October 27, 2025

Commissioner Manny Diaz Jr.
Florida Department of Education, Office of the Commissioner
Turlington Building, Suite 1514
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Commissioner Diaz:

We hereby submit the initial results of the 2024-2025 financial accountability report review for private schools that participate in the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship for low-income students, the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options, the Family Empowerment Scholarship–Unique Abilities, and the Hope Scholarship through Step Up For Students.

This financial accountability requirement is described in Florida Statute 1002.421(1)(q) and requires each school receiving more than $250,000 of scholarship funds in a single year to engage an independent Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to complete a report that focuses on the use of the scholarship funds and the systems, financial procedures and controls in place at the school. The CPA must complete Agreed-Upon Procedures that are filed with the commissioner and submit an accountability report to the Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO) that provides the majority of the school's scholarship funds. The deadline for that submission is September 15th following the end of that Fiscal Year. In turn, the SFO must notify the commissioner by October 30th of that year of a school's failure to submit a report and of any material exceptions reported by a CPA.

For the 2024-2025 school year, Step Up For Students identified 1834 schools that received more than $250,000 of scholarship funds. A total of 2,462 private schools throughout the state served 553,732 scholarship students and received funding from Step Up For Students programs. This represents 138 additional schools, or an 8.4% increase when compared to the prior year. We have communicated with these schools through emails, phone calls, and hosted webinars to notify them of their obligations under the law.

As of this date, we have not received reports from 117 schools. Of the 117 not received, 90 are verified with the CPA firms as "in progress". The schools and CPAs continue to work to complete their reports and satisfy the financial accountability reporting requirement.

Of the 1717 reports that we received, 445 or 25.9% contained material exceptions that ranged from bank reconciliations not completed and reviewed timely, funds not recorded to student accounts, to not creating an operating budget prior to July 1. Of those schools with material exceptions reported, 432 or 97% of those schools have submitted corrective action plans as of October 27, 2025.

One school submitted an incomplete report. Per the existing departmental policy, they would have been granted until December 15th to complete the incomplete sections of their reports. We are also attaching the following Appendices for your reference:

Appendix I

- The schools with clean reports.
- The schools with incomplete reports.
- The schools with material exceptions with corrective action plans.
- The schools with material exceptions without corrective action plans.
- The schools that did not file a report with a breakdown of schools confirmed contract and in progress with a CPA.

We thank you for your support of our programs and promoting education choice.

Sincerely,

Renee Wolf

Director of Program Accounting
Step Up For Students

Enclosure (1)