



Via US Mail and Facsimile at [REDACTED]

March 17, 2015

Dr. Russ Deaton
Interim Executive Director
Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation
404 James Robertson Parkway
Parkway Towers, Suite 1510
Nashville, TN 37243-0820

Dear Dr. Deaton,

ACLU-TN appreciates your swift action in remedying the situation where the Tennessee Promise Scholarship Program was being administered in such a way as to force a student to miss religious worship services or lose the scholarship. ACLU-TN expects that this incident is not isolated and that other students may face a similar situation where a mandatory meeting is scheduled in conflict with constitutionally protected activities such as a religious service.

Because a future conflict is very likely, ACLU-TN urges you and your cooperating organizations to revise the current policy manual to reflect that absences, beyond school activities and athletic events, may be excused and students will be allowed to attend a make-up meeting. While I am sympathetic to the fact that the administration of such a massive program requires some strict rules, the rigid excuse policy has already caused one constitutional conundrum. Without a doubt, other non-school related activities, including both religious and secular activities, will arise and place another student in a position of choosing between constitutional rights and the scholarship program.

ACLU-TN would be happy to review any proposed revisions to the excuse policy. Please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Thomas H. Castelli

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