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National Coalition for Public Education Praises House Leaders Calling for More Oversight of Failing D.C. Voucher Program

Today, U.S. Reps. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) and Bobby Scott (D-Va.) issued a letter to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos seeking information on the performance and oversight efforts of the Washington, D.C., private school voucher program, the only federally funded voucher program. The letter also requests information on whether students participating in the program are afforded the same protections – including by civil rights laws and safety regulations – as children in public schools.

NCPE issued the following statement applauding the members of Congress for demanding this information from the U.S. Department of Education:

“Information from studies by previous Departments of Education have provided valuable insight into the D.C. voucher program, showing that it lacks accountability and leads to lower academic performance. We applaud House leaders for requiring transparency and oversight of a program the Trump administration wants to funnel even more taxpayer money into, despite research showing it is failing.

“It is critical that the question of students’ civil rights protections in this program be brought to light. Private schools accepting voucher students generally don’t adhere to federal civil rights laws and are often of poor quality.

“In addition, study after study of the D.C. voucher program has shown that students perform worse academically than students not using vouchers, and student and parental satisfaction with their school does not increase either. In the face of these findings, it is clear that Congress should not continue to fund this failing program. Taxpayer dollars are better spent on the District’s public schools, rather than private, mostly religious schools.”

Founded in 1978, the National Coalition for Public Education supports public schools and opposes the funneling of public money to private and religious schools through vouchers, tuition tax credits, education savings accounts, and portability.