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Walton Family Foundation Invests to Double the Number of Students Enrolled in Private School with Public Scholarships by 2017

Bipartisan support fuels private school choice expansion; former Republican Governor and Democratic U.S. Senator validate efforts

BENTONVILLE, ARK. – December 17, 2013 – Today the Walton Family Foundation announced plans to invest \$6 million in the Alliance for School Choice in support of an effort to double the number of students nationwide who attend private schools with the support of publicly funded scholarships. There are now nearly 300,000 students attending private schools with the support of public funding. The Alliance for School Choice is a leading national organization promoting, defending and implementing school choice programs around the country. The Walton Family Foundation invests in programs and organizations that expand parental choice and promote equal opportunity in education and is ASC's largest donor.

Beginning in Wisconsin with 330 students in 1990, private school choice programs have grown to serve nearly 300,000 students across 18 states and the District of Columbia. In the last eight years alone, the number of students using tax credit scholarship and voucher programs across the country has more than doubled. This growth has been driven by vibrant parent demand as well as the passage of new parent choice laws in many states, most recently in Indiana, Louisiana and North Carolina.

"The work of ASC is vital to improving K-12 public education, especially for low-income communities," said Marc Sternberg, director of the foundation's K-12 education reform efforts. "These programs are experiencing unprecedented growth due to the fact that policymakers are responding to growing parent demand. Empowering parents to choose the best school for their child impacts the lives of individual students and can inspire the broader public education system to improve in all sectors – traditional public schools, private schools and public charter schools."

Of the 12 highest quality studies conducted on the impact of voucher programs over the last decade, 11 have shown positive impacts for at least some participating students. Most recently, [research from Harvard University](#) found that in New York, African-American students who utilized a trial voucher program when they were in elementary school were more likely to attend a four-year college than their comparable peers.

"All across the country, parents in low-income communities are increasingly able to choose the best education for their child thanks to policymakers, committed educators and families that are demanding more educational options," said Kevin P. Chavous, executive counsel to the American Federation for Children. "With this investment from the Walton Family Foundation, we will be able to help double the number of children that can attend the private school of their choice, helping to meet overwhelming demand from parents across the country."

Policymakers in many of the first states to allow parents to enroll their children in private schools with the support of public funding have expanded these programs due to demand in recent years. Legislators in Florida, for example, where the Tax Credit Scholarship passed in 2001 with the support of just one Democrat, expanded the program in 2010 with the support of all Republicans and nearly half of Democrats.

“When it comes to education, parents and students need choices, and those choices shouldn’t be limited by the zip code they reside in or the amount of their families’ annual income. Options allow parents to choose a school that best meets their child’s individual needs,” said former Florida Governor Jeb Bush. “In my home state of Florida, we’ve seen lawmakers from both sides of the political aisle come together to empower families with a range of educational choices. I applaud the Walton Family Foundation for generously supporting the Alliance for School Choice’s important work to give more students access to a great education.”

“We can no longer let income level or zip code determine a child’s future,” said United States Senator Cory Booker. “This is why I value organizations like Alliance for School Choice. Their work gives hope to children and families trapped in failing schools and helps make real the promise of our country – that every child should have access to a great education. I am grateful to The Walton Family Foundation for expanding the Alliance’s work and giving more families in disadvantaged communities the opportunity to send their children to schools that will prepare them for success in the 21st century economy.”

About the Walton Family Foundation

Driven by the urgent need to improve K-12 education in the United States, the Walton Family Foundation has invested more than \$1 billion to date in initiatives that expand parental choice and equal opportunity in education. Empowering parents to choose quality schools, regardless of type - traditional public, private or public charter school - will help spur the bold transformation of our national K-12 system of public education. Our nation’s children will only reach their potential in today’s global economy by having access to a high-quality, publicly funded education. Visit the foundation at: www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org.

About Alliance for School Choice

The Alliance for School Choice, the nation’s voice for educational choice, is the nation’s leading school choice advocacy organization and works in states across the country to help secure additional, high-quality educational options for families.

Editor’s Note: The Walton Family Foundation exists independently of Walmart and the Walmart Foundation. Each foundation operates with separate sources of funding and governance.

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