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For Immediate Release:

Contact: Lesley Searcy
205-915-1570
lsearcy@alabamascholarshipfund.org

Parents see vast improvements as their children excel academically and socially at new schools they attend on an Alabama Opportunity Scholarship Fund

Birmingham, Alabama (September 18, 2018) -- Ashanti Watt's daughter experienced regular bullying at the school she attended before receiving one of Alabama's tax credit scholarships through the Alabama Opportunity Scholarship Fund, but after receiving the scholarship to attend a new school in Montgomery, Alabama, she is learning at a much higher level and is eager to get to school each day.

"As a caring mother, I want what is best for my daughter," said Watts. "My daughter's writing and research skills have improved and she is now in a learning environment that encourages her to progress academically, socially and emotionally."

Watts' experience is not unique to students who are attending new schools on Alabama's tax credit scholarship fund. Other parents of students in the program also have similar stories to tell about how their children are excelling academically and socially.

A recent study released by the University of Alabama's Institute for Social Science Research found that low-income students attending public and private schools through the scholarship fund are performing at the same or better level academically as similar students attending Alabama public schools.

Alleane West's son has been attending school on a scholarship for the past three years and she fears without the scholarship to attend the school he is in, her son wouldn't ever receive an education due to his ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome. "My son was socially awkward and didn't interact with other students," said West, a single mother of five boys. "Now he is making good grades and the teachers have him on the right path so that he can learn. He also goes places and interacts with other children. He has a goal of attending college to become an engineer. This program is proof that my son will have a future."

Other key findings of the report stated that students in Alabama who are attending a school on a scholarship and who took the ACT Aspire outperformed their peers in economically challenged public schools in math and reading. This stats are true for students at every grade level except 10th grade math and 5th grade reading (pgs. 24 and 25).

"The data for this report were limited," noted Dr. Patrick J. Wolf, Distinguished Professor of Education Policy at the University of Arkansas. "Nevertheless, the most reliable comparisons in the study revealed that scholarship students are performing at least as well and often significantly better than their low-income peers in public schools," Wolf added.

On the ACT Aspire test, scholarship students improved in math and reading in the categories of Stable Proficiency and Gained Proficiency from the 2014-16 tests and the 2015-17 tests:

-The increase in math went from 27 percent to 44 percent - a 62% increase (pg. 30)

-The increase in reading went from 35 percent to 43 percent - a 22% increase (pg. 31)

"Ninety seven percent of parents of children who are attending private schools by way of the tax credit are satisfied with their school," said Lesley Searcy, Executive Director, Alabama Opportunity Scholarship Fund. "Their children also are excelling academically in the school they have chosen. While there is always room for improvement, these results should be encouraging to families in the program and for lawmakers looking for ways to improve education."

One of Kimberly Foster's sons finished his freshman year with an overall 3.78 GPA. The Mobile native's other children also are in the program and one them recently was voted eighth grade student council president. The same son also is working to become listed on the school's A/B honor roll. Foster adds that her children are now in a school where they excel and receive positive reinforcement from their teachers. The future will be bright for her children Foster believes. Because they are excelling at school her children now want to pursue engineering or law degrees after they graduate.

These findings in the University of Alabama study are similar to those found by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In that report, academic test scores were found to be similar, and it was concluded that while a direct comparison cannot be made between private and public-school students the achievement impacts observed remain similar. *These students achieved roughly the same or better test scores for profoundly disadvantaged children with less money.*

About the Alabama Opportunity Scholarship Fund:

At the Alabama Opportunity Scholarship Fund (AOSF), our mission is to empower families to choose the school that best fits their child's unique educational needs. AOSF provides scholarships to low-income, K-12 children who are not succeeding in their current environment. Scholarships are funded by the donation of corporate and individual Alabama income tax liability. AOSF is leading the way statewide in providing over 1,500 low-income children the educational opportunity that will give them a successful and productive future.