



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
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WASHINGTON, DC 20004

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Committee Member
Chair, Housing and Workforce Development
Economic Development
Finance and Revenue
Health
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June 22, 2009

Secretary Arne Duncan
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20020

Mayor Adrian M. Fenty
Executive Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW - Suite 316
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Duncan and Mayor Fenty:

We, the undersigned members of the Council of the District of Columbia, write you to express our support for the continuation of the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP). Because of the OSP, over 1,700 children have received scholarships of up to \$7,500.00 to attend participating private schools in the District. The OSP is part of a three sector initiative created by the federal government to provide additional funding to the District designed to aid public schools, public charter schools and low income District children attending private schools. The federal dollars authorized for the three sector initiative is over 70 million, of which only 14 million is allocated for the OSP. There are no District dollars impacted by this program. Since its inception in 2003, the OSP has allowed thousands of District school children to receive a quality education. A recent study of the program showed that the reading scores of participating students had improved. Additionally, according to a Georgetown University study, parent satisfaction with the program is over 85%. As elected representatives of the District of Columbia, and on behalf of the families who have sought educational opportunities for their children through the OSP, we write to you to seek your support for its continuation for this school year.

We are pleased that President Barack Obama has announced his intention to fund the program so that the children who are currently receiving scholarships may continue in the schools of their choice through 12th grade. Over 200 District families who applied for their children to be admitted into the program received letters of acceptance earlier this year. Unfortunately, on April 6, 2009, your respective offices sent 216 families letters

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advising them that, in effect, the program was going to shut down. That approach is grossly unfair and completely injurious to the hopes, dreams and aspirations of the families involved.

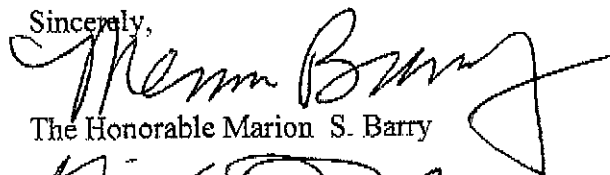
We ask you to rescind your letter of April 6, 2009, addressed to those 216 families and that you honor your respective promises to them by allowing these children to enroll in the private schools of their choice in the fall of 2009.

We believe we simply cannot turn our backs on these families because doing so will deny their children the quality education they deserve.

Indeed, last month, at a rally in front of the Wilson Building, several thousand families urged us to keep their children's futures in mind and to support the continuation of this popular school choice program.

We strongly urge you to stand with us in supporting these children and continuing the District's Opportunity Scholarship Program.

Sincerely,



The Honorable Marion S. Barry



The Honorable Henry Thomas, Jr.



The Honorable Michael Brown



The Honorable Muriel Bowser



The Honorable David A. Catania



The Honorable Yvette Alexander



The Honorable Kwame Brown