School choice scholarships help kids

Eighteen years ago, we created The Porter’s House Christian Academy in Jacksonville because there was a need to fill in the community. We wanted to teach children not only academic facts but the realities of true success in life.

Our Creator commands us to teach children in the right way. Our school imparts moral character, instills discipline and teaches students how to live a good and honest life.

Many of our students would not be able to attend The Porter’s House without a Florida tax credit scholarship.

This year, nearly 70,000 low-income students statewide are using the scholarships, including 5,334 in Duval and more than 300 at our school.

More than two-thirds of the scholarship students are black or Hispanic, more than half come from single-parent households and the average family income for them is $24,067, barely above the poverty line.

Studies show they were often the students who struggled most in public schools and are now making solid gains.

So I have to wonder if the Florida Education Association and Florida School Board Association recognize the tremendous damage they will do with the lawsuit they filed in August against the scholarship program.

Why uproot 70,000 low-income children from the schools where they are succeeding? How smart is that?

These groups argue that helping poor kids, mostly black or brown, pay for private tuition “siphons” money from public schools. Interestingly, we never hear them make the same argument when wealthy families opt out of a public school even though it “siphons” the same amount of money.

The truth is, the scholarships don’t hurt public schools financially as one study after another has shown.

It’s actually public schools that would take a huge financial hit if they had to suddenly absorb 70,000 low-income kids at nearly twice the per-pupil cost of each scholarship.

School choice advocates like me are not against public schools. In fact, our church, The Porter’s House Internation-