

## School Choice: The Right Choice for Pennsylvania's Future

School choice legislation that includes a voucher program and an increase in EITC scholarships is the right choice for Pennsylvania's future.

### **School choice saves tax dollars**

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Non-public schools provide an excellent education, often for a fraction of the cost of educating the same child in a public school.

- Average annual public school spending per pupil is **\$13,907** (2008-2009); the base cost of the state's subsidy per pupil is **\$8,950**.
- Average non-public school tuition is **\$3,500** (elementary) and **\$6,500** (high school).
- Opportunity Scholarship Grants will not exceed actual tuition paid; the difference between the scholarship amount and the base cost of the state subsidy will be returned to the state coffers.

Non-public schools already save tax dollars. If every one of Pennsylvania's **287,092** nonpublic school students returned to public school, the costs would be significant.  $287,092 \times \$13,907 = \mathbf{\$3.9 \text{ billion}}$  annually (not counting construction costs).

### **School choice works**

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School choice has been tried and tested in other states.

- Parents in **Milwaukee, Wisconsin** have had school choice for 20 years. Eligible low-income families may send their children to a participating private school of their choice within the city limits. In 2010, more than 20,000 students participated in the program.
- **Cleveland, Ohio** has had school choice for 15 years. More than 5,000 students are participating. Ohio expanded its voucher program statewide in 2005. Now more than 13,000 students are attending the school of their choice.
- **Louisiana** has a new voucher program for low-income students in failing school districts.
- Nationwide there are **26 programs in 14 states** that provide school choice through vouchers or tax credit scholarships.

Studies show school choice makes a difference.

- The Manhattan Institute for Policy Research studied voucher programs to address whether school choice improves outcomes for students using the vouchers. They found significant positive results, particularly for African-American students. Additional studies by Harvard, Stanford, the Federal Reserve Bank and other institutions confirmed this finding.

### **Parents want school choice. The public supports parental choice.**

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Recent polls in Pennsylvania surveyed parents' attitudes toward their children's education. Overwhelmingly, parents say they wish they had more choices.

- In November 2010 Pew Research Foundation survey, **62% of parents** in Philadelphia public schools said they have actively considered sending their children to charter, Catholic or private schools.

Taxpayers favor education vouchers, too.

- In another November 2010 poll, half of Pennsylvanians said they support and another 20% are undecided about education vouchers which help parents pay the costs at the school of their choice (Pulse Opinion Research).

Financial realities often preclude parents from choosing the school that best suits their children. Parents who pay their school taxes deserve assistance in the exercise of their right to choose a nonpublic school, if that is best for their children. School choice legislation that includes a voucher program and an increase in EITC scholarships is a step in the right direction toward expanding those opportunities to more parents.