

Vice President Pence: 'You Are America's Future'

A few hours before President Donald Trump hosted Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in the Roosevelt Room at the White House, Vice President Mike Pence was hosting an entirely different group of visitors there.

Originally, it was planned that the vice president alone would host students and parents of students who have benefited from the school choice scholarship and voucher programs to attend the school of their choice. The president briefly crashed the party, after which the vice president gave the following remarks:

Well, on behalf of the first family, it was going to be my privilege to welcome you to the White House today. But then the president decided—when he heard you were across the hallway, he decided to come by and say hello just to tell you all how proud he is of you, how proud he is of your parents and how proud we are to continue the D.C. scholarship program.

And we're so grateful—we're so grateful—to have someone who has been so dedicated to opening doors of opportunities for American children and families all across this country for so many years as the secretary of education. Would you join me in thanking Betsy DeVos for her wonderful leadership?

Secretary DeVos is fighting every day to give America's children the world-class education that every American child deserves. And on behalf of the President and families across America, Betsy, we thank you. We thank you. Today is just an early installment of the impact that you're having on expanding educational opportunities for all of our children.

And to Tseganesh Tadele, wow. What an impressive young lady.

Give her another round of applause, will you please? She actually rewrote a little of her speech right at the very beginning. She added greetings to the secretary, to the vice president, and to the president, which I thought was very impressive on your feet. And congratulations on all your great success. You really are a wonderful example of why President Trump is fighting so hard to expand educational opportunities for all of our families in the country, and we thank you for being here.

To all the advocates, to the administrators, especially to the parents who are here—the parents of these wonderful, beautiful children who are gathered here, to all the great teachers who are here: Welcome to the White House. You are making a difference each and every day in the lives of all these wonderful kids. Give yourselves a round of applause.

We have here leaders and students from K-5 grade school, middle school and high school; from three private, one charter school and one public school. And we're proud to have all of you kids here. St. Anthony's Catholic School, Georgetown Visitation, Basis D.C. Charter, just to name a few. And all the way from Indianapolis, Indiana, we have Thomas Carr Howe Community High School. Let's welcome all these great kids and these great schools.

And all the adults here, thank you for caring so much. Thank you for caring so much about your children and every student's education. Thank you for the late nights, for the early mornings. Thank you for the everyday acts of love and sacrifice you make on behalf of these kids, giving them the best shot in life, the best future for them.

And lastly, you heard the president say today again that he's proud of you. He's really proud of you, and so am I. You are America's future. You keep at it, you keep learning, you keep striving, you keep believing in your dreams. Don't ever let anybody tell you you can't. Then you will. You'll

live out your dreams. And thank you for believing in your dreams and working so hard at all of your classwork today. Give these kids another round of applause.

Now, we're here today because this week Congress is poised to pass legislation that President Trump will sign into law, a spending bill that will give new life and funding to the D.C. Opportunities Scholarship Program, which is the only federally funded voucher program in the country. It's a case study in school-choice success.

This spending bill will extend the Opportunities Scholarship for three years, funds it at \$45 million for the rest of the year. It is a victory for families and students throughout the District of Columbia. Since its creation in 2004, the Opportunities Scholarship program has given parents and families hope my giving them a pathway to take their children out of schools that too often are failing to meet the needs of children here in our nation's capital, give them a chance that other families have to put their children into a private school.

And over the past 13 years, the results have been impressive. Nearly 20,000 students have applied for the program, 7,500 students have been accepted. And more than 1,150 children are participating in the D.C. Opportunities Scholarship program at this very moment.

While only 69 percent of D.C.'s public school students graduated from high school last year, 98 percent of D.C. scholarship students walked across the stage and received their diploma last year—98 percent. And get this: 86 percent of those kids were accepted into college to continue their education and climb the ladder of success.

President Trump could not be more proud to extend this crucial program, but his commitment to school choice doesn't end there. I have to tell you that this is a president who

truly does believe that parents in America ought to be able to choose where their children go to school regardless of their income or their area code. And in the days ahead, we're going to continue to work each and every day to give every family in America the opportunity to choose the school that's best for them.

So with thanks again to our secretary of education for bringing us to this moment, with thanks to all of you for all the hard work that you're putting in to all of your schoolwork today, on behalf of the president of the United States of America, we say keep dreaming, keep striving. And I have a feeling we're going to see one of these kids back at the White House.

Thanks, everybody. And God bless you.

Watch the entire beginning of the event in the video clip above. {eoa}