

“(F) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this paragraph, the term ‘eligible child’ means a child from a low-income family, as determined by the local educational agency for purposes of allocating funds to schools under section 1113(c)(1).”

In section 401 of the bill, in section 4131(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (as proposed to be amended by such section 401)—

(1) strike “and” at the end of paragraph (14);

(2) strike the period at the end of paragraph (15) and insert “; and”; and

(3) insert the following:

“(16) activities to promote, implement, or expand private school choice for disadvantaged children in failing public schools.

In section 501 of the bill, in subparagraph (P) of section 5115(b)(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (as proposed to be amended by such section 501), after “including a public charter school,” insert “or a private school if no safe public school or public charter school can accommodate the student.”

In section 801 of the bill, in section 8507 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (as proposed to be amended by such section 801)—

(1) insert “(a) IN GENERAL.—” before “Nothing”; and

(2) add at the end the following:

“(b) INAPPLICABILITY.—Subsection (a) shall not be construed to prohibit the use of funds made available to parents of eligible children for sectarian educational purposes under private school choice provisions of this Act, or to require an eligible private institution to remove religious art, icons, scripture, or other symbols.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 143, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY).

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of this amendment, which is offered by myself, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY). With the consent of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE), I will just make a few comments and then yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER) for his comments.

Mr. Chairman, this amendment represents the language that was first introduced in the President’s bill as he sent it up to the House and represents that very important component of his education package and education philosophy, which is parental involvement in school choice. It is, in my estimation, just the most minimal introduction of the right to choose a school on the part of a parent that is concerned about the performance of the school relative to the child’s life, and it is certainly something that this Congress should take under consideration and, in my estimation, we should pass without hesitation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER).

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Chairman, this amendment that we have before us reinstates the private school choice provisions into the bill, and I think will help rescue children who are trapped in chronically failing schools. I would like to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) for sponsoring this amendment with me.

This issue is about fairness. It is about equity. It is about providing a safety valve for disadvantaged students.

Mr. Chairman, under H.R. 1, the bill expands choices for parents, but we need to expand it even further by giving parents the option of private school choice in cases where their children are trapped in failing schools. This was part of the President’s original plan and, while far from the only part, it is a very important part.

The amendment would restore all the private school choice provisions that were struck in the bill in committee, except for the demonstration program. Specifically, the amendment would restore private school choice as an option for disadvantaged students who have attended failing schools for at least 3 years. It would restore private school choice as a local use of funds under title IV of the Innovative Education Grants for Disadvantaged Students. It restores private school choice for students who are stuck in unsafe schools and where there are no other public schools to which they could transfer. And, it restores private school choice for students who have been victims of crime on school premises and where there are no other public schools to which they could transfer.

Mr. Chairman, I think it is common knowledge that we already have school choice in this country, except for poor children. Suburban parents, including many members of this body, are more likely to have the financial means to send their children to private schools, but low-income parents cannot afford this option. While we would continue to deny parents with children in failing schools the opportunity that Members of Congress enjoy, I just do not know.

We are told that providing poor children a way out of failing schools will siphon away money from the public school system. Quite frankly, I do not think this argument holds water.

Mr. Chairman, a couple of years ago, Matthew Miller, writing for the Atlantic Monthly, asked Bob Chase, who is the president of the National Education Association, if the NEA would support vouchers in exchange for tripling per-pupil spending for inner city kids, and guess what? Jay said, “no.”

This is not about money, even assuming, which we should not, that spending more money automatically increases student achievement. This is about an education bureaucracy that is resistant to change and mired in habit.

This about powerful lobbies that refuse to accept any change in the status quo.

Where it has been tried, school choice works. Harvard University’s Jay Green found that Florida students’ test scores have improved across the board since the implementation of Florida’s A-Plus program, similar to the plan that we would see in this amendment. And a September 1999 report conducted by the Indiana Center for Evaluation found that participants in Cleveland’s scholarship program scored up to 5 percentile points higher than their public school counterparts in language and science assessments.

Disadvantaged students have the most to gain from school choice. Consider the characteristics from those who benefit from Milwaukee’s Parental School Choice plan: Fifty-four percent receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children money, they come from families with an average income of \$11,600; 76 percent come from single-parent homes, and more than 96 percent are from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Chairman, this is a good amendment. These are good provisions. They will help parents and they will help children stuck in failing schools.

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee will rise informally.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHAFFER) assumed the chair.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evans, one of his secretaries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

#### NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT OF 2001

The Committee resumed its sitting.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, vouchers are a hotly debated topic throughout our Nation. The Michigan and California members of this House are very aware of this debate, having just had major ballot initiatives on private school vouchers recently defeated in their respective States.

In my home State of Michigan, in fact, our private school voucher proposition was opposed by over two-thirds of the Michigan voters, with a similar vote in California. The people of those two States, which are quite a cross-section of America, have spoken very clearly on this issue.

In committee, all private school voucher provisions were removed from the bill with bipartisan support. I believe that the passage of this amendment does jeopardize the many months of bipartisan work that have gone into producing this legislation. I would hope that the House would preserve the bipartisan support for this legislation and reject this amendment.