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## MY WORD

# Expanded tax-credit scholarship would help more kids succeed

I am not your typical parent who pays out of pocket for private-school tuition.

I am a single mother of three. I drive a garbage truck for the City of Orlando. It works me to the bone, and I often put in more than 50 or 60 hours a week. But I do it in order to send my two youngest sons to Miracle Grace Academy.

We live paycheck to paycheck, and sometimes I have to choose between buying food and paying tuition.

I picked a private school because Zion and Jadyn were struggling so much in their public school last year. But I am very pro-public schools. My oldest, Kymontae, is doing well in his magnet school.

When my youngest sons were bringing home D's and F's; when Zion had a substitute teacher for his entire second-grade year and fell way behind; when Jadyn was bullied in kindergarten by the bigger kids in his K-8 school and was afraid of having his lunch money taken every day ... well, as a mother, I just had to take action.

I found Miracle Grace Academy in Orlando, and knew immediately it was the right place for my boys. We applied for the Florida Tax Credit scholarship, but sadly we were left on the waiting list.

There isn't enough funding for all the families in Florida who need these scholarships. My boys are among the nearly



**BY SHAREKA WRIGHT**

My Word columnist

13,000 students on the waiting list for the 2018-19 school year. There are 1,200 just in Orange County.

Miracle Grace and its principal, Dr. Terri Jones, are wonderful. Zion and Jadyn have shown so much improvement. They're getting A's and B's now. They get along with everyone, and they learn discipline and spirituality.

But lately Zion and Jadyn haven't been going to school.

They've missed more than two weeks, because I don't have the money to keep up with my tuition payments. I've maxed out my overtime, and I'm thinking of getting a second job.

The school has always been very understanding of our situation. They help with breakfast and lunch. They let me be late on my payments. But I realize they need tuition to operate the school. Their patience can't last forever.

That is why I am calling on my state legislators, Rep. Bruce Antone and Sen. Randolph Bracy, to work with Gov. Ron DeSantis in this upcoming session to fund the FTC scholarship program so that families like mine won't have to wait and suffer.

There's only so much I can do on my own.

*The author lives in Apopka.*