September 13, 2023

**SENT VIA EMAIL**

Commissioner Manny Diaz  
Florida Department of Education  
Turlington Building, Suite 1514  
325 West Gaines Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Commissioner Diaz:

We, the undersigned, call on the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) and its scholarship funding organizations (SFOs), Step Up For Students and AAA Scholarship Foundation, to provide more information on students who have applied and been approved for Florida’s Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarships, Family Empowerment Scholarships – Educational Options (FES-EO), and Family Empowerment Scholarships for students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA).

Looking at all revenue sources, there is $4.2 billion dollars available, including $2.8 billion coming from general revenue. For fiscal year 2023-24, the Legislature appropriated $2 billion in the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) for scholarships, $436 million in State-Funded Discretionary Supplement dollars, and an additional $350 million in the back of the budget for cost overruns. There is also funding from the FTC Scholarship Program, which is approved for $1.1 billion for school year 2024, along with $467 million in carryforward from the program in the previous fiscal year. Additionally, there is funding from the sales tax and motor vehicle tax. However, little is known about the characteristics of the students applying, the future budgetary consequences of these scholarships, and the likely downstream impact on public schools.

On Aug. 26, 2023, the president of Step Up for Students shared on Twitter that the organization had awarded more than 410,000 full-time scholarships and continues to receive around 1,400 applications daily. With this letter, the undersigned organizations request an official release of this data on a regular basis, to include additional details.

Specifically, we request that the following information be made public regarding student characteristics:

- Number of new private schools that have applied to accept scholarships

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1 “Awarded” does not imply that students have been accepted by a private school. It is only that they have applied and been deemed eligible.
• Demographic information, including race/ethnicity, and income information of applicants by type of scholarship
• Number of Personalized Education Program (homeschool) students who have applied
• Number of students who have never been in public school before

We also request that FLDOE provide information on the budgetary impact and effects of universal FES and FTC scholarships on public schools:

• What happens if the scholarship costs exceed the allocated per-district amounts as laid out in the FEFP summary, the available funds from the FTC Scholarship Program, and the Educational Enrollment Stabilization Fund?

In the name of transparency, we call on you to share these data publicly and on a regular basis.

Sincerely,

Florida Policy Institute
ACLU of Florida
Alliance for Public Schools
Citizens for Better Schools, Inc.
Coral Gables Democratic Club
Democratic Public Education Caucus of Florida
Disability Rights Florida
Families for Strong Public Schools
Florida AFLCIO
Florida Council of Churches
Florida Education Association
Florida Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
Fund Education Now
Kendall Democrats
League of Women Voters North Pinellas County
League of Women Voters of Citrus County
League of Women Voters of Florida
League of Women Voters of Hillsborough and Pasco Counties
League of Women Voters of Lee County Florida
League of Women Voters of North Pinellas County
LWV Seminole County
LWV Tallahassee
Moms4Libros
MomsRising
NAACP Florida State Conference
P.S. 305
Pastors for Florida’s Children
SEIU Florida