



Harvard Model Congress

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HOMESCHOOLING UPDATE

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School choice gives parents the ability to determine which schools or services best fit their child's needs – whether a public school, private school, charter school, home school, or any other learning environment – by giving state funds directly to student's families (What is School Choice?, 2023). These typically take the form of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), School Vouchers, or Tax-Credit Education Savings Accounts (TESAs) (Types of School Choice, 2023). The most important thing to understand is each of these accounts or vouchers give families direct access to cash for use in their student's education. Therefore, one might expect that school choice and homeschooling advocates, such as the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), would be on the same page given that parents could better fund homeschooling practices.

However, since the introductory briefing, homeschooling advocates have grown weary of school choice efforts across states. In 2023, at least eight states implemented new school choice policies, with Iowa, Arkansas, Utah, and Florida all now having universal ESAs (Lonas, 2023). This has led to increased federal advocacy efforts from groups such as the HSLDA, with James Mason, president of the HSLDA, stressing that homeschooling has remained private largely because they have not been dependent on conditional government funding (Lonas, 2023). While Congress has yet to introduce any bills addressing school choice, the increasing number of states across the political aisle introducing such programs leads advocates and opponents to believe that it is only time until a school choice bill is introduced.

Despite school choice not having made its way to Congress, another controversial bill with indirect effects on homeschooling passed the House of Representatives in March 2023 with overwhelming conservative support, HR 5, or the Parents Bill of Rights Act (Barbara, 2023). HR 5, importantly, if passed by the Senate, would require local educational agencies within the states to ensure that “the curriculum for an elementary school or secondary school... grade level is freely and publicly available on the internet” (H.R.5, 2023). This bill would help better address curricular concerns by giving homeschoolers direct access to district resources. It provides a solution that both conservatives and liberals would likely favor. For conservatives, it does not increase regulations or threaten the caretaker's rights. For liberals, it does not increase regulations while prioritizing the support of children. With that said, liberals would likely not support

the entire bill given its other objectives, such as requiring elementary schools to obtain parental consent before changing a student’s pronouns (Barbara, 2023).

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