

addiction as simply a moral failing rather than the treatable medical condition that it is.

While opioid addiction may start with an excessive prescription or an indiscretion of youth, it ends with a scientifically understood, increasingly treatable, medical condition in which the biochemical pathways necessary to normal decisionmaking in the brain have been hijacked and the chemistry of the brain permanently altered.

Heroin does not discriminate. It does not care if you are rich or poor, Black or White, a devoted mother, or a loving child. None of us are immune to its chemical grips.

So today I pay my respects. Those who fall prey to opioids are worthy of being mourned. They are not forgotten.

WE NEED TO INVESTIGATE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, in 2010, the National Association of Community Health Centers stated:

Federally-Qualified Health Centers do not provide abortions to any of their patients, and we are not aware of any that have ever done so.

Remember last year we said we wanted to give community health centers more money because they assured us that they didn't do abortions?

However, on Tuesday, April 26, this week, we learned that some health center clinics in New York have been performing abortions.

The National Association of Community Health Centers has egregiously violated our trust. The fact that abortions are performed at these federally funded community health center clinics is astonishing.

We put our confidence in them, as providers of life-affirming women's health care, based on their commitment to not entangle such care with abortion. Abortion is not health care.

Mr. Speaker, we need an investigation into Community Health Centers to determine how many of their clinics are providing for, referring, or performing abortions, and the National Association of Community Health Centers should expel this network of New York clinics from their association.

□ 0915

NATIONAL REENTRY WEEK

(Ms. BASS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize National Reentry Week—reentry after an individual has paid their debt to society. Eighty-five percent of individuals who are incarcerated eventually get out, and we need to make sure that they have access to a well-paying job and quality education when they return home.

Reentry programs work. Mr. Jerrel McCoy lives in south L.A. He is 45 years old and served 27 years in a California prison. Today Mr. McCoy works for SHIELDS for Families-Jericho Vocational Services, which works with formerly incarcerated individuals to help them secure and maintain employment to avoid going back to prison.

With the help of these reentry services, Mr. McCoy has purchased his first car and moved into an apartment. According to Mr. McCoy, reentry programs allowed him to apply skills developed during his incarceration, and he learned that he has gifts and potential. Today Mr. McCoy strives to offer these benefits to his clients.

Reentry services are smart and just.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR OPPORTUNITY AND RESULTS REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 706, I call up the bill (H.R. 4901) to reauthorize the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 706, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4901

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; REFERENCES IN ACT.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Reauthorization Act” or the “SOAR Reauthorization Act”.

(b) REFERENCES IN ACT.—Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment is expressed in terms of an amendment to or repeal of a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to that section or other provision of the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act (division C of Public Law 112–10; sec. 38–1853.01 et seq., D.C. Official Code).

SEC. 2. REPEAL.

Section 817 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (Public Law 114–113) is repealed, and any provision of law amended or repealed by such section is restored or revived as if such section had not been enacted into law.

SEC. 3. PURPOSES.

Section 3003 (sec. 38–1853.03, D.C. Official Code) is amended by striking “particularly parents” and all that follows through “with” and inserting “particularly parents of students who attend an elementary school or secondary school identified as one of the lowest-performing schools under the District of Columbia’s accountability system, with”.

SEC. 4. PROHIBITING IMPOSITION OF LIMITS ON TYPES OF ELIGIBLE STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM.

Section 3004(a) (sec. 38–1853.04(a), D.C. Official Code) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(3) PROHIBITING IMPOSITION OF LIMITS ON ELIGIBLE STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the program under this division, the Secretary may

not limit the number of eligible students receiving scholarships under section 3007(a), and may not prevent otherwise eligible students from participating in the program under this division, based on any of the following:

“(i) The type of school the student previously attended.

“(ii) Whether or not the student previously received a scholarship or participated in the program, including whether an eligible student was awarded a scholarship in any previous year but has not used the scholarship, regardless of the number of years of nonuse.

“(iii) Whether or not the student was a member of the control group used by the Institute of Education Sciences to carry out previous evaluations of the program under section 3009.

“(B) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in subparagraph (A) may be construed to waive the requirement under section 3005(b)(1)(B) that the eligible entity carrying out the program under this Act must carry out a random selection process, which gives weight to the priorities described in section 3006, if more eligible students seek admission in the program than the program can accommodate.”.

SEC. 5. REQUIRING ELIGIBLE ENTITIES TO UTILIZE INTERNAL FISCAL AND QUALITY CONTROLS.

Section 3005(b)(1) (sec. 38–1853.05(b)(1), D.C. Official Code) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (I), by striking “, except that a participating school may not be required to submit to more than 1 site visit per school year”;

(2) by redesignating subparagraphs (K) and (L) as subparagraphs (L) and (M), respectively;

(3) by inserting after subparagraph (J) the following:

“(K) how the entity will ensure the financial viability of participating schools in which 85 percent or more of the total number of students enrolled at the school are participating eligible students that receive and use an opportunity scholarship;”;

(4) in subparagraph (L), as redesignated by paragraph (2), by striking “and” at the end; and

(5) by adding at the end the following:

“(N) how the eligible entity will ensure that it—

“(i) utilizes internal fiscal and quality controls; and

“(ii) complies with applicable financial reporting requirements and the requirements of this division; and”.

SEC. 6. CLARIFICATION OF PRIORITIES FOR AWARDING SCHOLARSHIPS TO ELIGIBLE STUDENTS.

Section 3006(1) (sec. 38–1853.06(1), D.C. Official Code) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by striking “attended” and all that follows through the semicolon and inserting “attended an elementary school or secondary school identified as one of the lowest-performing schools under the District of Columbia’s accountability system; and”;

(2) by striking subparagraph (B);

(3) by redesignating subparagraph (C) as subparagraph (B); and

(4) in subparagraph (B), as redesignated by paragraph (3), by striking the semicolon at the end and inserting “or whether such students have, in the past, attended a private school;”.

SEC. 7. MODIFICATION OF REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AND ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.

(a) CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS; COMPLIANCE WITH REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Section 3007(a)(4) (sec. 38–1853.07(a)(4), D.C. Official Code) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (E), by striking “and” at the end;

(2) by striking subparagraph (F) and inserting the following:

“(F) ensures that, with respect to core subject matter, participating students are taught by a teacher who has a baccalaureate degree or equivalent degree, whether such degree was awarded in or outside of the United States;” and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(G) conducts criminal background checks on school employees who have direct and unsupervised interaction with students; and

“(H) complies with all requests for data and information regarding the reporting requirements described in section 3010.”

(b) ACCREDITATION.—Section 3007(a) (sec. 38-1853.07(a), D.C. Official Code), as amended by subsection (a), is further amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “paragraphs (2) and (3)” and inserting “paragraphs (2), (3), and (5)”;

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(5) ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—None of the funds provided under this division for opportunity scholarships may be used by a participating eligible student to enroll in a participating private school unless the school—

“(i) in the case of a school that is a participating school as of the date of enactment of the SOAR Reauthorization Act—

“(I) is fully accredited by an accrediting body described in any of subparagraphs (A) through (G) of section 2202(16) of the District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-134; sec. 38-1802.02(16)(A)–(G), D.C. Official Code); or

“(II) if such participating school does not meet the requirements of subclause (I)—

“(aa) not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (Public Law 114-113), the school is pursuing full accreditation in accordance with an accrediting body described in subclause (I); and

“(bb) is fully accredited by such an accrediting body not later than 5 years after the date on which that school began the process of pursuing full accreditation in accordance with item (aa); and

“(ii) in the case of a school that is not a participating school as of the date of enactment of the SOAR Reauthorization Act, is fully accredited by an accrediting body described in clause (i)(I) before becoming a participating school under this division.

“(B) REPORTS TO ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of the SOAR Reauthorization Act, each participating school shall submit to the eligible entity a certification that the school has been fully accredited in accordance with subparagraph (A).

“(C) ASSISTING STUDENTS IN ENROLLING IN OTHER SCHOOLS.—If a participating school fails to meet the requirements of this paragraph, the eligible entity shall assist the parents of the participating eligible students who attend the school in identifying, applying to, and enrolling in another participating school under this division.

“(6) TREATMENT OF STUDENTS AWARDED A SCHOLARSHIP IN A PREVIOUS YEAR.—An eligible entity shall treat a participating eligible student who was awarded an opportunity scholarship in any previous year and who has not used the scholarship as a renewal student and not as a new applicant, without regard as to—

“(A) whether the eligible student has used the scholarship; and

“(B) the year in which the scholarship was previously awarded.”

(c) REQUIRING USE OF FUNDS REMAINING UNOBLIGATED FROM PREVIOUS FISCAL YEARS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 3007 (sec. 38-1853.07, D.C. Official Code) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(e) REQUIRING USE OF FUNDS REMAINING UNOBLIGATED FROM PREVIOUS FISCAL YEARS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—To the extent that any funds appropriated for the opportunity scholarship program under this division for any fiscal year remain available for subsequent fiscal years under section 3014(c), the Secretary shall make such funds available to eligible entities receiving grants under section 3004(a) for the uses described in paragraph (2)—

“(A) in the case of any remaining funds that were appropriated before the date of enactment of the SOAR Reauthorization Act, beginning on the date of enactment of such Act; and

“(B) in the case of any remaining funds appropriated on or after the date of enactment of such Act, by the first day of the first subsequent fiscal year.

“(2) USE OF FUNDS.—If an eligible entity to which the Secretary provided additional funds under paragraph (1) elects to use such funds during a fiscal year, the eligible entity shall use—

“(A) not less than 95 percent of such additional funds to provide additional scholarships for eligible students under section 3007(a), or to increase the amount of the scholarships, during such year; and

“(B) not more than a total of 5 percent of such additional funds for administrative expenses, parental assistance, or tutoring, as described in subsections (b) and (c), during such year.

“(3) SPECIAL RULE.—Any amounts made available for administrative expenses, parental assistance, or tutoring under paragraph (2)(B) shall be in addition to any other amounts made available for such purposes in accordance with subsections (b) and (c).”

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act.

(d) USE OF FUNDS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES AND PARENTAL ASSISTANCE.—Section 3007 (sec. 38-1853.07, D.C. Official Code), as amended by this section, is further amended—

(1) by striking subsections (b) and (c) and inserting the following:

“(b) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES AND PARENTAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall make \$2,000,000 of the amount made available under section 3014(a)(1) for each fiscal year available to eligible entities receiving a grant under section 3004(a) to cover the following expenses:

“(1) The administrative expenses of carrying out its program under this division during the year, including—

“(A) determining the eligibility of students to participate;

“(B) selecting the eligible students to receive scholarships;

“(C) determining the amount of the scholarships and issuing the scholarships to eligible students;

“(D) compiling and maintaining financial and programmatic records;

“(E) conducting site visits as described in section 3005(b)(1)(I); and

“(F)(i) conducting a study, including a survey of participating parents, on any barriers for participating eligible students in gaining admission to, or attending, the participating school that is their first choice; and

“(ii) not later than the end of the first full fiscal year after the date of enactment of the SOAR Reauthorization Act, submitting a report to Congress that contains the results of such study.

“(2) The expenses of educating parents about the eligible entity’s program under

this division, and assisting parents through the application process under this division, including—

“(A) providing information about the program and the participating schools to parents of eligible students, including information on supplemental financial aid that may be available at participating schools;

“(B) providing funds to assist parents of students in meeting expenses that might otherwise preclude the participation of eligible students in the program; and

“(C) streamlining the application process for parents.”; and

(2) by redesignating subsection (d), and subsection (e) (as added by subsection (c)(1)), as subsections (c) and (d), respectively.

(e) CLARIFICATION OF USE OF FUNDS FOR STUDENT ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE.—Section 3007(c) (sec. 38-1853.07(c), D.C. Official Code), as redesignated by subsection (d)(2), is amended by striking “previously attended” and all that follows through the period at the end and inserting “previously attended an elementary school or secondary school identified as one of the lowest-performing schools under the District of Columbia’s accountability system.”

SEC. 8. PROGRAM EVALUATION.

(a) REVISION OF EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 3009(a) (sec. 38-1853.09(a), D.C. Official Code) is amended to read as follows:

“(a) IN GENERAL.—

“(1) DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY AND THE MAYOR.—The Secretary and the Mayor of the District of Columbia shall—

“(A) jointly enter into an agreement with the Institute of Education Sciences of the Department of Education to evaluate annually the opportunity scholarship program under this division;

“(B) jointly enter into an agreement to monitor and evaluate the use of funds authorized and appropriated for the District of Columbia public schools and the District of Columbia public charter schools under this division; and

“(C) make the evaluations described in subparagraphs (A) and (B) public in accordance with subsection (c).

“(2) DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY.—The Secretary, through a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement, shall—

“(A) ensure that the evaluation under paragraph (1)(A)—

“(i) is conducted using an acceptable quasi-experimental research design for determining the effectiveness of the opportunity scholarship program under this division that does not use a control study group consisting of students who applied for but did not receive opportunity scholarships; and

“(ii) addresses the issues described in paragraph (4); and

“(B) disseminate information on the impact of the program—

“(i) in increasing academic achievement and educational attainment of participating eligible students who use an opportunity scholarship; and

“(ii) on students and schools in the District of Columbia.

“(3) DUTIES OF THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES.—The Institute of Education Sciences of the Department of Education shall—

“(A) assess participating eligible students who use an opportunity scholarship in each of grades 3 through 8, as well as one of the grades at the high school level, by supervising the administration of the same reading and mathematics assessment used by the District of Columbia public schools to comply with section 1111(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311(b));

“(B) measure the academic achievement of all participating eligible students who use an opportunity scholarship in the grades described in subparagraph (A); and

“(C) work with eligible entities receiving a grant under this division to ensure that the parents of each student who is a participating eligible student that uses an opportunity scholarship agrees to permit their child to participate in the evaluations and assessments carried out by the Institute of Education Sciences under this subsection.

“(4) ISSUES TO BE EVALUATED.—The issues to be evaluated under paragraph (1)(A) shall include the following:

“(A) A comparison of the academic achievement of participating eligible students who use an opportunity scholarship on the measurements described in paragraph (3)(B) to the academic achievement of a comparison group of students with similar backgrounds in the District of Columbia public schools.

“(B) The success of the program under this division in expanding choice options for parents of participating eligible students and increasing the satisfaction of such parents and students with their choice.

“(C) The reasons parents of participating eligible students choose for their children to participate in the program, including important characteristics for selecting schools.

“(D) A comparison of the retention rates, high school graduation rates, college enrollment rates, college persistence rates, and college graduation rates of participating eligible students who use an opportunity scholarship with the rates of students in the comparison group described in subparagraph (A).

“(E) A comparison of the college enrollment rates, college persistence rates, and college graduation rates of students who participated in the program in 2004, 2005, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 as the result of winning the Opportunity Scholarship Program lottery with such enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates for students who entered but did not win such lottery in those years and who, as a result, served as the control group for previous evaluations of the program under this division. Nothing in this subparagraph may be construed to waive section 3004(a)(3)(A)(iii) with respect to any such student.

“(F) A comparison of the safety of the schools attended by participating eligible students who use an opportunity scholarship and the schools in the District of Columbia attended by students in the comparison group described in subparagraph (A), based on the perceptions of the students and parents.

“(G) An assessment of student academic achievement at participating schools in which 85 percent of the total number of students enrolled at the school are participating eligible students who receive and use an opportunity scholarship.

“(H) Such other issues with respect to participating eligible students who use an opportunity scholarship as the Secretary considers appropriate for inclusion in the evaluation, such as the impact of the program on public elementary schools and secondary schools in the District of Columbia.

“(5) PROHIBITING DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Any disclosure of personally identifiable information obtained under this division shall be in compliance with section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (commonly known as the ‘Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974’) (20 U.S.C. 1232g).

“(B) STUDENTS NOT ATTENDING PUBLIC SCHOOLS.—With respect to any student who is not attending a public elementary school or secondary school, personally identifiable

information obtained under this division shall only be disclosed to—

“(i) individuals carrying out the evaluation described in paragraph (1)(A) for such student;

“(ii) the group of individuals providing information for carrying out the evaluation of such student; and

“(iii) the parents of such student.”.

(2) TRANSITION OF EVALUATION.—

(A) TERMINATION OF PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS.—The Secretary of Education shall—

(i) terminate the evaluations conducted under section 3009(a) of the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act (sec. 38-1853.09(a), D.C. Official Code), as in effect on the day before the date of enactment of this Act, after obtaining data for the 2016-2017 school year; and

(ii) submit any reports required for the 2016-2017 school year or preceding years with respect to the evaluations in accordance with section 3009(b) of such Act.

(B) NEW EVALUATIONS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—Effective beginning with respect to the 2017-2018 school year, the Secretary shall conduct new evaluations in accordance with the provisions of section 3009(a) of the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act (sec. 38-1853.09(a), D.C. Official Code), as amended by this Act.

(ii) MOST RECENT EVALUATION.—As a component of the new evaluations described in clause (i), the Secretary shall continue to monitor and evaluate the students who were evaluated in the most recent evaluation under such section prior to the date of enactment of this Act, including by monitoring and evaluating the test scores and other information of such students.

(b) DUTY OF MAYOR TO ENSURE INSTITUTE HAS ALL INFORMATION NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT EVALUATIONS.—Section 3011(a)(1) (sec. 38-1853.11(a)(1), D.C. Official Code) is amended to read as follows:

“(1) INFORMATION NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT EVALUATIONS.—Ensure that all District of Columbia public schools and District of Columbia public charter schools make available to the Institute of Education Sciences of the Department of Education all of the information the Institute requires to carry out the assessments and perform the evaluations required under section 3009(a).”.

SEC. 9. FUNDING FOR DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS.

(a) MANDATORY WITHHOLDING OF FUNDS FOR FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH CONDITIONS.—Section 3011(b) (sec. 38-1853.11(b), D.C. Official Code) is amended to read as follows:

“(b) ENFORCEMENT.—If, after reasonable notice and an opportunity for a hearing, the Secretary determines that the Mayor has failed to comply with any of the requirements of subsection (a), the Secretary may withhold from the Mayor, in whole or in part—

“(1) the funds otherwise authorized to be appropriated under section 3014(a)(2), if the failure to comply relates to the District of Columbia public schools;

“(2) the funds otherwise authorized to be appropriated under section 3014(a)(3), if the failure to comply relates to the District of Columbia public charter schools; or

“(3) the funds otherwise authorized to be appropriated under both paragraphs (2) and (3) of section 3014(a), if the failure relates to both the District of Columbia public schools and the District of Columbia public charter schools.”.

(b) RULES FOR USE OF FUNDS PROVIDED FOR SUPPORT OF PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS.—Section 3011 (sec. 38-1853.11, D.C. Official Code), as amended by section 7(b) and section 8(a), is further amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (c) as subsection (d); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (b) the following new subsection:

“(c) SPECIFIC RULES REGARDING FUNDS PROVIDED FOR SUPPORT OF PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS.—The following rules shall apply with respect to the funds provided under this division for the support of District of Columbia public charter schools:

“(1) The Secretary may direct the funds provided for any fiscal year, or any portion thereof, to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education of the District of Columbia.

“(2) The Office of the State Superintendent of Education of the District of Columbia may transfer the funds to subgrantees that are—

“(A) specific District of Columbia public charter schools or networks of such schools; or

“(B) District of Columbia-based nonprofit organizations with experience in successfully providing support or assistance to District of Columbia public charter schools or networks of such schools.

“(3) The funds provided under this division for the support of District of Columbia public charter schools shall be available to any District of Columbia public charter school in good standing with the District of Columbia Charter School Board, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education of the District of Columbia and the District of Columbia Charter School Board may not restrict the availability of such funds to certain types of schools on the basis of the school's location, governing body, or the school's facilities.”.

SEC. 10. REVISION OF CURRENT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.

Not later than the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, the Secretary of Education and the Mayor of the District of Columbia shall revise the memorandum of understanding which is in effect under section 3012(d) of the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act as of the day before the date of the enactment of this Act to address the following:

(1) The amendments made by this Act.

(2) The need to ensure that participating schools under the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act meet fire code standards and maintain certificates of occupancy.

(3) The need to ensure that District of Columbia public schools and District of Columbia public charter schools meet the requirements under such Act to comply with all reasonable requests for information necessary to carry out the evaluations required under section 3009(a) of such Act.

SEC. 11. DEFINITIONS.

Section 3013 (sec. 38-1853.13, D.C. Official Code) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (10) as paragraphs (2) through (11), respectively;

(2) by inserting before paragraph (2), as redesignated by paragraph (1), the following:

“(1) CORE SUBJECT MATTER.—The term ‘core subject matter’ means—

“(A) mathematics;

“(B) science; and

“(C) English, reading, or language arts.”; and

(3) in paragraph (4)(B)(ii), as redesignated by paragraph (1), by inserting ‘household with a’ before ‘student’.

SEC. 12. EXTENSION OF AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3014 (sec. 38-1853.14, D.C. Official Code) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking “and for each of the 4 succeeding fiscal years” and inserting “and for each fiscal year through fiscal year 2021”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(c) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts appropriated under subsection (a)(1), including amounts

appropriated and available under such subsection before the date of enactment of the SOAR Reauthorization Act, shall remain available until expended.”.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by subsection (a)(2) shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 13. EFFECTIVE DATE.

Except as otherwise provided, the amendments made by this Act shall apply with respect to school year 2017–2018 and each succeeding school year.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill shall be debatable for 1 hour, equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

The gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) and the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4901.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Utah?

There was no objection.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

We are here to pass an important bill, Mr. Speaker. This bill is H.R. 4901, known as the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Reauthorization Act, or SOAR.

The SOAR Act continues a three-sector approach to education within the District of Columbia. The bill provides equal funding to D.C. public schools, D.C. public charter schools, and the Opportunity Scholarship Program which is commonly known as the OSP.

The OSP provides scholarships to students of low-income families, many of whom would otherwise attend low-performing schools. This program is bringing about educational opportunities to those who need it most.

Now, to some, this may sound familiar because in October of last year, we considered H.R. 10, also a bill to reauthorize the SOAR Act. But H.R. 4901 is very similar to H.R. 10; however, after H.R. 10 passed the House, changes were made to it through a bipartisan negotiation with the Senate. These changes actually strengthened the bill, and we are pleased to support this today.

The new bill brings greater transparency and accountability to the OSP through increased reporting requirements. The new bill strengthens accreditation requirements, and the new bill clarifies congressional intent around the use of carryover funds and access to the OSP. Out of a commitment to regular order and the understanding of how important this legislation is, we wanted Members to have the opportunity to debate and vote on these changes, which we did in our committee, and it passed out of our

committee. Thus, we introduced H.R. 4901.

We improved the legislation, and now we are bringing it before the Chamber in an effort to pass the bill in its best possible form. I hope the House will see the value of this bill as it benefits families in the District, specifically low-income families in the District of Columbia.

The average income of a family with an OSP student is \$22,000 per year. Let me say that again. The average income of a family with an OSP student is \$22,000. This program offers these families more than just a scholarship, it is a lifeline. One OSP parent went so far as to describe the OSP as her salvation.

Mr. Speaker, the OSP is working. In the 2014–2015 school year, OSP students had a graduation rate of 90 percent. Ninety percent graduation rate. That should indicate to a lot of people that this thing is working. That is well above the national average of 82 percent and is certainly better than the average within the D.C. public schools, which is only about 64 percent.

However, I would be remiss if I did not note that the D.C. public schools increased their graduation rate 6 percentage points from 2014 to 2015, and we applaud that and hope that continues. That is in part because this three-sector approach is actually working.

Opponents of the SOAR Act want to stop this legislation because they disagree with the OSP for purely ideological reasons. In fact, opponents, just like their supporters, know that OSP students do as well, if not better, on every measure compared to the public school counterparts. Opponents will likely even support allowing current OSP students to remain in the program until they finish high school.

If the OSP is so bad, though, it makes no sense to allow children to remain in it. The truth is that the program works, and we should reauthorize it so it can work for even more children. Unfortunately, opponents of the OSP will seek to end the entire three-sector approach in an effort to simply stop the OSP.

I do want to note that the Washington, D.C., Mayor, the D.C. Council chairman, and seven other members of the D.C. Council sent a letter to the congressional leadership urging the reauthorization of this program. The Mayor and a majority of the D.C. Council recognize the value of this legislation and are asking that we stand with them and not forsake the children of the District of Columbia.

A March 2016 letter signed by the Mayor and 8 of the 13 Members of the D.C. Council supporting the SOAR Act will be entered into the RECORD. The letter states: “These funds are critical to the gains that the District’s public education system has seen in recent years.”

It goes on to note how important the SOAR Act has been in maintaining and recruiting quality teachers and principals. District officials show strong

support for this legislation, as does the Washington, D.C., community.

We are thrilled to have found common ground on this bill, and I welcome the District’s support. I thank them for their valuable work in getting this legislation to this point. I am also excited that the SOAR Act is supported by the Washington Post. I will be inserting in the RECORD a position they took on March 14, 2016, to that effect.

Mr. Speaker, the SOAR Act’s purpose is to improve education within the District, and I believe it is doing just that within public schools, charter schools, and the OSPs. It is providing families with a valuable choice, and it is allowing them to escape other situations that would not be nearly as conducive to their families.

I don’t understand why the critics of the OSP are so opposed to the program, especially since it produces graduation rates far above the national average. This feat is even more notable when you realize that the OSP achieves better graduation rates than D.C. public schools at only two-thirds of the cost, so you get better graduation rates, and it is two-thirds of the cost of D.C. public schools.

I recognize the importance of our public education system and the need for public school improvement. That is why the legislation also authorizes funds for public education. We must recognize the reality before us. This past year, D.C. eighth graders had the lowest test scores in the Nation in math and reading, some of the most critical skills that they need to be successful in life. While D.C. public schools have made progress, clearly, much remains to be done.

Mr. Speaker, students within the District should not have to wait for these changes to come about. They deserve an alternative, a quality education, and they deserve it now. Let’s work to improve public education in the District, but let’s not hold back current students while those improvements happen. Let’s allow them every opportunity available, such as an opportunity scholarship.

We are here today to debate a bill that works in every way to further the educational outcomes of Washington, D.C.

Mr. Speaker, also let me just take a personal note to thank Speaker Boehner for his passion on this issue. For years he has championed this. He has done it in his private time, he did it in his public life, he did it as a Member of Congress, and he did it as the Speaker of the House. This was his. He championed this. It has been successful, and I am glad to carry the baton and make sure that there is school choice within Washington, D.C.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as a mother, I believe parents should seize any and every educational opportunity available to their

children, so I certainly have no criticism of my own constituents who have seized this opportunity. In fact, in order to avoid disruption of the education of the current voucher students, I believe they should be allowed to remain in the program until high school graduation, and President Obama has offered a compromise to allow them to do so.

Consideration of this bill surely is unprecedented. Until today, I had never seen the House vote on virtually the same bill a second time in the same Congress, and that is about to happen here. The House, acted in October.

Why is this House acting redundantly again? Shouldn't the focus be on the Republican-led Senate where neither this bill—which is virtually the same as the bill that was passed before—nor its Senate companion has moved?

Last December, the Senate committee of jurisdiction canceled a scheduled markup of the bill to protect Republicans from this bill and especially from the civil rights amendments that had been proposed to the bill. Just last month, Chairman CHAFFETZ himself—who is the chairman of the authorizing committee, and the subcommittee—requested that the bill be included in the upcoming—the upcoming—2017 appropriation bill because the chairman, knows that legislation on an appropriation is how this bill is going to be passed.

The problem is that there is little congressional support for vouchers except for vouchers in the District of Columbia, where nobody can vote for anybody except this Member. Congress has refused to create a national voucher program. Just last year during reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, both the House and the Senate voted on several national voucher amendments, and each failed. So you see, they don't want vouchers in their own districts.

Moreover, the Congress has never authorized the D.C. voucher program in the light of day. When Congress first created the program in 2004, and then reauthorized it in 2011, it did so by adding the voucher bill as riders to appropriations bills. And to protect Republican Senators running for reelection this year, that is what is going to happen again. The Senate has never passed a standalone D.C. vouchers bill, and yet it is being reauthorized now for the third time.

In this Congress alone, Republicans have introduced legislation to overturn D.C.'s gun safety laws, its laws on reproductive health, its laws on non-discrimination, its laws on marijuana, on labor, on immigration, and on education. It is, therefore, ironic to hear Republicans favorably cite the support of some D.C. government officials for passage of this bill.

Now, let me explain that because I don't want my colleagues to get away with mischaracterizing the position of the D.C. government on the bill before us today. When the House voted this

bill last year, a majority of the D.C. Council wrote to Congress opposed to this voucher program. Last month, however, fearing the loss of \$40 million for public and charter schools, a bare majority wrote in support of this bill. You can't blame them.

I must say though, I am being hoisted on my own petard here. Ironically, the funding for public schools and public charter schools exists only because during the creation of the voucher program, I repeatedly said that funding for public and charter schools was the preference of D.C. residents. To his everlasting credit, the then-Archbishop of Washington then insisted that public and charter schools also receive funding in conjunction with the voucher funding.

The D.C. Mayor and a bare majority this year of the council sent a carefully crafted letter supporting this bill because they knew they were writing for the residents of the District of Columbia who do not support vouchers. Their letter did not support the voucher program itself, but referred only to the bill's public and charter school funding.

□ 0930

Those who signed the letter, by the way, were even more concerned that the Congress, instead, could pass the radical Cruz-Meadows bill, which would permit D.C. students to use local funds, commandeer local funds, from the D.C. treasury to pay for private schools.

City officials recognized—and who can blame them—that Republicans have conditioned reauthorization of the public and charter school funding on reauthorization of the voucher funding. I understand their concern about losing public and charter school funding because it has been part of the city's education budget for a decade.

There is, of course, no reason for a unique Federal voucher program in the District of Columbia, in particular. According to the study of the program's effectiveness mandated by Congress, by statute, the D.C. voucher program has failed in its stated purpose. That purpose was to improve academic achievement. The voucher program has not improved academic achievement, as measured by math and reading test scores of students overall or of students the program prioritized from low-performing public schools.

Republicans, rightly, were disappointed with these results, so guess what they did. Instead of getting rid of a failed program, they simply changed the evaluation. The prior reauthorizations required the program's evaluation to be “conducted using the strongest possible research designed,” and a randomized controlled trial—the gold standard—was therefore used.

It is almost laughable when somebody changes the test in order to pass it. In contrast, this bill requires the evaluation to be conducted—this time—using an acceptable—that means any acceptable—“quasi-experimental

research design” and expressly prohibits the randomized controlled trial that was mandated before.

This dishonesty is transparent, Mr. Speaker. As researchers conducting an evaluation of the program point out, a randomized controlled study “is especially important in the context of school choice because families wanting to apply for a choice program may have educational goals and aspirations that differ from the average family.”

The voucher program is also unnecessary. The District of Columbia has an unusually robust public school choice system, and it is available to every student. Now, I would wager that the District's choice system is the best in the Nation, and here is what it is.

Almost 50 percent of our children go to charter schools. Those charter schools were authorized when I worked with Speaker Newt Gingrich to allow charter schools instead of vouchers to be the District's alternative school system. For the public schools, 75 percent of our children attend out-of-boundary public schools that they have chosen. So I ask any Member who has public choice that robust to make himself known during this debate.

The D.C. voucher program also exempts students from protection of Federal civil rights laws that apply to public and federally funded programs. Under the voucher program, the Federal funding is considered assistance to the voucher student and not to the school, apparently in order to avoid these important mandates for our schools. Therefore, the program is not considered a federally funded program, although the money comes from Federal funds.

This program is exempt from title IV and title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, from title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, from the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Everybody knows that this program is going to be reauthorized as a rider on an appropriations bill, which is how the D.C. vouchers bill has always been enacted, in 2004 and again in 2011.

This is a masquerade here this morning. I am sorry Members had to be held over. This could have been taken care of yesterday. Even if the bill is not reauthorized, however, everyone expects that Republicans will continue to fund the three sectors, as they have always done.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, it is correct that the Republicans have continued to fund the three-sector approach in Washington, D.C., and I am proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. MESSER), the chairman of the Republican Policy Committee.

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4901, the

Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Reauthorization Act.

I want to commend Chairman CHAFFETZ for his work on this important policy and for continuing the legacy of former Speaker Boehner on this important issue.

Make no mistake about it, thousands of kids have access to the American Dream because of Speaker Boehner's dedication to the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program and education choice across the country.

I met one of those students in February during a hearing on Capitol Hill. Her name was Denisha Merriweather. Denisha provided some powerful testimony that I will not soon forget. She spoke of being locked in a failing school, and she said: "When I was growing up, college was a dream that I didn't even know that I had, and if it weren't for an educational option Florida gave me 12 years ago, I wouldn't be here today."

Ms. Merriweather is the first in her family to graduate from high school and college, and she is now attending graduate school. That is powerful stuff, and it is just one example of the thousands of young people in America whose lives have been changed by school choice.

As chairman of the Congressional School Choice Caucus, I believe every child in America deserves the same kind of opportunity that Denisha had. But right now, for the majority of students in this country, real educational choice only exists if you can afford it.

Ask yourself this question: If your local school is failing your child and you can't afford to move and you can't afford to pay for private school, what options do you really have?

Make no mistake about it, that is the truth for thousands of key people here in Washington, D.C., and, frankly, all across the country. They are locked in a failing school that is failing their child, and they can't afford to move and they can't afford to pay for a private school. They are stuck.

That is why school choice and the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program matters. Programs like D.C. OSP empower parents to choose the best educational environment for their child, regardless of their income, their ZIP Code, or their lot in life. And despite some of the rhetoric on the other side of the aisle, this program takes zero dollars from D.C. Public Schools—zero dollars. Yet D.C. OSP has a big impact on D.C. students. In fact, the program lets more than 6,000 students attend the school that gives them the best opportunity to succeed. And even better, an incredible 90 percent—90 percent—of D.C. OSP students graduate from high school on time, an incredible success.

It turns out that empowering parents and empowering students works. We have miles to go before every kid in America has access to a great school. This issue is far bigger than just D.C. schools. But today's bill will ensure that thousands of kids in Washington,

D.C., have an opportunity, and every one of those kids matter.

This bill is worthy of our support. I ask my colleagues for their support.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman is so concerned about the millions of parents who can't afford to send their children to private schools, his caucus had the perfect opportunity this year, because they have such a strong majority, to, in fact, pass voucher amendments, and they refused to do so for their own schools.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY), my friend.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from the District of Columbia for yielding.

I rise in opposition to H.R. 4901.

Contrary to its title and contrary to what you just heard, this voucher program for schoolchildren in the District of Columbia has neither expanded opportunities nor delivered results for those students and their families. It has actually proven to be an unwise and unwelcome use of tax dollars, which ought to be of great concern to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. Yet, rather than call for increased scrutiny, they are forcing the House to once again vote on a bill on which this Chamber has already acted.

In successive reports on the effectiveness of this program, the Department of Education has determined that students using these vouchers saw no statistically significant improvement in their overall achievement in math or reading—none.

In addition, the Department found that both parents and students from schools in need of improvement, the program's intended beneficiaries, reported that their experience with the voucher program did not—not—improve their level of satisfaction with the education system or the education they were receiving.

I also find it extremely cynical that this reauthorization would weaken the very reporting requirements that have shown this program to be ineffective. When you don't like the findings, I guess we suppress them.

Further, the Government Accountability Office has cited the program for not having sufficient financial controls and accountability measures, something I thought we favored. For example, the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, which administers the program, repeatedly failed to comply with statutory financial reporting deadlines, and its "policies and procedures lack detail in several areas related to school compliance and financial accounting" to ensure Federal tax dollars are being used in accordance with the law.

Mr. Speaker, I also hope the great irony of this legislation is not lost on my colleagues. Those who claim to support the conservative principles of small government would again authorize \$60 million in taxpayer subsidies for a program that has failed to meet ex-

pectations for both educational achievement and financial stewardship. I guess there are carve-outs for our ideological favorites.

Further, self-proclaimed states' rights conservatives are once again willing to impose the will of Congress on a local government—the District of Columbia—and they do it because they can. So much for Big Brother; so much for telling somebody we know best.

Finally, I want to remind my friends on the other side of the aisle of the principles they espoused just last year when we worked in bipartisan fashion to pass legislation reforming No Child Left Behind.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. CONNOLLY. In their own explanatory material for the Every Student Succeeds Act, Republicans say the new reforms are intended to restore local control by returning responsibility for accountability and school improvement to State and local leaders. Why doesn't that apply here? Another ideological carve-out, Mr. Speaker.

Congress has no business imposing its will on the schools and families of the District of Columbia in this fashion. They are not guinea pigs for our ideological favorites.

□ 0945

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE), the chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Mr. KLINE. I thank Chairman CHAFFETZ for yielding the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in very strong support of the SOAR Reauthorization Act, which will renew our vital investment in the children who live in the District of Columbia.

In passing the Every Student Succeeds Act last year, we took important steps to support and encourage greater school choice for students and their families. These reforms empower parents to do what is best for their children's education, and they help ensure that all children are able to receive the excellent education they deserve regardless of their family's background, income, or ZIP Code. Helping students escape failing schools so they can pursue brighter futures is an important priority, and that is exactly what the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program does for children in our Nation's Capital.

For more than 10 years now, the program has enabled thousands of students to pursue the quality education necessary to excel both in the classroom and later in life—and excel they do. In fact, last year, 90 percent of 12th graders who received a scholarship through the program graduated from high school, and nearly 90 percent of them, Mr. Speaker, went on to pursue college degrees. The traditional D.C.

public school system can make no such claim. These are very impressive results. Despite the claims of those who oppose these schools for, apparently, purely ideological, partisan reasons, with results like these—90 percent graduate, and 90 percent of those go on to college—it makes those claims that these schools are not performing well, frankly, laughable.

This legislation also authorizes support for D.C. public schools, and it will provide critical resources for its charter schools. I agree with the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia that the public charter schools in the District are performing well. They are giving some hope to mothers and fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers that their children will have a chance in life. I am very proud of those public charter schools. There are also parents—Presidents of the United States and so forth—who choose to send their kids to private schools, and that opportunity ought to exist for more children—for more students—in the District of Columbia. That is what the Opportunity Scholarship Program does. It provides another chance—another avenue, another road to hope—for children in our Nation's Capital.

Together, these measures are working to improve the traditional public schools that are struggling and that are still, too often, failing students—which is why there is a waiting line to get into charter schools and into private schools—and will make a positive impact in the lives of students across the District and will create much-needed educational opportunities for these children.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want the gentleman from Minnesota to know that there are waiting lines in the District of Columbia to get into many D.C. public schools and, of course, into many charter schools. We also know nothing about the schools that tell us 90 percent of their children graduate because this House has no information on them. What we do know is that the randomized study took children in D.C. public schools and compared them to students at exactly the same levels in the voucher schools—no difference in overall achievement. That is how we measure achievement in the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT), the distinguished ranking member of the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 4901, which would reauthorize the D.C. voucher program, known as the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, through 2021.

We don't spend enough money on education, so it is hard to justify diverting scarce public resources in order to finance private school education for

a handful of students at the expense of the vast majority who attend public schools. Instead, we should focus our limited public resources on initiatives that improve education for all of our children. This is the promise of a public school education in the United States, but the voucher programs undermine that promise while hiding behind the guise of school choice for students in need.

There are about 50 participating schools in the Washington, D.C., Opportunity Scholarship Program, but more than half of all of the participants are enrolled in just eight schools. Most of the schools in the program have higher tuition than the voucher covers, limiting the utility of the voucher and shifting the cost of education to the families that can't afford it—essentially, denying the opportunity to students whose families cannot afford the remainder of the tuition. Federal dollars are being provided to a small number of parents who can afford the choice and to others with students who are already enrolled in private schools when that money could have been used for our public school systems.

Although there are a few who can participate in the program, as the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia said, the results are disappointing. Research consistently demonstrates that the D.C. voucher program is an ineffective program that does not increase achievement. The four reports produced by the Department of Education found no improvement in reading and math after entering the voucher program for students coming from the most struggling D.C. public schools, nor did they find any statistically significant difference in math and reading academic performance from D.C. public schools. On average, Mr. Speaker, these schools are, at best, average.

When you cite statistics that say some may be doing well, you have to take into consideration that these are children from families who are very supportive of their children and that they would be doing well whether they were in the voucher program or not.

In addition to the disappointing results, we also found the voucher participants were less likely to have access to English language programs, special education supports, counselors, and other vital supports that ensure that all students remain on the path of academic success.

If the schools are not producing the promised results, why are we providing them with unrestricted Federal dollars?

Mr. Speaker, we could have improved the bill. We have a closed rule, so amendments were not allowed, but there were several amendments that should have been considered that I had offered. One would have protected the civil rights of students at schools that receive vouchers by requiring schools to certify that they provide each student with applicable civil rights pro-

tections. Another would have required any school receiving funds under this program to comply with the same Federal data and reporting requirements that all public schools or other schools receiving Federal money have to provide. All of our congressional districts provide this information, but, unfortunately, it is not required under the voucher program.

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to spend \$20 million to fund education in the District of Columbia, we ought to use it to improve education for everyone, not just for a few. This bill uses the money to help a few parents by subsidizing tuition in private schools, which many were already attending, at the expense of many, and it extends a program that fails to actually improve the education for students in Washington, D.C.

I join the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia in opposing this legislation.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, the graduation rate in the D.C. public schools is 64 percent. The graduation rate at the OSP program is 90 percent. Those are results, and they are worth every penny.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WALKER), a member of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, there are few times in this House that we can see an immediate impact from legislation. A few months ago, I remember meeting some families who were given a choice in the SOAR Act. I remember seeing the pride in their faces, but what I remember most was the hope they had—a hope that was new, a new hope in the future. America has always been about opportunity. The SOAR Act does exactly what it says in its title—Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Act. The SOAR Act is impacting lives today, but it is changing lives forever.

Upward mobility starts with a strong education. It reminds me of my background in working with some gospel music arrangers. I was surprised at the high volume of sales in this particular industry, and one of the arrangers summed it up this way. He said: "Mark, ain't nobody likes it but the people."

To my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who oppose the SOAR Act and who oppose parents in having this opportunity, let me say this: Ain't nobody likes it but the people.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, how much time remains on both sides?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from the District of Columbia has 10 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Utah has 16 minutes remaining.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Public schools in the United States and big cities are improving, and it should be noted that the D.C. Public Schools district continues to be the fastest improving urban school district

in the United States, according to data released from the 2015 Trial Urban District Assessment. These schools deserve support. They are improving test scores unlike the voucher schools. In comparing the randomized study of those who wanted the voucher and didn't get it and who remained in the District public school system with those who wanted the voucher and got it, there was no difference in their math and English scores.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Will the gentleman yield?

Ms. NORTON. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, on that point, if you select students from families who can afford the tuition and who are very supportive of their students, is it a surprise that they may do better in graduation rates than the average?

Ms. NORTON. In reclaiming my time, the gentleman has brought up a very important point.

By the way, some of the students who accept this voucher are already in the private schools, so they already could obviously afford the program. They are already attending the voucher schools, and they have now gotten vouchers. If you have some free Federal money, let me have some.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Would they be expected to do better, with their supportive families, than the average?

Ms. NORTON. In reclaiming my time, I think they would be because they have families behind them, and they are being compared with students who often do not.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. The gentleman pointed out that, with the randomized studies, there was no difference in the public schools and the voucher programs. Those studies are the conclusion of vigorous research that there was no difference; is that right?

Ms. NORTON. In reclaiming my time, there was no difference, and yet improving academic performance was a stated reason for the voucher program.

I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO).

Mr. TAKANO. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my colleagues in opposing the reauthorization of the D.C. voucher program.

Public schools are the foundation of the American education system. They represent a duty we have to provide every student in every community with an education that helps them realize their full potential. Vouchers prevent us from fulfilling that duty by redirecting taxpayer money away from our public schools, which are already underfunded, and into private institutions that do not open their doors to every child.

As with previous versions of the SOAR Act, this bill does nothing to ensure that students with disabilities

have access to private schools. It also discriminates against low-income families. In 64 percent of the participating D.C. schools, the tuition costs more than the voucher can cover, which, effectively, excludes families who cannot afford to pay the difference. Even students who can afford to attend private school can be excluded based on their prior academic achievement, language ability, or other discriminatory factors. I had hoped we could address these concerns through the amendment process, but the majority has not allowed amendments to the bill.

You would expect private schools that can choose their own students to have exceptional records of student performance, but you would be wrong. Since 2007, there have been four congressionally mandated reports on the D.C. voucher program's impact on student achievement. Not one of those reports found a significant improvement in reading or math scores among participants.

Mr. Speaker, with the Every Student Succeeds Act, we are entering a new era in education policy that holds real promise for students and educators across the country. We should be focusing our attention and resources on improving institutions that serve all students.

I call on my colleagues to remember the obligation we have to every child and reject H.R. 4901.

□ 1000

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DESANTIS).

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, at the end of the Civil War, Lincoln addressed the Ohio regiment and he said that the beauty of a free government is that it gives every individual an open field and fair chance for their intelligence, enterprise, and industry to flourish.

That was something that he could speak of firsthand because he had grown up in the backwater. When you start talking about places like Illinois and Kentucky, that was so far removed from the corridors of power at that time and then he ends up being the President of the United States, that would have been unheard of in a country in Europe.

I think right now, when you look at our country, you have people who are born and you are supposed to be able to make the most of your God-given abilities, no matter your circumstances. Some people are born into privileged circumstances, and some people aren't. But if they have the desire to succeed, they need to be able to do that in America.

Yet, what we find now is there are so many kids who grow up in communities that have really failing school systems, and I think the number one thing to be able to better yourself in our modern society is with education.

Now, of course, the Federal Government doesn't have jurisdiction over K-12 education for the States, and I think

that that is proper. I think, at times, the Federal Government has needed into that, and I think it has been counterproductive.

We do have jurisdiction over the District of Columbia. You have some families who are really in dire straits. There is a big D.C. bureaucracy that is not performing up to expectations. So this program is a lifeline to those families.

The average income is \$22,000 a year, which is not a lot in any community, but in Washington that is very, very little. It gives them a lifeline to be able to have an alternative school and maybe be able to make the most of their God-given ability.

Look, if the public school bureaucracy is doing well, then they can choose that. But if it is not and it is not working for them, then this gives them another option.

This is something that—having done the hearing at the school like we did on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, these are kids who are thrilled to be in these schools. I am just very happy to support this effort. I appreciate the chairman's work on this. We need to give every child the chance to succeed.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG).

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I proudly support the reauthorization of the SOAR Act because the SOAR Act provides the choice that parents in the District deserve. I supported H.R. 10 and I now support H.R. 4901, which made important improvements to H.R. 10.

This legislation we are considering today continues to empower low-income families in D.C. to take advantage of opportunities they may not otherwise be able to do. That is because H.R. 4901 is a bill that focuses on people, public schools, charter schools, Opportunity Scholarship Program, people with choices in each of those areas.

The SOAR Act is about improving the lives of students and families in the District in a profoundly personal way. Isn't that what true education is all about: personal achievement, improvement, and opportunity?

Take the story of Carlos Battle, as written about in the National Journal and a recent book on educational choice. Carlos received a scholarship through the OSP and attended Assumption Catholic School and then Georgetown Day School for high school.

As a result of this quality education, by choice, Carlos was able to attend Northeastern University in Boston. In fact, his mother says Carlos "almost surely wouldn't have gone to college" without the scholarship.

Carlos now talks about how many of his friends from his time in public school are still in the neighborhood and not doing well for themselves, and he said some even are in jail.

As he puts it: Everyone who was in my sixth grade class had the potential to achieve just as much as I did . . . that's just the unfortunate truth.

The OSP allowed Carlos to take advantage of his potential, and he kept on achieving all the way to Northeastern.

While in Boston, Carlos has spent time working at a nonprofit, helping give back to Boston public school students by helping them prepare for responsibilities of college where he has been able to lead workshops for public school students on college preparedness.

He is currently preparing to pursue a Ph.D. in a career as a child psychologist, and that would be an appropriate time for an applause line.

I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, how much time remains on each side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from the District of Columbia has 6 minutes remaining. The gentleman from Utah has 12 minutes remaining.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as I begin my remarks, I know that the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia would understand my sense of pride in acknowledging that, in my district, the Victory Early College High School, which is in the Acres Homes neighborhood and a part of the Aldine Independent School District, a public school, will be celebrating the National Blue Ribbon award ceremony this morning. I offer them congratulations and express my disappointment for not being there.

Obviously, they have been recognized as one of two schools in Houston nationally to earn the distinction of a National Blue Ribbon School at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., for closing the achievement gap. May I remind my colleagues that that is a public school system.

So I rise in opposition and join my colleague from the District of Columbia to oppose H.R. 4901, which would reauthorize the District of Columbia private school voucher program and the Opportunity Scholarship Program for 5 years.

The OSP program came about in 2004. In 2011, Congress reauthorized the OSP through fiscal year 2016. Under the SOAR Act, D.C. households with incomes that do not exceed 185 percent of the poverty line may receive an annual maximum voucher payment per student of \$3,000 for grades K-8 and \$12,000 for grades 9-12.

We all know that private schools are much more expensive than that. So, in essence, this creates a small class that pays money to schools that have not been assessed as to whether or not they are quality schools. Private schools can cost as much as \$50,000. Are we giving them \$50,000 while we are dumping

down the public school system? What is so disturbing is: Where is the data?

This bill, in particular, makes a significant change. The bill prohibits a control study group in making evaluations of the OSP and requires a less rigorous quasi-experimental research design than under the SOAR Act. Since 2004, almost \$200 million has been spent on D.C. voucher schools. Can you imagine what we would be able to do if that money was invested?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 15 seconds to the gentlewoman from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, can you imagine what that could do?

I hear that 50 percent of D.C. children are in charter schools, but 50 percent of children in D.C. are using The Choice Program. What are we doing in America? By using this as a scapegoat, we are suggesting that we are not invested in public schools.

Finally, the D.C. Mayor and City Council members, as I understand, were only advocating that: If you don't fund the voucher program, don't leave us out for the public and charter school program. There is a vigorous Choice Program in D.C.

This bill undermines the public school system for all of us, and we should oppose the bill.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER).

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4901, the Scholarship for Opportunity and Results Reauthorization Act. As many will remember, the House passed a similar bill, H.R. 10, last year with 240 votes.

H.R. 4901 makes three specific changes to H.R. 10 to ensure the D.C. scholarship program continues to run efficiently and effectively for the foreseeable future.

First, this bill creates additional reporting requirements for the administrator of the scholarship program to ensure that the program is operating effectively.

Second, it requires that any District of Columbia school that participates in this scholarship program must be accredited.

Finally, the Department of Education has been withholding funds from the scholarship program and excluding qualified students from participating.

H.R. 4901 ensures that the Department of Education cannot withhold funds from the scholarship program and that they cannot exclude students that are qualified to participate.

With these changes, this D.C. school scholarship program can continue to run efficiently and allow low-income families to better their educational experience and opportunities.

I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 4901.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SANFORD).

Mr. SANFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the SOAR Act. I want to talk for a moment about the elephant in the room, and that is the way in which it has become something of a tug of war between those who believe in choice in education and those who don't.

I think that, on the one hand, you have, for instance, taxpayer advocates who say: Wait a minute. If we are spending about \$30,000 per student and getting the results that we are out of the system, something ought to change.

There are other people who are advocates for the children of D.C., people like the former Mayor of this city, Anthony Williams, who said: Wait a minute. The scholarship program worked and it made a difference in people's lives.

There are people who are advocates for the marketplace who say: Wait a minute. There has been a revolutionary degree of change in technology and in output and in productivity as a result of marketplace forces, and maybe those marketplace forces ought to be at work in education as well.

I think, most of all, there are folks who acknowledge the fact that God makes every child different and that one size never fits all with the plethora of different personalities in children that are out there.

On the other hand, you have folks who say: Wait a minute. Let's do it the way we have always done it. We had schools set up this way in the 1970s, in the 1980s, in the 1990s, and in the 2000s. Let's do it the way we did it.

But, in that process, kids may be locked into schools that aren't working for them and for their families. They may be literally imprisoned in schools that aren't working.

So I think that what stands out about the SOAR Act is that it represents a set of keys so that kids would have additional choices. If we really believe that education is the cornerstone to opportunity in the 21st century, why not give kids as many keys as possible?

It could be a key to a charter school, a traditional public school, or a private school. It is a key of their choice because kids are indeed so different. That is what this bill acknowledges.

I commend the gentleman from Utah for what he has done on this front.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, how much time is remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from the District of Columbia has 3¾ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Utah has 9 minutes remaining.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ALLEN).

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Utah for yielding

and for his work on this important legislation.

As a proud member of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, I rise today in support of H.R. 4901, the Scholarship for Opportunity and Results Reauthorization Act, also known as the SOAR Act.

This legislation would reauthorize the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, which provides scholarships to low-income students so they may attend a D.C. private school of their parents' choice.

School choice is an effective tool that has proven to be successful in Washington, D.C. These scholarships have resulted in a 90 percent graduation rate, which is simply outstanding. I congratulate them on this.

Both of my parents were educators who instilled in me the importance of a good education, and I believe we should extend this opportunity to those who might not otherwise have it.

God created every child to be unique. As such, this legislation gives opportunities to students to receive an education chosen by their parents, those who know their child's needs best.

I encourage my colleagues to stand up in support of school choice and the SOAR Act to empower both parents and the students.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. POCAN).

□ 1015

Mr. POCAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman for yielding and for her advocacy for every child in the District of Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, last year we passed the Every Student Succeeds Act, a good bill, but instead of figuring out how to fund this bipartisan bill through our budget and appropriations process, which apparently has broken down, we are here in a legislative déjà vu re-debating a nearly identical bad bill we passed just months ago that will take money away from our public schools.

I am well aware of these attempts to divert money away from public schools and the failures of taxpayer-funded private schools. In the last 10 years, Wisconsin taxpayers have wasted \$139 million of taxpayer dollars on private schools that were later terminated from the voucher program due to their lack of appropriate standards and accountability.

Further, in Wisconsin, 79 percent of the students who received a taxpayer-subsidized voucher in 2013 were already attending private schools. The SOAR Act would allow kids already in private schools to receive this funding. That means taxpayer dollars are being used not to advocate education, but instead as a form of tax policy. What is worse is that the taxpayer-funded voucher schools both in my State and here in D.C. are not providing equitable resources to special needs students with disabilities.

At the end of the day, this is also about results. Multiple Department of

Education studies have concluded that the taxpayer-funded D.C. voucher program has failed to improve educational outcomes for participating students, and two U.S. Government Accountability Office reports have also identified its repeated management and accountability failures. Public funds should be used for public education which serves all students. It is that simple. I encourage everyone to oppose this bill.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers.

I reserve the balance of my time to close.

Ms. NORTON. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is going to be funded, and you can't blame the District of Columbia for wanting the public school and charter school funding that is in the bill. This bill is going to be funded. It was a Boehner bill, now it is essentially a Ryan bill, and I do want that understood.

I include in the RECORD the Council's letter from last year which opposed funding.

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT
OF COLUMBIA,
Washington, DC, October 8, 2015.

Hon. JASON CHAFFETZ,
Chairperson, Committee on Oversight & Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

CHAIRPERSON CHAFFETZ: We write as locally elected officials to express our opposition to renewed efforts to expand a federally funded school voucher program in the District of Columbia. We appreciate your interest in providing support to public education in the District. We strongly believe, however, that federal funds should be invested in the existing public education system—both public schools and public charter schools—rather than being diverted to private schools.

We support the decision by Congress and the President several years ago to phase out the voucher program. Multiple U.S. Department of Education reports indicate that the program has not lived up to the promises made by proponents. These studies along with two troubling Government Accountability Office reports have also revealed that many of the students participating in the voucher program attend private schools with fewer resources and lower standards than our public schools. The evidence is clear that the use of vouchers has had no statistically significant impact on overall student achievement in math or reading, or for students from schools in need of improvement.

We have serious concerns about using government funds to send our students to private schools that do not have to adhere to the same standards and accountability as do public and public charter schools. For example, private religious schools, which 80% of students with vouchers attend, operate outside the non-discrimination provisions of the D.C. Human Rights Act. Moreover, the voucher proposal is inequitable: if fully funded, the authorization would provide many more dollars per student for vouchers than is allocated per student in public schools and public charter schools.

Although we believe that students who are already receiving a voucher should have the opportunity to maintain and use that voucher through graduation from high school, we do not support expansion of the program to new students. The District devotes consider-

able funds to public education, and our local policies promote choice for parents. Indeed, over the past decade the quality of public education in D.C. has increased, as a result of reforms and targeted investment. Families can choose from an array of educational institutions based on publicly-available performance metrics, both within the D.C. Public Schools system and among the myriad public charter schools. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has called the progress of D.C. Public Schools "remarkable", while the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools has ranked the District's charter sector as the best in the country.

Despite such ample evidence that the Congressionally imposed voucher program is ineffective, while D.C. public schools improve every year, some members of Congress continue to see our city as their personal petri dish. It is insulting to our constituents, who vote for us but not for any voting member of Congress, that some of your colleagues push their personal agendas on D.C. in a way they could never do in their home states. Attacking D.C. home rule, including any expansion of the voucher program, is irresponsible governing on the part of Congress.

We call on you to respect the wishes of the District's elected officials on the quintessentially local matter of education as you consider this issue.

Sincerely,

DAVID GROSSO,
D.C. Council, At-Large, Chairperson, Committee on Education.

CHARLES ALLEN,
D.C. Council, Ward 6, Member, Committee on Education.

LARUBY MAY,
D.C. Council, Ward 8.

ELISSA SILVERMAN,
D.C. Council, At-Large.

ANITA BONDS,
D.C. Council, At-Large, Member, Committee on Education.

YVETTE ALEXANDER,
D.C. Council, Ward 7, Member, Committee on Education.

BRIANNE NADEAU,
D.C. Council, Ward 1.

JACK EVANS,
D.C. Council, Ward 2.

Ms. NORTON. This year, of course, recognizing that they might lose \$40 million, there was another bill, and a bare majority said: Give us the money.

But I want you to understand what the letter from the District of Columbia said.

"A reauthorization of the SOAR Act would help safeguard \$150 million in Federal funds for the D.C. Public Schools and public charter schools over 5 years."

And they go on to say: "SOAR Act funding for D.C. Public Schools has been used to support initiatives that reward and increase retention of high performing teachers and principals. The funds also help attract more high quality teachers and principals to D.C. Public Schools and improve the efficiency with which schools are run."

"After years of decline, D.C. public school enrollment is rising for the first time in decades. Schools that previously struggled to fill their pre-kindergarten seats have waiting lists and

other schools are attracting families back into the system at grade levels that have historically lost students.”

Clearly, we have a school system—and I cannot help but identify with them—that does not want to lose \$40 million for D.C. public schools and D.C. charter schools. I don’t ask anybody to change their vote. This program is going to be funded.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In conclusion, let me read the first sentence of the first paragraph from the D.C. Mayor, as well as the majority of the Council. “As Mayor and members of the Council of the District of Columbia, we support the three-sector Federal funding approach for D.C.’s K–12 education system that is authorized in the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results, the SOAR Act.”

It is clear this is producing results. I find it a little bit troubling when the opposition to the SOAR Act people stand up and say: Well, it is not producing results.

I will reiterate again that the average graduation rate at the D.C. public schools is 64 percent. The graduation rate for somebody who obtains the scholarship is 90 percent, and 92 percent of those people who get that scholarship go on to college. Those are laudable goals in any, any scenario.

And while this is done, this education is literally two-thirds of the cost, and it goes to people who really do deserve and need it, because the average annual income for somebody who is a recipient of this scholarship is \$22,000. A \$22,000 income in the District of Columbia for someone with kids is difficult, at best.

I want to thank, again, Speaker Boehner for his passion on school choice and particularly the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship. I also want to thank our Senate colleague, Senator TIM SCOTT. Senator SCOTT joined us in a field hearing that we had in the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. He is a true believer and is passionate about school choice and the need to give everybody the best possible opportunities that we can.

So I think we have had a good debate. We had a good markup and discussion within the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. I hope that we pass this important bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H.R. 4901, the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) Reauthorization Act.

Members of Congress, believe that together—the key to the future of our great nation is the quality of the education we provide our children.

We all know the story of some District of Columbia public schools: Low graduation rates, high dropout rates, low math and reading scores. And, we can all agree that the children in the District deserve a first class education.

A decade ago, I had the honor to Chair the District of Columbia Appropriations Sub-

committee. In that capacity, we worked to create a program to give a ‘hand-up’ to children in Washington, DC. We built a ‘three-sector’ approach: public schools, charter schools, and the latter, the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program, which provides parents with funds to send their children to private or parochial schools.

The bill before us today will reauthorize the three-sector approach to school reform in the District of Columbia—including the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program—through FY 2021.

The DC Opportunity Scholarship Program is a huge success. Last year alone 3,246 students submitted applications to participate in these scholarships and the program accepted 1,244 students.

88 percent of high school graduates in 2015, who were Opportunity Scholarship recipients, enrolled at a 2- or 4-year college.

Congress should listen to the voices of parents and students and continue to work to ensure that this not only survives, but grows.

I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this critical legislation.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit the following:

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate.

Hon. PAUL RYAN,
Speaker, House of Representatives.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Minority Leader, House of Representatives.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER MCCONNELL, MINORITY LEADER REID, SPEAKER RYAN, AND MINORITY LEADER PELOSI: As Mayor and members of the Council of the District of Columbia, we support the three-sector federal funding approach for DC’s K–12 education system that is authorized in the Scholarships for Opportunities and Results (SOAR) ACT. Our support for the SOAR Act is rooted in the importance we place on the much-needed federal funding for DC Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools which totaled \$30 million in FY2016. This funding is provided via our DC federal payments and does not take away from our state formula funding for education; rather, it adds to it. A reauthorization of the SOAR Act would help safeguard \$150 million in federal funds for DCPS and public charter schools over five years. These funds are critical to the gains that the District’s public education system has seen in recent years.

In addition, we are very concerned about a bill that was recently introduced in Congress, the Educational Freedom Accounts Act (H.R. 4426/S. 2455), which would require the District of Columbia to re-direct local funds from DCPS and the public charter schools toward Educational Savings Accounts for DC students who want to attend private schools. This bill would be harmful to the District’s progress on education and we strongly oppose it. SOAR Act reauthorization is far a better alternative and works for our families and school system.

SOAR Act funding for DCPS has been used to support initiatives that reward and increase retention of performing teachers and principals. The funds also help attract more high quality teachers and principals to DCPS and to improve the efficiency with which schools are run. After years of decline, DCPS enrollment is rising for the first time in decades. Schools that previously struggled to fill their prekindergarten seats have waiting lists and other schools are attracting families back into the system at grade levels that have historically lost students.

Public charter schools in the District represent 44 percent of the public school popu-

lation of more than 85,000 students with 62 public charter schools on 115 campuses. Since FY2004, federal funds authorized in the SOAR Act have supported the acquisition, renovation, modernization, and expansion of charter school facilities in the District. These funds have also been used to improve academic achievement, teacher and leader quality and recruitment, instructional support, and graduation pathways.

The SOAR Act provides equal amounts of federal funding for the DCPS, public charter schools and the OSP. We understand that these funding streams are inextricably linked. We urge you to ensure that the SOAR Reauthorization Act (S. 2171/H.R. 10) becomes law before the end of this Congress so that this critical funding for K–12 education in the District of Columbia is not put in jeopardy.

Sincerely,

Muriel Bowser, Mayor; LaRuby May, Councilmember; Brandon T. Todd, Councilmember; Mary Cheh, Councilmember; Phil Mendelson, Chairman; Vincent Orange, Councilmember; Anita Bonds, Councilmember; Yvette M. Alexander, Councilmember; Kenyon R. McDuffie, Councilmember.

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 14, 2016]
FOR D.C., PREAUTHORIZING SCHOOL CHOICE IS
THE RIGHT CHOICE

(By Editorial Board)

IN THEIR zeal to kill off the federally funded scholarship program for poor D.C. students, opponents have peddled the fiction that Congress foisted the program on an unwilling city. In fact, the program was backed enthusiastically by then-Mayor Anthony A. Williams (D) and a key D.C. Council member, and parent demand for scholarships far outstrips supply. So let’s hope that a letter from Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) and a majority of the council urging continued funding for the program finally puts the myth to rest and helps allow more students to benefit from the program.

The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, which provides needy students with vouchers to attend private schools of their choice, is up for reauthorization. As has happened before with all-too-depressing frequency since the scholarships were established in 2004, the program is under attack from unions and other opponents. If Congress fails to act, the city will also lose out on millions of dollars that go to its traditional and charter public schools as part of the three-sector federal funding deal.

The very real danger of the District losing \$150 million in federal funds over five years apparently finally sunk in with members of the council. Three members who previously had urged that the program be killed joined Ms. Bowser and five other members, including council Chairman Phil Mendelson (D), in a March 7 letter to congressional leaders in support of the Scholarships for Opportunities and Results (SOAR) Act. House Speaker PAUL D. RYAN (R-Wis.) in a statement called the support of the mayor and council “an important boost” in the effort to get reauthorization to the president’s desk.

We hope so. Mr. RYAN is right that “when we give more families a choice, more students succeed.” Uncertainty about the future of the program is the alleged reason the Education Department has, for several years, put a hold on funds that would allow additional students into the program. Officials with Serving Our Children, the nonprofit that took over administration of the scholarships in October, told us there are more than 1,900 applicants, with more expected, for just 146 new spots next year. If Congress doesn’t reauthorize the program, funding could dry

up, with no new students accepted after the 2016-2017 school year. The scholarships provide a lifeline to low-income and underserved families, giving them the school choice that more affluent families take as a given. And because the program results in more federal money for D.C. public education and not less—another myth advanced by opponents—it's time for Congress to act.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 4901, as I did when the House debated a nearly identical measure last October.

We have been told that the purpose of this bill is to help all DC children get a better education.

I strongly support that objective, but this bill does not.

Let me be crystal clear: public funds should support public education.

But this bill proposes to spend 100 million dollars over five years to fund vouchers to send students in the District of Columbia to private schools.

Coming from the city of Baltimore, I understand the complexities of turning around struggling inner city schools.

Almost ten years ago, I became deeply involved in improving one of my own neighborhood schools, the Maritime Industries Academy.

It takes vision, commitment, accountability and, yes, resources to begin the process of turning troubled schools around.

However, it is extremely difficult to turn around public schools if we divert public resources to private schools.

By dividing funding among DC Public Schools, DC Charter Schools, and private school vouchers, this bill provides one-third of its total funding to voucher students, a tiny fraction of the District's students.

The lack of equity is stunning. Our focus should be on maximizing the impact of the federal government's limited resources to serve ALL of the District's students.

This program was last authorized in 2011, over my strong objection and along party lines, despite the fact that the study on the program's impacts mandated by law found that the use of vouchers had no effect on academic achievement, as measured by math and reading test scores.

Vouchers also had no impact on students' perceptions of school safety and satisfaction.

We have heard all the Republican rhetoric justifying massive cuts to education funding—all the talk about budget constraints, about tightening our belts, and about making sacrifices.

But apparently all that goes out the window when Republicans want to give 100 million dollars in taxpayer funds to private schools.

As a graduate of public schools and a long-time advocate of quality public education, I believe our highest priority must be to use limited taxpayer dollars to support programs that will truly meet the educational needs of all children.

This bill does not do that. So I urge my colleagues to reject H.R. 4901.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to this rule and the underlying bill, H.R. 4901, the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Reauthorization (SOAR) Act.

H.R. 4901 would reauthorize the District of Columbia's private school voucher program, the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP), for five years through 2021.

Simply put, this bill diverts much needed resources from the D.C. public school system into this unsuccessful and counterproductive voucher program.

We know that this voucher program has failed to improve academic achievement, threatens vital civil rights for students, undermines constitutional protections, and is poorly managed.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is just another Republican attack on the District of Columbia's right to self-governance.

Even worse, the Districts' government did not request this reauthorization—nor did its representative, Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON.

If the District wants to establish a voucher program, it has the authority to do so.

But it hasn't for many of the reasons I listed above.

Mr. Speaker, we should work to fully fund our public schools and ensure equal access to education for all students—not funnel additional funds into this ineffective and poorly managed program.

I urge my colleagues to vote “no” on the rule and the underlying bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 706, the previous question is ordered on the bill.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman opposed to the bill?

Mr. TED LIEU of California. I am opposed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Ted Lieu of California moves to recommit the bill H.R. 4901 to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with the following amendment:

Insert after section 7 the following new section:

SEC. 8. NONDISCRIMINATION AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS FOR ELIGIBLE ENTITY AND PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS.

Section 3008(a) (sec. 38-1853.08(a), D.C. Official Code) is amended by inserting “actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity,” after “national origin.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes in support of his motion.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, this is the final amendment to the bill, which will not kill the bill or send it back to committee. If adopted, the bill will immediately proceed to final passage, as amended.

My amendment would simply change the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program so that it could not discriminate against students based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sadly, we know that LGBT kids are often victims of bullying and hate. According to a survey by the Human Rights Campaign, LGBT youth were twice as likely as their non-LGBT peers to report being verbally harassed and excluded.

Moreover, misguided anti-LGBT laws, such as those passed in North Carolina and Mississippi, continue to send a message that being LGBT is not okay, and that is wrong. As one of my Republican colleagues earlier today on the floor stated, God makes every child different. It is wrong to systematically discriminate against students because they are LGBT.

We need to send our kids a message that saying whom they love and the gender they identify with does not dictate their self-worth, and it certainly should not dictate whether or not they can get a voucher. I move that we begin to do this right now by passing my amendment to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Being LGBTQ is not a medical condition that needs to be cured. It is instead a beautiful reflection of what it means to be a human being.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Utah is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, we went through regular order in our committee. We had field hearings. We had a markup. The gentleman was free to offer an amendment in committee. That did not happen.

This is a school choice bill. This is a bill that gives parents the opportunity to make choices about where their students can attend, and this scholarship program has been a very valuable tool. I am opposed to the motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, the Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the minimum time for any electronic vote on the question of passage.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 167, nays 228, not voting 38, as follows:

[Roll No. 178]

YEAS—167

Adams	Garamendi	Napolitano
Aguilar	Graham	Neal
Ashford	Grayson	Norcross
Bass	Green, Al	O'Rourke
Beatty	Green, Gene	Pallone
Becerra	Grijalva	Pascarell
Bera	Hahn	Pelosi
Beyer	Hastings	Perlmutter
Bishop (GA)	Heck (WA)	Peters
Blumenauer	Higgins	Peterson
Bonamici	Hinojosa	Pingree
Boyle, Brendan	Honda	Pocan
F.	Hoyer	Polis
Brown (FL)	Huffman	Price (NC)
Brownley (CA)	Israel	Quigley
Bustos	Jackson Lee	Rangel
Capps	Jeffries	Rice (NY)
Capuano	Johnson, E. B.	Richmond
Cárdenas	Kaptur	Roybal-Allard
Carney	Kelly (IL)	Ruiz
Cartwright	Kennedy	Ruppersberger
Castor (FL)	Kildee	Ryan (OH)
Castro (TX)	Kilmer	Sánchez, Linda
Chu, Judy	Kind	T.
Cicilline	Kirkpatrick	Sarbanes
Clark (MA)	Kuster	Schakowsky
Clarke (NY)	Langevin	Schiff
Clay	Larsen (WA)	Schrader
Cleaver	Larson (CT)	Scott (VA)
Clyburn	Lawrence	Scott, David
Cohen	Lee	Serrano
Connolly	Levin	Sewell (AL)
Conyers	Lewis	Sherman
Cooper	Lieu, Ted	Sinema
Courtney	Lipinski	Sires
Crowley	Loebsock	Slaughter
Cuellar	Lofgren	Smith (WA)
Cummings	Lowenthal	Speier
Davis (CA)	Lowey	Swalwell (CA)
DeGette	Lujan Grisham	Takano
Delaney	(NM)	Thompson (CA)
DeLauro	Lujan, Ben Ray	Thompson (MS)
DelBene	(NM)	Titus
DeSaulnier	Lynch	Tonko
Deutch	Maloney,	Van Hollen
Dingell	Carolyn	Vargas
Doggett	Maloney, Sean	Veasey
Doyle, Michael	Matsui	Vela
F.	McCollum	Velázquez
Edwards	McDermott	Visclosky
Ellison	McGovern	Walz
Eshoo	McNerney	Wasserman
Esty	Meeks	Schultz
Foster	Meng	Waters, Maxine
Frankel (FL)	Moore	Watson Coleman
Fudge	Moulton	Welch
Gabbard	Murphy (FL)	Wilson (FL)
Gallego	Nadler	Yarmuth

NAYS—228

Abraham	Comstock	Gosar
Aderholt	Conaway	Gowdy
Allen	Cook	Granger
Amash	Costello (PA)	Graves (GA)
Amodei	Cramer	Graves (LA)
Babin	Crenshaw	Griffith
Barletta	Culberson	Grothman
Barr	Curbelo (FL)	Guinta
Barton	Davis, Rodney	Guthrie
Benishek	Denham	Hardy
Bilirakis	Dent	Harper
Bishop (MI)	DeSantis	Harris
Bishop (UT)	DesJarlais	Hartzler
Black	Diaz-Balart	Heck (NV)
Blackburn	Dold	Hensarling
Blum	Donovan	Herrera Beutler
Bost	Duffy	Hice, Jody B.
Boustany	Duncan (SC)	Hill
Brady (TX)	Duncan (TN)	Holding
Brat	Ellmers (NC)	Hudson
Bridenstine	Emmer (MN)	Huelskamp
Brooks (AL)	Farenthold	Huizenga (MI)
Brooks (IN)	Fitzpatrick	Hultgren
Buchanan	Fleischmann	Hunter
Buck	Fleming	Hurd (TX)
Bucshon	Flores	Hurt (VA)
Burgess	Forbes	Jenkins (KS)
Byrne	Fortenberry	Jenkins (WV)
Carter (GA)	Fox	Johnson (OH)
Carter (TX)	Franks (AZ)	Johnson, Sam
Chabot	Frelinghuysen	Jolly
Chaffetz	Garrett	Jones
Clawson (FL)	Gibbs	Jordan
Coffman	Gibson	Joyce
Cole	Gohmert	Kelly (PA)
Collins (GA)	Goodlatte	King (IA)

King (NY)	Nunes	Shimkus
Kinzinger (IL)	Olson	Shuster
Kline	Palazzo	Simpson
Knight	Palmer	Smith (MO)
LaHood	Paulsen	Smith (NE)
LaMalfa	Pearce	Smith (NJ)
Lamborn	Perry	Stefanik
Lance	Pittenger	Stewart
Latta	Pitts	Stivers
LoBiondo	Poe (TX)	Thompson (PA)
Long	Poliquin	Thornberry
Loudermilk	Pompeo	Tiberi
Love	Posey	Tipton
Lucas	Price, Tom	Trott
Luetkemeyer	Ratcliffe	Turner
Lummis	Reichert	Upton
Marchant	Renacci	Valadao
Marino	Ribble	Wagner
Massie	Rice (SC)	Walberg
McCarthy	Rigell	Walden
McCaul	Roby	Walker
McClintock	Roe (TN)	Walorski
McHenry	Rogers (AL)	Walters, Mimi
McKinley	Rogers (KY)	Weber (TX)
McMorris	Rohrabacher	Webster (FL)
Rodgers	Rokita	Wenstrup
Rooney (FL)	Rooney (FL)	Westerman
Ros-Lehtinen	Ros-Lehtinen	Williams
Roskam	Roskam	Wilson (SC)
Ross	Ross	Wittman
Rothfus	Rothfus	Womack
Rouzer	Rouzer	Woodall
Royce	Royce	Yoder
Russell	Russell	Yoho
Salmon	Salmon	Young (AK)
Sanford	Sanford	Young (IA)
Scalise	Scalise	Young (IN)
Schweikert	Schweikert	Zeldin
Scott, Austin	Scott, Austin	Zinke
Sensenbrenner	Sensenbrenner	
Sessions	Sessions	

NOT VOTING—38

Brady (PA)	Fincher	Newhouse
Butterfield	Graves (MO)	Payne
Calvert	Gutiérrez	Reed
Carson (IN)	Hanna	Rush
Collins (NY)	Himes	Sanchez, Loretta
Costa	Issa	Smith (TX)
Crawford	Johnson (GA)	Stutzman
Davis, Danny	Katko	Takai
DeFazio	Keating	Torres
Duckworth	Kelly (MS)	Tsongas
Engel	Labrador	Westmoreland
Farr	McArthur	Whitfield
Fattah	Miller (MI)	

□ 1044

Messrs. ROKITA, DUFFY, and TROTT changed their vote from “yea” to “nay.”

Messrs. CAPUANO, JEFFRIES, Ms. MOORE, and Mr. HOYER changed their vote from “nay” to “yea.”

So the motion to vote was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 224, noes 181, not voting 28, as follows:

[Roll No. 179]

AYES—224

Abraham	Barletta	Bishop (UT)
Aderholt	Barr	Black
Allen	Barton	Blackburn
Amash	Benishek	Blum
Amodei	Bilirakis	Boustany
Babin	Bishop (MI)	Brady (TX)

Brat	Bridenstine	Hudson	Pompeo
Brooks (IN)	Brooks (IN)	Huelskamp	Posey
Buchanan	Buck	Huizenga (MI)	Price, Tom
Bucshon	Burgess	Hultgren	Ratcliffe
Burgess	Byrne	Hunter	Reed
Byrne	Carter (GA)	Hurd (TX)	Renacci
Carter (TX)	Carter (TX)	Hurt (VA)	Ribble
Chabot	Chaffetz	Jenkins (KS)	Rice (SC)
Clawson (FL)	Clawson (FL)	Jenkins (WV)	Rigell
Cole	Coffman	Johnson (OH)	Roby
Collins (GA)	Cole	Johnson, Sam	Roe (TN)
Comstock	Collins (GA)	Jolly	Rogers (AL)
Conaway	Comstock	Jones	Rogers (KY)
Cook	Conaway	Jordan	Rohrabacher
Cramer	Cook	Joyce	Rokita
Crenshaw	Cramer	Kelly (PA)	Rooney (FL)
Culberson	Crenshaw	King (IA)	Ros-Lehtinen
Curbelo (FL)	Culberson	King (NY)	Roskam
Lamborn	Curbelo (FL)	Kinzinger (IL)	Ross
Lance	Davis, Rodney	Kline	Rothfus
Delaney	Delaney	Knight	Rouzer
Denham	Dent	LaHood	Royce
Duff	DeSantis	LaMalfa	Russell
Duncan (SC)	DesJarlais	Lamborn	Salmon
Duncan (TN)	Diaz-Balart	Lance	Sanford
Ellmers (NC)	Donovan	Latta	Scalise
Emmer (MN)	Duffy	Lipinski	Schweikert
Farenthold	Duncan (SC)	Long	Scott, Austin
Fitzpatrick	Duncan (TN)	Loudermilk	Sensenbrenner
Fleischmann	Ellmers (NC)	Love	Sessions
Fleming	Emmer (MN)	Lucas	Shimkus
Flores	Farenthold	Luetkemeyer	Shuster
Forbes	Fitzpatrick	Lummis	Smith (MO)
Fortenberry	Fleischmann	Marchant	Smith (NE)
Fox	Fleming	Marino	Smith (NJ)
Franks (AZ)	Flores	Massie	Stefanik
Frelinghuysen	Forbes	McCarthy	Stewart
Garrett	Fortenberry	McCaul	Stivers
Gibbs	Fox	McClintock	Thompson (PA)
Gibson	Franks (AZ)	McHenry	Thornberry
Gohmert	Frelinghuysen	McKinley	Tiberi
Goodlatte	Guthrie	McMorris	Tipton
Gowdy	Hardy	Rodgers	Trott
Granger	Harper	McSally	Turner
Graves (GA)	Harris	Meadows	Upton
Graves (LA)	Hartzer	Meehan	Valadao
Guthrie	Heck (NV)	Messer	Wagner
Hardy	Hensarling	Mica	Walberg
Harris	Herrera Beutler	Miller (FL)	Walden
Hartzer	Hice, Jody B.	Miller (MI)	Walker
Heck (NV)	Hill	Moolenaar	Walorski
Hensarling	Holding	Mooney (WV)	Walters, Mimi
Herrera Beutler		Mullin	Weber (TX)
Hice, Jody B.		Mulvaney	Webster (FL)
Hill		Murphy (PA)	Wenstrup
Holding		Neugebauer	Westerman
		Noem	Whitfield
		Nugent	Williams
		Nunes	Wilson (SC)
		Olson	Wittman
		Palazzo	Womack
		Palmer	Woodall
		Paulsen	Yoder
		Pearce	Yoho
		Perry	Young (AK)
		Pittenger	Young (IA)
		Hice, Jody B.	Young (IN)
		Pitts	Zeldin
		Poe (TX)	Zinke
		Poliquin	

NOES—181

Adams	Cicilline	Ellison
Aguilar	Clark (MA)	Eshoo
Ashford	Clarke (NY)	Esty
Bass	Clay	Farr
Beatty	Cleaver	Foster
Becerra	Clyburn	Frankel (FL)
Bera	Cohen	Fudge
Beyer	Connolly	Gabbard
Bishop (GA)	Conyers	Gallego
Blumenauer	Cooper	Garamendi
Bonamici	Costa	Graham
Bost	Costello (PA)	Grayson
Boyle, Brendan	Courtney	Green, Al
F.	Crowley	Green, Gene
Brady (PA)	Cuellar	Griffith
Brooks (AL)	Cummings	Grijalva
Brown (FL)	Davis (CA)	Hahn
Brownley (CA)	DeGette	Hastings
Bustos	DeLauro	Heck (WA)
Butterfield	DelBene	Higgins
Capps	DeSaulnier	Himes
Capuano	Deutch	Hinojosa
Cárdenas	Dingell	Honda
Cárdenas	Doggett	Hoyer
Carney	Dold	Huffman
Cartwright	Doyle, Michael	Israel
Castor (FL)	F.	Jackson Lee
Castro (TX)	Edwards	Jeffries
Chu, Judy		

Johnson (GA)	McNerney	Schakowsky
Johnson, E. B.	Meeks	Schiff
Kaptur	Meng	Schrader
Kelly (IL)	Moore	Scott (VA)
Kennedy	Moulton	Scott, David
Kildee	Murphy (FL)	Serrano
Kilmer	Nadler	Sewell (AL)
Kind	Napolitano	Sherman
Kirkpatrick	Neal	Simpson
Kuster	Nolan	Sinema
Langevin	Norcross	Sires
Larsen (WA)	O'Rourke	Slaughter
Larson (CT)	Pallone	Smith (WA)
Lawrence	Pascarell	Speier
Lee	Pelosi	Swalwell (CA)
Levin	Perlmutter	Takano
Lewis	Peters	Thompson (CA)
Lieu, Ted	Peterson	Thompson (MS)
LoBiondo	Pingree	Titus
Loeb sack	Pocan	Tonko
Lofgren	Polis	Van Hollen
Lowenthal	Price (NC)	Vargas
Lowey	Quigley	Veasey
Lujan Grisham	Rangel	Vela
(NM)	Reichert	Velázquez
Luján, Ben Ray	Rice (NY)	Visclosky
(NM)	Richmond	Walz
Lynch	Roybal-Allard	Wasserman
Maloney,	Ruiz	Schultz
Carolyn	Ruppersberger	Waters, Maxine
Maloney, Sean	Rush	Watson Coleman
Matsui	Ryan (OH)	Welch
McCollum	Sánchez, Linda	Wilson (FL)
McDermott	T.	Yarmuth
McGovern	Sarbanes	

NOT VOTING—28

Calvert	Graves (MO)	Payne
Carson (IN)	Gutiérrez	Sanchez, Loretta
Collins (NY)	Hanna	Smith (TX)
Crawford	Issa	Stutzman
Davis, Danny	Katko	Takai
DeFazio	Keating	Torres
Duckworth	Kelly (MS)	Tsongas
Engel	Labrador	Westmoreland
Fattah	MacArthur	
Fincher	Newhouse	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). There are 2 minutes remaining.

□ 1051

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on April 29, 2016, I was unable to vote on H.R. 4901, the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Reauthorization Act. I would have voted in support of final passage of H.R. 4901, rollcall No. 179, had I been present.

Mr. HANNA. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 179 on H.R. 4901, I am not recorded because I was absent for personal reasons. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

Stated against:

Ms. TSONGAS. Mr. Speaker, I missed a vote on H.R. 4901 in order to attend a family wedding. Had I been present for this vote, I would have voted "no" on rollcall 179 (H.R. 4901).

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, on April 29, 2016, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted as follows: On rollcall No. 178, Democratic Motion to Recommit H.R. 4901, I would have voted "yes." On rollcall No. 179, Scholarships for Opportunity and Results Reauthorization Act, H.R. 4901, I would have voted "no."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I was absent on April 29, 2016, due to a medical procedure. Had I been present, I would have voted: On

The Democratic Motion to Recommit H.R. 4901, I would have voted "yea." On Passage of H.R. 4901, I would have voted "nay."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent in the House chamber for votes on Friday, April 29, 2016. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote 178 and "nay" on rollcall vote 179.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, on April 29, 2016, I was unavoidably detained and missed rollcall votes 178 and 179. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes" on rollcall 178 and "no" on rollcall 179.

ADJOURNMENT FROM FRIDAY, APRIL 29, 2016, TO TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2016

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourns to meet at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, May 3, 2016.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

MOMENT OF SILENCE HONORING THE LIVES OF UGA STUDENTS LOST IN A TRAGIC ACCIDENT

(Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, my friends and colleagues from the Georgia delegation and I rise in honor of the lives of four bright young University of Georgia students who were killed in a tragic car accident outside of Athens on Wednesday evening.

We pray for and grieve for the families of Christina, Halle, Kayla, and Brittany, and the entire University of Georgia community. We also pray for Agnes, who remains in critical condition, that she may be healed.

The remarkable impact of these women upon UGA's campus is evidenced by the thousands of students, faculty, and staff who gathered yesterday in an outpouring of love, support, and remembrance.

Mr. Speaker, this tragedy is every parent's worst nightmare, and our hearts ache for these families.

I ask all my colleagues and all of those watching to pray for these families and to join the Georgia delegation in a moment of silence for Christina, Halle, Kayla, and Brittany, as well as for Agnes, and to know, in the words of Psalm 147:3: "He heals the brokenhearted and binds their wounds."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members will please rise and join in a moment of silence.

ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING CLASSIFIED SCHEDULE OF AUTHORIZATIONS AND CLASSIFIED ANNEX ACCOMPANYING INTELLIGENCE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

Mr. NUNES. Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce to all Members of the House that the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence has ordered the bill H.R. 5077, the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, reported favorably to the House today, and will file its report on the bill in the House in early May.

Mr. Speaker, the classified schedules of authorizations and the classified annexes accompanying the bill are available for review by Members at the offices of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in room HVC-304 of the Capitol Visitor Center. The committee office will be open during regular business hours for the convenience of any Member who wishes to review this material prior to its consideration by the House.

I recommend that Members wishing to review the classified annex contact the committee's director of security to arrange a time and date for that viewing. This will ensure the availability of the appropriately cleared committee staff to assist Members who desire assistance during their review of these classified materials.

I urge interested Members to review these materials in order to better understand the committee's recommendations. The classified annexes to the committee's report contain the committee's recommendations on the intelligence budget for fiscal year 2017 and related classified information that cannot be disclosed publicly.

It is important that Members keep in mind the requirements of clause 13 of House rule XXIII, which only permits access to classified information by those Members of the House who have signed the oath provided for in the rules.

In addition, the committee's rules require that Members agree in writing to a nondisclosure agreement. The agreement indicates that the Member has been granted access to the classified annexes and that they are familiar with the rules of the House and the committee with respect to the classified nature of that information and the limitations on the disclosure of that information.

NATIONAL CONGENITAL DIAPHRAGMATIC HERNIA AWARENESS MONTH

(Mr. HOLDING asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HOLDING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my constituent and friend, Dawn Williamson, in raising awareness for congenital diaphragmatic hernia, also known as CDH.

Mr. Speaker, CDH affects over 1,000 babies in the United States per year