

Sen. Johnson: Introduces Legislation to Permanently Authorize SOAR Act

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Contact:

[Austin Altenburg](#)

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Tim Scott (R-S.C.), and Mike Braun (R-Ind.) introduced legislation Wednesday to permanently authorize the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) Act, and ensure that students and their families in the District of Columbia have continued choice and increased opportunity for their education through the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OPS).

The senators had this to say about the bill:

“The Opportunity Scholarship Program has helped thousands of students from low-income households attain a graduation rate 21 percentage points higher than comparable students. The fact that twice as many children apply for the program as can be accommodated shows how strong demand is from parents seeking such positive results for their children,” **said Sen. Johnson.** “This bill is about providing hope for a better future to students by allowing them to choose schools that meet their needs, and offering certainty and stability to families and schools through the permanent authorization of the program. I sincerely hope my colleagues will join our bipartisan group in supporting a program that gives children the opportunity to create a better life for themselves.”

“I have long supported the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program because I believe D.C.’s students and parents deserve a choice and access to high-quality schools,” **said Sen. Feinstein.** “Our bill will help ensure that’s the case by permanently reauthorizing the successful D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. This bill continues federal support for the district’s public and charter schools while also offering low-income students the opportunity to attend accredited private schools that they would otherwise not be able to afford.”

“Having grown up in neighborhoods that would have benefited from school choice, I know firsthand the amazing opportunities that can be opened for children when they’re afforded that opportunity,” **said Sen. Tim Scott.** “I have visited multiple schools in Washington that utilize the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, and know for a fact that parents and students see it as an absolute blessing. I look forward to permanently authorizing the SOAR Act and continuing to open doors for some of our most overlooked communities.”

“Parents know what’s best for their children, and parents ought to be able to call the shots on their kids’ education,” **said Sen. Braun.** “School choice empowers parents and students to succeed, and the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) Act delivers those results with a third of the funding.”

Background:

- Permanently authorizes Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) Act funding for District of Columbia public schools, public charter schools, and Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) schools.
- Updates accreditation language from the previous list of accreditors noted in the School Reform Act of 1995 and replaces it with the Student and Visitor Exchange English Language Program list – a list that is administered by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and is more current, consistently monitored, and federally approved to ensure accreditors for the federally-funded D.C. OSP remain current and well vetted.

Bill text can be found [here](#).