

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Date: February 25, 2014

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Subject: GOAL Seeks Solutions to SSO Fundraising Shortfall

GOAL Seeks Solutions to SSO Fundraising Shortfall

Pledges to Cooperate with SSO, School, and Donor Communities to Protect Families

A story in today's *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reports that the Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program (GOAL) and Arete Scholars Fund (Arete) have different views about how to expand Georgia's very popular and nationally respected Georgia Education Expense K-12 tuition tax credit program.

GOAL believes that the current program, to which thousands of Georgia individuals and corporations have contributed, and that has awarded scholarships to thousands of children from low and middle-income families, should be expanded by significantly increasing the annual cap on available education expense credits.

Arete believes that a separate tax credit program should be created to award scholarships exclusively to low-income families, funded by contributions for which only corporations can receive a tax credit, and available only for use at private schools that administer state-approved standardized tests.

Though GOAL and Arete share a passion for educational freedom and responsible, transparent, and accountable school choice programs, in GOAL's opinion, there is no reason to create a parallel program, especially one that favors a single class of donors, excludes middle income families, and contains a standardized testing mandate.

Last year, the Georgia General Assembly increased the available annual education expense tax credits by \$6.5 million to \$58 million, thereby enabling SSOs to provide more scholarships to deserving students. The legislature also enacted some much-needed reforms to the program, which GOAL and Arete supported. Yet, even though more money was available for scholarships, the claim has been made that, due to a fundraising shortfall, one or two SSOs will be unable to fund the scholarships of existing recipients for the upcoming 2014-2015 school year.

Regardless of the source and cause of this short-term funding crisis, though not responsible for it, GOAL, in cooperation with its donors, participating schools, and adequately-funded SSOs, is committed to helping other SSOs in meeting their scholarship commitments for 2014-2015. GOAL invites the SSOs that have students who are at risk of losing their scholarships to provide GOAL with information about their scholarship funding needs for the 2014-2015 school year so that we can work together to find a solution as soon as possible.

Fortunately, thanks to the Georgia legislature and Governor Nathan Deal, there is an additional \$6.5 million available for scholarships. The SSO community should work together to direct it where needed to immediately alleviate any hardships.

Then, in anticipation of the 2015 legislative session, GOAL, Arete, and other SSOs should join with parents, donors, and private school communities to speak with one voice at the Capitol for the expansion of Georgia's *existing* and extremely popular Education Expense Credit law.

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