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TO: Senate Education Subcommittee on K-12 Scholarships

FROM: Dr. Janelle Rivers, Education Advocacy Specialist

SUBJECT: Budget Consequences of Education Scholarship Bills

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Ballot initiatives in other states have shown that when voters have an opportunity to weigh in at the polls, they defeat proposals that attempt to send public money to private and religious schools. Ninety percent of South Carolina voters choose to send their students to public schools, and it's likely that they, too, would oppose sending public money to private schools.

The over-arching concern is that the General Assembly is constitutionally charged with the "maintenance and support of a system of free public schools open to all children in the State."¹ Any mechanism that directs public money to private and religious schools instead of strengthening options within our system of public schools is unlikely to meet with approval from the majority of voters.

South Carolina lawmakers have been wise to wait to see the results of "universal choice" experiments in other places. States that implemented "universal choice" programs have seen disastrous effects on their state budgets. We can benefit from their experience.

These "universal choice" programs are being promoted nationally by dark-money groups whose ultimate goal is to undermine the public schools in order to privatize K-12 education. The propaganda that these programs are primarily to help students in poverty has been discredited by the widely known fact that such funds most often go to families that are well above the poverty line.

¹ SC State Constitution, Article XI, Section 3.

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