



TO: The Honorable Members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives
FROM: Alex Halper, Manager, Government Affairs
DATE: June 22, 2011
RE: Support School Choice programs

On behalf of its thousands of statewide member businesses of all sizes and crossing all industry sectors, the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry is writing to express support for legislation to expand educational opportunities for the children of our Commonwealth. We understand the House may consider such legislation in the near future.

The short- and long-term economic competitiveness of Pennsylvania nationally, and the United States globally, depends on a well-educated workforce. Yet despite some of the highest elementary and secondary education spending in the nation, Pennsylvania's public school systems are far too often failing to adequately prepare students to enter higher education or employment.

Families with the means to send their children to private or parochial schools will often choose these alternatives if they believe it will benefit their children. Unfortunately, lower- and middle-income families typically have no alternatives when they are confronted with the reality that the public school system is not the best option for their child.

Accordingly, the PA Chamber supports reforms to provide more parents with choices for their children's education, including school vouchers, the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program and charter schools.

We understand the concerns expressed by opponents to school choice, most of whom are well-intentioned advocates for the long-term viability of the public school system. As business leaders, however, we also understand that competition is often the catalyst for progress and improvement. As such, being required to compete for students with other educational institutions may ultimately spur public schools to enact the improvements that will help ensure their enduring success.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Alex Halper at 717-720-5471 or ahalper@pachamber.org. Thank you.