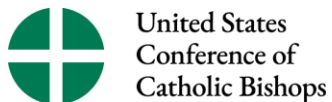


March 3, 2025

The Educational Choice for Children Act and Impacts on Catholic Education

*Prepared for and presented to the
California Catholic Conference
ECCA Summit*



Presentation Overview

I. Background/USCCB's perspective

II. ECCA history

III. Impacts for Catholic Education

IV. Current state of play

V. What you can do

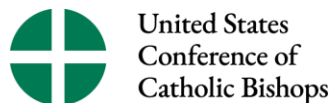
Background



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

About me

- Joined USCCB in June 2024 as the Associate Director for Public Policy in the Secretariat of Catholic Education
- Previously Senate staffer: education policy advisor to Senator Tim Scott and then-Senator Marco Rubio
- Led the Senate School Choice Caucus
- Worked on ECCA as a Congressional staffer



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops



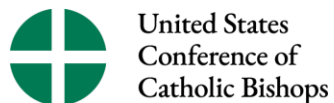
About USCCB

- The USCCB's Secretariat of Catholic Education is the team of staff members that assists the Committee on Catholic Education.
- Our office provides support and advocacy in federal public policy on education issues that impact Catholic students, families, and schools.
- We work closely with USCCB's Office of Government Relations and the Office of General Counsel on these goals



USCCB's support for ECCA

- USCCB has endorsed the ECCA since 2023, because the bill aligns with Church teaching about parental autonomy in education.
- USCCB worked to ensure the legislation included strong protections for religious liberty.
- USCCB has assisted SCCs across the country to mobilize outreach in support of ECCA.



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops



THE LOOP [READ](#) [MISSION](#) [MERCH](#)

US bishops' conference supports school choice bill

USCCB, CATHOLIC EDUCATION LEADERS URGE SUPPORT FOR FEDERAL SCHOOL CHOICE BILL



[Marriage Special Report](#) [Jubilee 2025](#) [Pope Francis](#) [Arts](#) [Blogs](#) [Vatican](#) [Register Radio](#) [Job Board](#)

Bishops Back School Choice Funding Bill



In an email campaign, the USCCB requested that Catholics contact their senators to encourage them to support the School Choice Now Act.

Catholic World News

USCCB committee backs Educational Choice for Children Act

January 30, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
United States Senate
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510


The Honorable Adrian Smith
United States House of Representatives
502 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Cassidy and Representative Smith:

Thank you for introducing your respective bills, S. 292 and H.R. 833, the Educational Choice for Children Act. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Catholic Education is pleased to support this legislation.

Parents as First Teachers

The Catholic Church teaches that parents are the first and primary teachers of their children and therefore have the right to select the best educational environment for their children. Whether that is in a public, homeschool or private school, parents know the needs of their children.



*“[P]arents have the right to **choose a school for them** which corresponds to their own convictions. This right is fundamental,” and “[p]ublic authorities have the duty of guaranteeing this parental right and of ensuring concrete conditions for its exercise.”¹*

Since 1925, parental rights in education have been the law of the land in the United States. At a time when all “common schools” had religious instruction, Catholic families desired their own schools. After being required to attend common schools with Protestant religious instruction as a part of the daily curriculum, the United States Supreme Court ruled² that Catholic families have a right to send their children to Catholic schools and cannot be forced to attend a government school.

The Educational Choice for Children Act protects this right by empowering parents with the financial resources they need to select the education environment that aligns to their values and works best for their children.

ECCA Legislative History



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

About ECCA

- ECCA is legislation that would create a federal scholarship tax credit to directly empower parents of up to two million K-12 students to choose the best school or education service for their child.
- The ECCA is a tax bill that doesn't require any new federal appropriations, instead generating revenue from voluntary contributions.
- Under the bill, up to \$10 billion in annual credits would be available to fund scholarships for students in lower- to middle-income families.
- Under ECCA, taxpayers could contribute to a nonprofit scholarship granting organization (SGO) and receive a 100%, non-refundable tax credit.
- Includes robust protections for religious liberty, parental autonomy, and prevents state interference
- The ECCA had 186 cosponsors in the House and Senate last year – the most of any federal school choice bill ever.

Opportunities for Catholic schools

Opportunities

- 32 states and D.C. provide children the option to attend the school of their parents' choice through tax credits, vouchers, or scholarships.
- In the 2023-2024 school year, 13.7% of Catholic school children use a parental choice program, and 28.3% of schools enrolled students using parental choice programs.
- These programs have been game-changers for the states that have them, and ECCA has the potential to do the same for states that don't have state-level programs

EXHIBIT 39: PARTICIPATION IN PARENTAL CHOICE PROGRAMS

Region	Schools	Students
New England	11	1,096
Midwest	174	11,632
Great Lakes	729	125,404
Plains	215	14,214
Southeast	424	67,060
West/Far West	117	13,087
Total	1,670	232,493

Source: NCEA 2023-2024 statistical report

Current state of play



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Current state of play

- The ECCA was introduced in the 119th Congress on January 29th by Senators Bill Cassidy and Tim Scott and Reps. Adrian Smith and Burgess Owens (S. 292/H.R. 833).
 - 29 Senate cosponsors, 43 House cosponsors
- Goal: ensure that ECCA is included as part of the anticipated tax reconciliation package.



Challenges

- Lack of clarity on path forward for reconciliation (one bill or two?).
- Extremely narrow margins in the House, making everything more difficult.
- High price tag of the bill, and difficulty finding acceptable offsets, will mean that things that can get into the bill will be limited.
- Fighting off any harmful amendments or procedural challenges to ECCA language.

Likely narrow GOP House majority could put Trump's tax cuts in jeopardy, says Raymond James

POLITICS

Trump demands 'ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL' after Senate GOP moves to peel off tax pledges

Trump backtracks from 'one big, beautiful bill' to fund his agenda

"Now what they approved yesterday is one part of it, and then they approve another part of it," Trump said on Kilmeade's radio show. "And, you know, you could, I guess, you could make the case. You could do three. You could do 10."

Speaker Johnson's historically narrow House majority shrinks even further

What you can do now



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Action Items

What USCCB is doing

- Sending letters of support to key lawmakers from the Bishops urging support.
- Sending out Voter Voice alerts.
- Scheduling Hill meetings to advocate.
- Working with Catholic stakeholders to think ahead to implementation.

What you can do

- VoterVoice or other grassroots advocacy tools: alert supporters on your email lists to urge their Representative and Senator to support ECCA.
 - In outreach, ensure that they know you are a constituent.
- Request district office meetings with Members of Congress and their senior staff to advocate for the bill.
- Think ahead to implementation.

Questions?

Contact me:
apreston@usccb.org