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everal leading (self-anointed) state education advocacy associations, led by the statewide teacher’s union, have filed a lawsuit assaulting school choice for some Florida families. This lawsuit seeks to end the nation’s largest tax-credit scholarship program, a program that serves nearly 70,000 students statewide and 944 in Escambia County alone. This wildly popular program serves primarily poor minority students and all taxpayers benefit – as the cost per pupil in this program runs about 50 percent of the cost per pupil in the traditional public school systems.

Accountability is built-in. Student progress is measured, and the gains made by students in this program roughly equate to the progress the students in traditional public schools achieve year over year. Opponents counter that the system isn’t fair because students in this scholarship program “don’t take all the exact same tests and FCATs like public school students must.”

So, to follow that logic of these tax-credit scholarship critics, because traditional public schools waste so much time over-testing and drilling students on how to take tests – we should foist this same nonsensical practice on tax-credit scholarship schools? That is ridiculous. We need to test less across the board – we all know this!

The plaintiffs in this lawsuit want this program killed so they can monopolize education and leave parents NO choices; they think it’s all their money and “We know what’s best for your kid” is their mentality.

But I think we deserve a greater voice in how our tax dollars are spent educating our own children – don’t you?

The plaintiffs state that they worry about the amount of taxpayer money “diverted” from local districts by this tax-credit scholarship that primarily benefits underprivileged minority youth. But what really worries these special interest groups is the loss of the money “diverted” to their own coffers – via dues memberships fueled by taxpayer-funded employees – if this scholarship program grows!

The plaintiffs espouse the naïve belief that money is the panacea to improve school performance and this scholarship program robs Florida of additional money for schools. But they know full well that throwing more taxpayer money at schools doesn’t make such schools better. Look no further than poor-quality D.C. and Los Angeles public schools (Spending upward of $30,000 per student) for proof.

I’m a proponent of public schools, but I’m also a strong advocate for school choice. These views are not mutually exclusive. Offering choices in education fosters competition; Adam Smith Economics 101 illustrates that with competition, organizations increase quality and efficiency.

Currently we have many Florida students that have not found success in our expensive traditional public schools, but have flourished in a lower priced tax-credit scholarship program. And so-called advocacy groups are trying to kill this program? Why?

One Escambia parent wrote “Please do not let the FSBA take away this awesome scholarship that my boys are utilizing.”

A local grandparent wrote “Step up for Students has been a godsend for my grandchildren,” and a local school principal stated “If quality education for Escambia County students is the goal, then please help me continue to do my part in training and raising up the next generation by opposing any actions brought about to stop students from being helped by this scholarship.”

Instead of listening to biased, self-obsessed labor unions and other special interest lobbying entities, I’m listening to my constituents; I’m in agreement with them and together we are on the right side of this issue.

I hope Florida legislators and other education leaders with courage will listen to students, parents, and taxpayers that benefit from this worthwhile program, too.