

**Testimony to the Pennsylvania House Policy Committee**

**January 23, 2026**

**Prepared by Keisha Jordan, President and CEO,  
Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia**

Thank you for the opportunity to share the impact of scholarships in Pennsylvania, and the continued need for access to quality educational options for children in the Commonwealth.

My name is Keisha Jordan, I am President and CEO of Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia. CSFP is Pennsylvania's largest Kindergarten – 8<sup>th</sup> grade focused private school scholarship program, serving more than 6,800 Philadelphia students. Our program is unique in that scholarships follow the student and remain with them through 8<sup>th</sup> grade; once a student receives a CSFP scholarship, up to three students in a family will receive annual funding to attend the school of their choice all the way through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We serve students with the most need; those with the lowest incomes and who live in Pennsylvania's lowest academic achieving public school neighborhoods. For CSFP scholars, a scholarship is the way to economic and social success.

Our outcomes are strong. As we celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2026, CSFP scholars:

- Choose from among 150 private schools in the region, including here at St. Anselm, where 48 students are receiving CSFP scholarships this year, with an investment of \$109,500
- Outperform their public school peers in math and reading
- Attend high schools of choice, at a rate of 95%
- Graduate high school on time
- Enroll in college at a rate of 72%, in comparison to the Philadelphia School District at a rate of 51% in the same year. The highest enrollment colleges for CSFP students are Temple University, Drexel University, Community College of Philadelphia, and Penn State University. In other words, CSFP alumni are remaining in Philadelphia and having an impact right here at home.

When Philly students who live in low-achieving public school neighborhoods have the chance to attend the tuition-based school of their family's choice, their academic opportunities improve. These outcomes measure the effectiveness of just one scholarship program funded thanks to your continued support of the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit programs. But there are more than 200 such programs, all of which could show outstanding outcomes of one type or another.

While EITC and OSTC have a positive impact on the lives of more than 100,000 Pennsylvania students, the programs still do not meet the need of the more than 200,000 Pennsylvania students who live in neighborhoods with the state's lowest academic achieving public schools. Thousands of Philadelphia students apply for CSFP scholarships annually, but funding limitations mean we can only offer a fraction of them a scholarship that could change their lives. Applicant families tell us they are not only seeking a quality academic experience for their children; they are also seeking safety and often the values inherent in religious education of all types – Catholic, Islamic, Christian, Jewish, or Quaker. All families, regardless of income, should be able to make these important school decisions for their children, especially when their neighborhood option is not acceptable. There is still more need for programs that will give choice in education to Pennsylvania students.

A new opportunity to award more scholarship dollars through tax credits is just months away for states that opt to participate in the federal tax credit program. Through this program, donors will receive a 100% tax credit for a gift of up to \$1,700 to a scholarship organization like CSFP. Scholarship

Granting Organizations will then turn those donations into scholarships for students that can be used for private school tuition, technology, special education services, and more. The organization Democrats for Education Reform estimates that if 30% of eligible Pennsylvania taxpayers participate, more than \$960 million could be available for scholarships in the Commonwealth. For scholarship organizations like CSFP, the federal tax credit could expand our capacity to meet the demand of Pennsylvania families wanting school choice for their children.

The first step in bringing this program to Pennsylvania students is for Governor Shapiro to opt-in to participate. I urge all legislators to communicate this need to the Governor. If Pennsylvania does not opt in, Pennsylvania taxpayers will still participate in the program, but their gifts will benefit students in other states. We want this program enacted in the Commonwealth, for the benefit of Pennsylvania students.

Adding the federal tax credit to the EITC/OSTC programs will enable more family success stories like Lawanda's. Lawanda has been a CSFP parent leader for eight years. Her oldest son is now a college graduate and getting started in his career. Her younger son Caleb is an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at St.

Malachy who was accepted to every high school he applied to, including his top choice of LaSalle College High School. Lawanda will tell anyone who asks that her family's partnership with CSFP through scholarships was life changing. In 2026, our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and also the anniversary of the EITC/OSTC tax credit programs, we will be sharing more success stories that further prove scholarships work.