

# National Coalition for Parental Choice

April 25, 2016

**Members of the United States House of Representatives**

**RE: Support HR 4901, *Scholarships for Results and Opportunity Reauthorization Act of 2016***

Dear Members:

We are writing to urge full House support for HR 4901, the *Scholarships for Results and Opportunity Reauthorization Act of 2016*. This bill will reauthorize and strengthen the highly successful D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP).

2016 marks the 12<sup>th</sup> year for this incredible program, which has been an educational lifeline for nearly 6,400 children from very low-income D.C. families since it began in the 2004-2005 school year. This is illustrated by the following facts:

#### Better Educational Outcomes

- 90+ percent graduation rate for students using a scholarship and near 90 percent college enrollment
- Graduation rates for children using a scholarship are 30 points higher than D.C. public schools

#### Serving Children Most In Need

- Average income for participating families is less than \$22,000 per year
- Eighty-eight percent of participating children would otherwise be zoned for a school in need of improvement
- Ninety-seven percent of participating children are African-American and Hispanic

#### Strong Demand

- More than 16,000 families have applied to participate in the OSP since its inception
- Many of the low-income families on charter school waiting lists want access to the OSP

The OSP is an example of funding what works in education because it is a program that has demonstrably improved educational outcomes for children from low-income families. According to the last U.S. Department of Education Institute for Education Sciences (IES) report (2010), 91 percent of children who used their Opportunity scholarships graduated from high school, 21 percent higher than those who applied, but did not receive a scholarship. There was also a statistically significant increase in reading scores according to a 2013 summary article published by the first OSP federal evaluation team in the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, a top scientific peer reviewed publication.

The District of Columbia presents a remarkable story of the power of parental choice with families afforded the opportunity to choose from traditional public schools, charter schools and

the OSP. This has strengthened the city's education system and improved educational outcomes for students. Maintaining and fully funding all educational options is critically important for D.C. families, especially low-income families served by the OSP. No child should be denied a quality education simply because of their zip code or family income. We urge all members to support HR 4901 to reauthorize the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program.

Sincerely,

Agudath Israel of America  
Alabama Opportunity Scholarship Fund  
American Federation for Children  
American Federation for Children Growth Fund  
Archdiocese of Washington  
Arkansas Parent Network  
Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)  
Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO)  
Center for Education Reform (CER)  
Council for American Private Education (CAPE)  
D.C. CAPE  
D.C. Catholic Conference  
Friends of Choice in Urban Schools (FOCUS)  
Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice  
Foundation for Excellence in Education  
Foundation for Florida's Future  
Georgia Center for Opportunity  
Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options (HCREO)  
Institute for Justice  
Institute for Quality Education  
Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education  
Iowa Advocates for Choice in Education  
Louisiana Federation for Children  
Maryland CAPE  
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools  
New York Campaign for Achievement Now (NYCAN)  
Parents/Partners for Educational Freedom in North Carolina  
School Choice Ohio  
School Choice Wisconsin  
Step Up for Students  
Students First  
Thomas B. Fordham Institute  
Thomas Jefferson Institute