

GOP-backed school tax credit bill heads to Beshear

By MCKENNA HORSLEY
Kentucky Today

A Republican-backed bill opting Kentucky into a tax credit program promoted by the Trump administration to fund scholarships for K-12 students is now heading to Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear's desk.

House Bill 1 passed in the Senate with a vote of 33-5 Friday morning after it was filed in the House last week. Sen. Keturah Herron, of Louisville, was the lone Democrat to vote in favor of the bill.

Senate President Pro Tem David Givens, R-Greensburg, presented the bill in the Senate and said he was "excited" about educational opportunities that could be funded with scholarships from donors. He pointed to federal guidance on how the scholarships can be used, including tuition for private schools, support services for students with disabilities, tutoring and more.

Givens also made a direct appeal to Beshear during his floor speech asking him to sign or let the bill lay on his desk, which would let it become law without his signature.

"Your bully pulpit is powerful, and it would be a positive message to everyone," Givens said. "And if you choose to veto, you know it's going to be overridden. That is what it is. But I'll ask you to make your \$1,700 contribution, governor, to a Kentucky SGO and help these kids. It's a rare opportunity."

HB 1 would allow Kentucky K-12 students to receive scholarships for

private school tuition and other education assistance funded by donations from people receiving the federal tax credit that will become available in 2027 under President Donald Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) passed by Congress last year. In addition to tuition, the scholarships may be used for tutoring services, books, internet access and more.

Under the bill, Kentucky may identify eligible scholarship granting organizations (SGO) for students. An SGO can benefit not only private school students, but public school students as well.

The Education Freedom Tax Credit is up to \$1,700 per year for people who donate to SGOs, which would then give most of the money to eligible students through scholarships. The organizations would be able to use 10% of the money for administrative costs. Donors can receive the \$1,700 credit even if they do not live in a state that has opted into the program.

Kentucky's program would be overseen by the secretary of state, who is currently Republican Michael Adams. His office would report to the U.S. Treasury about the state's participation in the federal tax credit. Adams praised the bill on X after the Senate passed it and called it "a game-changer for education" and that he looked forward to implementing it.

Democrats have argued HB 1 is a way to support "school choice" options at the expense of public schools despite rejections of earlier proposals by



Senate President Robert Stivers answers questions in the state Senate's temporary chamber, June 25, 2025, in Frankfort.

Kentucky voters and the state Supreme Court. However, Republicans say the bill would allow K-12 students and their families to benefit from education assistance grants funded by a federal tax credit — at no cost to the state and without the use of tax dollars.

Democratic Caucus Chair Reggie Thomas, of Lexington, argued that Democrats in Congress voted against the (OBBBA) because the tax credit "takes out money that could otherwise go to Medicare benefits, Medicaid benefits, SNAP, defense, housing, transportation, you name it."

Thomas added that he believes approval of HB 1 will create "a have and have not system among our public schools." He said schools in urban areas with more private and parochial schools are already set up to raise funds, and public schools in that area will also receive donations for resources.

"If you live in one of those counties where your primary workforce depends on the public school, you will be harmed and disadvantaged by that bill," Thomas said. "And so what this bill will do will make sure that we have an uneven playing field among the schools here in this commonwealth, and that's not good for the people of Kentucky."

Later while casting a vote in favor of HB 1, Sen. Donald Douglas, R-Nicholasville, pushed back at Thomas' "haves and have not" comment.

"I really don't understand, as a Black Kentuckian, why there is this need to perpetuate the stereotype of a caste system here in our commonwealth. I heard earlier that the money is supposed to go to our public schools," Douglas said, saying that the Kentucky Constitution directs the General Assembly to "provide for an efficient system of common

schools."

The Kentucky Supreme Court recently interpreted that section of the Constitution to refer to public schools when striking down a 2022 charter school law as unconstitutional.

Sen. Karen Berg, D-Louisville, argued while explaining her no vote that HB 1 would allow tax dollars to be diverted from the federal government and to schools.

"What these guys are saying to you is that we have a way, because of

what Trump did, to bypass the Constitution of Kentucky and to bypass the will of the voters in Kentucky to give your tax dollars to private schools," Berg said. "We voted no in this state, our Constitution says no. To say, 'Well, it's not state money, it's federal money.' It's your tax dollars."

Senate Appropriations and Revenue Chair Sen. Chris McDaniel, R-Ryland Heights, said while voting in favor of the bill that it was a "ridiculous narrative that this is limited to rich people." He argued that a married couple making roughly \$100,000 a year would owe \$7,200 in federal income taxes, and could benefit from a \$1,700 tax credit.

"If we have 172 school districts in this state, there will be 172 scholarship granting organizations at a minimum that are set up," he said. "If you are a young married couple, would you rather send your money to the federal government, or would you rather send it to the school district where your children are attending?"

In the House, two Democrats voted for the bill and one Republican voted against it.

LEGAL NOTICE

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

In accordance with KRS 176.051, Kentucky's noxious weed law, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet will control noxious weeds on state-owned right of way at the request of the adjoining property owner. The noxious weeds named in this law are Johnson grass (*Sorghum halepense*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Cutleaf Teasel (*Dipsacus laciniatus*) Nodding thistle (*Carduus nutans*), Common teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*), Poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), Marestail (*Conyza canadensis*), Amur Honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*) Japanese knotweed, (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*) and Kudzu (*Pueraria montana*).

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Your COMMUNITY Your CALENDAR

THURSDAY, MARCH 5

CKRH Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy Program: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Central Kentucky Riding for Hope, 4185 Walt Robertson Rd. Free. forms.gle

Intersections: 250 Years of Lexington History: 12-4 p.m. Lexington History Museum, 210 N. Broadway. \$3.00 - \$10.00. lexhistory.org

JCEF Thursday Night Bingo: 6:30-9 p.m. JCS Annex, 847 Wilmore Rd. \$20.00.

LexTalks: Driftwood: 6:30-7:30 p.m. Lexington History Museum, 210 N Broadway. Free. secure.qgiv.com

Lightwire Theater presents Dino-Light: 12:45-1:45 p.m. Boyle County Performing Arts Center, 315 Cunningham Way. www.thebcpac.com

Sounding Joy Women's Choir: 7-8:30 p.m. Norton Center, Grant Hall, Room 114, West Walnut Street. \$0.00 - \$45.00.

Teen Howl Poetry Series: 5:30-7 p.m. Third Street Stuff, 257 N. Limestone. Free. www.instagram.com

Unlock Your Neck & Shoulders: Breaking Free from Bracing in the studio: 6-7:30 p.m. Lexington Salt Cave & Wellness, 309 N. Ashland Ave, Suite 180. \$35.00. lexsaltcave.as.me

Wildcat Thursday Comedy Showcase!: 8 p.m. Ethereal Public House, 102 w vine st. Free. www.wildcatcomedy.co

FRIDAY, MARCH 6
2026 Sneaker Soiree: 6-9 p.m. Lost Palm, 941 Manchester St. \$100.00. www.gotrcentralky.org

Beauty Encore: 7:30-9:30 p.m. Pam Miller Downtown Arts Center, 141 East Main Street. \$10.00 - \$25.00. allegrodanceproject.org

CKRH Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy Program: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Central Kentucky Riding for Hope, 4185 Walt Robertson Rd. Free. forms.gle

Goodfellas Pizzeria - 20 Years on Mill Street Celebration: 6-10 p.m. Goodfellas Pizzeria - Mill Street, 110 N Mill St. Free. www.facebook.com

Lexington SC vs Louisville City FC: 7:30 p.m. Lexington SC Stadium, 200 Shives Drive. www.lexsporting.com

Lightwire Theater presents Dino-Light: 10-11 a.m. Boyle County Performing Arts Center, 315 Cunningham Way. www.thebcpac.com

Lost Palm Rooftop Sessions: 7-11 p.m. Lost Palm at The Manchester, 941 Manchester St. Free. lostpalmky.com

Stand up Comedy open mic: 8-10:30 p.m. Ethereal Slicehouse, 401 S Limestone. Free. www.wildcatcomedy.co

Trucker Hats | Beanies |Tote Bags | Pencil Bags | Always Open: 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Poppy & Pomelo, 526 E. High St. www.poppyandpomelo.com

What We See: The Gathering Artists: 4:30-6 p.m. Art Center of the Bluegrass, 409 West Main Street. Free. go.artcenterky.org

Wick + Mortar Studio / Craft and Candle Cocktail Bar: 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Wick + Mortar Studio | Poppy & Pomelo, 526 East High Street. www.poppyandpomelo.com

World Neuroscience and Psychiatry Conference 2026(WNPC26): 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Comedy Off Broadway, 161 Lexington Green Cir UNIT C4. \$499.00 - \$1,599.00. neuroscience.episirus.org

SATURDAY, MARCH 7
Beauty Encore: 2-4 p.m. Pam Miller Downtown Arts Center, 141 East Main Street. \$10.00 - \$25.00. allegrodanceproject.org

Contra Dance: 8-10:30 p.m. Artworks at the Carver School, 522 Patterson St. www.ltda.us

Cookies and Canvas: 3-5 p.m. Art Center of the Bluegrass, 409 West Main Street. \$10.00. go.artcenterky.org

HEATED RIVALRY NIGHT: 8 p.m. Manchester Music Hall, 899 Manchester St. www.manchestermusichall.com

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Lost Palm Rooftop Sessions: 7-11 p.m. Lost Palm at The Manchester, 941 Manchester St. Free. lostpalmky.com

Sound & Slow Movement: 5-6:30 p.m. The Sound Healing Center of Lexington, 333 East Short Street, Suite 320. \$25.00. soundhealingcenterlex.as.me

Step Into Beautiful, Presented by Independence Bank: 1-4 p.m. The Manchester, 941 Manchester St. \$500.00. sbslex.org

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