

# **The Year of School Choice: 42 States Consider School Vouchers, Scholarship Tax Credits in 2011**

## ***State Legislators Fight for Children and School Choice***

**Washington, D.C. (June 16, 2011)** – Forty-two states have introduced legislation in 2011 to create or expand school voucher and scholarship tax credit programs, according to an analysis completed today by the American Federation for Children — the nation's voice for school choice.

If these bills pass, millions of children would have the opportunity to attend the private schools of their parents' choice, demonstrating historic momentum for the popular educational choice movement.

Fifty-four bills create or expand voucher programs and 42 bills create or expand tax credit scholarship programs. Many bills often target disadvantaged children, including 27 bills for special needs children, two bills for military children, and two bills for children in foster care, according to AFC analyst Michelle Gininger, who conducted the research.

Since the beginning of the year, 12 bills have been enacted in nine states that will create, expand, and restore highly accountable and effective school choice programs.

For example, Arizona created the nation's first-ever Education Savings Account program for children with special needs. The Arizona Empowerment Account Program will allow participating families to receive 90 percent of the per-pupil funding to use on a variety of educational options, including: tutoring, online education, testing fees, college courses, and textbooks. Any unused funds after high school graduation can be used for college tuition.

In Washington, D.C., Congress reauthorized the highly successful and popular D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program for five years. Funded at \$20 million per year, this reauthorization will provide scholarships to thousands of low-income students and revive one of the nation's most recognizable school voucher programs.

Indiana's legislature, with the backing of Governor Mitch Daniels, created the Choice Scholarship Program, the broadest voucher program in the country. This legislation, which creates a highly accountable program that provides scholarships to low- and middle-income students to attend the private schools of their parents' choice, is set to benefit 15,000 by the program's second year.

As many as 19 bills have been introduced to expand existing programs to increase student enrollment caps, expand student eligibility, and create stronger accountability measures. Wisconsin, for example, is on track to expand its highly successful voucher program to include even more students in Milwaukee, as well as to expand it to Racine.

Governor Kasich in Ohio is working with leaders in the legislature to expand the Educational Choice Scholarship Program to 60,000 students by 2013.

The American Federation for Children ([www.FederationForChildren.org](http://www.FederationForChildren.org)) praised the growing trend towards passage of school choice legislation as a vital step toward providing educational options to all children.