



Frances Floresca, Education Policy Analyst and Reporter

August 9, 2023

Grant Sawyer State Office Building,
555 East Washington Avenue, Room 4401
Las Vegas, Nevada, 89101

Dear Members of the Interim Finance Committee,

My name is Frances Floresca for the record, and I am an education policy analyst living here in Nevada who does work for various organizations and outlets around the country, none of which I am representing today. I urge you to approve **Item F** to allocate funding for Opportunity Scholarships for low-income students.

I am the mother of a baby boy who will one day be in school, and I am someone who benefited from having access to more options in education by attending a charter school next door in Utah. I would not have succeeded in school and my career without having this learning opportunity. However, not only did I succeed, but I saw improvements with many of the public schools in the area when Utah public schools saw charter schools as competition.

When my family came to this country from the Philippines when I was young, they really wanted to prioritize education for my sister and me. They found schools that worked for us, but if we had access to education freedom scholarships, we would have been able to cast a net even further and look at all of our options.

I also want to note Utah currently ranks #9 in Pre-K to 12 education while Nevada is ranked at #46. Utah ranks #2 for spending the least amount of funds for each student, yet it still manages to rank high in education.

I also hear from Nevada's elected officials and their allies that this will only take more money away from public schools.

According to a study from the Nevada Policy Research Institute, the expansion of school choice programs has the potential to save millions of dollars annually. These funds could then be used to benefit students who decide to remain in public schools. It would bring in more money for fewer students.

If you read my recent opinion, *It Is Unjust to Trap Students Into Failing Public Schools*, I noted how you spoke often about helping low-income families and individuals during the most recent legislative session, but you would not fight for students of low-income families. Now between



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500 and 600 students are on the [verge](#) of losing their school choice scholarships unless you approve the \$3.2 million unallocated COVID-19 dollars.

And before you ask, “Why should we use COVID-19 dollars?,” let us not forget many Nevada families began sending their children to [private schools](#) and [public charter schools](#) while traditional public schools in Nevada remained closed for in-person learning. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted how children were learning.

Test scores have continued to drop, especially among Black and Hispanic students in the state, many who are stuck in failing public schools in the state, especially in Clark County, one of the largest school districts in the country. If you really do not want to see more segregation in education, now is the time to ensure all students have access to the best education opportunities for them regardless of race or income.

Studies [show](#) students of low-income families also have benefited from these programs as they have shown increased progress within a few years. In Nevada alone, the Department of Education analyzed that out of **386 Opportunity Scholarship recipients, 71% of them [increased](#) ELA and math scores.**

[Studies](#) by John Chubb and Terry Moe of the Brookings Institution, as well as economists Milton and Rose Friedman, show that school choice programs lead to “increased overall quality levels and lower costs” in education.

You will be hearing from many whose lives have been changed with Opportunity Scholarships here in Nevada. I urge you to hear them out, and know why it is vital to provide more support for these scholarships.

Again, I urge you to approve Item F for the sake of Nevada children and the future of the Silver State.

Sincerely,

Frances Floresca