

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting, and defending America's free enterprise system, supports H.R. 4901, the "Scholarships for Opportunity And Results (SOAR) Reauthorization Act," which would reauthorize the DC Opportunity Scholarship program. Created in 2004 with bipartisan support, the program improves and expands quality educational experiences in all of the District of Columbia's education sectors—public, charter, and non-public.

School choice initiatives provide the best hope for low-income parents to have the flexibility necessary to ensure their child is able to attend a school that best meets their academic needs. H.R. 4901 would ensure the continuation of the nation's only school choice program supported by the federal government. In 2015-16 alone, the DC Opportunity Scholarship program enabled 1,244 students to select from 49 participating schools. Many of these students previously attended persistently underperforming public schools in the nation's capital, which despite recent improvements have a collective graduation rate of only 64 percent.

The outlook for students participating in the DC Opportunity Scholarship program is far brighter. According to the American Federation for Children, graduation rates for children using a scholarship are 30 points higher than DC public schools and nearly 90 percent of program participants go on to attend college. These outcomes are why this program has been a success for the past decade and why an increasing number of parents are seeking to have their child participate. H.R. 4901 would ensure this vital opportunity continues to exist.

The Chamber supports H.R. 4901, the "Scholarships for Opportunity And Results (SOAR) Reauthorization Act," and urges swift passage.

Sincerely,



R. Bruce Josten