



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCHOOL CHOICE ADVOCATES TO RALLY WEDNESDAY AT THE STATE HOUSE ON HEELS OF LANDMARK STUDY; GOVERNOR SET TO SPEAK

Ri corporations step up to support program that provides expanded educational opportunities to students in need

PROVIDENCE, MAY 15 – School choice advocates will be rallying at the State House Wednesday on the heels of a landmark study that shows voucher and tax credit scholarship programs that give parents freedom to choose in their child's education are growing rapidly and delivering net savings to state and local budgets.

Last year, Governor Carcieri proposed and the legislature approved — with overwhelmingly bipartisan support — the Rhode Island Corporate Scholarship Tax Credit Program. The program—which went into effect January 1st of this year—allows eligible corporations to make contributions that provide tuition assistance for low-income students at a wide range of participating schools.

“The corporate scholarship tax credit program will help strengthen K-12 education throughout Rhode Island by opening the doors to greater educational opportunities for our most disadvantaged students and easing the burden on our public schools,” Governor Donald L. Carcieri said. “I have been a strong advocate for school choice, and this innovative program advances my goal of providing students and parents with options to succeed in the schools that best meet their needs.”

Any family with a household income of 250% or less of the federal poverty level—approximately \$50,000 for a family of four—is eligible to apply for tuition assistance. There are over 90,000 families in Rhode Island who qualify for the program.

“There are just not enough affordable school options in the state,” said Caroline Hutchinson, a mother of two from Providence whose children attend Barrington Christian Academy with the help of tuition assistance. “This new tuition scholarship program will help families like ours consider schools they might not have thought about until now.”

A new study released last week by the Friedman Foundation, *“Education by the Numbers: The Fiscal Effect of School Choice Programs, 1990-2006,”* finds that school choice programs throughout the country generated nearly \$444 million in net savings to state and local budgets from 1990 to 2006 while helping to consistently increase instructional spending per student in public school districts as well.

“Of the 12 voucher and tax-credit scholarship programs that began operations before 2006, every program is at least fiscally neutral, and most produce substantial savings,” said Robert Fanger, Director of Communications for the Friedman Foundation. “Seven more programs have been created since 2006. We predict that Rhode Island's scholarship program will produce similar fiscal benefits for the local school districts.”

To date, corporate contributions totaling over \$734,000 have been pledged to the Rhode Island Scholarship Alliance (RISA) by a wide range of companies including Bank of America, Citizens Bank, CVS Pharmacy, Inc., Amica Insurance, Dykeman Electrical Contractors, Warren Equities, and Chatterton Insurance Agency.

"Investing in the future success of our state's youth should be a critical priority for all Rhode Islanders," said William F. Hatfield, president, Bank of America Rhode Island. "Bank of America is honored to contribute to the Rhode Island Scholarship Alliance. These funds will help numerous students pursue their dreams through a quality education."

RISA is the alliance of school choice advocates and scholarship granting organizations (SGOs) working to promote educational opportunities for economically disadvantaged students through the tax credit program. SGOs are charitable organizations representing two or more private schools established to administer tuition assistance grants to eligible students. Currently, there are four certified SGOs representing more than 60 private schools throughout the state.

"We are pleased to have such a strong response to date from the Rhode Island business community for this first year program," said Donna McGowan, Executive Director of RISA. "Their contributions mean more students in Rhode Island will have the opportunity to choose the school that's right for them with the help of tuition assistance."

THE RHODE ISLAND SCHOLARSHIP ALLIANCE RALLY WILL TAKE PLACE ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 16TH IN THE GOVERNOR'S STATE ROOM AT THE RHODE ISLAND STATE HOUSE BEGINNING AT 3:00PM.

SCHEDULED SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- **Honorable Donald L. Carcieri, Governor of Rhode Island**
- **Senate President Joseph A. Montalbano, D-Dist. 17**
- **House Speaker William J. Murphy, D-Dist. 26**
- **Dan Corley, Founder and Head, Community Preparatory School and President, Rhode Island Scholarship Alliance**
- **Donna McGowan, Executive Director, Rhode Island Scholarship Alliance**
- **Terrence Allen, Bank of America**

For more information, go to: <http://www.rischolarshipalliance.org>

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