



THE DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON

March 7, 2011

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Any parent with more than one child knows that every child is different. Each child is blessed with his or her own God-given strengths and challenges that need to be appropriately recognized, addressed, and supported, and one of the best supports we can offer is an educational system that recognizes this fundamental truth.

South Carolina is home to a huge array of parochial, private, charter, magnet, independent, and home school options that have grown to serve the children of parents who have, for one reason or another, decided their local public schools were not the best match for their children. However, equal access for all children to these opportunities currently does not exist and certainly does need to be expanded. That is what School Choice is all about: giving families of K-12 students across the state equal access to the classroom that best meet the needs of their children.

I hope you will take a few minutes to study the reverse side of this letter to gain a better understanding of the two opportunities, as well as the accompanying benefits, that are currently being proposed through School Choice: A) State Income Tax Credits; and B) Scholarships to students from low-income families distributed through Student Scholarship Organizations.

Equal access has already happened at the college level through the H.O.P.E. and L.I.F.E. scholarship program for which all high school seniors, regardless of the schools they attend, are eligible. With your active support, school choice can offer similar opportunities to families of elementary, junior high, and high school students as well as validate the mission and success of our Catholic schools and other independent schools that effectively and efficiently serve an important public good. Doesn't every child in the state deserve access to them?

In the Lord's Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Robert E. Guglielmo".

Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmo
Bishop of Charleston

Office of the Bishop

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State Income Tax Credits:

Any person in South Carolina who files a state tax return and pays part of a student's tuition will be able to claim a credit. Initially, these credits will be available only to parents and guardians of children entering into private Kindergarten, and students transferring from public schools to private schools. The credits, half of the total state spending per student, will average \$2,200 in the first year. Each year the eligibility will extend to one additional grade level. As the savings to state government from these entering and transferring students grows, those with children already in the private school system will also become eligible for credits as well.

Student Scholarship Organizations:

Children of families with low-incomes will be served too. All children from families eligible for Medicaid or school lunch subsidies will be qualified for tuition scholarships from charities that exist solely to award them. Corporate and individual donors to these non-profit "Student Scholarships Organizations" will also receive state income tax credits and any money that doesn't reach low-income children in the form of scholarships will be given to the state's General Fund. Similar programs have provided tens of millions of dollars of support for low-income children in Georgia, Pennsylvania and Arizona. The scholarship size, roughly \$2,200 per student, is the same size as the individual income tax credit and represents half of the \$4,400 median tuition fee charged by private schools across the state.

This system of tax credits will save public schools millions of dollars while providing middle and low-income parents greater incentives for active engagement in their children's education.

On average, each student who transfers out of a traditional school will result in an increase of \$5,254 in funding for the local school district. That's because locally-raised property and sales taxes for schools are untouched. In other words, public schools will have more money to educate fewer children. Public schools will also have a renewed sense of mission because all parents in South Carolina will, for the first time, have real access to all types of classrooms for their children