



TO: The Honorable Members of the Pennsylvania Senate
FROM: Alisha Wells, Manager, Government Affairs
DATE: Oct. 26, 2011
RE: Support education reform

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 that would make important improvements to Pennsylvania's education system, including expansion of the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program and the implementation of an Opportunity Scholarship Program. We understand that S.B. 1 may be voted on Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2011 and respectfully request that you vote "yes" on this reform bill.

PA Chamber members believe that, much as occurs within the business community, competition within the education system will drive progress and improvement. For this reason, we urge you to support the creation of an Opportunity Scholarship Program in Pennsylvania. Providing educational choices for low-income students who are stuck in low-achieving school districts will allow them to realize their full academic potential, while serving as a catalyst for those districts to improve.

Ultimately, the quality of education students receive will play a major role in the overall competitiveness of the state on both a national and global scale. Unfortunately, while investment in public education continues to increase, data indicates that some of our schools are failing to provide students with an education that adequately prepares them for the workforce. In an effort to ensure the future success of Pennsylvania's children, these trends must change. For this reason, the PA Chamber has endorsed Gov. Tom Corbett's education reform policy. It is our belief that these reforms will be a step in the right direction toward making improvements that bridge the gap between employee skill sets and employer needs.

In addition, the PA Chamber supports provisions within S.B. 1 that would increase access to the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program. The EITC program has provided thousands of low-income children with the opportunity to receive a better education. We believe the increase from \$75 million to \$125 million by 2014 will better align the program with current economic realities and allow more families to pursue educational opportunities for their children that they otherwise could not afford. The positive impact

generated by this legislation will be felt to an even greater extent if other reforms are enacted this session that propose an expansion of entities which authorize charter schools. This will infuse true competition into the public school system and inspire students and teachers to reach their potential.

We encourage you to vote in favor of S.B. 1. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Alisha Wells at 717 720-5431 or awells@pachamber.org.