

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

As organizations committed to the promotion and enactment of school choice, we were encouraged by your recent speech in Indianapolis where you laid out a vision for empowering parents to choose the best educational setting for their children. School choice has transformed lives across the nation in places where it has been implemented. The innovative programs that are in place in states like Arizona, Florida, and Ohio are customized for the needs of their respective student populations and have dramatically increased parental satisfaction rates as well as helped bolster educational outcomes. It is also worth noting that the overwhelming majority of studies show that competitive forces resulting from school choice have caused scores to improve even in the schools from which the students left.

We applaud your commitment to avoid mandating a “one size fits all” approach to school choice, and especially your stated goal to move away from policies that for far too long have been driven from Washington. We firmly believe that education decisions should be made at the local and state level, with schools ultimately accountable to empowered parents.

As the administration prepares to roll out its proposal, we would like to express our support for a series of policies that would unify school choice advocates while remaining true to the Constitution and the tenets of federalism necessary for crafting good education policy. These policies would help serve as a model for school choice proponents across the nation while expanding opportunities to important student groups:

- Provide school choice for hundreds of thousands of active-duty military families and their children by allowing allotted Impact Aid financing to be used for education savings accounts. Data suggests this could provide new opportunities for some 700,000 children across the nation.
- Build upon the successful D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program by transforming the District’s public schools with the implementation of universal education savings accounts to benefit nearly 75,000 students.
- Provide opportunities for Bureau of Indian Education schools through the creation of flexible education savings accounts to benefit some 49,000 students who have been neglected for far too long.

These proposals would benefit nearly 1 million students in every state across the nation, while maintaining the integrity of federalism necessary for preserving the unity of the school choice movement. In sheer numbers alone, these proposals would benefit twice the number of children enrolled in private school choice programs in the country.

Additionally, combining 529 saving accounts into Coverdell accounts would provide parents with new tools for enhancing educational opportunities for their children. And support for truly transformative approaches like those found in the A-PLUS Act would finally put power back into the hands of states and end Washington's failed one-size-fits-all approach to education.

Your dedication to advancing school choice is an exciting departure from previous administrations and provides a unique opportunity to champion school choice as a solution to many of our education system's woes. We believe such vocal support, coupled with the specific policies above, would help bolster school choice movements among the states and serve as a unified front in the continued state-led effort to provide better futures and opportunities for our children.

Sincerely,

The Texas Public Policy Foundation
The Heritage Foundation
The American Legislative Exchange Council
Palmetto Promise Institute
The Sutherland Institute
The Goldwater Institute
Beacon Center of Tennessee
The Georgia Public Policy Foundation
Alabama Policy Institute
The Rio Grande Foundation
Idaho Freedom Foundation
Public Interest Institute
Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs