

# SUMMARY

## MODERNIZING EDUCATION TO UNLEASH ACADEMIC POTENTIAL

In Tennessee, we now see a groundswell of support for greater educational choice. In fact, parental choice has become overwhelmingly popular across varying demographics and socio-economic backgrounds.

- In the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice's latest national survey, 69 percent of parents with school-aged children were supportive of opportunity scholarships—up significantly from 59 percent in 2012.
- Most interestingly, those most supportive of choice options are minorities and the newer generations: African-Americans (74 percent), Hispanics (72 percent), and young adults (69 percent).
- More than 35 private school choice programs have been enacted nationwide.
- In 2013-2014, more than 308,000 students participated in private school choice programs across the country.

Yet, here in Tennessee, private school choice is only an option for families with students receiving a special needs education. While this is an important first step, thousands of students across our state are still waiting for the opportunity to unleash their academic potential.

## TENNESSEE'S STUDENTS DESERVE THE BEST

In addition to bringing about opportunity scholarships for Tennessee families, we should also follow other states that have embraced even more options that are empowering families in bold new ways. Tennessee took a step in the right direction in 2015 by passing education savings accounts (or Individualized Education Accounts) for students with special needs. We should continue this encouraging progress in 2016 by embracing a similar reform that offers a menu of options for all students to receive a customized education that best suits their unique needs.

### *Introducing Course Access:*

- Course Access is a technology-driven education reform approach that allows K-12 students to access quality courses regardless of location.
- To date, 12 states have passed a Course Access (or similar) program.
- Course Access maximizes the use of existing state and local resources to better serve students and ensures districts are evolving with the needs of the 21st century student.
- Students can continue to be enrolled in their public school, but receive access to advanced placement classes from area public schools and language courses from local universities, earn industry certification for workforce training, and stay on course for graduation, *even* while pursuing time-intensive athletic or artistic activities.
- Families can select the best courses for their children from an online catalog of in-person, online, and blended courses.
- Taking place in small and large districts, rural and suburban, these cost-effective strategies harness technology to strengthen districts and offer new opportunities for all students.

It is time for Tennessee to offer a robust opportunity scholarship program and bring the latest innovations in academic freedom to Tennessee families through Course Access.