



“EITC is not a loophole. For thousands of Pennsylvania families like mine, it has been a lifeline.”

That’s part of Barbara’s story, and it’s one example of why PA’s Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program works. EITC is Pennsylvania’s successful scholarship program where businesses voluntarily contribute what amounts to a nearly dollar-for-dollar credit off their state taxes. For 25 years, it has helped thousands of children to receive an excellent education and have their family’s values reinforced.

Barbara grew up in Kensington, and thanks to the daily sacrifices made by her single mom, she became the first in her family to attend college

“That did not happen by accident,” she states, crediting the EITC program with helping to change the trajectory of her life.

It’s also why it’s so discouraging to watch every Democrat Representative in our Pennsylvania House, along with three Republicans - Representatives Joe Hogan (R-Bucks), Tom Mehaffie (R-Dauphin), and KC Tomlinson (R-Bucks) - vote this week to make it harder for families like Barbara’s to access educational opportunities in our state. House Bill 2632 passed 105-97, and it now heads to the PA Senate. A chief concern now is this bill being a part of ongoing budget negotiations, which is why we need your prayers and engagement.

I listened to the entire PA House floor debate on House Bill 2632, a burdensome bill being rushed through the process after being introduced just days ago. Two speakers, both from Philadelphia, stood out to me for very different reasons.

PA State Rep. Martina White (R-Philadelphia) helped outline what is at stake:

“For 25 years, Pennsylvania’s Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs have helped families find the educational setting that best meets their child’s needs. They are among the most successful educational initiatives this Commonwealth has ever created. In fact, our EITC program has been so successful that the federal government recently modeled its new Education Freedom Tax Credit after Pennsylvania’s approach.

Today, more than 100,000 students annually receive scholarships through these programs. Families apply in record numbers year after year. And that last point matters most. Because the challenge facing EITC and OSTC has never been a lack of demand. This past year, 70,000 families applied for scholarships and never received them, not because they were ineligible. Not because a scholarship organization rejected them. But because there simply was not enough funding available...

House Bill 2632 moves us in the opposite direction. This bill eliminates the existing EITC and OSTC programs and replaces them with a new framework that makes it harder for families to qualify for a scholarship and more difficult for scholarship organizations to receive donations. It lowers the maximum income limit, meaning many families who qualify today won’t qualify tomorrow.”

If we truly value every student and their opportunity to thrive, House Bill 2632 should never have been voted out of the PA House.

While at the Capitol this week, I spoke with someone who attended Harrisburg High School, where the latest test scores show just 12% of students are proficient in reading and only 2% are proficient in math.

The school's main campus sits less than three miles from where our State Representatives voted on House Bill 2632.

But private schools are the problem?

That brings me to the other Philadelphia lawmaker who caught my attention. PA State Rep. Jason Dawkins (D-Philadelphia), who sends his kids to private school, rose to the microphone saying he was not intending to speak but felt compelled to address differences between funding for the EITC and OSTC programs.

Rep. Dawkins argued that EITC "is a subsidy for people who can afford the tuition." He used funding differences between the two programs (EITC is twice as old as OSTC) to justify support for a complete overhaul of the tax credit program presented with House Bill 2632. He concluded by saying:

"For me, and for the folks watching back home, I am going to support this bill, and I'm going to tell you why. Cuz far too long we've been leaving certain kids behind while advancing others."

If we're going to talk about leaving kids behind, what about the 70,000 students who applied for scholarships last year and were left empty-handed? House Bill 2632 doesn't solve that problem. It makes it worse.

And what about Barbara? Was EITC merely a subsidy for her family because they could somehow afford tuition? "We are not wealthy. We are a family that has stretched, sacrificed, and made hard choices because we believe investing in our children's education matters. Those sacrifices, along with EITC, have proven fruitful."

The fact is, Barbara's EITC story isn't unique. Thousands of students are still waiting for the same opportunity she received.

The question before lawmakers should not be how to burden these programs with new restrictions. The question should be how to help more students access the opportunities that changed Barbara's life.

More than one in four students across Pennsylvania now attend a school other than their assigned public option, and that number continues to grow. Families are looking for educational options that best meet their children's needs.

We should respond by expanding opportunities, not restricting them.

After all, the next Barbara is out there right now. She may be waiting for a scholarship opportunity that could change the trajectory of her life, too.

[We need lawmakers working to open more doors for students](#) like Barbara, not to close them.

Sincerely,



Dan Bartkowiak
Chief Strategy Officer
Pennsylvania Family Institute

P.S. If you want to read more about Barbara's story, she penned an op-ed this week on the problems with House Bill 2632. [Click here to read it.](#) While this bill was amended to remove immediate scholarship funding cuts, what remains is the dismantling of the EITC and OSTC scholarships, imposing new financial burdens on scholarship organizations, increasing bureaucratic mandates on participating schools, and eliminating the supplemental scholarship opportunities for economically disadvantaged students.

P.P.S. Please make sure to let your State Senator know your concerns with House Bill 2632. [Click here to send an email.](#)

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