

LB753 - THE OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIPS ACT

The Opportunity Scholarships Act, introduced by Senator Lou Ann Linehan on behalf of Governor Jim Pillen, provides scholarship opportunities for families, especially low-income families, to attend a private school of their parents' choice.

HOW WILL LB753, THE OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIPS ACT, WORK?

- Tax-credit scholarships would provide expanded school access to many Nebraska families who can't afford the best educational setting for their children.
- The state would provide \$25 million in total income tax credits to incentivize donations to scholarship granting organizations (SGOs).
- The proposed program would provide a 100% state income tax credit for donations to scholarship granting organizations (SGOs). Donations are capped at 50% of an individual or business's state tax liability.
- Donations would be made to scholarship granting organizations (SGOs), which then award scholarships to eligible children.
- The program would give priority to students in families at 100% poverty level, as well as, students with "exceptional needs", who have experienced bullying, in the foster system, in military families, or have been denied option enrollment.

BRANDON'S STORY



"When my brother was younger, he told my dad he wanted to be just like him. But my dad said, 'No. I want you to have better.' And growing up, my dad told us the only way to have a better life than he had was through education.

A high-quality education should be available to everyone because, no matter what walk of life you come from, whether from a high-income family or a low-income family, education can provide you with the support to overcome the barriers placed on you by society and allow you to have a better future for yourself and your children. School choice is parents being able to decide what school to send you to, what type of education you receive... I am grateful for my school and for my parents' willingness to work hard so I can have better."



WHY SCHOLARSHIP TAX CREDITS?

- Scholarship tax credit programs create new pools of funding so that children can receive scholarships to attend the private schools of their parents' choice.
- There are 25 scholarship tax credit programs operating across the country, and research has demonstrated that these programs are positive for student achievement and save money for state and local governments.
- Studies consistently demonstrate that public schools benefit from the existence of scholarship tax credit programs. Twenty of 21 studies show these programs improve the performance of nearby public schools.
- The nation's largest school choice program is a scholarship tax credit – Florida's Tax Credit Scholarship Program – which serves over 18,000 students.

HOW YOU CAN HELP PASS LB753:

Contact Lawmakers: Call or write your State Senator to personally convey why private or parochial education was the best fit for your child, or to simply encourage him/her to support Opportunity Scholarships (LB753). Find your senator and contact information at nebraskalegislature.gov.



Tell Your Story: If you have a personal story about a positive experience with private or parochial education, you can have a powerful impact by sharing it with others. Maybe you wanted a faith-based environment for your child. Maybe private or parochial school better met your child's needs. Maybe you or your child have benefited from a privately-funded scholarship and you want others to have the same opportunity.

Share the Facts:

- Different children have different educational needs.
- Every child has the right to an education in which they can thrive.
- Many families can't afford to move to a better school district or afford to send their child to a private school in which they will thrive. All kids deserve the same access to a good education.
- LB753 simply helps incentivize private donations to help fund scholarships for low-income and middle-class families.
- Tax-credit scholarships exist in 21 states, including Iowa, South Dakota and Kansas. Nebraska should be next!
- LB753 will save taxpayer dollars. Iowa's scholarship tax credit program saves their state over \$12 million annually.
- At \$15k/pupil for public schools, Nebraska's private schools already save half a billion dollars per year.
- Successful private schools promote successful public schools, and vice versa.
- Studies consistently demonstrate that public schools benefit from the existence of scholarship tax credit programs. Twenty of 21 studies show these programs improve the performance of nearby public schools.

WRITE LAWMAKERS TO SAY "THANK YOU!" FOR SPONSORING LB753!

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MISCONCEPTIONS VS. REALITY

Nebraska is one of only two states that has not passed a school choice program. Misconceptions may be standing in the way for the states that do not offer offer families the opportunity to send their children to a school that best fits their learning needs and values.

"SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS DRAIN MONEY FROM PUBLIC SCHOOLS."

Reality: Tax credit scholarship programs across the country, in the aggregate, have been proven to save state governments millions—even billions—of dollars. When a student attends a nonpublic school using a tax credit scholarship, state governments do not have to pay the public school the full cost for providing an education for that student. And the cost to educate a child in a traditional district school is greater than the revenue a state foregoes through scholarship tax credit programs. It's no wonder that tax credit scholarship programs, for example, end up saving each participating state anywhere from \$13 million to \$120 million annually. So, not only do tax credit scholarships not harm public school funding, but they provide additional revenues that could be used to invest in kids in public school settings.

"SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS VIOLATE SEPARATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE."

Reality: The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that appropriately designed private school choice programs are fully constitutional. And numerous state courts have upheld the constitutionality of tax-credit scholarship programs.

"STUDENTS DON'T BENEFIT FROM PRIVATE SCHOOL CHOICE."

Reality: Seventeen empirical studies examined academic outcomes for tax-credit scholarship recipients using random assignment, the “gold standard” of social science. Of these studies, 11 report positive test score effects among their primary findings. Four studies found no significant effects, and two found negative impact in the early years of study. School choice also leads to more students graduating from high school and enrolling in college, as we've seen in Milwaukee and Florida. In Florida, for example, tax credit scholarship students are up to 43% more likely to enroll in college than their peers in traditional public schools if they enroll in the program for four years or more.

"SCHOOL CHOICE HURTS TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS."

Reality: Public schools are an integral part of American society, and, in many cases, they offer a quality education. But public schools are not an ideal fit for every child—parents deserve a choice. All students can learn, and we believe they should all have the opportunity to do so in a safe and supportive school, chosen by their parents, that meets their individual learning needs.

Studies consistently demonstrate public schools benefit from the existence of scholarship tax credit programs. Twenty-one empirical studies examine private school choice programs' impact on academic outcomes for nonparticipating students in nearby public schools. Of those studies, 20 found that private school choice improved the performance of nearby public schools; one found no significant effects of this competition.

"NEBRASKA ALREADY HAS SCHOOL CHOICE."

Reality: While it's important children and families to have access to option enrollment and alternative public schools, we know students and parents need expanded options. Schools, organizations, and private groups work tirelessly to offer as many scholarships as possible, but demand for scholarship opportunities continue to outweigh supply. Nebraska families deserve more opportunities for their children to thrive and succeed.

MISCONCEPTIONS VS. REALITY CONT.

"THERE IS NO ACCOUNTABILITY IN PRIVATE SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS."

Reality: All school choice programs have some level of administrative and financial accountability. And most programs have academic accountability. Private schools in every state must comply with health and safety regulations as well as anti-discrimination laws. Already in Nebraska, approved and accredited private schools have testing standards, health and safety standards, financial accountability standards, among other standards. And, in addition to all these requirements and regulations, private schools are accountable to those who matter the most: parents.

"PRIVATE SCHOOLS HAVE SELECTIVE ADMISSIONS POLICIES."

Reality: Private schools often have just as diverse classroom settings as traditional public schools. Not every school needs to meet the needs of every student. In fact, that isn't realistic. But what we do need is diverse schools all kids can access to meet their specific educational needs.

"PRIVATE SCHOOLS DON'T SERVE STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS."

Reality: Private schools are meeting the needs of a substantial number of students with special needs, and doing so without the funding mechanisms accessible to public schools. Education funding for students with special needs is complex, but it boils down to this: state and federal funding cannot follow a student to the school of their choice. This means all special needs education funding can only go to public schools. This places private schools at a disadvantage when educating children with special needs, especially those with the highest needs. Nevertheless, private schools are increasingly developing funding and programming to accept more children with special needs, as well as creating schools specifically tailored to serving certain populations of students with special needs. As studies show, about 12% of students in public schools have special needs, while about 7% of students in private schools have special needs.

"PRIVATE SCHOOL PROGRAMS INCREASE RACIAL SEGREGATION IN SCHOOLS."

Reality: No reputable study shows that private school choice increases racial segregation. In fact, of the 10 studies using valid empirical methods to examine school choice and racial segregation, nine found that school choice creates more racially integrated classrooms; one found no significant effect on integration. And a 2016 analysis found the Louisiana Scholarship Program aids desegregation efforts in Louisiana. Moreover, most school choice advocates believe in the power of diverse schools and celebrate the fact that private school choice programs give kids from different socioeconomic backgrounds the opportunity to learn and collaborate together, helping them develop key skills for the 21st Century workplace.

"SCHOOL CHOICE ONLY HELPS URBAN STUDENTS."

Reality: Public and private school choice are critically important to increasing education options for rural and suburban students. Students outside of major urban districts face real challenges due to population sparsity and school size, limiting many families' high-quality educational options. More rural and suburban policymakers are embracing school choice as a way to bring new and better opportunities to their constituents.