



PENNSYLVANIA CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NETWORK

Pennsylvania House Republican Policy Committee
Chairman David Rowe

Hearing on Expanding Educational Opportunities for Every Child
Hosted by Representative Gary Day
Legislative Testimony
October 22, 2026

Chairman Rowe, Representative Day, and Members of the Republican Policy Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the importance of educational choice in Pennsylvania and the need to strengthen opportunities for families through the state's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program and the new Education Freedom Tax Credit (EFTC).

Pennsylvania Christian Education Network (PCEN), an initiative of the Pennsylvania Family Institute, recognizes the importance of educational opportunities, and the role scholarship programs play in helping families pursue the best educational setting for their children. As the Executive Director of the PCEN and a former public school teacher and principal, I believe every child deserves access to an education that meets their individual needs and reflects their family's values. For many families, a Christian school provides an educational environment where students can grow academically and be disciplined in a Biblical worldview that aligns with their family's convictions. The most significant barrier to these opportunities is the financial hurdle.

Supporting Pennsylvania's EITC Program

Since its inception in 2001, Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program has helped expand educational opportunities by encouraging eligible businesses and, since 2014, individual taxpayers to contribute to scholarship-granting organizations (SGOs) in exchange for state tax credits. The program provides an important mechanism for directing private support toward scholarships and educational initiatives that benefit students across the Commonwealth.

EITC is an investment in Pennsylvania's children and families. By helping scholarship organizations provide financial assistance, the program allows more parents to consider schools that might otherwise be beyond their financial reach. It also recognizes that educational success is different for every student and that parents are best positioned to understand their children's individual needs and choose the best option for their family.

For parents, many use tax credit scholarships like EITC to access the option that best fits their needs, which for some is through Christian education. These schools provide academic instruction through spiritual formation established on Biblical truth. When



PENNSYLVANIA CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NETWORK

families have meaningful educational options, students can pursue environments that better fit their learning needs, and parents have greater flexibility in directing their children's education.

We should continue to support and expand Pennsylvania's EITC program, protect its effectiveness, and recognize scholarship-granting organizations as valuable partners in expanding educational opportunities. We should also pursue additional avenues that complement the state's existing efforts, such as the federal Education Freedom Tax Credit (EFTC).

Pennsylvania Must Opt into the Education Freedom Tax Credit

The new federal Education Freedom Tax Credit presents an important opportunity to build on Pennsylvania's existing commitment to educational choice.

Beginning January 1, 2027, eligible taxpayers may claim a federal tax credit for redirecting taxes that they already owe to eligible scholarship-granting organizations. Under current federal guidance, the credit can be up to \$1,700 per eligible taxpayer, or \$3,400 for married couples filing jointly. The program is designed to support scholarships for qualifying elementary and secondary education expenses.

The opportunity presented by this new tax credit program is significant. With no credit caps, it is projected that hundreds of millions of dollars annually would be used to help families access better educational options. However, while any taxpayer can redirect their taxes and claim the credit, Pennsylvania families and students can only benefit from these privately funded dollars if the Commonwealth elects to participate.

This is not a question of choosing between public education and private education. It is a question of whether Pennsylvania will help families in our state access a better education or just help families who live in states that do opt in.

These contributions from private citizens can help students across all educational walks of life, including public, cyber, charter, private, and Christian schools throughout the Commonwealth. An affirmative "yes" to participate from Governor Josh Shapiro is an investment in Pennsylvania students and families.

A Time-Sensitive Opportunity for Pennsylvania Families

With the federal program scheduled to begin on January 1, 2027, the Commonwealth must act with urgency. State participation and the identification of qualifying scholarship-granting organizations are essential steps in allowing the credits to help students in our state. Early action gives scholarship-granting organizations, taxpayers, and families greater time to prepare for implementation.



PENNSYLVANIA CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NETWORK

Other states have already decided to participate. To date, 31 states (including our neighbors to the north, New York) have opted in. New York Governor Kathy Hochul said it best when she officially opted New York into the program on October 9th, "I'm not going to leave money on the table when it could help our kids." **Pennsylvania should not fall behind.**

The Pennsylvania Family Institute and the Pennsylvania Christian Education Network understand that educational opportunity depends not only on the quality of schools but also on whether families can afford to access them. By supporting EITC and embracing the EFTC, Pennsylvania can build its existing scholarship infrastructure and give families additional ways to pursue the education that best serves their children.

Pennsylvania should continue strengthening its EITC program while taking advantage of the new federal EFTC program. These programs, in tandem, will bolster educational outcomes across the Commonwealth.

The Pennsylvania Christian Education Network and the schools and families we represent respectfully call on Governor Shapiro to opt Pennsylvania into the federal program before its January 1, 2027, start date and to work with the appropriate agencies and scholarship-granting organizations to ensure a timely, orderly implementation.

Our responsibility is to put students first and respect parents' role in directing their children's education. Making educational opportunities financially accessible to more Pennsylvania families helps us toward fulfilling those responsibilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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