

September 11, 2003

Senator Lincoln Chafee
141A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Arlen Specter
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

We are writing in regards to S. 1583, the DC Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 2003. As you are aware, this bill currently contains \$40 million for education in the District of Columbia, including \$13 million each for private school vouchers, public charter schools, and public schools complying with the No Child Left Behind Act.

At every opportunity, proponents of vouchers have paraded the support of a few of our colleagues in the District government for this measure. Nonetheless, we are compelled to repeat that majorities of the Council, Board of Education, and residents of the District of Columbia continue to oppose the use of public money on private school vouchers.

The \$13 million earmarked for vouchers will finance up to \$7,500 in private school tuition for not more than 2,000 students, which is just 3 percent of the roughly 67,000 students in the District's public school population. We propose that the portion marked for vouchers should instead be added to the amount appropriated to schools for compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act, so that a total of \$26 million will go to public schools and \$13 million to public charter schools. We believe that an amendment achieving this goal will improve the District's most underperforming schools and will have a greater benefit for the city's children.

Sincerely,

Councilmember Carol Schwartz

Councilmember Adrian M. Fenty

Councilmember Sandy Allen

Councilmember Phil Mendelson

Councilmember Vincent B. Orange, Sr.

Councilmember Jim Graham

cc: Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton