

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNTS

WHEREAS, education is essential to unlocking the door to The American Dream and for the future prosperity of The Palmetto State; and

WHEREAS, all children should have access to a quality education that equips them for success—no matter their zip code or learning style; and

WHEREAS, every tool and strategy available should be employed to improve academic quality for students—from kindergarten through high school; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 has significantly impacted the educational opportunity and attainment of students across South Carolina creating a new sense of urgency to accelerate their learning; and

WHEREAS, since COVID, South Carolina has seen enrollment decline in traditional public schools, while enrollment in public charter schools, private schools and home schools has skyrocketed;

WHEREAS, in response to resulting similar parental demand, 18 other states have expanded or enacted new private school choice programs in 2021; and

WHEREAS, since 2019 the Republican-led General Assembly has passed budgets with a combined hundreds of millions of new investments in public schools, including to provide every teacher a pay raise, to increase base student cost, for workforce partnerships in technical schools, for school resource officers, for new textbooks, for new school buses, for mental health counselors, for rural school construction, and for expanded full-day 4-K; and

WHEREAS, South Carolina public schools have received an unprecedented additional \$3.4 billion in federal COVID-related aid; and

WHEREAS, South Carolina parents have received no financial assistance to cope with the learning losses their children experienced; and

WHEREAS, Republican voters support the value of public education, and its intended goal of creating educated citizens, but do not believe that a one-size-fits-all approach adequately meets every student's needs; and

WHEREAS, an overwhelming majority of Republican voters believe that parents should have “educational choice,” a range of schooling options that will empower them to access the education that best meets the individual needs of their children; and

WHEREAS, in a statistically-sound April 2021 poll of 400 South Carolina primary voters, 78% of respondents supported a school choice program that “gives parents the right to use a portion of state tax dollars to send their child to a public or private school which best serves their needs;” 91% agreed that “parents should have a choice to move a child to a school that fits their needs;” 89% agreed that “too many students are stuck in underperforming schools and parents should have the opportunity to get them a quality education at another school;” 83% agreed that “some schools may use instruction time to push a political agenda so parents should have the right to determine what values their children are taught in school;” and

WHEREAS, Education Scholarship Accounts (ESAs) are the most flexible, parent-driven school choice option available in the steady growth and improvement of private school choice programs; and

WHEREAS, current Education Scholarship Account legislation creates special accounts using the state portion of education spending for economically-qualified parents who may use funds in these special accounts to fund the specific education option tailored to their child, including private schooling, tutoring, educational therapies, curriculum, individual classes or services at a public school, and other educational services; and

WHEREAS, beginning a program with students in the greatest need does not preclude expanding such a program to ultimately allow funding to follow all students in the future, the end-point at which true public education must ultimately arrive;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the South Carolina Republican Party Executive Committee believes that the South Carolina General Assembly, led by Republicans, must include common sense free-market education policies— education choice in general and passage of Education Scholarship Accounts in particular—in the work of its 2022 legislative session.