



October 10, 2023

Commissioner Manny Diaz, Jr.
Florida Department of Education
Turlington Building, Suite 1514
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
Commissioner@fldoe.org

Dear Commissioner Diaz:

I write on behalf of the Liberty Justice Center, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, public-interest law firm committed to safeguarding the rights of individuals and organizations affected by government actions.

LJC appreciates that Florida has established itself as a leader in the school choice movement. However, we are concerned about your recent decision to suspend the availability of school choice scholarships to four schools, alleging that they “have direct ties to the CCP” and “constitute an imminent threat to the health, safety, and welfare of these schools’ students and the public.”¹ The DOE’s September 22, 2023 press release announcing the suspension failed to provide any details regarding the investigation that led to this decision.

While the DOE certainly has an interest in ensuring the integrity of its educational programs, we are deeply concerned about the apparent lack of transparency and due process in connection with this decision. Media reports have indicated that these schools’ alleged ties to the CCP may be tangential at best.² It also appears that the schools and families relying on these scholarships were given no warnings prior to the sudden suspension of their scholarship eligibility.

It is essential that government agencies operate with transparency, accountability, and fairness, particularly when making decisions that have far-reaching consequences for educational institutions and the students they serve. Given the significant impact of the DOE’s decision, it is incumbent upon the DOE to provide a more comprehensive and detailed account of the basis for the suspensions.

Accordingly, consistent with the Sunshine in Government principles established by the Florida Legislature, and Chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes (the Public Records Act), we are requesting all Public Records (as defined in Section 119.011(12)) regarding this decision, including but not limited to:

¹ <https://www.fldoe.org/newsroom/latest-news/icymi-florida-takes-action-against-four-florida-schools-with-ties-to-the-chinese-communist-party.stml>

² See, e.g., <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/2023/09/22/schools-vouchers-china-desantis/>

1. All records concerning the investigative process followed by the DOE in reaching this decision, including any internal memoranda, evidence, or findings that were considered.
2. Any communications with the Governor's Office regarding this decision and investigation, including memoranda, and/or emails exchanged with the Governor's Office.
3. Any communications with affected schools and/or families impacted by the suspensions.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We are hopeful that the DOE shares our commitment to the principles of transparency, fairness, and due process. If you have any questions or need further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



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cc: Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
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The Capitol
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