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*“If we abide by the principles taught in the Bibles, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity.”*

*Daniel Webster*

**CATO Report Analyzes Health of Private Schools After COVID-19**

CATO’s Center for Educational Freedom recently released a report, titled “[Private Schooling after a Year of COVID-19](#),” which offers an analysis of how the pandemic restrictions affected private schools. In late spring of 2020, CATO created a “COVID-19 Permanent Private School Closures Tracker” as it seemed that many private schools would have to permanently close due to the effects of the shutdowns. As private schools are dependent on tuitions and charitable giving rather than public funds, it seemed likely that employment shutdowns would have a negative effect on the funding received by private schools and would thereby tremendously hurt their ability to remain open. However, after a year, only 132 private schools nationwide have permanently closed due to the pandemic. The report considers data from these schools such as the location, enrollment, the financial status before the shutdown, tuition, and the number of students receiving financial assistance. Of the schools that closed, 84% of schools were Catholic, and 9% were independent schools. Geographically, 66% of the schools were located in the Northeast. Regarding tuition and financial status, the authors report that “the closed private schools had significantly below-average tuitions, which may explain the next finding: 111 schools on the COVID-19 closure list reported having financial difficulties prior to the pandemic.” While the news of school closures is concerning, the authors also note that the “private school closures were not as numerous as some people feared early on,” and the report examines factors that aided the stability of the private school sector. The authors note that the stimulus bills, particularly the CARES Act, offered programs which allowed private school participation such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and educational services which included private schools. Additionally, the authors point out that private, autonomous schools “responded to initial shutdowns with greater speed and depth of content than public schools,” and then were the first to offer in-person education when school resumed in the fall. As the authors state, “while public schools tended to eschew in-person schooling, private schools typically embraced it.”

Based on the data gleaned from the study, the report concludes with policy recommendations to ensure a continued strong and healthy educational environment for private education. In the area of school choice, the authors emphasize that the best policies and programs are those that allow the money to follow children to schools, rather than funding schools and institutions. Regarding government intervention, the authors recommend no help from the federal government, and more aid from state level offices as this is the best way to enact policies that truly help families and students in providing school choice. Specifically, the authors point out that governors can utilize discretionary funds under the CARES Act and other programs to advance such policies that target the aid to students and families. One silver lining from the education restrictions and closures is the growth of school choice opportunities. As parent satisfaction with public schools decreased, lawmakers worked to ensure parents had more school options, with at least 29 states considering school choice legislation.

## **Indiana Legislature Expands School Choice Program**

The Indiana state legislature has approved a [substantial expansion of the state's voucher program](#), a move which will provide school choice for most middle-class families. Enacted in 2011, the program has grown from serving approximately 4,000 students its first year to serving [over 36,000 students](#). The program is available to students currently enrolled in a public school, students in the zone for a public school with an F-rating, students in foster care, special education students, and siblings of current scholarship students. The approved changes will raise the household income limit to \$145,000 for a family of four, \$120,500 for a family of three, and \$95,700 for a single-parent household. Additionally, the new law allows all participating families to receive 90% of the allotted funding per pupil at their neighborhood school; previously, only families on the lower end of the income level received 90%, while families on the higher end received only 50%. The new law also establishes an education savings account program for special education students. State Senator Jeff Raatz, chairman of the Senate education committee, stated, "A decade ago, Indiana decided to be a school choice state and we followed that along. . . . We have done a historic effort here. . . . We fund students and not systems, essentially." The school choice expansion, included in a budget bill, received strong bipartisan support, passing 96-2 in the House and 46-3 in the Senate; and Governor Eric Holcomb has indicated he will sign the bill into law.

## **Alabama Governor Signs Bill Prohibiting Males from Competing in Female Sports**

Last Friday, Alabama became the most recent state to [protect girls' sports](#) by requiring players to compete on teams that align with their biological sex. Alabama Governor Kay Ivey signed the bill after it was overwhelmingly approved by the House and Senate. The bill simply states that public K-12 schools may only "participate in, sponsor, or provide coaching staff" for sporting events in which the teams are separated by biological sex according to the student's birth certificate. [Dozens](#) of states are currently considering such bills to protect girls' sports from unfair competition and to push back against the transgender ideology that is sweeping across the nation. Governors considering these bills have faced intense pressure from business and cultural leaders, leading to some disappointing results from conservative governors. Gov. Asa Hutchinson (AR) recently vetoed a bill that would protect children from transgender medical procedures. Governors Kristi Noem (SD) and Doug Burgum (ND) both recently [vetoed](#) their legislatures' bills to protect girls' sports from unfair competition, claiming that they would have unintended consequences such as hurting business in their states. But other states are moving forward with bills that affirm God's design for human sexuality. Gov. Tate Reeves (MS) [signed](#) a Save Girls' Sports bill last month, and some state legislatures are considering overriding their governors' vetoes and passing the bills into law. With Governor Kay Ivey taking this positive step, conservatives hope that more states will be emboldened to uphold the truth about human sexuality in their laws.

## **In Case You Missed It:**

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACIS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance](#)

[Oklahoma Governor Signs Bill Banning Abortions Once a Heartbeat is Detected](#)

[Federal Court Upholds Ohio Ban on Aborting Babies with Down Syndrome](#)