LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR H.R. 9462 THE EDUCATIONAL CHOICE FOR CHILDREN ACT
UNITED STATES HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SEPTEMBER 9th, 2024
AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA

Agudath Israel of America ("AIA"), founded over a century ago, is a national grassroots Orthodox Jewish organization. AIA serves as a liaison between government and the entire spectrum of Orthodox Jewish educational institutions in the United States including the more than 750 Orthodox Jewish elementary and secondary schools across the country that collectively educate over 250,000 students.

Because Orthodox Jewish schools have experienced rapid growth over the decades, and because our community has long attached the highest priority to education, AIA has taken a considerable interest – and has been a leader – in the formulation and implementation of education law and policy. On both the national and state levels, AIA has been a prominent and powerful voice in the school choice movement. We firmly believe that one of the keys to educational excellence is parental involvement and that there is no better way to encourage such involvement, and to ensure educational accountability, than to allow parents to choose the school that is best suited for their children, whether public or nonpublic, secular, or sectarian.

Scholarship tax credit programs, like H.R. 9462, the Educational Choice for Children Act (ECCA), sponsored by Rep. Adrian Smith, support two of the highest ideals in Judaism: Education and Charity. The bill will effectively encourage taxpayers to invest in education and cover a variety of expenses facing public and private school children.

Thousands of students currently attend Jewish schools as a result of scholarships generated by tax credit programs. Many of those families would be unable to pay their tuition obligations without scholarships from scholarship granting organizations ("SGOs") that assist families to pay tuition under these scholarship tax credit programs, but the need far exceeds the demand. This bill will spur the philanthropic spirit of American taxpayers and encourage them to invest in the future of our country – the education of our children.

School choice is beneficial for all states and gaining in popularity with voters and elected officials of all parties. In urban areas, school choice has helped stabilized neighborhoods[1], as it takes away the incentive of young families to move to the suburbs in search of better schooling. Recently, some of the most rural states have enacted expansive school choice policies and studies show that school choice is both popular[2] and helps rural areas[3]. In truth, all Americans benefit when parents have the ability to choose the educational setting that best meets their child's needs.

We encourage lawmakers, Republican and Democratic, to put a bipartisan stamp on the common-sense policy that is at the heart of this bill: assisting parents to access the learning environment and the educational benefits that are best suited for their children, and that will enhance educational achievement for all of America's students.

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[1] Nicole Stelle Garnett, "*Decoupling Property and Education*," 123 Columbia Law Review 1367 (2023)

[2] New Poll: School Choice Support Soars from 2020. American Federation for Children. Retrieved from https://www.federationforchildren.org/new-poll-school-choice-support-soars-from-2020

[3] Jason Bedrick and Matthew Ladner, "Rustic Renaissance: Education Choice in Rural America," Heritage Foundation Special Report No. 264, January 9, 2023, https://www.heritage.org/education/report/rustic-renaissance-education-choice-ruralamerica