

Does Open Enrollment Benefit Students?

Understanding the research base related to Mississippi HB 1435

A research overview prepared by Elizabeth Day PhD and Lisa Chinn PhD

What is House Bill 1435?

Mississippi already has statewide open enrollment (i.e., public school choice).

This bill adds new mechanisms and levers that shape the process:

Changes the right of refusal.	Establishes a “Student Portability and Open Enrollment Fund.”	Outlines new reporting requirements.
HB 1435 stops the releasing district from refusing the student to leave. Receiving districts must establish unbiased selection processes.	The fund pays the cost of the local portion of total funding formula base-student cost for the transferring student.	HB 1435 requires districts to report to the state how schools determine maximum enrollment, as well as capacity and transfer data.

Who are the opponents and proponents?

News sources are the primary source for understanding legislators' views of the bill.¹



- Most Republicans who opposed HB 1435 either represented:
 - North Mississippi, a region that has historically invested in and protected public schools
 - The suburban area of Rankin County
- The main concerns from opposition lawmakers have centered on segregation.
 - Research specifically focused on segregation offers mixed findings and suggest it is highly context-specific.²

What does the research say?

The research literature is limited to pre-COVID-19-onset. We found no studies that included student outcomes after 2021. All findings should be considered with that in mind.

Findings from Systematic Reviews

We found no systematic reviews specifically addressing the benefits or drawbacks of the policy changes specific to HB 1435 and public school choice (changing right of refusal, reporting requirements, or funding sources).



A 2022 meta-analysis of 92 studies on all forms of school choice found no evidence of a link between school choice and student achievement at the district or school level.³

When assessing student-level achievement, there was a small but statistically significant positive effect.

Standardized mean difference = 0.001, 95% CI[0.001, 0.002]

Findings from Individual Studies

There were more studies on school choice and student outcomes for individual cities and states. Findings are mixed.

- A 2024 study (2008-2019 data) of Los Angeles's Zones of Choice – centralized vs neighborhood based assignment – found gains in student achievement and four-year college enrollment rates.⁴
- A 2018 study (2009-2010 data) of schools in Colorado found small benefits to achievement for students who participated in open enrollment.⁵
- A 2017 study of schools in Michigan found no evidence of an association between public school choice and student achievement.⁶
- A 2014 study of schools in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg District found small, statistically significant increases in the rates of 5-year high school graduation, college attendance, and degree completion for students who won the lottery to their first choice school, with greater gains for girls.⁷
- A 2009 study from Florida's Pinellas County schools found no significant benefit of open enrollment on student achievement.⁸

References

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5. Carlson, D., Lavery, L., & Hughes, T. (2018). Should I Stay or Should I Go? Open Enrollment Decisions and Student Achievement Trajectories. *Social Science Quarterly*, 99(3), 1089-1104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12478>
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8. Özek, U. (2009). The effects of open enrollment on school choice and student outcomes. National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research. https://webarchive.urban.org/UploadedPDF/1001301_open_enrollment_schools.pdf.

For full legislative text:

<https://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2025/html/HB/1400-1499/HB1435IN.htm>

Methods

Findings presented in this brief come from a literature review of academic peer-reviewed studies, as well as a review of research and findings from non-partisan think tanks, foundations, and organizations. Given the rapid nature of this search, other relevant studies may exist. In addition, please note that we did not use formal methods for summarizing results, assessing study quality, or exploring reasons for differences in findings across studies.

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