

Who Supports the OSP?

D.C. LEADERS

“I cannot look those parents in the eye right now at this point and offer every single one of them a spot in a school that I think is a high performing school ... Until we are able to do that, which again I think is on that 5 year time horizon, then I believe that we do need to have choice for our families. They have to have the ability to participate either to move into a charter school or to use the opportunity scholarships.”

—*D.C. Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee*

“The OSP is fulfilling its basic mission: it is improving and advancing the educational lives of thousands of low-income children. I have met countless mothers and fathers and grandparents who, with the leg up provided by DC OSP, have rescued their children and grandchildren from lives with iffy futures and literally changed their families’ whole outlook on life. The Opportunity Scholarship Program is giving greater voice and empowerment to low-income families with proven success for children. We must and we will continue the fight!”

—*Anthony Williams, former D.C. Mayor*

“We have to tell Congress to fund the program and not let the local people down. I’m a strong supporter of choice. What about these parents who are stuck in the rat-infested, crumbling traditional public schools? We have a program that doesn’t take a cent from the local public schools. Our children’s education is at risk. I stand in solidarity with you.”

—*Marion Barry, former D.C. Mayor*

“I stand up for what I believe are important issues— one of the most important issues we have right now is D.C. Opportunity Scholarships. We cannot decide for you which are the opportunities that will make you successful.”

—*D.C. City Councilman Harry Thomas, Jr., Ward 5*

“Since its inception in 2003, the OSP has allowed thousands of District school children to receive a quality education. We believe we simply cannot turn our backs on these families because doing so will deny their children the quality education they deserve. We strongly urge you to stand with us in supporting these children and continuing the District’s Opportunity Scholarship Program.”

—*D.C. City Council, Majority Letter*

“These children are thriving and succeeding due to their hard work and the D.C. OSP. For Congress and the Administration to take this program away is denying educational opportunities for our children. It’s time to tell our political leaders to keep this program going—it’s the right thing to do for our kids.”

—*Kevin P. Chavous, former D.C. City Councilman*

Nearly 9,000 D.C. families have applied to participate in the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

View “Let Me Rise” for more OSP family stories: <http://www.voicesofschoolchoice.org>

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MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

“Imagine the frustration that we would feel if our children were trapped in a public school where we knew they were not getting a good education that would compromise the rest of their life and yet we did not have the money to get them a better education. The Opportunity Scholarship Program...gives economically disadvantaged kids an opportunity to rise to the limits of their ability. Over 85 percent of the students in this program would be attending a school in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring as designated under Federal law. This is a remarkable program that really does deserve to be continued.”

—*Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-CT)*

“It is so disappointing—it is discouraging and dismaying—that we are having to fight for the continuation of a program that each and every day is making a difference in the lives of these children. I hope my colleagues will take a close look at the facts revealed by our hearing, the rigorous studies that have been done to compare educational progress, the recommendations of the chancellor of the DC Public Schools and, most of all, I hope they will listen to the students and to the families whose lives have been changed for the better due to this program. It would be truly a tragedy for the children of the District of Columbia if this program is not continued.”

—*Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)*

“I have supported this program for some 6 years now, since its inception under the leadership of District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams, and I strongly believe it should be continued. It is right. I do not understand why we are so afraid to give needy youngsters the opportunity of choice in education, to allow someone who cannot do well in a certain setting to have a different setting in which they may well be able to do very well.”

—*Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)*

“This program is popular, effective, and has made a difference for thousands of low-income children in our nation’s capital for the last five years. Ending it at the behest of powerful special interests would be shameful. We know where Washington, D.C. parents stand on this issue: they want the program to continue. It’s time now for Congress and the Administration to listen to the voices of the parents and students that this program has served so well.”

—*House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-OH)*

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D.C. PARENTS

“I would like to ask Mr. Secretary Arne Duncan: how is it that my child should not be given the same opportunity as his children to get the best education possible? If Congress gave enough money, why is my daughter being denied the opportunity to attend a great school?”

—*Latasha Bennett, OSP Parent and Applicant*

“The D.C. Public School system has failed me and many others at life’s opportunities. The schools are unsafe and overcrowded. I want my children to have a better and brighter future. I want them to have the opportunity to receive the best education possible so that they are armed with knowledge. I know that a good education is the key and will unlock any and all doors to success. I will fight to keep the OSP active.”

—*Aviette Norris, OSP Applicant*

“My oldest son has been on an Opportunity Scholarship for five years. The possibilities are endless as long as the program continues. I have never made a better decision to apply for this program. Every parent should have the ability to make that same decision.”

—*Patricia William, OSP Parent*

“The scholarship has been able to give my daughter an opportunity to go to a private school and learn in an environment that is safer, academic(s) are enforced more, and the teachers and staff’s goals are to see the students succeed in life. My greatest inspiration is seeing my daughter succeed in high school and seeing how delighted she is to go onto college and succeed.”

—*Hilda Amancio, OSP Parent*

“I am thankful for the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program that has given my son, Ronald, the chance to be educated in a school that works for him.”

—*Carmen Holassie, OSP Parent*

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STUDENTS

“Some public schools, including the one I went to, are not as strict and focused. It makes it hard to concentrate on learning. But at Sacred Heart the academics are taken seriously. This focus is something that has helped me succeed.”

—*Shirley-Ann Tomdio, OSP Student*

“The OSP program must continue. I am struck that there are people who are willing to take this program away. We have come so far and we will fight for this program until it is reauthorized.”

—*Ronald Holassie, OSP student*

“The school choice program is the ladder holding me up. If the program goes away, the ladder will too and there will be no more climbing for me.”

—*Carlos Battle, OSP Student*

“Receiving a scholarship and being given the choice of where I could attend school was a blessing for my family. It changed my life and made innumerable options available to me. I hope that everyone graduating (from D.C. OSP) remembers the opportunities we were given to receive a wonderful education and the chance at a successful future. These privileges come with a lot of responsibilities—and one is to help make sure that our brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, and other children in the District of Columbia have the option to also receive a D.C. Opportunity Scholarship.”

—*Jordan White, OSP graduate*

“The scholarship program has made a huge difference in my life, and has opened up new opportunities for me.”

—*Joshua Carter, OSP Graduate*

“I am determined to build a better life and want others in my community to have that chance, as well.”

—*Tiffany Dunston, OSP Graduate*

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