



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

September 17, 2013

The Honorable Eric Holder  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

On August 22, 2013, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a motion in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana to prevent the state of Louisiana from offering private school choice opportunities to children in school districts with existing desegregation orders. This action will affect hundreds of low-income and minority children in 34 districts who simply want to attend a better school.

As you know, the Louisiana Student Scholarships for Education Excellence Program began five years ago with the goal of empowering parents to send their children to the school of their choice. These scholarships are awarded to children of all races who meet strict income limits and are either entering Kindergarten or enrolled in a school that has received a C, D, or F ranking on the state accountability system. Of the 5,000 scholarships distributed last year, 91 percent went to minority students. The state awarded another 8,000 scholarships for the 2013-14 school year, a 60 percent increase over last year. That increase demonstrates the immense popularity of the program; nearly 12,000 parents applied for scholarships for the 2013-14 school year, and the program has a 93 percent satisfaction rate among participating families.

The department's allegation that the Louisiana Program could impede the desegregation process is extremely troubling and paradoxical in nature. If DOJ is successful in shutting down this invaluable school choice initiative, not only will students across Louisiana be forced to remain in failing schools, but it could have a reverberating effect and cause other states to feel pressured to shut down similar initiatives that provide countless children the opportunity to receive a better education.

According to the American Federation for Children, 18 states and the District of Columbia currently operate 39 publicly funded private school choice programs that provide priceless education opportunities to more than 250,000 children. These programs receive support from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle who agree that all children, regardless of race or income,

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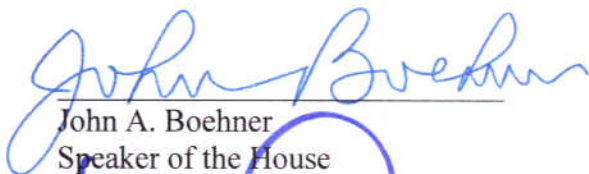
deserve access to a high-quality education. Instead of undermining choice and opportunity in education, the administration should support state and local efforts to provide more education options.

With this in mind, please provide a detailed written response to the following:

1. Please explain how your efforts to revoke scholarships and eliminate education choices will help students – particularly low-income and minority children – access better education opportunities and a pathway to a brighter future.
2. Please provide a list of the meetings you and/or your staff held with outside groups or individuals on this issue.
3. Please provide all written communication and correspondence among the department and administration regarding the Louisiana scholarship program.
4. Please provide all written communication and correspondence between the department and outside interest groups regarding the Louisiana scholarship program.

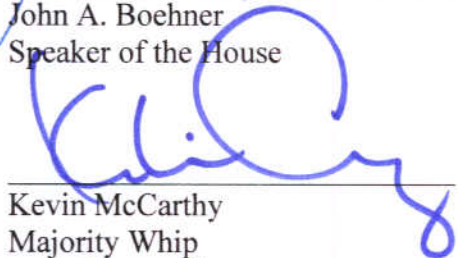
We strongly urge you to consider the effects of this poorly conceived motion on the very children you profess to be protecting. Please provide your detailed response by October 1, 2013. If you are unable to provide the requested information by the date specified, please inform the committee in writing why you cannot meet the deadline, and the date by which you will provide the requested information. If you have additional questions or comments, please contact Mandy Schaumburg of the Education and the Workforce Committee staff at (202) 225-6558 or [mandy.schaumburg@mail.house.gov](mailto:mandy.schaumburg@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,




John A. Boehner  
Speaker of the House


John A. Boehner  
Speaker of the House



Kevin McCarthy  
Majority Whip



John Kline  
Chairman, House Committee on Education  
and the Workforce




Eric Cantor  
Majority Leader

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Majority Leader



Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Chair, Republican Conference

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Chair, Republican Conference



Todd Rokita  
Chairman, House Subcommittee Early  
Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary  
Education

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