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**PRESS RELEASE from
PALMETTO PROMISE INSTITUTE and
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Palmetto Promise Institute fights to restore SAFE Grants for South Carolina students

Palmetto Promise is represented by national school choice attorneys from the Liberty Justice Center

COLUMBIA, S.C. (July 28, 2020) — Today, Palmetto Promise Institute asked an Orangeburg, S.C. judge to allow the governor's new Safe Access to Flexible Education (SAFE) Grants program to move forward. If the judge sides with Palmetto Promise, thousands of students from moderate and low-income families will have the opportunity to attend a school of their choice this fall.

Last week the governor launched the \$32 million program to help families who have been hit the hardest by COVID-19 and other economic hardships. South Carolina has more than 780,000 school-aged children, and this grant program would award funds to approximately 5,000 students. But the program was halted days ago by opponents of the program who sued Gov. McMaster and Palmetto Promise Institute. A temporary restraining order was placed on the SAFE Grants program.

Palmetto Promise Institute is represented by attorneys at the Liberty Justice Center, a national Supreme Court case-winning law firm. Liberty Justice Center has partnered with Kevin Hall and Todd Carroll of Columbia's Womble Bond Dickinson law firm as in-state counsel. They are fighting to protect SAFE Grants so South Carolina parents have the opportunity to choose the education option that best suits their child regardless of economic circumstances.

"SAFE Grants are an educational lifeline for South Carolina families," said **Ellen Weaver, President and CEO of Palmetto Promise Institute**. "Many of these families were making big sacrifices even before the pandemic to send their children to a school that meets their needs. The COVID crisis has hit already tight family budgets hard. SAFE Grants mean new hope and peace of mind for parents struggling to make the best decision for their child."

Tomorrow, attorneys for Palmetto Promise Institute will appear in court alongside Gov. McMaster to fight on behalf of the families SAFE Grants will serve.

"This program is urgently needed right here, right now, to help students across the state access a great education that fits their needs during this challenging time," said **Daniel Suhr, attorney at the Liberty**

Justice Center. “Every child deserves a world-class education and just because their parents don’t make a lot of money or have suffered hardship as a result of the pandemic doesn’t mean their children should suffer, too. We plan to vigorously defend this program in Court, and we’re hopeful that the judge will recognize how important this is to so many South Carolina families.”

Background: In order to provide South Carolina children the ability to remain in a school of their choice or to have new alternatives for quality education in a safe setting, Gov. McMaster recently used \$32 million in federal CARES Act funds entrusted to his discretion to create the Safe Access to Flexible Education (SAFE) Grants program.

The SAFE Grants program provides moderate and low-income families with a scholarship of up to \$6,500 per student to pay tuition and fees at a private or religious school. The governor anticipates that approximately 5,000 scholarships will be awarded in total for this fall’s rapidly approaching school year.

This program takes no existing money away from public education. What it does is give families the financial support to keep children in their current school and allow others who need a different option a rare opportunity to choose the best educational setting for their child.

Liberty Justice Center is best known for their victory in the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Janus v. AFSCME*. The Center is currently litigating on education choice across the country. In June 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue* that parents can use publicly funded vouchers to send their children to religious-based institutions. Justice Samuel Alito’s explanation for why he agreed with the Court’s decision specifically mentioned the argument made by the Liberty Justice Center in its amicus brief.

Case documents in *Adams v. South Carolina* are available here:

<https://libertyjusticecenter.org/media/sc-safe-grants>.

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Palmetto Promise Institute (PPI) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) educational organization. PPI conducts public policy research dedicated to advancing a free and flourishing South Carolina, where every individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The Liberty Justice Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public-interest litigation center that represents clients at no charge and was founded to fight against political privilege. The most recent example of the Liberty Justice Center’s national success in this arena is its 2018 U.S. Supreme Court victory in *Janus v. AFSCME*. Beyond its work in the *Janus* case, the Liberty Justice Center’s team of talented, liberty-minded attorneys also fight to protect economic liberty, private property rights, free speech, school choice and other fundamental rights. The Liberty Justice Center pursues its goals through strategic, precedent-setting litigation to revitalize constitutional restraints on government power and protections for individual rights. Learn more about the Liberty Justice Center at LibertyJusticeCenter.org.