Parents now have so many educational choices in Florida that roughly 1.5 million students attend a school that is not assigned to them by their district. In fact, this customization— with magnets, charters, online courses, dual enrollment, private scholarships — has become one of public education’s greatest strengths.

So it pains me to see honorable educational organizations, including the one that represents elected school board members in Florida, declare legal war on it.

The lawsuit filed on Thursday by the Florida School Boards Association and Florida Education Association takes direct aim at a private learning option for 67,000 economically disadvantaged children, but their talk about a constitutional provision for “uniformity” suggests they would turn back the clock on charters, virtual education and almost any innovative alternative that is not the exact same as a district school. That’s scary, and not at all what parents are showing us that they want.

As a new member to the Indian River School Board, I represent every child and every parent in our county, and that includes the 204 low-income children this year who attend nine private schools here with the support of a $5,272 Tax Credit Scholarship. These are all our community’s children, and we should support them in any educational option that helps them learn and grow into successful adults.

My own son is a perfect example of this new customized learning landscape. He attended a magnet school for elementary, a charter school for middle and is now in a traditional district school, Sebastian River, for high school. All three played to his individual needs and strengths, and all three have served him well.

The point is that this is not a competition; it’s a collaboration. Offering these options can surely present some logistical challenges for school districts that have long been used to assigning all students to schools based on their home address, but we know that parents are responding and I have seen no evidence that they harm our traditional neighborhood schools.

The tax credit scholarship, for example, costs about 60 cents on the public education dollar, which means the savings could be used to provide more money for district schools. The state’s Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference projected that the program saved $57.9 million in fiscal 2013, and that’s not counting the extent to which it helps districts from having to build new schools. It’s also important to note that, although these students don’t take the FCAT, they all take nationally norm-referenced tests that show us they are making solid progress every year.

The Florida School Boards Association is holding its next board of directors meeting here in Vero Beach starting on Wednesday, Sept. 3, and I wish it would have considered the thoughts of the elected board members in all 67 counties before filing a lawsuit that pits us against thousands of low-income parents in our own communities.

The complaint filed Thursday literally asks a judge to uproot these 67,000 students from schools that appear to be working for them, leaving particularly urban districts in the position of scrambling to find room for them. This feels more like a temper tantrum than a strategy for helping disadvantaged children. Choice is good for education, and it’s time we embraced it.

Dale Simchick, Sebastian, is a member of the Indian River School Board representing District 2.