

Suit Challenges Parental Rights to Remove Kids From Failing Schools

Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys filed a friend-of-the-court brief late last week with the Louisiana Supreme Court in defense of the Louisiana Scholarship Program against an attack by a teachers' union and several public school boards.

The program, initially launched in New Orleans in 2008, expanded statewide in 2012 to provide scholarships to lower-income families so that children in those families can escape failing schools to attend a school that best fits their needs. After a lower court struck down the program in November of last year in a lawsuit filed by the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, the state filed an appeal, which went directly to the Louisiana Supreme Court.

"Parents should be able to choose what's best for their own children, and that's exactly what the Louisiana Scholarship Program allows to happen," said Legal Counsel Matt Sharp. "Significant evidence shows that programs like Louisiana's improve academic outcomes both for students who participate in the programs and those who remain in public schools. The ultimate winners are Louisiana families who want to provide the best education for their children, whether it is public or private."

In the brief, filed on behalf of several nonprofit advocacy groups and faith-based schools throughout the state, Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys point out that "the right of parents to raise and educate their children according to their religious faith is one that the U.S. Supreme Court and Louisiana state courts have repeatedly recognized and affirmed

as fundamental.”

The brief also provides evidence that similar programs have shown a positive impact on the educational success of students. As the brief explains, “students who participate in school choice programs—and in voucher programs in particular—graduate at an almost 20 percent higher rate than their peers” and “exhibit improved academic performance.”

Joel Pearce, one of nearly 2,200 allied attorneys with Alliance Defending Freedom, is local counsel on behalf of the groups that filed the brief in the case, *Louisiana Federation of Teachers v. State of Louisiana*.