



PO BOX 8453, COLUMBIA, SC, 29202, (803) 606-0431, WWW.LWVSC.ORG

TESTIMONY: H.5164
BEFORE THE K-12 SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE EDUCATION & PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

March 5, 2024

I am testifying on behalf of Dr. Janelle Rivers and the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, in opposition to H.5164.

Being accountable for use of public funds requires designing appropriate evaluations for the programs that are enacted, documenting how well the programs have been implemented, and then using outcome data to determine what adjustments are needed, Expansion of any program that uses public funds should be based on quality program evaluation data.

The South Carolina Educational Scholarship Trust fund has no program effectiveness data, because the initial implementation of the program has not even begun. Therefore, the authors of this bill cannot be using program evaluation data to recommend its expansion. The only basis available for estimating program effectiveness at this time would be what professional evaluators call process data, and even that is limited. There is no available implementation data. What is available for evaluating South Carolina's educational scholarship program at this time would be limited to analysis of the provisions that the state has enacted for regulation of its public and private schools.

Fortunately, the Network for Public Education has just issued a nationwide report titled *Public Schooling in America: Measuring Each State's Commitment to Democratically Governed Schools*. The report measures states on 42 factors that affect public education, which are grouped into the following four categories:

1. **Privatization laws:** the adequacy of guardrails and limits on charter and voucher programs to ensure that taxpayers and students are protected from discrimination, corruption, and fraud.
2. **Homeschooling laws:** the adequacy of laws to ensure that instruction is provided safely and responsibly.

3 Financial support for public schools: the degree to which the state provides sufficient and equitable funding of public schools.

4 Freedom to teach and learn: the degree to which state laws provide for student safety protections and honest instruction free of political intrusion.

The resulting state outcome is not a measure of student performance, but rather a measure of legislative commitment to support of public schools. Five states received a grade of A for their strong commitment to public education. South Carolina was one of 17 states that received an overall grade of F. (Burris, 2024)

Until and unless South Carolina can produce data to show that its Educational Scholarship Trust Fund is supporting successful educational outcomes, there is no reasonable basis for expanding the program.

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina urges you to oppose this bill.

Contact: Janelle Rivers, Ph.D., Education Advocacy Specialist LWVSC
803 667-6610 rivers12@bellsouth.net

Burris, C. (2024, March). *Public Schooling in America: Measuring Each State's Commitment to Democratically Governed Schools*. Retrieved from Network for Public Education: <https://networkforpubliceducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Publicschooling-in-America-2024.pdf>