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D.C. OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM: MAKING THE AMERICAN DREAM POSSIBLE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

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D.C. OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM: MAKING THE AMERICAN DREAM POSSIBLE

Thursday, May 14, 2015

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:36 a.m., at Archbishop Carroll High School, 4300 Harewood Road, NE, Washington, D.C., Hon. Jason Chaffetz [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Chaffetz, Meadows, DeSantis, Walker, Blum; Cummings, Norton, and Welch.

Also present: Representative Rokita.

Ms. BLAUFUSS. Good morning. My name is Beth Blaufuss, and I am so privileged to be the president of Archbishop Carroll High School. And I want to welcome all of you to our school.

Members of the House of Representatives, Senator Scott, our visitors, particularly from St. Thomas More and from Sacred Heart, this morning is about the promise of our young people. So, it is only fitting that I hand the microphone over to our student council president, Jordan Winston.

[Applause.]

Mr. WINSTON. Teachers, students, administrators, and guests, welcome to Archbishop Carroll High School. My name is Jordan Winston, and I am the president of student government here. And we are honored to host the Members of the House of Representatives, particularly D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton.

We would also like to thank Chairman Chaffetz, Senator Scott, and Ranking Member Cummings, for holding this hearing at our school. We are truly elated to have this opportunity to take part in such an important legislative process.

On behalf of Archbishop Carroll, I, once again, would like to thank our guests for being here today. And I truly hope that you, the audience, enjoy this experience. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Ms. BLAUFUSS. Thank you. Our student ambassadors will remain in the main lobby. If there is anything that they can do for you—students, I will come back on the microphone at the conclusion of the hearing. So, thank you.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Well, thank you, and good morning. Thank you for your participation, and thank you so much for allowing us to come to this school. It is a wonderful opportunity for us; we need to do more field hearings, and be out. And we appreciate your participation today.

This is an official hearing of the United States Congress, and so allow us to go through our formalities. And we will kick things off, and, again, thank you so much for hosting us here. And to the students, thanks for being able to be here and be part of this process.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform will come to order. And, without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time.

We are here to discuss the "D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program: Making the American Dream Possible." We are extremely fortunate to be here on this site, at Archbishop Carroll High School, to talk about a program that is improving the education in the District of Columbia and for its students.

Since the year 2004, the Opportunity Scholarship Program, often referred to as the OSP, has given around 6,000 students in the District the ability to attend the private school of their choice. The scholarship program targets students in struggling public schools located in low-income areas. Here, 54 percent of students are choosing to attend Archbishop Carroll High School, with the help of the OSP. Giving students that choice has never been more important in the District than right now.

The District of Columbia public schools rank at the top in spending per student, yet near the bottom in academic performance. As a personal note, I happen to represent the State of Utah. We happen to have the lowest per capita spending per student. It is not something we are necessarily proud of, but we are looking at—from my perspective, I get to see the two extremes: the lowest per-pupil spending in the nation happens in Utah; the highest per-pupil spending happens here, in the District of Columbia.

But, really, it should be about academic performance, about graduation, about making the outcomes better, so that kids have a better opportunity in life. And that is, in part, why we are here today to have this discussion.

Despite spending more per student than any other jurisdiction in the country, D.C. public schools continue to struggle when it comes to educating students. While the national graduation rate in the year 2014 was roughly 81 percent, District public schools only graduated 58 percent of high school seniors. Realizing graduation rates were suffering in the District, in 2004 Congress adopted a 3-pronged approach in an effort to improve the quality of education. The Opportunity Scholarship Program was just one piece of that approach.

Congress also appropriated funds directly to D.C. public schools to improve education, as well as funds to expand public charter schools in the District. This approach received broad, bipartisan support, including from D.C.'s mayor at the time, Anthony Williams. For the past 12 years, Congress has continued to provide the District with funding for all three programs.

The results show that students who participate in the Opportunity Scholarship Program are more successful. Last year, 89 percent of OSP students graduated from high school. And, on average, 92 percent of OSP graduates enroll in college or university. Those are amazing numbers, something to be proud of, and something that we will always want to strive to improve upon. But they are exceptionally good numbers. This stands in sharp contrast to the

previously-mentioned average District graduation rate of just 58 percent.

But statistics only say so much. Most convincing for me is the testimony parents who see their children improving and achieving, as a result of this scholarship program. We have a video of those parents, and I would like to play it now. It is just a minute-and-a-half or so, but if we could play the video, I would appreciate it.

[Video shown.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. I think what you will find is that people on both sides of the aisle—certainly everybody on this dais here—wants to improve the quality of education for children. There is nothing more important to our future than making sure that our children are as well-educated as we can possibly be.

And I want to extend a special thanks to Archbishop Carroll High School, led by President Blaufuss, Principal Dunn, for hosting us, the wonderful students who have made this all possible. Again, we thank you. We can't thank you enough for this, and we look forward to hearing from the witnesses today.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. We have Mr. Rokita here, from the Committee on Education and Workforce, who is the chairman of the subcommittee that deals with K through 12, and I appreciate his attendance. I would ask unanimous consent that he be allowed to participate fully in today's hearing.

[No response.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Without objection, so ordered.

I now recognize the distinguished ranking member, the gentleman from Maryland, Mr. Cummings, for his opening statement.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me begin by saying to all of the children and young adults here today, I want to thank you for all that you are doing. I want to thank the teachers and I thank the Members who are here today. And I—it is wonderful to see smiling faces.

Just last week, in Baltimore, we heard a young lady who was in the ninth grade. And she talked about how she was reading from a book that was published in 1973. And I thought about it, and that is when I came out of college. And so I know that here, you are working hard as you can to get an education. I have often said that the greatest investment that we can make is in education. That education allows you to better yourselves and to achieve what we want for all of our children: a life that is fulfilling and enriching, meaningful, and rewarding.

I want to thank the parents and the family members, the teachers and the faculty who support these children, and provide them with this wonderful education. You have one of the most important missions in the world. You handle some of our most precious resources as a nation; you handle our children. And we entrust you with their lives and their futures every single day.

Our number-one responsibility is to help our children figure out what their gifts are, and then we must help to nurture those gifts so that they may deliver them to the world. I have a saying that I have been using quite a bit up in Baltimore recently, which is that our children are the living messages we send to a future we

will never see. We are the protectors of this generation. And we owe it to the next generation, and generations yet unborn, to give them the education they deserve.

I know firsthand what an education can do. How can a son of two former sharecroppers with a third-grade education each be sitting before you today as a Member of the Congress of the United States of America? Because I was given an education. Because my family supported me every step of the way. I attended public schools in Baltimore, I attended college right across the road at Howard University, and I attended a law school at the University of Maryland. And now it is our turn to help our kids in our districts throughout the country to have the same opportunities we have.

But here is a challenge we face: Speaker of the House John Boehner supports giving vouchers to students in the District of Columbia, and he personally pushed for more than $150 million to fund this program. Yet, at the same time, Speaker Boehner and the Republicans in the House of Representatives have put forth their education budget for the entire country. And it would result in $2.7 billion less than the Administration's budget for Title I education funds.

Think about what I just said. This money would fund about 10,000 schools with 38,000 teachers and aides, and 4.2 million students. More than 157,000 children will lose the opportunity to participate in Head Start. Special education funding would be $1.6 billion less, which could have supported up to 26,800 special education teachers and other professionals.

Personally, I do not understand how anyone can claim to be promoting the education of our nation's children when they are slashing billions of dollars from education funds across the country, while at the same time supporting lucrative tax breaks for the richest corporations and executives in our nation.

On May 3, 2015, Speaker Boehner appeared on the Sunday news show, "Meet the Press," and the host asked him about how we could improve schools in Baltimore and in the District. The speaker responded by saying, "If money was going to solve the education probably—problem, we would have solved it decades ago." I am sure almost everyone in this room has friends or family members in schools, in other cities, and perhaps in this city, who do not want their budgets cut. Some of you may even have cousins up the road in Baltimore. Every child in this country—every child, every single child, everyone—deserves to have access to a high-quality education.

The greatest threat to our national security would be our failure to properly educate every single one of our children.

[Applause.]

Mr. CUMMINGS. The answer is not to slash billions of dollars from national education funding. The answer is not to provide vouchers to provide private schools. The answer is to invest more in our public schools, our education systems, our teachers, and our kids.

Mr. Chairman, I sincerely hope that we can work together to make robust investments in education, so that all kids, whether they grow up in D.C., in Baltimore, Utah, anywhere else, have the same opportunity to get a high-quality education.

And, as I go back to the young lady who addressed us in Baltimore, the one who was reading from the 1973 book, one of the things that came out during that period is she said, "I am angry. I am angry that I have been deprived of the kind of education that would allow me to be all that God meant for me to be."

And that must be our challenge. We cannot leave any child behind. All of them, again, are bearing gifts. The question is will we help them to develop those gifts, so that they might deliver them to the world.

And, with that, I yield back.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank the gentleman. We had unanimous consent to allow Mr. Rokita, from the Committee on Education and Workforce, the subcommittee chairman, we will now recognize him for five minutes.

We are going to need that mic, sorry. We are going to need to pass that down. Thank you.

Mr. ROKITA. Well, thank you, and good morning, everybody. Well, good morning, everybody.

I wanted to start by thanking Chairman Chaffetz for inviting me to offer a statement at this Oversight and Government Reform Committee field hearing on the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. I also want to thank our hosts here, at Archbishop Carroll High School.

The Members up here had a quick opportunity to tour this school. And let me just say, Mr. Chairman, I have been to schools—and Mr. Cummings—I have been to schools all across the country. I have seen some of the best schools in Indiana and across this country, and I have seen some of the worst. Not for lack of money, but for lack of leadership, lack of caring.

You see, schools, Mr. Chairman, don't exist for adults. At least not the good ones. The good schools I have seen exist for the students. And that is what I saw already this morning at Carroll High School.

And I know that the other schools represented here today by students, probably those same kind of great schools. You see, I could tell within the first minute or so, whether or not a good school. I could tell by the way it is orderly. I could tell by the attitude of people like Principal Blaufuss, who, the minute I—second I saw her, said, "I get to be the principal of these students." I saw that here today, and I know it exists, again, at schools for the other students represented here today. I know, because I went to eight years of a Catholic school: St. Thomas More, the one in Indiana, not the one around here.

You see, Mr. Cummings, schools that are good have a spirit, have an attitude that says in this profession, in this profession of teaching, in this profession of school administration, our profession doesn't exist for ourselves. It doesn't exist for a teacher's union. Like political service itself, we walk into it, and we work, and we exist for someone else. And in the case of a good school, it exists for the kids.

As the chairman of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood Elementary and Secondary Education, I understand the challenge—I hope to understand the challenges many students and schools are facing. I understand the frustration of Mr. Cummings.

Let me say this right now. Education budgets haven't been slashed. In fact, they are on par, and have slightly gone up. And since the Federal Government has been involved in the education business since the early 1970s, education spending has gone up 300 percent. And test scores, the best way to measure success of students, the best way we—one of the best measurement sticks we have, showing how much we care about students and their success, and the future that we are sending them into, as Mr. Cummings suggests, those test scores have been flat since the early 1970s.

So, it is very much true that just throwing more money at something doesn't solve the problem. Again, it is not the structure you have, even though this is a very decent one. It is what goes on inside the structure that really, really matters. And that brings me back to the word I used at the beginning: leadership.

We all believe—I challenge anyone to say that anyone up here or any adult in the United States believes that a child should be denied access to a high-quality education. We all think that access should be there. And that is what brings us to this hearing today. Parents, teachers, and school administrators I meet with are all too aware of the current state of our education system, and that it threatens the American Dream for the current and future generations of students.

Leaving the world in better shape than we found it is as much a part of our American exceptionalism as the freedom we enjoy that allows us to pursue the American Dream in the first place. And I believe—we all believe—that a strong education system is essential to preserving that dream.

I am concerned because, by many standards, the American Dream is under threat. We cannot build cities and strengthen communities if our citizens can't read. We cannot maintain the engaged citizenry needed to keep a free republic if our citizens cannot think critically. We cannot compete in an increasingly global economy if our citizens cannot add or subtract. And that is why I strongly believe—and I suspect everyone up here strongly believes—that a student's zip code, where you live, should not sentence that student to a failing school, just so that school can keep its doors open.

Again, schools shouldn't exist for the adults in them, they should exist to serve the students in them. We should not just stand by and watch our students, the future generations of Americans, be retrained to failing and un-performing schools. That is why I believe it is our collective responsibility to do everything we can to help students access a high-quality school and education.

And as my colleagues here know, and with a lot of their help, in January I reintroduced the Creating Hope and Opportunities for Individuals and Communities through Education Act, the CHOICE Act. It is H.R. 618. A good friend, who will testify here in a minute, Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina, introduced the companion legislation in the Senate, and I will let him speak in more detail about it. But let me just say that this legislation expands education opportunities and fosters success by providing students and parents greater choice in their education, just like the parents in that video explained.

In addition to expanding school choice for individuals with disabilities in a pilot program for our military students, this Act would expand access to the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program by mandating excess carryover funds be used to promote the program and support additional scholarships for low-income families here, in Washington, D.C.

As many people here know already, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program is the first federally-funded scholarship program in the United States providing scholarship to low-income residents of the District of Columbia to send their children to local participating private schools. No longer must a student be shackled to a low-performing school.

Since 2004, the D.C. OSP program has served almost 6,000 low-income children in Washington, D.C., and has become a model for effective public scholarship programs. The program received more than 3,600 applications for the 2014–2015 school year alone, Mr. Chairman. Currently, the enrollment wait list for D.C. public charter schools totals more than 22,000 applicants. There is a market here, Mr. Cummings. The 2010 program evaluation show that 82 percent of students offered scholarships through this program received a high school diploma, compared to 70 percent of those who applied but were not offered scholarships. It is working.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. We thank the gentleman. You are well past the five minutes.

Mr. ROKITA. Sorry.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. So I will——

Mr. ROKITA. I am used to having a clock in front of me, my apologies.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. But we will insert the gentleman's full and complete testimony into the record.

Mr. ROKITA. I ask your support for H.R. 618.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. We will now recognize the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia, Ms. Norton, who cares deeply about all issues of D.C., but certainly education. We appreciate her passion and commitment.

I would also remind the audience this is an official congressional hearing. We would remind Members to address comments to the chair, and that the audience would be inappropriate at a congressional hearing to applaud and do those types of things.

So, with that, we will now introduce, again, and recognize Ms. Holmes Norton for a very generous five-plus minutes.

[Laughter.]

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I must say that you have given District of Columbia students a rare opportunity to actually be present at a House hearing. Normally, you would have to come to the House to have that opportunity. You might find some of them boring, you might not want that opportunity. But for this hearing, I think it is particularly suitable to be having this hearing at a D.C. public school [sic]. And I am very pleased to be back at Carroll, John Carroll. I am very proud to represent many of you, those of you who live in the District of Columbia.

I want to thank your president, I want to thank your faculty, I want to thank your parents for providing you with such an excellent education.

And, while I am here, I do want to say I hope that John Carroll knows about my D.C. students in the capital program. I don't think I have seen Carroll students for a while. Class by class, we ask you to bring students. And they not only meet with their congresswoman, they get a tour of the Capitol. We don't think any young person should graduate from high school in the District of Columbia without having been to the nation's Capitol.

I would particularly like to welcome my constituents who are testifying here this morning. I applaud your commitment, your demonstrated commitment to education. And I want to be clear. My remarks today are addressed only to my colleagues, not to my constituents. This is, after all, a hearing, which is being held, and I expect the Speaker of the House to be here. This is a program that he, himself, set up. So this hearing is necessary for it to be reauthorized, but it is virtually a fait accompli, that it is going to be reauthorized.

I want to be clear what it is I—that I am for, and what it is I do not support. As a mother, and now a grandmother, I understand and applaud parents who take advantage of every opportunity available for their children. If you get an opportunity, take it.

Along with President Obama and my Democratic House and Senate colleagues, however, I support allowing the current District of Columbia voucher students to remain in the program until they graduate. But we do not support using federal dollars for, essentially, a new program, a program for new students to be admitted, particularly at a time when there are huge, slashing cuts being made to D.C. public-school programs.

The Republican House is again seeking to impose its will on the District without the consent of D.C.'s locally-elected government or me, the only elected representative of the District of Columbia in Congress. Within the last month, this Committee, and then the House, tried but failed to overturn a local D.C. anti-discrimination law. Adding insult to injury, this Committee did not invite any locally-elected D.C. officials to testify on that law, or at today's hearing.

If the D.C. Government wanted to create a private-school voucher program, it has the legislative authority under the Home Rule Act to do so. And it insists that its authority, as an independent jurisdiction of taxpaying citizens, be respected by this Congress.

Republicans seem to lack the courage of their own convictions on private-school vouchers. Both the Republican House and Senate are currently considering legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Conspicuously absent from their Republican bill is a nationwide private-school voucher program. Why would Republicans impose a voucher program on the District, but not propose—even propose—expanding that program nationally? Could it be that Republicans recognize the lack of national support for vouchers?

Since 1970, every single state referendum to establish a voucher program or tuition tax credit has failed. And none of the votes were even close. Americans want public funds used for publicly-account-

able schools. The stated purpose of the D.C. voucher program is to help low-income students from low-performing public schools to improve academically. However, the D.C. voucher program, which provides federal money to publicly unaccountable private schools, has failed to improve academic achievement.

In the past, my D.C. voucher parents have visited me. And many said that they had tried to enroll in our popular D.C. public charter schools, but could not because of long waiting lists. If Congress sincerely wanted to help students in the District, it would direct the voucher funds to D.C.'s robust home rule public school choice, our publicly-accountable charter schools.

The D.C. voucher results are consistent with studies that show that school voucher programs across the country have failed to improve academic achievement. The latest data available on the D.C. voucher program is from a 2010 U.S. Department of Education study. The study, conducted by one of the Republican's own witnesses today, Professor Patrick Wolf, found: "no conclusive evidence that the program affected student achievement, as measured by math and test results."

Most important, the study found there was:—again, "no significant impacts" on the achievement of students who the program was designed to most benefit, students who previously attended public schools, identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the ESEA.

While the Department of Education study found that the D.C. voucher program improved high school graduation rates, the study did not examine the rigor of voucher schools' curriculums, or graduation requirements. In fact, the higher graduation rates, together with flat test scores, suggest that voucher students may have attended schools with less rigorous curriculums and graduation requirements.

The Department of Education study did find that D.C. vouchers improved parents' ratings of school safety and satisfaction. However, the study did not find that vouchers improved the ratings of school safety and satisfaction for the most important group: the students, themselves.

Although I am a proud graduate of the D.C. public schools, and strongly support our traditional public schools, I have always supported, and strongly so, public charter school alternatives for those parents who are dissatisfied with the D.C. public schools. Children cannot wait until traditional public schools meet the necessary standards. This is true, even though the D.C. public schools have made some of the most impressive improvements in the country, by any measure.

D.C. public school enrollment has grown by 22,357 students in the last 4 years, the first enrollment growth in 39 years. In 2014, D.C. public school students reached their highest proficiency rates ever in reading and math. In the last 8 years, the percentage of students who were proficient in reading increased 13 points to 47.7 percent. And, in math, increased 22.6 percentage points to 51.1 percent. I challenge the D.C. voucher schools to demonstrate comparable improvement.

In the last four years, the four-year graduation rate for D.C. public schools has increased from 53 to 58 percent. D.C. public-school

test and graduation rates are comparable to other urban school districts. D.C. charter schools are publicly-funded and independently run, under the supervision of the D.C. public charter school board. D.C. charter schools are tied for third-largest percentage of public charter-school students in the nation, educating 37,684 students, or 44 percent of our D.C. public-school students.

The first public charter school was opened in 1996, and there are now 112 public charter schools. D.C. charter schools have higher educational achievement and attainment than D.C. public schools. D.C. charter schools out-perform D.C. public schools across traditionally disadvantaged groups, including African-American and low-income students, and have a higher percentage of such students, precisely the students the D.C. voucher program was ostensibly designed to serve. Sixty percent of D.C. charter school students are proficient in math, and 53.4 percent are proficient in reading. Seventy-nine percent of D.C. charter students graduate.

It is important to review the role of Congress in the creation of D.C. charter schools and vouchers, to understand the democratic and undemocratic way to help the District. We worked collaboratively with then-Speaker Newt Gingrich to create the robust charter school system we have today. Newt came to me and said he was considering a voucher program in D.C. I told him of public opposition to vouchers in the city, and urged him to defer to the already existing fledgling charter school system that had been created by the District.

At the time, the charter schools in the District had attracted few charters. Working together with Speaker Gingrich, we were able to get Congress to pass the District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995, which created a new charter school system in the District, leading to the large-scale, robust alternative public charter school system enthusiastically supported by D.C. residents today. The long waiting lists in our charter schools are the best evidence of their quality, and their embrace by our parents and residents, as the city's own home rule choice. Yet Republicans in Congress later imposed a voucher program on D.C. anyway, and are attempting to do so again.

I want to clear up a misconception about the D.C. voucher program funding. The original authorization of the program contained funding for private-school vouchers only. It did not contain any funding for D.C. public schools or charter schools. I insisted that D.C. public schools and charter schools be funded, too. I worked with the then-Archbishop of Washington, Theodore Edgar McCarrick, who strongly supported vouchers—and the majority of voucher students attended Catholic schools—to get funding also for D.C. public schools and charter schools. The current authorization includes that funding.

If Republicans want to give the District funds for education, why not ask us how we could best use the money? Is that not the way to treat taxpaying American citizens?

D.C. public schools are improving so significantly, and our public schools and our charter schools are in such great demand, that many of these schools, both the public schools and the charter schools, have long waiting lists. Why, then, expand a congressionally-sponsored private-school program for the city? The answer, of

course, is abuse of power. It is the same congressional abuse and disrespect evidenced by Congress in trying to overturn two D.C. anti-discrimination laws.

We do appreciate the congressional interest in our children. We ask all of them—we ask that all of them now in the voucher program be allowed to continue until they graduate from high school. We ask only for congressional respect for the people of the District, who have built their own home rule public school choice alternative to their traditional public schools.

Any new funding for education in the District should reinforce the hard work of our city, parents, and residents who have shown the nation that they know how to build an alternative to our public-school system. They should be heralded by Congress as an example to most U.S. school districts which have, in contrast to the District of Columbia, significantly limited school choice, and spurned public charter schools. D.C. residents know what to do without the benefit of congressional paternalism, instruction, or intervention.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. We will hold the record open for five legislative days for any Members who would like to submit a written statement.

We will now—we have two panels today. First panel, we are honored to have Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina. Senator Scott's——

[Applause.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Senator Scott is an inspiration to a lot of people, and he has broken through a lot of barriers in his life. His life story is an inspiration. It is to me, and I think to lots of others. He is one of the most decent human beings I have ever come in contact—it was an honor and a privilege to serve with him when he served in the House of Representatives. Honored that he is serving in the United States Senate. And we are pleased that he is here today.

We now recognize Senator Scott.

WITNESS STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF HON. TIM SCOTT, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is certainly a privilege to have an opportunity to speak before this August group, as well as before the students here, at the Archbishop Carroll High School. Certainly, I think the students are already learning something about our ability in Congress to tell time. It is remarkable.

[Laughter.]

Senator SCOTT. I assure you that I will add to the confusion, as my five minutes will not be measured in real, human time.

[Laughter.]

Senator SCOTT. House Members have the ability to restrain themselves in a way that Senators have not learned so well. So I am just excited to be in good company with all of us who are going to run over our five minutes. And we do apologize in advance, even though we will do it anyways.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this very important hearing on an issue that I believe is critical to combating poverty, to unleashing our economy, and ensuring that students across the nation have an opportunity to fulfill their god-given abilities. And for that conversation to start at the Nation's Capital, where we have students benefitting from the Opportunity Scholarship, it just seems appropriate that the generation to come will be better because of the D.C. OSP, Opportunity Scholarship.

I also want to thank Archbishop Carroll High School, along with the president and the board of directors, the parents, the teachers, and, of course, the students here, for hosting us on their amazing campus.

I do want to extend a unique congratulations, Mr. Chairman, to the student government president here, who did a fabulous job in his remarks this morning, Mr.—I say Mr. Jordan Winston. I was once a student government president at a high school, myself. I would say to all the students, and particularly to Mr. Winston, all things are truly possible in America. I am reminded very much of the success of this young man, and I look around, and I think to myself that the future is better because the next generation is smarter than the current generation. And so I am excited about that.

Unfortunately, you will hear today a lot of chat about Democrats and Republicans. I honestly will tell you, although I am certainly a Republican, that I think the focus on Rs and Ds, blue and red, is the wrong focus. The focus has to be on the kids. This is not a political conversation. There is no question of political tentacles in the conversation around education. But part of the problem is we continue to have a conversation about Rs and Ds. What we need to have, what we must have, is a conversation about the future of our children, all of our kids.

And the question I ask myself very often is how do we see the manifestation of Proverbs 22:6? How do we train up children in the way that they should go, and when they are older, they benefit from that solid foundation?

I hope we hear a lot of conversations about that today. I hope that, as you hear from the kids and parents and others who will testify, that you will hear stories that are truly journeys, journeys that started on rough road, journeys that started in little houses and trailers and small apartments, journeys that started very much like my journey, having grown up in a single-parent household, living in real poverty, and another place that has had its challenges, and played out in the news, in North Charleston, South Carolina, where Mr. Walter Scott was shot.

I will tell you that when we get serious about the issue of education, we get serious about unleashing human potential. One of my friends, Trey Gowdy, said that the closest thing to magic in America is education. I am a product of public schools. I like, love, and appreciate good public schools. But I refuse to allow any child anywhere in this nation trapped in the wrong zip code in an underperforming school, to continue to have to go to a school that is inconsistent with the future of that child.

And so, that is why we find ourselves here today. Growing up in poverty was a very difficult time for me. I was one of those kids

that yearned for a male role model, for guidance, for structure, for discipline. And so I started drifting. And all the drifting seems to go in the wrong direction. And by the time I was a freshman in high school, I was flunking out of high school. I may be one of the few United States Senators to ever fail out of high school. I don't recommend that, by the way.

[Laughter.]

Senator SCOTT. I failed world geography. I know I am the only one that ever failed civics, the study of politics. And then I went to the U.S. Senate and realized I have plenty of company in that area.

[Laughter.]

Senator SCOTT. You can always talk bad about yourself. Anyways, I will give you all time to digest that humor. It is the best I have, so it won't get any better than that.

But I also went on to fail Spanish and English. When you fail Spanish and English, no one calls you bilingual. They all call you bi-ign'ant, because you can't speak in any language. And that is where I found my unhappy self.

But I had the good fortune of a mother who believed in the power of education, a mother who believed in the power of hope, the mother who believed in the power of the future. And she took me and encouraged me in tangible ways. I will talk about that next time. And it turned out to my benefit. And over the next three years, I was able to catch up with my class, and graduate on time, go to college.

Why are these things so important? Why are the statistics that we have heard this morning so powerful and so important? I want to reframe some of the statistics, and talk about what they mean in real life, as adults.

Since 2004, 6,000 students have come through the OSP program. Ninety-plus percent of those students graduated on time. Ninety-eight percent—just last year, ninety-eight percent of the OSP students went on to a two-year or four-year degree. Ninety-three percent, just in the last two years, graduated on time, versus fifty-eight percent in other D.C. public schools.

This, these are statistics for families who have an income under $21,000, on average. We are talking about the difference between spending around $20,000 for the normal public schools here, in D.C., versus spending about $8,500 for D.C. Opportunity Scholarships.

So, in other words, for $.40 on the dollar, you don't get a 58 percent graduation rate, you get a 93 percent graduation rate. You get 98 percent of those students going on to a 2-year or a 4-year institution.

And how does that translate for a life? Why are these statistics so important for the students and their parents? Well, it is because a high school dropout—and if we think about the impact of education, especially on people of color, half of African-American males, like me, do not finish high school in four years. Well, for those students who don't graduate from high school, their income, annually, is around $19,000. One, nine, nineteen-thousand. For those students who continue on and graduate from high school, their income is around $28,000. For those students who go on to

get an advanced degree, or bachelor's degree, the income is around $52,000.

How does that translate into employment? Well, for people of color, the persistent unemployment rate, in aggregate, is around 10.5 percent. African-Americans with a college degree, it is less than half. The poverty rate, 27 percent, people of color; 15 percent for all Americans. Significantly lower for African-Americans, Hispanics, with a college degree.

You see, for me, the reason why I sponsored and crafted the CHOICE Act—and I thank Congressman Rokita for taking up the legislation—is because I know that hope begins in a strong family structure. Hope begins in a faith-filled environment. And hope begins in the hearts and the minds of students who are properly equipped with education.

I hope that, as we have this debate of how to use public dollars, and sometimes private institutions, that we don't forget that the Pell Grant that students who graduate from high school receive—students who don't graduate from high school don't benefit from the Pell Grant. So, we take the Pell Grant, public dollars, to private colleges every single day. I took my Pell Grant, along with a small football scholarship—and I do mean small—to a school, a private school, private Christian school. And it allowed me to get a amazing education.

I am passionate about this issue. I am passionate about this issue because I have seen what it has done for my family. I have seen what it has done for myself. I have seen what it has done for my community.

And now that I am at 4 minutes and 30 seconds, Mr. Chairman, I will close.

[Laughter.]

Senator SCOTT. I can't tell time, either. I apologize.

I didn't come up with this quote, but I do think the quote is absolutely perfect: "When parents have better choices, their kids have a better chance." Education really is, today, a major component of the American Dream.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank you. Thank the Senator.

[Applause.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Senator, thank you so much for your participation and your passion and your inspiration to so many people. We appreciate your presence here today.

We are now going to take a two-minute break while we reconfigure the panel here. And so give us two minutes, and we will be back and continue the hearing from there.

Senator, thank you.

[Recess.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. We are now pleased to recognize our second panel of witnesses. I am pleased to welcome Dr. Patrick Wolf, who is a professor and 21st century chair in school choice at the College of Education and Health Professions at the University of Arkansas.

Ms. Shirley-Ann Tomdio—did I pronounce it—Tomdio —former Opportunity Scholarship Program recipient, and a student at the George Washington University. Thank you for being here.

And Ms.—I want to make sure I pronounce this—Seferash Teferra—oh, good, thank you for being here—she is the parent of an Opportunity Scholarship Program recipient.

And we have Ms. Megan Gallagher, a senior research associate at the Urban Institute.

Welcome, all. Pursuant to committee rules, all witnesses are sworn to be—before they—to testify, are to be sworn in. So we need you to stand, rise, and raise your right hand, please.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank you. You may be seated. And let the record reflect that all witnesses answered in the affirmative.

We are going to try to limit your initial comments to five minutes. We haven't been so—haven't been good at it so far, but we are going to start now by recognizing Mr. Wolf for five minutes.

And if you could bring that microphone up nice and close, we would appreciate it. And Mr. Wolf is now recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF PATRICK J. WOLF

Mr. WOLF. Chairman Chaffetz, Ranking Member Cummings, distinguished members——

Chairman CHAFFETZ. I think we are going to need a little bit closer, sorry. Yes, there we go.

Mr. WOLF. I am pleased to be here with you today to discuss my professional judgement regarding the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship program, or OSP. I speak on behalf of myself, as an independent scholar. My testimony does not necessarily represent any official position of my employer, the University of Arkansas.

My research teams have conducted most of the scientific evaluations of private school choice programs in the United States. The Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences selected me to lead the government evaluation of the OSP during its original pilot from 2004 to 2010.

Since lotteries determined if eligible students did or did not receive an Opportunity Scholarship, we were able to use a gold standard experimental research design to determine what impact the OSP had on participants.

Students in our pioneering study graduated from high school at significantly higher rates, as a result of the OSP. Congressman Rokita mentioned the very conservative estimates of the impact of a mere offer of a scholarship was to improve the graduation rates to 82 percent from 70 percent—as 12 percentage-point gain.

But when you factor in that some of the scholarship recipients never used their scholarship, we can calculate a scientifically-valid estimate that the use of an Opportunity Scholarship increased the likelihood of a student graduating by 21 percentage points, from 70 percent to 91 percent. In scientific terms, we are more than 99 percent confident that access to school choice through the OSP was the reason why students in the program graduated at these much higher rates. And many of them graduated from this very institution, Archbishop Carroll High School.

Mr. Chairman, graduating from high school is an economic imperative. Those are not my words, but the words of President Obama in a speech to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 2010.

Each additional high school graduate saves the nation an average of $260,000, due to increased taxes on higher lifetime earnings and lower law enforcement and welfare costs. Thus, the 449 additional high school graduates, due to the operation of the OSP during its pilot, produced a return on investment of $2.62 for every dollar spent.

The D.C. OSP is not the only private school choice program to demonstrate a clear and dramatic impact on boosting educational attainment. My research team similarly found that the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program significantly increased the rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and persistence in college for the low-income students participating in our nation's oldest urban private school choice program.

Researchers at Harvard University and the Brookings Institution determined that a privately-funded K–12 scholarship program in New York City significantly increased the rate at which African-American and immigrant students enrolled in college.

Increasingly and consistently, researchers are finding that private school choice programs like the OSP enable students to go farther in school. Evidence that students achieved higher test scores due to the OSP was only consistently conclusive in reading and for three subgroups of students: namely, females; students with relatively higher performance at baseline; and students transferring from better-performing public schools. Parents were more satisfied with their child's school as a result of the OSP, and rated their schools safer.

When a previous Congress closed the OSP to new students, and reduced its funding, the OSP parents put actions behind their positive words about the program. They rose up in peaceful protest, participated in rallies, writing letters to Congress, and testifying at hearings like this one to save the program. And we see several parents back to testify again. So this empowerment continues. Ultimately, the parents triumphed, as the OSP was reauthorized and expanded in 2011, with passage of the SOAR Act. That entire amazing story is captured in a book I recently coauthored called "The School Choice Journey: School Vouchers and the Empowerment of Urban Parents."

The research record from the carefully-studied pilot period of the D.C. OSP is filled with good news. Students graduated from high school at much higher rates, due to the use of a scholarship. The program appears to have had a positive effect on student reading test scores, but we can only have a high level of confidence about that for certain subgroups of students. Parents have been empowered, and report that their children are in better and safer schools.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I am happy to answer questions.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Wolf follows:]

For complete submitted testimony, please see the following website: *https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/d-c-opportunity-scholarship-program-making-the-american-dream-possible/*

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank you. We appreciate it.

If you could please pass the microphone, and we will now recognize Ms. Tomdio for five minutes.

Keep that microphone nice and close, if you could.

STATEMENT OF SHIRLEY–ANN TOMDIO

Ms. TOMDIO. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I am very honored to be given the opportunity to share my journey with you all today.

My name is Shirley-Ann Tomdio. I was a recipient of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship for nine years. My journey began in the fourth grade, when I transferred from a D.C. public school to Sacred Heart School after my father applied for the scholarship. What this opportunity would do for my family was unpredictable.

My parents, born and raised in Cameroon, Africa, had come to the United States seeking a better life for themselves and for their children. Little did they know how much their hard work would pay off. After hearing about the scholarship opportunity, my father quickly applied and then enrolled my younger brother and sister and me in Sacred Heart School.

My parents' efforts to get us to school each day gave my siblings and me dedication. My mother worked and attended nursing school through most of my education. My father would drive us to school every morning before going to work. And, because he was well aware of the tremendous opportunities our scholarship afforded us, he was always very involved at our school. I am certain that it was exhausting for them, but they never showed it.

In 2009, I graduated from Sacred Heart School as the valedictorian of—as the valedictorian, and took my Opportunity Scholarship across town to Georgetown Visitation. At Visitation, I made second honors my first two years, and first honors my third and fourth year. I was a decorated member of the track and field team, co-editor of our school's art and literary magazine, cheerleader for our school's pep rally, secretary and treasurer for the Black Women's Society. I participated as a violinist in our orchestra for four years, and was a president my senior year.

In May 2013, I walked across the stage and accepted my diploma. My parents were really seeing the results of their devotion to our quality education. They now watch as their first-born child heads to the George Washington University on the pre-med track.

Today, I have successfully completed my sophomore year at GW. I have maintained good grades, was a member of the gospel voice—gospel choir, and was an officer for the Black Women's Forum. I am majoring in exercise science, with a minor in French. My ultimate goal is to become an orthopedic surgeon, and my future success will surely consist not only of my parents' efforts, but those of the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

Attending an institution that allows the student to excel gives him or her the chance to speak up when something is not understood, and develop a relationship with other peers and teachers is what this program has done for its recipients. Being in an environment we are certain works and provides does so much more than I can believe—than I believe I can speak to.

Every child should have the chance to receive a quality education because, at the end of the day, we are the future. We want to grow in a world where, knowing that our lives are secure, and that we can be successful, because our education was never limited by our backgrounds, traditions, race, or socio-economic standings. What

really matters are the individuals that come from these opportunities.

This scholarship has allowed me to build a strong foundation for myself. As the oldest, I have set an example for my siblings and, most importantly, myself. The D.C. OSP continues to instill in me the courage and strength to continue on my journey each day, and make the most of my opportunities. I know that my limits are endless. So should every child out there with a dream. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Ms. Tomdio follows:]

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Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank you. Appreciate that.

[Applause.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Pass the microphone there. We will now recognize Ms. Teferra for five minutes. If you can bring that microphone nice and close, that would be very much appreciated.

Ms. TEFERRA. Good morning.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Even a little bit closer, if you could, sorry. Yes, thank you.

STATEMENT OF SEFERASH TEFERRA

Ms. TEFERRA. Good morning Chairman Chaffetz, Congress, staff, parents, and students. My name is Seferash Teferra, and I am a Ward 4 resident of the District of Columbia. I have lived in the District of Columbia for the past 12 years. I have one child, Yalemwork Teferra. We are an Opportunity Scholarship family, and this is currently our second year taking advantage of this wonderful program.

My child was a student for eight years at E.L. Haynes public charter school. Yalemwork was not being pushed to her full potential capacity. She was always ahead. And, despite our endless fight for more challenging classes and material for advanced students, the school failed to meet our needs. In addition, Yalemwork felt isolated from the community, and did not view it as an optimal place to learn.

My daughter has massive potential, and a love for learning that my income could not accommodate. Yalemwork had her eye set on Sidwell Friends School for a long time, and we hoped that the OSP program would be financially able to help her dreams come true. Because of the OSP, Yalemwork is in an academic community where she is thriving. She not only loves the school immensely, and is so passionate about learning, but she is a head of three clubs and started one of her own.

In addition, she does volunteer work, both in/out of her school, and is a friendly face in the community. Yalemwork is incredibly involved in activism scene at her school, and is involved in all social justice issues. She is not only a part of FEM, F–E-M, Female Empowerment Mission; BSU, Black Student Union; Debate Team; the Democratic Civil Club; Civil Eyes, a club dedicated to combating issues of racial and gender inequality, but has started her own club called BASA, Brothers and Sisters in Africa, to help address issues prevalent in Africa, and allow the important discussion of Africa rich history and current oppression to be addressed in the

Sidwell community. Her heavy involvement in the social justice scene at her school has sparked her interest in politics.

Yalemwork would not have had the opportunity to attend Sidwell, as my income was not able to support her, and pay for her tuition were it not for the OSP. Honestly, I believe that the key in the limit regarding Yalemwork future thanks to the help to OSP [sic]. Her attending Sidwell has allowed her to realize her full potential and allowed her passions to flourish.

The Opportunity Scholarship Program is an amazing program that helps people like my daughter, Yalemwork, and let their dreams come true. The government and all elected officials should absolutely back this program so it can help the many financially-struggling youth reach their full potential, and allow their dreams to come true. I cannot believe there are some people who do not support this program, and would doubt its ability to help families choose a path best suited to their individual child's education.

Please, Members of Congress, continue to support the Opportunity Scholarship Program so it can continue the amazing work it does in transforming our young people's lives.

[Prepared statement of Ms. Teferra follows:]

For complete submitted testimony, please see the following website: *https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/d-c-opportunity-scholarship-program-making-the-american-dream-possible/*

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank you. Appreciate that.

Ms. Gallagher is now recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF MEGAN GALLAGHER

Ms. GALLAGHER. Thank you, good morning. My name is Megan Gallagher, and I am a senior research associate at the Urban Institute. The non-profit Urban Institute is dedicated to elevating the debate on social and economic policy research. Today I am here to provide an evidence-based perspective on the relative merits of the Opportunity Scholarship Program. The views expressed are mine, and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

This hearing is being held in a school in a D.C. community, not on Capitol Hill. There are parents in this room who are making the most out of their resources to improve their children's opportunities. The OSP represents one of the resources available to parents in D.C.

Back in 2004, when the OSP was first created, the educational landscape of D.C. was far different. Since then, the number of charter schools has doubled, and children can apply to attend almost any public school in the whole city. Public school enrollment has increased by eight percent. Private school enrollment in elementary and middle schools has decreased by half. Those shifts represent a major change in the landscape.

But, importantly, public schools have also gained ground on standardized tests. Fourth-grade proficiency rates in math and reading have more than doubled since 2004, from 10 to 25 percent. And scores on D.C.'s own standardized test have consistently improved over the same time period. All groups, including students from lower-income families and Hispanic and black students have experienced improvements.

There is still a great deal of work to do in D.C. to promote meaningful choice for every student. But it is not clear that OSP is the best strategy. The OSP has been evaluated along two dimensions: the direct benefits it provides to students, and the indirect benefits it provides to the D.C. school system.

The 2010 evaluation of OSP that Mr. Wolf cited found that the evidence is mixed on direct student benefits. It found improved parent satisfaction and parent-reported graduation rates, but reading and math test scores of recipients and non-recipients were not different from one another after four years. The design of the study is strong, and was able to address many of the questions that previous studies were not able to tackle regarding differences between scholarship recipients and non-recipients.

There are, however, two important shortcomings to that 2010 evaluation. First, parent-reported graduation rates may differ from actual graduation rates. Second, other important outcomes were not examined in the evaluation. We should have learned more about how the vouchers affected outcomes like five-year graduation rates and college enrollment.

Then there is the question of whether OSP indirectly benefits the public school system. The 2010 evaluation of OSP found that student mobility across schools is so high in D.C. that voucher holders' departures or threats of departures are indistinguishable from other sources of student mobility and, therefore, unlikely to drive change at those schools.

In terms of sheer scope and scale in D.C., students choosing to attend charter schools and DCPS schools through open enrollment policies are likely to have more of an influence on school improvement than OSP. For every OSP enrollee, there are 24 students in charter schools. And 16 students that have enrolled in a DCPS school of their choice.

Plus, a number of other factors than school choice may be contributing to public school improvement, making it difficult to detect differences between OSP recipients and non-recipients.

Research from other cities on vouchers is no more convincing. Past research from multiple cities has found that, if there are any direct benefits of vouchers on student achievement, they are small or not different from zero. It also found that there is little evidence that vouchers drive improvements in public school systems.

In summary, the evidence that OSP improves student achievement is inconclusive. We also don't know enough about how the vouchers affect outcomes like graduation and college enrollment. And, while the D.C. school system continues to improve and offer expanded school choices, it isn't clear that OSP has contributed to those changes. Evidence may be forthcoming, but it does not exist today.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

[Prepared statement of Ms. Gallagher follows:]

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Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. We will now recognize the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Meadows, for five minutes.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to all the students that are here. Obviously, it is very gratifying, when we get to see the success of so many, really, our future.

And so, Ms. Gallagher, I want to start with you. You say there was no evidence to support that. Is there evidence to support your claims that it is actually hurting? Because I didn't hear you report any studies to the contrary. So you just said it was ambiguous. Is that correct?

Ms. GALLAGHER. There is no evidence to support the—that a voucher program is improving student outcomes. There is no evidence that it is harming students, either.

Mr. MEADOWS. All right. So, at worst case, then, we are giving students and parents a choice, because we offer them a scholarship to go to a school of their choosing. That is the worst case scenario. If we are making a mistake, as Members of Congress, that is the worst that we are doing, is we are giving them a better choice?

Ms. GALLAGHER. Well, that is a tough question. I think that, as policy-makers, I think——

Mr. MEADOWS. No, I am talking about—not really as policy-makers. What I am talking about is parents and students—really, when we look at this, is this not about just giving them another choice?

Ms. GALLAGHER. I think each family needs to make the choice that is best for his or her child.

Mr. MEADOWS. I totally agree. And so, if we have this program that gives them a scholarship, and they get to go somewhere of their choosing, do you not see that that is a good thing?

Ms. GALLAGHER. I think that we need more solid evidence on the benefits of the program before directing more funding towards it.

Mr. MEADOWS. So let me follow up on that line of questioning, then. I take it you probably went to higher education.

Ms. GALLAGHER. I did.

Mr. MEADOWS. Okay. Were you forced to go to a public school in your state of residence?

Ms. GALLAGHER. [No response.]

Mr. MEADOWS. I don't think you were. Were you forced to go—in higher education, were you forced to go to a public school in your particular state or locality?

Ms. GALLAGHER. In higher education I was not. But in elementary——

Mr. MEADOWS. No, that was the question.

Ms. GALLAGHER.—and secondary education, I was.

Mr. MEADOWS. So, if you were not forced in higher education, why would we not want to take a similar model in K through 12? What would be the rationale to not take the similar model there?

Ms. GALLAGHER. Right now, D.C. has more school choice than it ever has.

Mr. MEADOWS. And I don't disagree with that. But we are looking, really, at—what we are talking about is why would we force someone to go to a school if we had a scholarship?

I can tell you I grew up with very humble means. And all I wanted was a scholarship to go somewhere where, actually, the people that lived in a different zip code could go to school. And I said,

"Boy, if I just had that opportunity, you know, it would actually be great." Now, whether it made a difference educational-wise or not, I can't say. But I can tell, from the testimony that we have had here from this young lady, who is doing—and did well, and is doing so well, even if it made no academic difference whatsoever, the pride, the esteem that she has, the pride that her mom has that I got to speak to earlier, do you not see value in that, Ms. Gallagher?

Ms. GALLAGHER. One of the nice things about D.C. is that students don't have to go to school in their same zip code.

Mr. MEADOWS. Yes——

Ms. GALLAGHER. They have full choice across the city.

Mr. MEADOWS. I understand that. But if we had—you didn't answer my question. If the scholarship that they had basically allowed a mom and a daughter to make a choice and be proud of where they are going, is there not value in that? Yes or no?

Ms. GALLAGHER. I think that satisfaction with your education is really important.

Mr. MEADOWS. So there is value in that, yes.

Ms. GALLAGHER. There is value in making a choice that is meaningful for you.

Mr. MEADOWS. Okay. So if that is the case, and this money is on top of that, on top of public funding and other sources, what harm does it do? Who—because you mentioned public schools. Is that the harm, is—that you are fearful of, is the danger to public schools, or the students?

Ms. GALLAGHER. I am here to represent the existing evidence, and I don't have the concerns that I think your—that you think I have, sir.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank you. The gentleman's time has expired. We will now recognize Ms. Norton for five minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We heard—we have heard some testimony about high school graduation rates. And I accept that testimony. But we have heard little testimony about the schools themselves.

We are here in a school whose reputation is well established, John Carroll High School. Indeed, my own chief of staff graduated from Carroll. But I—Mr. Chairman, we have—I would like to have this information in the record from the Institute of Science and Human Values, which did look, take a close look, at some of the schools themselves. We have no evidence that Carroll is representative of the schools.

In fact, let me quote from some of the other evidence. You could go to any private school you wanted to go to. And this evidence, from the Institute of Science and Human Values, which is quoted in the Washington Post, as well, spoke of voucher students who went to a school where there were two classrooms. And what they said was a soot-stained storefront, where students had to use a gymnasium two miles down the road.

Another school, where 93 percent of the students in the school—the school wouldn't have existed, but for the vouchers—used a learning model known as Suggestopedia. Now, they apparently base this model on an obscure Bulgarian philosophy of learning that stresses learning through music, stretching, and mediation.

The Washington Post reported: "Hundreds of students are using their voucher dollars to attend schools that are unaccredited or are in unconventional settings, such as a family-run K through 12 school operating out of a storefront, a Nation of Islam school based in a converted Deanwood residence, and a school built around the philosophy of a Bulgarian psychotherapist." Those are not John Carroll schools, high schools.

Mr. Wolf, why didn't you get actual graduation rates, instead of parent-reported graduation rates?

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, Ms. Norton, we were not authorized by our human subjects protocol from OMB to obtain actual student graduation rates. We were authorized to do it through telephone interviews. But in a follow-up study my team did in Milwaukee, we were able to get access to both the administrative records on student high school graduation and conducted——

Ms. NORTON. So you are saying——

Mr. WOLF.—the same parent——

Ms. NORTON. That was Milwaukee. You are saying you could not have found out that the OMB did not allow you to ask the schools to see their graduation—their report of who graduated that year?

Mr. WOLF. It was not permitted in our protocol for this study. But in the Milwaukee study we found that the reports of the parents agreed with the administrative records in 98 percent of cases. So that gave us confidence that the parent reports——

Ms. NORTON. I just wanted to have it for the record.

Ms. Gallagher, do you see a flaw in that way of going at trying to assess graduation rates in this jurisdiction?

Ms. GALLAGHER. I think it is very unusual to use parent reports of an outcome that critical to measuring the impact of an education program.

Ms. NORTON. I don't understand that, when it came to the safety of students, I would have been very gratified if, as reported, parents were—saw improvement in the safety of students. But the students themselves did not report improvement in the safety of students. Can either of you account for that difference?

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, Ms. Norton, I would just add that, in the overall safety scale that we used, yes, there was no significant difference in the reports for students offered scholarships, compared to the control group. When we broke it out by individual items, individual safety items, there were some significant benefits to the choice program, based on the reports of students, in terms of the more serious sorts of threats to safety, like students bringing guns to school, and——

Ms. NORTON. All right, but not safety—my time is running out.

[Laughter.]

Ms. NORTON. You said that—and I am quoting from you, and I am interested in this, because the ostensible reason for the program was to help the lowest-achieving students in the worst schools in the District of Columbia. You found that there were no significant impacts on the achievement of students that this program was most designed to benefit: those who had previously attended public schools identified for improvement and corrective action, and the rest.

Can you explain why there was no improvement in the very students who apparently generated the need for this program?

Chairman CHAFFETZ. The gentlewoman's time has expired, but the gentleman will have ample time to respond.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, Ms. Norton, we did a statistical study. We didn't actually get sort of inside the black box to identify the sorts of specific factors that you mentioned.

I would just add, though, that the students from needs-improvement schools did graduate at much higher rates, just like the students that were not from needs-improvement schools. There were no significant impacts of the program on their achievement, but they did graduate at higher rates.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank the gentlewoman. We will now recognize the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Walker, for five minutes.

We will need to move that microphone here.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a privilege to be here and participate in a very informative hearing. Many places to start. Before I would like to start is a quote. It says, "We know that equipping our students to make decisions and solve problems independently not only honors their free will, but prepares them for college and beyond."

Mr. Chairman, that wasn't your quote, wasn't my quote. The lady that quoted that was President Mary Blaufuss, right here at this wonderful school.

You know, I am puzzled sometimes why parents are the bad guys in this process. I know my parents were very involved in our choice of schools, and had a huge impact, as Ms. Blaufuss—not just college, but beyond. The interesting thing in all of this is to understand—instead of people telling students and parents what they should be doing, is to offer them the scholarship opportunity so that they can flourish.

My colleague, Mr. Meadows, talked about even if all things were even—sort of the three H's that I heard through this process. I have heard happy, I have heard hope, I have heard healthy. Those kinds of items are very tangible in the life of a family, and at the heart of a family, as you see opportunities that come about.

One of the interesting things—and I know, Ms. Gallagher, I would like to come to you first, there—you have informed us that you were just kind of neutral, just independent, reporting the data. There is an interesting piece of data that I think was omitted. I am sure it was not intentional on your behalf, but it has to do with the reading test scores of students. Those who were offered or used an OSP scholarship averaged nearly four points higher than the scores of non-OSP students—time-wise, equivalent to the gain of about three months of learning. It is—am I—is that data incorrect, or do you have access to that information?

Ms. GALLAGHER. I believe those data came from the three-year measurement period, and not the fourth-year measurement period.

Mr. WALKER. Okay. So that is a three-year track.

Ms. GALLAGHER. But——

Mr. WALKER. Dr.——

Ms. GALLAGHER.—Dr. Wolf can speak to that more clearly.

Mr. WALKER. Great transition. Let's go to Dr. Wolf, just for a second, and ask him about the reading achievements highlighted in the evaluation.

Still important, are these gains likely due to the OSP?

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Walker, the 3.9 average higher reading scores was for the fourth and final year of the study. It was not statistically significant at the high level of 95 percent confidence. It was only significant at the level of 94 percent confidence. So that is why we stated in the final report that it was not conclusive. But that was from the final year.

The impacts in reading were larger, and clearly statistically significant during the three-year time period. But then, our sample changed, as a lot of students graduated. So we had a smaller and different group of students for that fourth-year study.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you. That is great information to have.

I think one of the things that is important is look at some of the overall data. And I just want to use this opportunity maybe—have time for maybe one more question. But I want everybody in the room to understand some of the math. We have got some bright people in this auditorium.

In 1981—we spend about $173—I am sorry, about $10 billion on education. At the approximate time I believe we had about 46 or 47 million students in this country, which—equivalent to about $222 per student. Now, if you will fast-forward that, we have spent $173 billion last year, just from the DoE. But if you add the total cost of education, it is $619 billion, which equivalates [sic] to about $12,800 per student.

Now, the bottom line for me in all this is that Congress and Washington, we have had our go, or we have had our run at the opportunity to tell people where they need to go with education, and how we are going to spend it. But is it not time to let more and more families have the opportunity to utilize such a wonderful scholarship program that offers that hope, opportunities for health, and opportunities for happiness?

If you feel the energy even in the room—and, Ms. Teferra, with your testimony, there seems to be a lot to be merit value here. And I believe it is time for us in Washington—as Senator Scott so eloquently addressed it, this is not a Republican or Democrat issue. This is something that we need to return power, certainly, to the parents and to these wonderful students.

Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. I thank the gentleman. I will recognize the ranking member, Mr. Cummings, for five minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you very much. I am going to take our discussion in a little bit different direction, because, you know, in Baltimore we have a situation where I meet with students. And we have so many students that are angry. They are angry that they have not gotten a good education. And they blame not Republicans, not Democrats, but adults. Little boy sitting in the ninth grade, wanting to be a doctor, cannot read.

And there is a warning that must go out to all of us, that it is—nobody is saying that people shouldn't have choices. I am telling you, I want parents to—I applaud the parents who go out there and fight for their kids. As a matter of fact, I encourage parents

to do that. I think it is important. I think that is our responsibility, as a parent. But the question becomes what truly are the choices.

Now, Ms. Teferra, I want you to understand there is nobody up here that does not want every child—not just your child, but every child—to have the same kind of education we would want for our own children. That is my standard. I want your child to have the same kind of education I would want for my child. And that is important to me, considering my own journey.

When I listened to Representative—Senator Scott, I could relate to almost everything he said, because I been there. And I understand that, without an education, I wouldn't be sitting here today. I got that.

But I want to ask you, Ms. Gallagher, and probably you, Mr. Wolf. A lot of people don't understand what goes into how significant the environment is that a child learns in. I will never forget visiting a school, and the school had just opened in Baltimore, and they—and when I was talking to the various kids in different parts of the school, and they said—I asked them. I said, "What do you like most about this school?"

You know what they said, almost every one of them? "I don't have to watch my back." How significant is that? That is the safety, the environment?

And then, you know, when I listen to Ms. Tomdio and to Ms. Teferra, there is another factor that I want you all to address. And that is that when you have parents who are fighting for their kids, it makes a big difference, a big difference. And I wonder how—Ms. Tomdio probably would have done almost anywhere, as long as she had that parent fighting for her and backing her, and if she were put in an environment where she felt safe.

A lot of people don't even know what it is to be in an environment and try to learn when you don't feel safe. And I know there are people in this audience probably that know exactly what I am talking about. If you don't feel safe, it is kind of hard to learn.

So, Mr.—Dr. Wolf and Ms. Gallagher, would you comment on that? Because I think we are facing in this country a situation where not hundreds, but thousands of children are not being properly educated, and they are coming back now and saying—and blaming us, as adults. And of all the things that Senator Scott said I agree with the most, it shouldn't be a Republican, it shouldn't be a Democrat, this is about America. This is about us educating all of our children, every one, whether they are in Baltimore, or whether they are in Little Rock. Every one of them.

So, Mr. Wolf—Dr. Wolf, I am sorry, Ms. Gallagher?

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Cummings, I certainly underscore your point about school safety being crucially important. It is important for parents, it is important for children.

What we found in our focus groups that we did to supplement the official government evaluation, we found clear messages from parents that their first priority when they made their first school choice was really to put their child in a safer school. Because if their child wasn't safe, it really didn't matter to them how good the academics was. Once they felt they had their child in a safe school, then they were more critical about the academic program, and sort

of pushed them on the academic side. But safety is fundamental for families in urban environments.

And one reason why they viewed their private schools as safer in—through the Opportunity Scholarship Program was they are a lot smaller. Basically, the average school attended by a student in the scholarship program was half the size of the average school attended by students in the control group. With that smaller size, you can get a safer educational environment.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Ms. Gallagher?

Ms. GALLAGHER. So safety inside and outside of school can——

Mr. CUMMINGS. Talk about parenting, how significant that parent fighting for their kid is. I mean—go ahead.

Ms. GALLAGHER. That is not an area that I am as familiar with. I have done some research in D.C. about the choices that parents in very isolated communities have to make about school. And my evidence suggests that they feel that they have many options. Some of them are harder to get to. So transportation can be difficult. And sometimes, while the teaching environments are great in the schools, their students need some wrap-around services, some supports to help them learn.

Mr. CUMMINGS. And do they get that in the private schools? I am just—I mean the wrap-arounds you are talking about.

Ms. GALLAGHER. My understanding, from the evidence that came out of the evaluation, the 2010 evaluation, is that the private schools had fewer wrap-around supports than the public schools do.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank the gentleman. Now I recognize the gentleman from Iowa for five minutes.

Mr. BLUM. Thank you, Chairman Chaffetz. I would also like to thank the panelists for sharing your experiences today and your insights with us. And, as well, I would like to thank Archbishop Carroll High School for hosting this event today.

I had the pleasure of running into your varsity men's basketball coach in the hallway, Coach Fudd, and I had no idea the rich basketball tradition Carroll High School had. Some of the notable graduates are Coach John Thompson, who went on to fame at Georgetown University, and Eddie Jordan, amongst others. And I committed to the coach that I will be back this coming basketball season, sitting in the stands, cheering on the Carroll High School basketball team. So I look forward to that very much.

[Applause.]

Mr. BLUM. The reason I am interested in basketball is I coached basketball for many years at a high school in Iowa, where I am from. And one of the blessings I had is every year probably half of my team was made up of kids from the inner city of Chicago, whose parents moved to Iowa to escape the violence that was present there, in Chicago.

One of my players, Malcolm, became an orphan when he was playing for me. His father was murdered in a drug deal gone bad in Chicago, his mother died of cervical cancer at the age of 42. And we took Malcolm into our family. And here is a young man that, when he came to Iowa in the sixth grade from the inner city of Chicago, could not read. Could not read. And I am so proud and

pleased and happy to say that last year Malcolm graduated from college with honors. And so—yes.

So, Malcolm experienced his own version of an Opportunity Scholarship. And I want to make sure that all children, regardless of their zip codes, across this nation have the opportunity to experience their own versions of the Opportunity Scholarship. It is because of Malcolm and my own personal experiences I am very interested in education and how it can improve.

My first question today would go to Dr. Wolf. Doctor, your research has shown school choice programs increase graduation rates, and I would like to hear from you on what you think makes these programs so successful. Is the school districts in Washington, D.C. unique? Or could these be successful throughout the country?

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Blum, we have done some research on some—you know, by visiting schools, by visiting high schools that are part of choice programs. And there certainly are a variety of factors that seem to be contributing to these higher graduation rates. One is universally high expectations for students. They really send out a signal they believe that all these students can graduate from high school, and the students internalize that, and it becomes confidence-building for them.

They also tend to have some programs—they are not necessarily the official wrap-around programs that Ms. Gallagher mentioned, but many of them do have special programs that allow kids to recover credits that they lost because they fail a class. So these include after-school study programs, where they can make up course material, where they can make up credits. It also includes Saturday—going to school on Saturday. Basically, pushing them harder and giving them more opportunities to master the material that allows them to graduate and move on. So, those are sort of the main things.

And then, also, just a philosophy. A administrator at a school in Milwaukee, private school in Milwaukee, said, "The main philosophy is that graduating from high school is a three-legged stool. And the three legs are the student, the parent, and the school, and they all really have to do their part to support the effort, and then the students get through."

Mr. BLUM. Also, Dr. Wolf, as part of your study that you sent—you sent a survey, I believe, to public school principals, to ask how they were planning to respond to having their students being offered scholarships. Is that correct?

Mr. WOLF. Yes, that is correct.

Mr. BLUM. And did these principals indicate any changes they intended to make in their public schools, as a result of these scholarship offers?

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Blum, 28 percent of them said they had made changes in response to the Opportunity Scholarship Program. Many of those changes were focused on communicating better and more frequently with parents about the programs that their school offers, about the opportunities in their school, about, you know, what their student could do. So those were the main areas.

Some of them established new programs, specifically targeted at the demographic of students eligible for the OSP. But a lot of the

efforts were more sort of communicating more effectively with parents.

Mr. BLUM. Thank you. And I can tell by the glance of the chairman that the five-minute clock has expired. And just once again I would like to thank Carroll High School for having us, and I look forward to being in the stands when we play either St. John's or DeMatha High School next basketball season.

And, with that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank the gentleman. We will now recognize Ms. Norton again for five minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Gallagher, your testimony has really a stunning statistic, when one understands the District of Columbia. The District of Columbia has been a city which always had a large middle-income and upper-income group of parents and residents. And they typically went to our best private schools. You report that there has been a 50 percent decrease in private school enrollment in the District of Columbia. Could you offer any possible explanations for that really quite extraordinary figure?

Ms. GALLAGHER. Unfortunately, I don't have any good reasons why we are seeing that. But we are seeing that decline.

Ms. NORTON. So could you offer some hypothesis as to —since these—the District has experienced an enormous increase in population. So, by process of elimination, we know it is not because they left town. So could you offer some hypotheses of what this means, that these parents are not any longer going to private schools?

Ms. GALLAGHER. I am not comfortable offering hypotheses. But I do know that more middle-income and higher-income parents are choosing public schools in D.C.

Ms. NORTON. And I can tell you that many of them also are choosing the public charter schools, so they look like they do have choices here, choices that they don't have in many jurisdictions around the United States.

Now, I am puzzled by the difference between the graduation rates, and not knowing what contributed to it, because, Mr. Wolf, you did not examine the rigor of the curriculums of the schools involved. And, of course, I gave you some examples of some schools that, of course, are not the John Carroll standard. But you did not look at the curriculums of the schools that would show these graduation rates.

So, we don't know anything about the effect of those curriculums, whether they were good or not good, whether they were schools that were less rigorous—at least some of them—to get through. We don't have any of that information. All we have is the raw information on the graduate rates.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman and Ms.——

Ms. NORTON. And those are parent views of what the graduation rates were.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Chairman, Ms. Norton, we do—it is public knowledge which high schools in the District of Columbia participate in the program, and they are John Carroll, they are Sidwell Friends, they are St. John's, they are Gonzaga, they are——

Ms. NORTON. I am sorry, I am not just talking about high schools.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Something happened to that microphone real quick. I don't know what happened to it. Maybe it ran out of a battery there.

Ms. NORTON. Did you only look at high—you looked at high schools and graduation rates. Did you look beyond high schools?

Mr. WOLF. [No response.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Why don't we pass this microphone there? I think we can take it off the stand and—just take it off. There we go.

Mr. WOLF. So, Mr. Chairman, Ms. Norton, we do know which schools we are talking about, which high schools. So all of the students in our attainment sample were in eighth grade or higher when they entered the program.

And so, generally, this is the effect of the high schools that were participating in the program, and that is John Carroll, that is Sidwell Friends, that is St. John's Prep School, it is Gonzaga, it is Georgetown Visitation. And, I mean, I just find it difficult to believe that these elite college prep schools somehow lowered their standards to boost this high school graduation rate. I think it is real.

Ms. NORTON. I would agree with you, that I would hypothesize that these students had successfully completed rigorous curriculum. I would like to know more about them, of course, because I could only hypothesize that.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, we have heard great kudos today about the D.C. program, and I do think I have to say once again if the D.C. program is to be so lauded and praised, why does not the Republicans' own education bill that is pending and being worked now, simply expand that program for the rest of the country?

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Well, thank you. And I will now recognize myself for five minutes to address that, and talk about some of these other issues.

And I agree with a lot of what Mr. Cummings said. I think there is probably something—there is nothing more powerful than a parent fighting for their child. And we heard that in part of the testimony. And we could listen to all sorts of statistics and analysis. I think they are important to look at metrics. I am not trying to dismiss them. But I have no questions for Dr. Wolf or Ms. Gallagher. Good quality people, and appreciate the dialogue.

But my questions are really for the two people who have gone and lived through the program. And, you know, I have lived in affluent areas. And I recognize now, as an adult looking back, a lot of the kids that I am friends with now, they didn't have those same types of opportunities. They didn't have—they didn't go to the same nice school that I did.

And you know, in Utah, we spend about just over $6,000 per student. We spend more than $20,000 per student in Washington, D.C. And yet our graduation rates are much, much higher. Much higher. They are higher than the national average, and we have the lowest per-pupil spending.

Now, there is lots of different reasons why I think that is probably the case. But going back to why don't we make this a national program, Utah doesn't want it to be a national program. We want

the Federal Government out of our business. We want them out. We want to be able to make those decisions.

The question for Washington, D.C.? Well, then, why are we different? Because they are not a state. They are different. We are different under the Constitution.

We are trying to give an opportunity here, in Washington, D.C., that we have heard great things about. We heard from this dais here that, by offering this scholarship, by empowering parents to make these types of choices in their schools, that it is an abuse of power, that it is inappropriate for Congress, that it lacks respect—that Congress lacks respect by allocating and appropriating money that came from all over the nation to give that to parents in forms of this scholarship.

And so, we will start with Ms. Tomdio. Do you see anything negative from this program?

Ms. TOMDIO. Well, as a recipient of this, I really do not see anything negative for the people that are in this program, and the parents that are given this opportunity. It is an advantage for us, I would say, because, as—D.C., we are not a state. So we are given some type of leeway. And I think it is a great opportunity for us to——

Chairman CHAFFETZ. So if you were sitting here in our seat, and this bill came up to vote, and you had to decide no, no money, no scholarships, or yes, let's allocate tens of millions of dollars, and let's give more scholarships to more people, how would you vote?

Ms. TOMDIO. When you say give more scholarships to more people, in D.C. or just around——

Chairman CHAFFETZ. In Washington, D.C.

Ms. TOMDIO. I would say yes, to give these students, these parents, more opportunities to keep getting us educated and keep fulfilling our dreams.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. And if we can now move the microphone there to Ms. Teferra, do you think more people should have this opportunity or less people should have this opportunity?

Ms. TOMDIO. First of all, Chairman, thank you for the question. I hear for and not-for for this program. I—as a parent, I—believe me, I prefer—I was prefer to have equal opportunity, high-standard education opportunity for all.

My daughter stayed at E.L. Haynes public charter school the eight years. She started as a kindergarten. And moving when she was at fourth grade and so forth, the education that I expect, it is not there any more. The challenge itself. She gets bored, unhappy, and just—any homework, any lesson, she just breeze through it. And she comes, we discuss every day, because her education, her life, is very important to me and to her, her future.

So, I didn't see any improvement. I have talked to the principal, Ms. Jenny Niles. I have talked to the PTA. I go to PTA. And nothing has been improved. So my other path is to look for another public—private school to fulfill Yalemwork's dream. As a parent, I have to back that up.

So, finally, we started applying for private schools and public schools, as well. And she accepted all three of them: Sidwell Friends, Maret, and the School Without Walls. And we have to sit down and make a decision, which one. And we discuss, and she

said she choose one, which is Sidwell Friends. And she did get another second opinion. And then she picked Sidwell Friends.

So my thing is this, though. I heard everything that been said, as in high school, public school or public charter school, should have the same type of education. But for me, and for Yalemwork, time is ticking. What do I do? What is my other choice? And I have to choose what is available to me and to Yalemwork, because I wanted her to do the best and become a wonderful citizen.

So, I would say I will support—at the moment, I support, I said yes.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank you. Now I recognize Mr. Cummings for five minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. And, Ms. Teferra, I mean, I was listening to you very carefully. Your daughter left a lot of other children in the public schools, right? And how—I mean do you feel—when the chairman was asking the question about the children, and what expanding the program, I am sure you would want those other parents not to just be subjected to a lottery, but to be able to have the kind of opportunity that your daughter had, right? The ones that are left in the public schools. I am just curious.

Ms. TEFERRA. Yes, I know what you mean. But everybody has——

Mr. CUMMINGS. And I am not—first of all, I agree with you. You got to fight for your child, no matter—but I am just—and that is the point that we are making. It is not about not wanting your child to have the very best. We want all children to have the kind of opportunities where they can go to school in a decent building, have the kind of things they need, not reading from a book from 1973. We want all children to have that, because that is what makes our society strong and better. But go ahead.

Ms. TEFERRA. Everybody has a choice, don't they?

Mr. CUMMINGS. No, they don't. No, a lot of people are—the same people that your child left in the school that you were not satisfied with, they still there.

Ms. TEFERRA. I understand. That is something that has to be improved.

Mr. CUMMINGS. It does.

Ms. TEFERRA. So then, like I said, what do I do? She is in eighth grade, and I see potential in her. What is my choices?

Mr. CUMMINGS. Yes. Again, I understand that. But I just want to make sure you were clear that we want you to do what you need to do, but we also want to look out for all those other children, too.

Ms. TEFERRA. I care for them, too.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Yes.

Ms. TEFERRA. I do.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Ms.—and one last question.

Ms. Gallagher, Congresswoman Norton was asking you about the decrease in private school enrollment, and it was an excellent question.

But I was wondering if—and I know you didn't have as much information as we would have liked, but is that the trend in—nationally? Do you know that? In other words, for private schools to be decreasing?

And, you know, I am searching for answers for the very —so that our children can have opportunity. And it sounds like the charter school movement here in D.C. is being very effective, based upon the figures that you just were—you know, put out there. Can you comment?

Ms. GALLAGHER. I think that you asked me two questions.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Yes, I did.

Ms. GALLAGHER. Okay. One is do I know whether the——

Mr. CUMMINGS. It is a trend for private schools to be decreasing.

Ms. GALLAGHER. And I am familiar with D.C. and not as familiar with other cities. I am sorry.

But on the topic of whether the charter school system here is responsible—is causing all the improvements we see, I think that we don't know the answer to that question. I wish we did.

We also have an open enrollment system, which allows students in D.C. to apply to any school in the city. And that is a very—oh, sorry, any public school in the city. And that is a very unusual arrangement. It allows for a lot of choice for parents across the city.

Mr. CUMMINGS. So would you say that that may be largely helpful, with regard to the trend that——

Ms. GALLAGHER. I think, together, those choices are part of the story about why we are seeing improvements in D.C.——

Mr. CUMMINGS. And, apparently, the schools may be getting better, then. Would you—is that a reasonable assumption?

Ms. GALLAGHER. [No response.]

Mr. CUMMINGS. In other words, people are moving—you are saying people are moving and they have got choices to go to different schools, and they are doing better. I think you mentioned some test scores, or whatever. So they are doing better. But you——

Ms. GALLAGHER. Yes, test scores have been increasing over time, and a number of different reforms have been going on at the same time. There have been major personnel changes in D.C. There have been new curricula and standardized tests. There have been big investments in facilities in D.C. And so, all of those things can contribute to improved test scores.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And again, I want to thank our witnesses very much for your testimony. We do have challenges all over the country. And education is so very, very important. And we are going to continue to work hard to make sure that every child can walk into their destiny. Thank you.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Thank you. I want to thank everybody's participation today. I want to thank Senator Tim Scott for being here, and being an important part of this discussion.

I want to thank the four of you, and congratulate you, in particular, Ms. Tomdio, and your future. You represent the best of what is happening, and we are proud of you and wish you nothing but the best of hope and luck, and everything else. But I have no doubt about your tenacity to get it done and make things happen. And we are proud of you, and we wish you nothing but the best.

And her parents, are they in the audience? Can we recognize them? Where are her parents? Let's see. Stand up. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. Very good. And, to Ms. Teferra, I don't know if your—do you have your—any relatives here that we should recognize, or——

Ms. TEFERRA. No, I came by myself.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. No? Very good. She is——

Mr. CUMMINGS. She is in school.

Chairman CHAFFETZ. School, I hope, right?

[Laughter.]

Chairman CHAFFETZ. All right, good. Listen, and thank you so much to Archbishop Carroll High School.

This is a great facility, great students. And we wish you nothing but the best. We are proud to be here, we are honored to be here. Thank you for your time and attendance today.

The committee now stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:43 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

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