

## Parents Group Decries Bill That Abolishes Opportunity Scholarships

By Administrator

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Mike Long, President of Parents for Educational Freedom in North Carolina, decried a newly introduced bill in the N.C. House that seeks to abolish the North Carolina Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP).

“Our state is embroiled in a once-in-a-century global pandemic. People’s bank accounts are being impacted every day, especially those of working-class families in North Carolina. And yet, in the middle of this crisis, a small group of House lawmakers want to take away the Opportunity Scholarship Program, which currently enables 12,283 students in our state to get the education they deserve,” Long said. “Outrageously, this effort to end Opportunity Scholarships is hidden in a broader bill that seeks to respond to recent court decisions on the Leandro case providing ‘a sound basic education’ to all NC children. Our message to sponsors of the bill: You cannot take away educational opportunity freely chosen by thousands of families. You cannot advance Leandro policy on the backs of these students.”

Long added, “Under this provision, the 12,283 current scholarship students can keep their scholarships, but we are well aware that this is the first step in Governor Roy Cooper’s plan to eliminate the program completely. We do not believe it is written this way, in goodwill, but as a way to tiptoe, politically, toward current scholarship family’s purse strings and rip it away from them when they get the chance.”

OSP provides low-income and working-class, tax-paying families in North Carolina with a private school scholarship of up to \$4,200 to send their child to the school of their choice. Today, 12,283 K-12 students in our state benefit from an Opportunity Scholarship. According to an N.C. State University study, the median household income for new OSP recipients (adjusted for inflation) is \$16,213 and \$15,000 for renewal recipients. HB 1129 would stop any new students from joining the program and begin the eventual draw down of all Opportunity Scholarships.

“Since the birth of OSP in 2013, parents and families in our state have been under attack by the education elite class, who believes they are better positioned to make education decisions for children than their parents,” Long added. “This education establishment, including politicians in our state, simply is not listening. Since OSP was passed in 2013, tens of thousands of families have applied for the program, and nearly 40,000 scholarships have been awarded or renewed for children from low-income and working-class families in our state. Furthermore, thousands of new families would lose access to the program in the future. To the legislators eager to sign-on to a bill to abolish this program, my question is simple: Why?”

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“The best word to describe this bill: Hypocrisy. All of the sponsors are Democrats, including Rep. Graig Meyer who himself attended a private high school in Ohio. Why was school choice suitable for Rep. Meyer but not hard-working, low-income families in our state? Perhaps this group of lawmakers is working to make good on Gov. Cooper’s comments that the Opportunity Scholarship Program ‘is an expense that we should stop in our state,’ and that he ‘felt better just eliminating the funding.’ It is shameful, and we call on House leaders to stand up to Gov. Cooper and his anti-school choice allies to block HB 1129.” The following are sponsors of HB 1129 and the number of current Opportunity Scholarship students and applicants in the counties they represent: