



# Enacting Education Freedom in Nebraska

## *LB295: Opportunity Scholarships Act*



### Education Choice

- Parents have the right to choose a school for their children which corresponds to their own convictions (CCC #2229) and should have true liberty in their choice of schools.
- Protects religious freedom by lifting the financial burdens that prevent many families from choosing faith-based education.



### LB295 Overview

- The Opportunity Scholarships Act provides for private school scholarships for low-income students.
- It does so by enacting a tax credit for donations to nonprofit scholarship granting organizations.

### Why We Need LB295

- Too many parents in our state lack true freedom of education choice.
- Many cannot afford to pay both taxes in support of government schools and tuition for parochial or other private schools.
- This bill will give low- and middle-income families privately-funded scholarships to choose a private education for their children.



### This Will Help Nebraska

- More opportunities for low-income students.
- Nebraska will join 18 other states with similar laws which have saved more than \$1.8 billion all together.
- Higher achievement and college enrollment rates.
- Increased civic participation.



### What You Can Do to Pass LB295

- Join our network for important updates/action items.
- Write Letters to the Editor.
- Write to your Senator.
- Write to Governor Ricketts.
- Host an LB295 info session.
- Share information on social media.

# More About Education Choice and LB295

## SHARE YOUR STORY!

If you have a personal story about how private education or a privately-funded scholarship has had a powerful impact on your child and family, Nebraska needs to hear it! All children should have the opportunity to choose the education that best fits their needs.

Here are ways to make your voices heard to advance education choice in our state:

### Contact your Senator

They are elected to serve you after all! You can simply encourage your Senator and Governor Ricketts to support LB295 or, even better, tell them why private school was best for your child. Find contact information at [nebraskalegislature.gov](http://nebraskalegislature.gov).

### Letters to the Editor

This can be a powerful, yet easy, way to show public support for education choice. For a list of talking points and directions for contacting your local paper, visit [necatholic.org/education](http://necatholic.org/education).

### Contact the NCC

The Nebraska Catholic Conference is collecting your stories to share with the Legislature, media and general public. We would love to hear from you!

Contact Lauren Garcia at 402.477.7517 or [lgarcia@necatholic.org](mailto:lgarcia@necatholic.org).

## Why do we need LB295?

Every single child in Nebraska deserves to go to a school that best suits his or her needs, regardless of income. LB295 allows for more private, not public funds, for scholarships to attend private school which too many cannot otherwise afford. In 2017, Children's Scholarship Fund of Omaha turned away 635 applications due to lack of scholarship funds.

## How will LB295 work?

LB295 will create a state income tax credit for donations to scholarship granting organizations, i.e., nonprofits that turn nearly all their revenue into private-school scholarships. Participating schools must be approved or accredited by the state and follow the nondiscrimination requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

## What is a tax credit?

A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction of one's tax liability, in contrast to a tax deduction, which merely reduces one's taxable income.

## Who will LB295 help?

A first-time recipient must be transferring from public to private school - unless they are entering private-school Kindergarten, private school 9th grade, or are a sibling of any of these other recipients. The bill is focused on families who likely have no other choice but public schools. An eligible family's income must be lower than twice the Free-and-Reduced-Lunch level.

## Will LB295 hurt public schools?

LB295 steers only private - not public - funds to private-school students. It helps reduce costly overcrowding in Lincoln and Omaha public schools. It actually saves state tax dollars in short order by slowing the amount of state aid needed for public schools. If a recipient transfers from public to private school, it will likely leave more resources for the state to spend on fewer students.

## How will this affect private schools?

Participation will be voluntary for all private schools. The state will be prohibited from interpreting the Opportunity Scholarships Act in any way that expands its authority to control or intrude upon private schools.

*"Nebraska has many parents and children who know there are different options but don't have a choice because of limited resources. What if you were them? . . . Education is too important and we need to let parents choose what is best for kids like me."*

**Jayleesha**, 8th grader at Holy Name School (Omaha)  
Revenue Committee LB295 Hearing Testimony  
January 26, 2017