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Statement on Governor Pritzker Opting Out to Help Illinois Families and Students

November 24, 2026

Today, Governor Pritzker chose to refuse an estimated $2 billion from the federal government that would have benefited Illinois public and private school students beginning in 2027. While we are extremely disappointed the Governor did not join more than half of the U.S. governors who have opted into the Federal Tax Scholarship Tax Credit Program (FSTC), we are equally perplexed for a number of reasons.

First, our public-school districts are struggling financially. Why reject an easy way to support them without spending **any** additional state tax dollars? The stakes are high – according to a poll conducted by Impact Research the FSTC could bring in up $2 billion in new funding for education in Illinois. That is $2 billion, with a "B". It is no wonder why there is widespread support among every demographic for Illinois participation. Yet, the governor's decision to delay opting-in means that children will go without better funded tutoring services, better funded services for our most challenged students and without much needed transportation and after-school programs for at least one more year.

Second, the governor is concerned that not enough money will go to public education compared to what private schools might gain. While we reject that analysis, it is puzzling that he would now make this argument given that in 2023 when the state tax credit program was up for renewal the governor stated he would sign the renewal if it passed the legislature, even though the program benefitted only private schools and would have potentially cost the state tens of millions of dollars. The FSTC program costs the state nothing and is designed to benefit all schools.

What is certain however, is that while Illinois students are shut out of these benefits, Illinois taxpayers will still be able to take the $1,700 tax credit by designating their money to fund programs supporting students in one of the participating states. The cost of this outflow of money from the state is estimated to be $1billion.

Governor Pritzker still has time to reconsider this decision to give Illinois students extra resources without taking anything away from current State budget needs. There are clear and compelling reasons to change course. We urge him not to squander this opportunity by putting politics ahead of school children. Our Illinois families deserve better.

For questions, please contact info@ilcatholic.org.