\$43,374 for treadmills, and \$226,584 for gaming consoles;⁴² and in Arizona, the state's Auditor General found that parents misused more than \$700,000 in voucher funds on items such as beauty supplies and sports apparel with no way for the state to recoup the money,⁴³ and despite this, still allowed families to use vouchers to buy items like pizza ovens and Sea World tickets.⁴⁴

Vouchers Are Bad Tax Policy

As the chief tax-writing-committee, the House Ways and Means Committee has a duty to deliver responsible tax policies that benefit American communities. The ECCA, however, would be destructive to the tax code by incentivizing donations to private school voucher programs over all other charitable donations. When taxpayers donate to most tax-exempt charities, they receive a federal tax deduction that could be worth between 10 and 40 cents on each dollar donated, depending on the donor's tax bracket. But this bill incentivizes donations to SGOs that give out vouchers above any other charity by providing a 100% tax credit on each dollar donated. In effect, this bill provides donors to vouchers with a tax advantage that is 2-3 times more generous than donating to other charities.

Such a policy is deeply unfair and potentially catastrophic for the charities doing essential work in our communities: charities like veterans' groups providing support to our returning servicemen and women, domestic violence shelters serving people who are vulnerable and abused, and job training programs for adults with disabilities. By deprioritizing all these worthy causes in order to pay for wealthy families' private school tuition, the ECCA could reduce taxpayers' incentive and ability to donate to charities, reduce charitable donations, and ultimately harm our communities by bankrupting essential community services.

Vouchers Violate Religious Freedom

Witnesses and members at this hearing decried "indoctrination"⁴⁵ in education and offered vouchers and 529 accounts as a solution. Yet vouchers and 529 accounts predominantly fund students to attend private, religious schools and educational programs where religious indoctrination is a central goal. For example, a review of Indiana's voucher program found that 98% of participating schools were religious,⁴⁶ and in the Arkansas voucher program, 87% of participating schools are religious.⁴⁷ This conflicts with one of the most dearly held principles of religious freedom: the government should not compel anyone to fund a religion with which they disagree—or even a religion with which they do agree. Parents certainly may choose a religious education for their children, but they may not demand that the taxpayers foot the bill.

Taxpayer dollars also should never be used to fund schools that can refuse to admit students or hire employees based on their religion. Yet many religious schools impose a religious litmus test on students, teachers, and their families. Furthermore, because oversight must accompany public funds, vouchers threaten the autonomy of religious schools by opening them up to government audits, control, and interference.

⁴² Jeffrey S. Solocheck, [Florida Parents Can Spend Left Over School Voucher Funds on TVs, Kayaks, Disney Tickets](#), *Miami Herald* (Sept. 1, 2023).

⁴³ Yvonne Wingett Sanchez & Rob O'Dell, [Parents Spent \\$700K in School Voucher Money on Beauty Supplies, Apparel: Attempted Cash Withdrawals](#), *Ariz. Republic* (Oct. 30, 2018).

⁴⁴ Caroline Hendrie, [As Many More States Enact Education Savings Accounts, Implementation Challenges Abound](#), *Education Next* (June 2023).

⁴⁵ Dr. DeAngelis testified, "Too many schools are focusing on indoctrination, not education. The best solution for this problem is to allow the families to choose for their own kids." Educational Freedom Hearing (statement of Dr. DeAngelis, Witness).

⁴⁶ Andrew D. Catt, [Exploring Indiana's Private Education Sector](#), *Friedman Foundation* (2014).

⁴⁷ Steve Brawner, [Eighty-Four Private Schools Approved for LEARNS Money](#), *Magnolia Reporter* (Aug. 3, 2023).

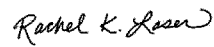
Conclusion

Rather than funneling taxpayer money into voucher programs that have proven to be costly, unsuccessful, discriminatory, and unaccountable, we would best serve the nation's students by funding the 90% of American students who attend our public schools. We urge you to reject schemes like the ECCA and 529 plan expansions that were proposed at this hearing, and instead ensure that public funds remain in public schools.

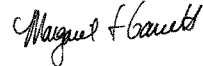
If you have any questions, please contact Maggie Garrett (garrett@au.org) or Samantha Sokol (sokol@au.org).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rachel Laser
President & CEO



Maggie Garrett
Vice President for Public Policy



Samantha Sokol
Federal Policy Advocate



October 30, 2023

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
1139 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: House Ways and Means Committee hearing on “Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers” held on October 25, 2023

Dear Chairman Smith:

On behalf of the nearly 12,000-member American Association of Professional Landmen (AAPL) and our 38 affiliated local associations across North America, I am writing to you to express our support for H.R. 1477, the “Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow’s Workforce Act.”

AAPL is proud to join more than 600 other trade groups and associations in advocating for this bipartisan, bicameral bill sponsored by the Professional Certification Coalition – of which AAPL is a member – that would expand qualified expenses under 529 savings plans to include postsecondary training and credentialing programs, such as licenses and private, nongovernmental certifications.

Passage of this vital legislation would greatly benefit our members by easing the cost of professional certification and/or educational expenses offered by AAPL as part of our member credentialing programs in support of the critical work our members perform in the domestic energy industry.

If I can be of further assistance in advancing H.R. 1477, your staff may contact me directly at 817-484-3618 or by email at rcohen@landman.org.

Kindest regards,

Russell B. Cohen
AAPL Director of Government Affairs



**WRITTEN STATEMENT
OF
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF CPAs
SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD OF THE
OCTOBER 25, 2023
HEARING OF
THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
ON
EDUCATION FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY FOR AMERICAN FAMILIES,
STUDENTS, AND WORKERS**

AICPA's Written Statement for the Record
U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means
October 25, 2023, Hearing on Education Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students,
and Workers
Page 2 of 4

Introduction

The American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) appreciates the leadership taken by the House Ways and Means Committee in addressing tax policy aimed at assisting Americans in overcoming the financial hurdles associated with furthering their education. To aid in this effort, we urge the Committee to consider H.R. 1477, the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act, which would expand education opportunities for American families and workers.

As the national, professional organization for all Certified Public Accountants, the AICPA's mission is to power the success of global business, CPAs, CGMAs, and specialty credentials by providing the most relevant knowledge, resources and advocacy, and protecting the evolving public interest. The AICPA is the world's largest member association representing the accounting profession, with more than 421,000 members in the United States and worldwide, and a history of serving the public interest since 1887. Our members advise clients on federal, state and international tax matters and prepare income and other tax returns for millions of Americans. Our members provide services to individuals, not-for-profit organizations, small and medium-sized businesses, as well as America's largest businesses.

Recommendation

The AICPA recommends¹ that the Committee favorably consider H.R. 1477, the bipartisan Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act, which will allow Americans to use tax-favorable 529 plan funds to pay for certain expenses related to postsecondary credentials and training programs.

Background: Creation and Evolution of Section 529 Plans

Section 529 plans are an effective tax-advantaged tool used by American families to save money for a child's education. Once deposited, funds not only grow tax-free in a 529 savings plan but are also withdrawn without being taxed, if used to pay for certain education expenses.

In recent years, Congress has continued to recognize the importance of 529 plans in helping Americans offset the rising costs of education by enhancing its' use by broadening the types of covered expenses via the passage of several pieces of legislation.

Originally, tax-free withdrawals from 529 plans were able to be used solely for post-secondary education expenses such as tuition, mandatory fees, room and board, textbooks, and other essentials related to obtaining a college education. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA),² passed in 2017, expanded the use of 529 plans by allowing \$10,000 per year from 529 accounts to be used to pay for K-12 education tuition. The Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement (SECURE) Act,³ passed in 2019, further increased the benefits of 529 plans by allowing individuals to withdraw 529 plan funds to pay for expenses related to a beneficiary's apprenticeship registered by the Secretary of Labor under the National Apprenticeship Act. The

¹ AICPA letter, "[Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act \(H.R. 1477\)](#)."

² P.L. 115-97.

³ P.L. 116-94.

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SECURE Act also allows individuals to pay down certain student loan debt. The SECURE 2.0 Act,⁴ signed into law in 2022, again boosted the benefits of 529 plans by allowing beneficiaries, beginning in 2024, to roll 529 plans into Roth individual retirement accounts (Roth IRAs), a type of tax-advantaged retirement savings account. This change helps to ensure that 529 plans funds will not remain stuck unused in a 529 account.

Concerns

Inequity in Education Expenses Covered by 529 Plans

While 529 plans can be used to pay for certain education expenses incurred from kindergarten through postsecondary education, such as a traditional college education, a large segment of the skilled labor market is barred from taking advantage of the same benefits. Currently, 529 plan funds cannot be used to defray the cost of postsecondary training and credentialing programs. This means that individuals seeking a non-college education or for workers wanting to enhance their skills via a postsecondary credential program are not given the opportunity to defray those education costs via the tax benefits provided by 529 plans.

The AICPA is a longtime advocate for equity and fairness⁵ in the tax system. Taxpayers in similar tax situations should be treated equally. By passing the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act, Congress would even the playing field of educational choices by allowing Americans to use their tax advantaged 529 savings plans to pay for fees and expenses for postsecondary training programs or those required to obtain or maintain recognized postsecondary credentials, including professional credentials and certifications. An individual whose dream is to pursue a career in cosmetology would be afforded the same tax benefit as an individual choosing a career requiring a college education. A college graduate who has the ambition to obtain a postsecondary credential to further their professional skillset, would also be treated equally.

Shortage of Skilled Workers, Including Certified Public Accountants

Jobs that require skills training are the backbone of the U.S. economy.⁶ Those jobs include in-demand jobs in accounting, healthcare, information technology, and trades such as plumbing and carpentry. However, there is a talent shortage of skilled workers in the U.S., including those in the accounting field.⁷

CPAs play a more important role in business than ever before, especially in many newer initiatives such as digital transformation, environmental, social and governance (ESG), and artificial intelligence (AI). In addition to the newer business initiatives, the core functions of CPAs are just as important. CPAs who specialize in taxation sift through complex tax laws and regulations to ensure that both individuals and businesses pay the correct amount of tax, which is critical to funding various public services. CPAs who are independent auditors ensure the

⁴ P.L. 117-328.

⁵ AICPA "Guiding Principles of Good Tax Policy: A Framework for Evaluating Tax Proposals."

⁶ National Skills Coalition.

⁷ American Institute of CPAs, February, 2023, "[Plan to Accelerate Talent Pipeline Solutions.](#)"

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integrity of financial reporting and play a key role in helping businesses to act ethically. Forensic accountants, considered financial detectives, play a key role in asset tracing in fraud and money laundering investigations and being expert witnesses in financial crime and civil disputes. Since CPAs play a key role in business and the economy, it is paramount to address the shortage of Americans choosing a career as a CPA.

Earning the CPA credential has historically been one of the most notable ways to establish a professional identity and exhibit a high level of competence in the accounting profession. Certifications are indicators of an individual's specialized knowledge or skills that have been measured and achieved via assessment. However, the expense of the CPA exam preparation, application, and registration can easily exceed \$3,000, depending on the state, and is often cited by would-be CPAs as a deterrent to sitting for the CPA exam. Additionally, CPAs must keep up with continuing professional education requirements to ensure they maintain and improve their skills.

Reversing the growing talent shortage of skilled workers, including accounting professionals, will require a multi-pronged effort. By expanding the allowable use of 529 education savings plans, would-be and current CPAs and other skilled workers would be given more financial flexibility as they decide how best to pay for the requirements associated with obtaining and maintaining a license. Workers in any phase of their career, at any education level would have access to the unique tax-advantages that 529 plans provide.

Concluding Remarks

To further support all Americans in fulfilling their educational desires, and to create equality in education-related tax policy, we encourage this Committee to favorably consider H.R. 1477, the bipartisan Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act.

We also encourage the Committee to consider additional education-related tax benefits designed to simplify and harmonize tax credits related to higher education.⁸

The AICPA appreciates the opportunity to submit this written statement for the record.

⁸ AICPA letter, "2023 AICPA Compendium of Legislative Proposals – Simplification and Technical Proposals," February 7, 2023.



November 8, 2023

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chair, Committee on Ways and Means
1139 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
Ranking Member, Committee on Ways and Means
1129 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Neal:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), I write to share our support for the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act (H.R. 1477/S. 722), which was among the topics discussed during the Committee's hearing titled "Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers."

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 228,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. SLPs identify, assess, and treat speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive-communication disorders.

State-sponsored 529 educational savings accounts are currently exempt from federal taxes when they are used to pay for qualified education expenses including college, graduate, or professional degrees; education programs from Title IV accredited institutions; registered apprenticeships; and certain K-12 tuition and student loan repayments. However, under current law, 529 plan beneficiaries cannot use funds to obtain or maintain recognized postsecondary credentials, including professional certifications, licenses, and other valuable training or credentials that increase skill and knowledge and improve care.

Audiologists must earn a clinical doctorate degree and SLPs must earn a master's degree, while both must obtain state licensure to practice. Audiology assistants and SLP assistants have multiple educational pathway opportunities for both licensure and certification. Preconditions to obtain and maintain state licensure can include passage of a national certification examination (or evidence of meeting certification requirements) and certain continuing education requirements.

ASHA urges the Committee to advance H.R. 1477 and provide flexibility for beneficiaries to use plan funds to cover the educational, training, or credentialing programs that best fit their initial and ongoing skills development, professional growth, and career needs. Doing so would increase opportunities for ASHA members and improve access to care for the people they serve.

If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eric Masten, ASHA's director of federal affairs for education, at emasten@asha.org.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Augustine, PhD, CCC-SLP
2023 ASHA President



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October 25, 2023

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chairman
Committee on Ways & Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways & Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Neal,

Thank you for holding this hearing today on the merits of expanding educational opportunities for American families, students, and workers. The American Trucking Associations (ATA) appreciates the Committee on Ways & Means' interest in streamlining pathways to fulfilling careers in the skilled trades and, to that end, encourages your consideration of H.R. 1477, the *Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act*. This strongly bipartisan legislation would expand the use of tax-advantaged 529 account funds for postsecondary training expenses and empower individuals to obtain the in-demand skills of a 21st-century job market.

The trucking industry continues to face an alarming shortage of drivers and technicians—occupations that require significant training as a condition of employment. In 2022, the shortage of qualified drivers reached a near-record high of 78,000. This figure is expected to increase to 160,000 by 2031. Furthermore, over the next decade, the industry will need to hire roughly 1.2 million new drivers to keep pace with growing demand and to replace an aging workforce. Similarly, an estimated 41,000 additional diesel technicians were needed in 2022, including new positions for additional work, unfilled prior openings, and replacement of those leaving the position. The *Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act* would help the trucking industry address these dire workforce challenges by connecting talented jobseekers with the training programs necessary to jumpstart their careers. The ability to use tax-advantaged 529 accounts for technical education, licensing, and credential program expenses would go a long way toward eliminating financial barriers to fulfilling professions in trucking. As Jerome Redmond, President and CEO of American Truck Training, explained compellingly in his testimony, H.R. 1477 would “allow college savings plans to become *career savings plans*.”

Building and investing in a 21st-century workforce requires the alignment of financial resources with the most essential and in-demand jobs. The *Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act* does exactly that. We urge your consideration of this legislation and look forward to future engagement with the Committee on Ways & Means.

Sincerely,

Bill Sullivan
Chief Public Affairs & Advocacy Officer
American Trucking Associations



Chairman Jason Smith
House Committee on Ways and Means
1100 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith,

The Board of Pharmacy Specialty (BPS) was organized in 1976 as an independent certification agency of the American Pharmacists Association (APhA). The mission of BPS is to improve patient care by promoting the recognition and value of specialized training, knowledge, and skills in pharmacy and specialty board certification for pharmacists. BPS currently recognizes more than 58,800 active pharmacist certifications across 14 specialties.

In line with BPS's commitment to recognizing highly knowledgeable, specialized practitioners, BPS endorses support of HR 1477, The Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act, which is ultimately an investment in the professional development of practitioners who can positively impact patient care.

While it is recognized that pharmacists with specialized board certification have a positive impact on patient care, the focus of BPS's endorsement of the Act is its potential to facilitate professional growth. The Act's provision for the use of 529 account funds would significantly alleviate the financial burden on those seeking to obtain and maintain such certification. This process is essential for keeping current of the rapidly evolving healthcare landscape.

Board-certified pharmacists are dedicated to lifelong learning, engaging in ongoing education to stay informed of the latest drug literature and clinical guidelines. This commitment reflects not only a professional mandate but their commitment to patient care excellence. The financial relief provided by this Act would alleviate barriers to continuous professional development.

The passage of the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act would be a significant stride in elevating the quality of patient care nationwide. By supporting more pharmacists in achieving and maintaining board certification, the highest standard of care would be more than a mere benchmark, it would be a widespread practice. BPS stands in strong support of this Act, advocating for its swift passage and recognizing its potential to profoundly transform healthcare delivery and patient outcomes.

Sincerely,

Board of Pharmacy Specialties



WRITTEN COMMENTS FOR THE RECORD

HEARING ON EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY FOR AMERICAN FAMILIES, STUDENTS, AND WORKERS

UNITED STATES HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

OCTOBER 25, 2023

AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA

Agudath Israel of America (“AIA”), founded in 1922, is a national grassroots Orthodox Jewish organization. AIA serves as a liaison between government and the entire spectrum of Orthodox Jewish educational institutions in the United States including the more than 750 Orthodox Jewish day schools across the country that collectively educate over 250,000 students. Agudath Israel frequently advocates legislative and public policy positions before federal, state and local governments. In so doing, Agudath Israel seeks to protect and strengthen the rights and advance the interests of Orthodox Jews and institutions, and to offer a uniquely Orthodox Jewish perspective on contemporary issues of concern.

Because Orthodox Jewish day schools have experienced rapid growth over the decades, and because our community has long attached the highest priority to education, AIA has taken a considerable interest – and has been a leader – in the formulation and implementation of education law and policy. We have been deeply engaged in the national discussion on educational reform and have worked closely with successive presidents and congressional leaders to seek ways to enhance American education – both public and nonpublic. From the original 1964 Elementary and Secondary Education Act through today, there has been virtually no major federal education bill in which AIA has not been involved.

On both the national and state levels, AIA has been a prominent and powerful voice in the school choice movement. We firmly believe that one of the keys to educational excellence is parental involvement and that there is no better way to encourage such involvement, and to ensure educational accountability, than to allow parents to choose the school that is best suited for their children, whether public or nonpublic, secular, or sectarian.

Scholarship tax credit programs, like H.R. 531, the Educational Choice for Children Act (ECCA), sponsored by Rep. Adrian Smith, support two of the highest ideals in Judaism: Education and Charity. The bill will effectively encourage individual and corporate taxpayers to invest in education and cover a variety of expenses facing public and private school children.

Over the last two decades, AIA has advocated for, and helped implement, scholarship tax credit programs in more than a dozen states. Thousands of students currently attend Jewish schools in those states as a result of scholarships generated by tax credit programs. Many of those families would be unable to pay their tuition obligations without scholarships from scholarship granting organizations (“SGOs”) that assist families to pay tuition under these scholarship tax credit programs.

But not everyone can afford to make that choice. While our nonpublic schools do their best to raise scholarship dollars, and private scholarship funds are available in some areas, the need far exceeds the demand. This bill will spur the philanthropic spirit of American taxpayers and corporations and encourage them to invest in the future of our country – the education of our children.

School choice is beneficial for all states and gaining in popularity with voters and elected officials of all parties. In urban areas, school choice has helped stabilize neighborhoods¹, as it takes away the incentive of young families to move to the suburbs in search of better schooling. Recently, some of the most rural states have enacted expansive school choice policies and studies² show that school choice is both popular and helps rural areas. Earlier this year, we have seen Democratic governors in Illinois and Pennsylvania support scholarship tax credit programs and polling³ shows bipartisan support for the issue. In truth, all Americans benefit when parents have the ability to choose the educational setting that best meets their child’s needs.

ECCA will provide many thousands of needy students significant sums to pursue their educational goals. The proposed federal scholarship tax credit program will add significantly to existing state scholarship programs and encourage the opening up of more opportunities in states where few, if any, such programs currently exist.

We encourage lawmakers, Republican and Democratic, to put a bipartisan stamp on the common-sense policy that is at the heart of this bill: assisting parents to access the learning environment and the educational benefits that are best suited for their children, and that will enhance educational achievement for all of America’s students.

¹ Nicole Stelle Garnett, “*Decoupling Property and Education*,” 123 Columbia Law Review 1367 (2023)

² Jason Bedrick and Matthew Ladner, “Rustic Renaissance: Education Choice in Rural America,” Heritage Foundation Special Report No. 264, January 9, 2023, <https://www.heritage.org/education/report/rustic-renaissance-education-choice-rural-america>.

³ New Poll: School Choice Support Soars from 2020. American Federation for Children. Retrieved from <https://www.federationforchildren.org/new-poll-school-choice-support-soars-from-2020>



CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER BOARD OF STANDARDS, INC.

October 24, 2023

Honorable Jason Smith, Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
1139 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Richard Neal, Ranking Member
House Ways and Means Committee
1139 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for H.R. 1477, the "Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act"

Dear Chair Smith and Ranking Member Neal:

Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc. (CFP Board) supports the bipartisan legislation, H.R. 1477, the "Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act." CFP Board is a nonprofit certification and standard-setting organization that sets competency and ethical requirements for more than 97,000 Certified Financial Planner™ professionals, representing about 1 in 3 financial advisors in the United States. This legislation will be the subject of a Ways and Means Committee hearing on Wednesday, October 25: *Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers*.

H.R. 1477 would permit owners of 529 plans to use those savings for fees and expenses required to obtain or maintain recognized postsecondary credentials, including professional certifications. As such, the legislation would allow individuals to use 529 funds for expenses and fees associated with obtaining or maintaining CFP® certification. Post-secondary certification programs, such as CFP Board's certification program, provide opportunities for career growth for financial advisors seeking to enhance their knowledge, skills, and careers. This in turn will help increase access to competent and ethical financial planners for consumers seeking financial advice.

CFP Board encourages the Committee to approve this legislation. In today's economy, employers look to certification as distinguishing those who have the requisite knowledge and skills to perform well in a particular job. The Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act will provide economic opportunities for workers, help reduce the racial and gender wealth gap, and help grow talent pipelines not only for financial planning, but for a wide variety of jobs that desperately need workers.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this issue, please contact Leo Rydzewski, General Counsel, by phone at 202-379-2230 or by email at LRydzewski@cfpboard.org.

Sincerely,

Kevin R. Keller, CAE
CEO
Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc



November 8, 2023

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chair, Committee on Ways & Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act (H.R. 1477)

Dear Chairman Smith:

Thank you for holding a hearing to examine "Educational Freedom and Opportunity for American Families, Students, and Workers." The Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) and the Pharmacy Technician Educators Council (PTEC) are especially grateful for your consideration of the bipartisan, bicameral *Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act* (S. 722 / H.R. 1477).

PTCB is the nation's first and only nonprofit pharmacy technician credentialing organization. PTCB's Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPHT) credential is recognized in every US state and territory and is widely accepted by employers of all sizes as an important credential for pharmacy technicians. There are more than 290,000 active CPHTs throughout the United States. PTEC, a division of PTCB, represents experts in pharmacy technician education and training who collectively prepare thousands of individuals each year to work as pharmacy technicians.

H.R. 1477 would expand qualified expenses under 529 plans to include postsecondary skills training and credentialing programs, such as licenses and voluntary, nongovernmental certifications. It would provide valuable tax-advantaged resources to more workers pursuing career growth, mid-career changes or alternative career pathways. PTCB and PTEC believe this sensible workforce development policy will enable more individuals to pursue a pharmacy technician career and allow current pharmacy technicians to pursue additional education, training, and credentials to advance their careers.

We urge you to advance this bipartisan legislation that will have positive economic effects for Americans of any educational background, skill level, or age, and that would benefit all industries and professions that rely on employees with specialized training or credentials.

Thank you for convening this important hearing, for the opportunity to provide comments, and for your attention to the *Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act*. Please contact Ryan Burke (rburke@ptcb.org), PTCB Senior Director of Professional Affairs, if you or your staff have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William Schimmel".

William Schimmel
Executive Director & CEO

