

# Attachment 2

*Testimony before the Idaho Senate Education Committee given on 1/16/17 by Briana LeClaire, Executive Director, Idaho Federation of Independent Schools. Contact: [briana@idfis.org](mailto:briana@idfis.org) (208) 724-6311*

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Briana LeClaire, and I am the executive director of the Idaho Federation of Independent Schools, a statewide private school organization. Our members include Holy Rosary Catholic School and the Watersprings School in Idaho Falls, Grace Lutheran School and Holy Spirit in Pocatello, St. Edward's and Lighthouse Christian in Twin Falls, Nampa Christian, The Ambrose School, Cole Valley Christian and the Sheridan Academy in Meridian, The Alzar School in Cascade, Summit Academy in Cottonwood, Classical Christian Academy and Genesis Prep in Post Falls, Holy Family Catholic School, Lake City Junior Academy and LAM Christian in Coeur d'Alene.

The Federation protects schools' freedoms to educate children well, and promotes private schools and private school choice.

The demand for private schooling in Idaho exceeds its availability. A survey by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice revealed that the first choice of 27 percent of Idahoans is a private school. However, only three percent of Idaho's k-12 students are enrolled in one.

The same survey showed that 5,000 seats are available right now in Idaho's private schools, and that 94 percent of private schools award financial aid. The median tuition for private elementary schools is \$3,550 and the median high school tuition is slightly more than \$5,000.

All students should attend the K-12 school that suits them best. Full stop. There should be no adjective, like public, private or charter, in front of the word “schools.”

Many states facilitate school choice through tax credit tuition scholarship programs, education savings accounts, vouchers, and other programs. Through fate, some Idaho children are positioned to attend the schools their parents think are best for them. They might belong to a family of means. They might be a homeless child on a full-ride sponsorship to Cole Valley Christian School. They are probably a recipient of financial aid from the school itself. But the fact remains that for most Idahoans, excellent schools that could be serving 5,000 more children are off the table.

We don't need to reinvent the wheel. We just need to get the kids in the car. This legislature should make it so that more Idaho kids can attend the great schools where their parents want them in the first place.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.