



## Senator Feinstein Opposes Changing DC School Voucher Program

July 13, 2005

*Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today urged the Senate Appropriations Committee to reject any changes to the District of Columbia’s pilot program that provides \$7,500 toward tuition for qualified public school students to attend private school.*

*Following is the text of the letter Senator Feinstein sent to Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), Ranking Member Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) and all other members of the Appropriations Committee:*

**I am writing to join Mayor Anthony Williams in urging the Appropriations Committee to reject a broad expansion of the scholarship program for students in the neediest public schools in Washington, DC to attend private schools of their choice.**

**I believe I was a crucial and critical vote for this program and would very strongly oppose the proposals to allow students to attend private high schools three miles outside the District and to raise the high school scholarship level to \$11,500 from \$7,500.**

**The pilot program, which I supported based on a request from Mayor Williams, is just in its second year out of five, and like the Mayor, I don’t believe it should be dramatically changed through the course of the program. Furthermore, it is imperative that we have the results of a comprehensive evaluation before considering any program changes.**

**As Mayor Williams noted in a press statement: “Everyone involved with the school choice program has agreed that we should let the program run through its trial period before we attempt any major restructuring - such as sending District students to private schools in Maryland and Virginia. I’m afraid that tinkering with it now could erode public support for choice and might lead to unintended consequences.**

**When we launched the school choice program in 2003 we always knew that modifications might be necessary but agreed to wait to see how things unfolded over a five-year period before making piecemeal changes. At the end of that period, we will have enough information to judge the program’s strengths and weaknesses. My hope is that our state-of-the-art school choice program will continue to provide an alternative for some students but will complement our existing strong public school**

**and charter school options - with the goal of educating all students inside our boundaries.”**

**My original purpose for supporting the pilot program was so we could learn whether students currently attending failing public schools would improve academically in a private school environment. To change the program mid-way would make such an evaluation very difficult.**

**Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.**

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