



Protecting the Equal Rights
of Nonreligious Americans

May 9, 2025

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Washington, D.C. 20005
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www.secular.org

Dear (Ways and Means Member),

The Secular Coalition for America, on behalf of its twenty member organizations dedicated to the separation of church and state, freedom of religion or belief, and the rights of the nonreligious, is writing to urge you to oppose the inclusion of two bills in the Ways and Means reconciliation package: the Educational Choice for Children Act (ECCA) and the Healthcare Sharing Ministry Tax Parity Act.

ECCA would provide \$10 billion annually in tax credits to fund private and religious K-12 schools. The bill would do this by establishing a new, unprecedented dollar-for-dollar tax credit for individuals and corporations that make contributions to organizations that give scholarships or vouchers to students to attend private K-12 schools.

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy estimates ECCA could actually cost as much as \$13.4 billion annually because stock can be donated as well, allowing stockholders to avoid paying capital gains and still get the full current value of the stock by taking advantage of this very lucrative incentive.

Current voucher programs overwhelmingly support wealthy parents who are already sending their children to private school. ECCA will, in effect, redirect federal funding away from important government services toward high-income families. Additionally, and despite proponents' claims that these programs improve access for low-income students, studies show that when vouchers become available, private schools raise their tuition.¹

Seventy-seven percent of private schools are religious schools. This bill diverts federal funds that could be used for public education, public safety, or any other public purpose to private, mostly religious schools. Private and parochial schools are not held to the same laws and regulations as public schools. They can — and too often do — discriminate against students, families, and school staff. The subsidization of sectarian instruction and discriminatory practices with taxpayer dollars is a clear violation of the separation of church and state. Public dollars should be used to support public goods and services that benefit all, not to fund private entities that accept and benefit a select few.

Voucher proposals were rejected by voters in three states last fall — Colorado, Kentucky and Nebraska — reflecting overall national sentiment. Vouchers do not promote educational achievement, nor are they viable options for many low-income students or rural students with no private schools available. We urge you to stand with the majority of American voters by opposing ECCA.

¹edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai24-949.pdf?_ga=2.154612344.1332102044.1746808645-531677636.1746808645



Atheists. Agnostics. Humanists. Americans.

The Healthcare Sharing Ministry Tax Parity Act would allow ministry members to deduct monthly membership payments from their taxes by classifying healthcare sharing ministry expenses as eligible medical care expenses, similar to how other people can deduct health insurance premiums.


These payments are currently not treated the same as payments made to insurance companies because healthcare sharing ministries are not insurance companies. They are nonprofits — essentially healthcare clubs — that offer minimal coverage and, crucially, are not legally bound to provide the benefits they suggest they will provide. Healthcare sharing ministries take advantage of that loophole far too often; this alone should disqualify them from any further federal largess.

Healthcare sharing ministries originated among insular Christian communities, but they are now being marketed more widely by commercial insurance brokers along with legitimate insurance policies. We experienced this firsthand when a broker tried to sell one of our coalition member organizations on ministry membership.

Ministry members who discover that they will not receive the full benefits promised by their ministry “policy” cannot go to their state insurance agency for help because that agency only has jurisdiction over insurance companies. Ministry members who agreed to live a Christian lifestyle as a condition of membership can be surprised when that agreement is stretched in order to find a reason to deny coverage.

In all, these insurance clubs fail to meet the minimum standards to be considered comparable to insurance policies and thus should not receive comparable tax treatment. People who want to be able to deduct their healthcare insurance payments should only be able to do that with actual insurance payments. We hope you will oppose the inclusion of the Educational Choice for Children Act and the Healthcare Sharing Ministry Tax Parity Act in the reconciliation package when the Ways and Means Committee considers and votes on it.

Sincerely,


Steven Emmert
Executive Director

American Atheists

American Ethical Union

American Humanist Association

Atheist Alliance of America



Atheists. Agnostics. Humanists. Americans.

Black Nonbelievers

Humanist Mutual Aid Society

Center For Inquiry/Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science

Camp Quest

Ex-Muslims of North America

Freedom From Religion Foundation Action Fund

Freethought Society

Hispanic American Freethinkers

Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers

Recovering From Religion

Secular Student Alliance

Secular Woman

Society for Humanistic Judaism

The Clergy Project

Unitarian Universalist Humanist Association