



## **Fund Students, Not Systems**

Open letter to Florida Legislators:

School choice is expanding across the country and giving families unprecedented freedom to choose an education that aligns with their aspirations and values.

Florida has been a pioneer in school choice for two decades. As of December 2022, nearly half of Florida students have chosen an educational option outside of their zoned traditional public school. Governor DeSantis rightly stated that “parental involvement is important to a child’s success both in school and in life.” We applaud Governor DeSantis and Florida lawmakers who recognize that parents are the ultimate form of accountability and who have worked tirelessly to defend the mantle of parental agency.

While Florida is ahead of most other states, lawmakers have an opportunity to further expand educational freedom and parental choice. [The Heritage Foundation](#) ranks Florida #3 on school choice, noting that it could be improved by expanding eligibility for private education choice policies.

[Recent surveys](#) conducted by EdChoice highlight how school choice can be expanded to meet parental wishes. Specifically, the survey finds that 78% of Florida parents support education savings accounts (ESAs) that can be used for “school tuition; tutoring; online education programs; therapies for students with special needs; textbooks or other instructional materials; or save for future college expenses.” Moreover, 57% of Florida parents prefer home-based schooling for their children (i.e. at home with a parent or tutor) one day per week or more. In deference to these findings, Florida can take the lead on parental empowerment by:

Passing a universal ESA for all Florida students (i.e. no eligibility requirements).

- Allowing as much funding as is legally permissible to follow the child and ensuring parents have control to use ESA funds toward any eligible expense.
- Allowing the ESA to be used toward tuition payments at any type of private school, including religious schools, virtual schools, vocational schools, and boarding schools.
- Removing existing barriers to home-based education (e.g. eliminate licensure requirements for micro schools/learning pods and enrollment restrictions on district and charter-run virtual school programs).
- Ensuring that any regulations initiated by uptake of the ESA (e.g. testing requirements) do not extend to homeschool families who decline to participate in the ESA.

These steps will be a catalyst for innovation and competition and will expand Florida’s educational choice offerings to allow families to select and customize their education as they see fit. These reforms



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also have national implications. Florida’s pioneering reform efforts give the state outsized influence in setting conversations and policy agendas in statehouses across the country.

In the interest of students in Florida and across the country, we urge Florida’s lawmakers to adopt these policies, to further empower parents and expand school choice, and set the roadmap for an education system to benefit the Free State of Florida.

Yours in Educational Freedom,

American Federation for Children  
Americans for Prosperity - Florida  
American Legislative Exchange Council  
Center for Education Reform  
Classic Learning Test  
EdChoice  
Educational Freedom Institute  
Heritage Action  
Independent Women's Voice  
James Madison Institute  
Liberty Justice Center  
Moms for Liberty  
National Coalition for Public School Options - Florida  
yes. every kid.  
Young Americans for Liberty  
Betsy DeVos, 11<sup>th</sup> U.S. Sec. of Education  
Byron Donalds, U.S. Representative (R-FL, 19th District)

Christopher Rufo, Manhattan Institute  
Chaya Raichik, Libs of TikTok  
Corey DeAngelis, American Federation for Children  
Erika Donalds, The Optima Foundation  
Erika Sanzi, Parents Defending Education  
James D. Paul, Educational Freedom Institute  
Jason Bedrick, Heritage Foundation  
Jay P. Greene, Heritage Foundation  
Karol Markowicz, Columnist, Fox News & New York Post  
Lindsey Burke, Heritage Foundation  
Lisa B. Nelson, American Legislative Exchange Council  
Max Eden, American Enterprise Institute  
Nicole Neily, Parents Defending Education  
Robert Pondiscio, American Enterprise Institute  
Virginia Gentles, Independent Women's Forum