

Joint Statement on School Choice

**by Delegates of The Rabbinical Council of America/Union of Orthodox Jewish
Congregations of America and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**

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Western Civilization has long recognized the fundamental right of parents, as well as their sacred responsibility, to guide the upbringing and education of their children. Almost a century ago, the United States Supreme Court recognized that “parents ... direct the upbringing and education of [their] children.”

The communities we represent accept this responsibility with the utmost seriousness. We have committed ourselves and our institutions to creating educational environments that strive to imbue in our children the highest moral values, a depth of knowledge, and a proficiency in skills enabling them to support themselves and their families, and to benefit society at large.

Many Catholic and Jewish parents are committed to providing their children with this education, and struggle mightily to do so. Others, including those who may not be members of our faith communities, wish to send their children to schools where they can receive the best possible education, but cannot afford the cost. We join together to call upon our elected and appointed officials to implement policies which will empower all parents to choose schools for their children which they believe best serve each child’s own individual, educational needs.

The Supreme Court has recognized that government funds may flow to religious institutions as a result of the private and independent choices made by individuals upon the basis of their own beliefs. Thus, initiatives facilitating the flow of such funds and services can enhance the Constitution’s promotion of the free exercise of religion while remaining mindful of neither establishing nor endorsing religion.

Moreover, at this time in our nation’s history, “school choice” is an issue of justice issue. For too many years, the United States has been aware that serious inequalities trap low-income children in schools whose infrastructures are crumbling and whose environment is dysfunctional.

“School choice” under its various forms ensures that the poor will be provided with the opportunity to direct the education of their children without regard to their economic status.

“School choice” policies also vest parents of all walks of life with the power to educate their children as they see fit.

Therefore, we, delegates of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Rabbinical Council of America/Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America are committed to working in partnership with each other, elected officials and all others who share our common commitment to securing greater educational opportunity for all our nation’s children.