



## Better Accountability Measures Needed in HB 328

**IDRA Testimony Against House Bill 328, Submitted by Mikayla Arciaga, M.A.Ed., to the Georgia House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Income Tax, February 25, 2025**

Dear Chair Williamson and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Mikayla Arciaga, M.A.Ed., I am the Georgia Advocacy Director at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

We commend the author on all of the revisions that were made to House Bill 328. We support all of those. We do still have some concerns as it pertains to participating schools. For the schools where these scholarships are paid to by parents, there still remains no guarantee of protections for our most vulnerable student groups, students with disabilities, students with discipline histories.

There is no guarantee that when a child is pulled out of their public school to go to a private school – even if they leverage this program – they will receive the same protections they would be entitled to in their public school. The other concern is around the accountability and transparency of this program. I am coming to this conversation with degrees in economics and in program evaluation. We simply do not have enough data about this program to say that it is working beyond taking the word of the schools that may benefit from this program and the scholarship organizations that distribute them.

We would love to see additional expansions around the expenses the scholarship is covering and reports of participating schools. It is delightful to hear that this is benefiting children. But I work with a variety of families where, for every student who is benefiting, we see students that have been removed unjustly and have no option for recourse. With that, then, comes concerns around recapture of funds that are otherwise public funds.

The final thing I would just like to address is the idea that this is “revenue saving.” I have seen some of the math and the reports around this from the department of audits. My concern is that the math that is used assumes that all of the students who are participating are public school students who are transferring to private school. This is questionable since there are many students who would never be planning to go to a public school. So, the claim that this is saving the state money is just simply inaccurate.

Again, we appreciate seeing the revisions that have been made and the opportunity to speak on this. Thank you so much.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your

consideration. For more information, please contact Mikayla Arciaga, M.A.Ed., Georgia Advocacy Director, at [mikayla.arciaga@idra.org](mailto:mikayla.arciaga@idra.org).

*IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.*