

charter schools with greater flexibility in how they use Federal startup grants, for example, by allowing them to use the funds for transportation or for facilities improvements if that is what they decide is the best use of funds.

Finally, this legislation would encourage States to provide charter schools with the support they need to be successful and to hold them accountable when they fail to demonstrate positive results.

Last summer, Senator RAND PAUL and I sat in a room with the parents who had been able to get their child into a charter school in Nashville, where 600 students were left on the waiting list.

It was an emotional experience to hear these parents talk about their child getting this opportunity, to hear the students talk about how well they are doing, and to hear from the teachers who spend their lives helping these students.

Charter schools are public schools stripped of many Federal, State and union rules and constraints placed on traditional public schools. The money the State government would ordinarily spend on their district school follows each child to the charter school instead.

Charter schools cannot charge tuition, and any student who wants to attend a charter school may do so if space is available.

If more students want to attend than can be accommodated, the charter school must use a lottery to decide which students receive a seat.

Several years ago I visited the Memphis Academy of Science and Engineering, a charter school in Memphis. While most Memphis students were on spring break at the time, the sophomores I visited were in the classroom studying Advanced Placement biology.

Because the school's teachers have the flexibility to do what is best for their students, the school was open 12 hours a day and on Saturday mornings because many of these children did not have as much at home as others. And these children, who the year before had been at schools deemed "low-performing," were succeeding.

These students were fortunate because their parents had the opportunity to choose this charter school, and their children were lucky enough to win a seat.

Across Tennessee, more than 15,000 students now have that same opportunity to attend one of 68 charter schools—and they are thriving as a result.

A recent study by Stanford University found that, on average, Tennessee students attending charter schools gain the equivalent of 86 additional days of instruction in reading and 72 additional days of instruction in math each year than do students attending district schools.

In other words, they make almost a year-and-a-half's worth of progress in a single school year.

About 60 percent of students attending charter schools in Tennessee are low-income, more than 90 percent are African American or Hispanic.

In other words, charter schools in Tennessee are making a difference for those students who have traditionally been least well served by our Nation's public schools.

We have come a long way since 1992, when, in my last act as U.S. Education Secretary under George H.W. Bush, I sent a letter to every school superintendent across the country, urging them to consider replicating the early successes of charter schools in Minnesota—which were then called "start-from-scratch schools."

At the time, there were only a dozen charter schools in existence. Today, there are well over 6,000, serving over 2.5 million students. Nearly 5 percent of all public schools students in the United States now attend charters.

Most important—the fact that should give great urgency to our effort here today—there are an estimated 580,000 students on waiting lists for charter schools throughout the Nation.

That is because parents and students see that charter schools are working.

RECOGNIZING THE FRANKLIN REGIONAL COMMUNITY

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the heroic acts of students and teachers during the crisis at Franklin Regional High School in Murrysville, PA. The entire community displayed astounding courage in the face of tragedy.

On the morning of April 9, 2014, a knife-wielding student assaulted students and teachers at Franklin Regional High School. During the attack, 24 people were injured, some gravely. However, thanks to the selfless actions of students, faculty, and support staff, the attacker was subdued and additional harm was prevented.

Students shielded friends from danger and administered emergency first aid, an attentive student had the composure to sound the fire alarm to warn people to exit the building, and several brave individuals put their safety on the line to incapacitate the attacker. At a time of crisis, the Franklin Regional family proved their commitment to one another.

I also want to acknowledge the brave actions of law enforcement and emergency personnel whose quick arrival ensured the safety of our students. Their prompt arrival provided life-saving medical attention to injured students and the community remains indebted to their vigilance.

I believe that the Senate should recognize the Franklin Regional community for their bravery and resiliency. It is imperative that the community knows that our country shares their grief and stands with them as they overcome this tragedy.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING ADAM BOYD

• Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Adam Boyd for his hard work as an intern in my Washington, DC, office. I recognize his efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Adam is a native of Cheyenne, WY, and a graduate of Cheyenne East High School. He is also a recent graduate of the University of Wyoming, where he earned a degree in French. He has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made him an invaluable asset to our office. The quality of his work is reflected in his great efforts during his time in my office.

I thank Adam for the dedication he has shown while working for me and my staff. It was a pleasure to have him as part of our team. I know he will have continued success with all of his future endeavors. I wish him all my best on his next journey.●

RECOGNIZING MARTHA CROSBY

• Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Martha Crosby for her hard work as an intern in my Washington, DC, office. I recognize her efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Martha is from Richmond, VA. She is a recent graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, where she earned a degree in political science, concentration in politics and government. She has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made her an invaluable asset to our office. The quality of her work is reflected in her great efforts over the last few months.

I thank Martha for the dedication she has shown while working for me and my staff. It was a pleasure to have her as part of our team. I know she will have continued success with all of her future endeavors. I wish her all my best on her next journey.●

RECOGNIZING PATTERSON OAKS

• Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to Patterson Oaks for her hard work as an intern in my Casper, WY, office. I recognize her efforts and contributions to my office as well as to the State of Wyoming.

Patterson is a native of Casper, WY where she graduated from Natrona County High School. She attends Casper College where she is pursuing a degree in paralegal studies. She has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has made her an invaluable asset to our office. The quality of her work is reflected in her great efforts over the last several months.

I thank Patterson for the dedication she has shown while working for me