



The Promise Scholarship Does Not Promise to Protect Students from Discrimination

IDRA Testimony Against SB 152, Submitted by Mikayla Arciaga, M.A.Ed., to the Georgia House Education Committee, April 1, 2025

Dear Chair Erwin and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon, chair, members of the committee. Thank you for your time today. My name is Mikayla Arciaga, M.A.Ed. I am the Georgia Advocacy Director for IDRA. We are 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 are opposed to both the underlying Senate Bill 152 and the amended version of the bill, especially since the program has not expanded the safeguards that we would want to see for both financial and individual protections in this program. Safeguards that we would expect from any other publicly funded program in our state, including public schools.

The financial concerns that we raised about this program in 2023 have not been remediated, specifically around accountability mechanisms. I believe there is some effort to do that in this bill, and we appreciate the transparency there. But there is still no mechanism for accounting what happens to taxpayer funds if a child unenrolls, is expelled or transfers between schools. The transient experience that many foster children experience highlights some of the concerns we have for those who are participating in this program.

Further, none of the individual protections have been codified. I appreciate the parent who shared that we want safe schools for our kids, and the Promise Scholarship can help do that. But the Promise Scholarship does not protect students or promise to protect them from discrimination. Private schools are still allowed to discriminate against children with disabilities, children from historically marginalized backgrounds, and children with discipline histories. And none of this has been remediated in this bill or its amended version and should be addressed before this program is enacted in the fall.

We do appreciate some of the clarity that was added, but it does muddy the waters in some ways. I know the attempt has been made, unfortunately you need more time to clarify more of this language and codify more of the protections that every private school should be held to if they receive money from our taxpayers in the state.

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.

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.