

Rally For School Choice

Feb. 20, 2002

10:30 a.m. – U.S. Supreme Court

As the U.S. Supreme Court hears oral arguments on the constitutionality of the Cleveland school choice program, parents will gather to show their support for the right to choose a school that best serves their children.

Who should come?

Any parent, grandparent, or concerned citizen who supports parental choice.

What should I bring?

Bring a friend! Dress for the weather – all else is provided. Hot cocoa will keep you warm, and a great line-up of speakers will lift everyone's spirits.

How do I get there?

Shuttle buses will run from the Union Station and Capitol South Metro stops to the Supreme Court. Contact CER for more detailed transportation information.

How can I help?

Tell your friends, neighbors and co-workers about the rally, and encourage them to come. Please RSVP for this event – keeping an accurate count of our supporters is vital.

Questions? Ready to participate? Call CER at 202-822-9000.



**CALLING ALL DC PARENTS TO SUPPORT THE
CLEVELAND SCHOLARSHIP CASE BEFORE THE U.S. SUPREME
COURT.**

The U.S. Supreme Court has under consideration an education case that could change the face of school reform in this country. This decision could land a devastating blow to the educational opportunities for low income, disadvantaged school children across this country according to DC Parents for School Choice Executive Director Virginia Walden Ford.

*The Cleveland school choice program is being challenged in the Supreme Court case *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*. The education of 4000 Cleveland children who attend private schools on publicly funded scholarship stands in jeopardy because opponents believe these scholarships violate the separation between church and state.*

During the last decade the Cleveland public school system faced a severe crisis. It was declared by the State to be one of the worst in the country and for the first time in US history, a federal court transferred control of the school system to the state. In an effort to ensure a fair education for all, legislation was passed that allowed parents to move their children to private schools. The Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program was enacted in 1995 and signed into law by the Governor. The program provides scholarships for low-income students to attend private schools. The mostly Catholic schools agreed to accept the scholarships as 90% of tuition.

Opponents have fought this program in lower courts sighting violation of the First Amendment. School choice proponents across the country firmly believe that without scholarship programs like the one in Cleveland, poor urban students of color will remain trapped in less than adequate public school systems.

We are deeply concerned for the children in the District of Columbia, "This case represents all economically disadvantaged children. If it is not successful at the Supreme Court level, we are further relegating our children to a separate and unequal education. Without this Supreme Court mandate it will be impossible for us to make strides toward ensuring fair educational opportunities for our children."

Maintaining that many of the Cleveland parents are financially unable to travel to Washington to raise their voices on behalf of their children, Walden Ford went on to say, "we all care about what is happening to our children and we must support the Cleveland parents in any way that we can because they can't be here to speak for themselves. "

If you want to help D.C. Parents for School Choice in their efforts to support Cleveland's parents, please contact us at (202) 518-4140 or email us at dcparentschoice1@aol.com.

CLEVELAND PARENTS FOR SCHOOL CHOICE
BLACK ALLIANCE FOR EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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CONTACT: Virginia Walden Ford (202) 518-4140
Rosa-Linda Demore-Brown (216) 881-9912
Kaleem Caire (202) 544-9870

**Parent Groups To Rally In Support of School Choice,
Rally Set for Morning Of Argument In Front of the U.S. Supreme Court**

From Across America—A coalition of parent groups from across the country are joining for a rally on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court in support of school choice. The rally is scheduled to be held in front of the Supreme Court at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, February 20, 2002, the day the High Court will hear arguments on the constitutionality of the Cleveland school choice program. The rally is being organized by DC Parents for School Choice, Cleveland Parents for School Choice and the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO).

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear the case of *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, an education case that could change the face of school reform in this country. The education of 4,000 Cleveland children who attend private schools on publicly funded scholarships stands in jeopardy. Moreover, with striking similarities to the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, unless the program is upheld, this decision could land a devastating blow to educational opportunities for low-income, disadvantaged schoolchildren across this country.

Rosa-Linda Demore-Brown, Executive Director of Cleveland Parents for School Choice, said, "I firmly believe that it is a basic right of all parents to make decisions that are in the best interest of their child and that includes choosing the best possible education for their children. Every child has a right to quality education."

Virginia Walden Ford, Executive Director of DC Parents for School Choice, expressed deep concern for the children in the District of Columbia: "This case represents all economically disadvantaged children. If it is not successful at the Supreme Court level, we are further relegating our children to a separate and unequal education. Without this Supreme Court mandate, it will be impossible for us to make strides toward ensuring fair educational opportunities for our children."

During the last decade, the Cleveland public school system faced a severe crisis. It was declared by the State to be one of the worst in the country, and for the first time in U.S. history, a federal court transferred control of the school system to the State. In an effort to ensure a fair education for all, legislation was passed that provides scholarships primarily for low-income parents to move their children to the schools of their choice. The Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program was enacted in 1995 and signed into law by the governor. When suburban public schools chose to boycott the program and block their doors to children in the program, choice parents turned mostly to religious schools with their scholarships.

School choice proponents across the country firmly believe that without scholarship programs like the one in Cleveland, poor urban students of color will remain trapped in less-than-adequate public school systems.

Kaleem Caire, President/CEO of the Black Alliance for Education Options, said, "Let's be clear, there is no one system in America that will work for every child. There is no one school where every child will or can reach their full potential. This is a civil rights issue, especially for parents of color. Each parent, and not just the wealthy, deserves the right to send his or her children to the school that best meets their needs."

Because many of the Cleveland parents are financially unable to travel to Washington to raise their voices on behalf of their children, Walden Ford went on to say, "We all care about what is happening to our children and we must support the Cleveland parents in any way that we can because they can't be here to speak for themselves."

A rain site will be determined.

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