

The Truth about Arizona's ESA Voucher Program

New performance data, spending reports, and expansion (9/11/2018) by month on Arizona's voucher system, with no end in sight. With limited oversight, transparency, and accountability for taxpayer dollars, there is no reason for those who use the program to worry about consequences for inappropriate use. It will continue to grow until significant regulations are put into place.

How did Arizona get here? I thought Arizona voters and the courts rejected universal vouchers multiple times? How did the legislature push the program through without support from the public? What are the forecasts for its stability and impact on the Arizona economy? Does the program cost more per-student than public education? These are important questions that must be addressed.

The political forces in Arizona, and around the nation, have gathered their own versions of the value of universal vouchers and hid behind their incorrect data, even when corrected. Several groups have gathered and shared info about the data surrounding Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA), or vouchers, from /F2 11.04 Tf1 0 0 1 461.98 577.78 Tm0 g0 G(.)]TJETQq0. 0 1 328.75 606.58 g0 G(.)]TJuchers, B

students as required by public schools

A: No. Vendors, tutors, home schools, micro-schools, and voucher recipients are not required to return any unused dollars, even if they re-enroll their students back into public school. ADE does not audit the use of the dollars or follow-up with the recipient on unused dollars, it is a "blank check" to the end-user with no requirements for accountability. ADE is legally required by the legislature to "administer and monitor" the program as they see fit. State Superintendent Horne is not monitoring the program with the same scrutiny and accountability he requires for public schools, nor does he intend to do so in the future. Again, Mr. Horne has stated publically many times that Arizona taxpayers just need to "trust the parents."

The current ESA voucher program in Arizona is out of control with no end in sight. The voters of Arizona rejected the concept at the ballot box, but the legislature pushed it through in 2022 by one vote in the House and one vote in the Senate. The Representative who cast the deciding vote, Representative Joel Johnson, has publically stated that if he could vote all over again, he would vote "no." The original premise to help underprivileged students in "bad schools" and the program has been allowed to run amok – today, Arizona ESA vouchers are nothing more than #WelfareForTheWealthy at the expense of the Arizona taxpayer.

If the legislature, or the Arizona Department of Education, does not reign in the out-of-control spending without accountability, regulation, purchasing requirements, or transparency, the program will bankrupt the state of Arizona – in 2024 the bill for the program will be pushing one billion dollars. Without regulation for student safety, performance standards, academic requirements, or non-partisan oversight, the one million public school students of Arizona will suffer. ESA voucher dollars are public taxpayer monies that should require the same oversight every public institution in Arizona must follow to educate Arizona's students.

Without more stringent standards, the learning performance of voucher students in this state will decline, all students will suffer negative educational growth with reduced resources, and our other state services found in the state's General Fund budget such as fire, police, transportation, roads, and bridges will dwindle. The economic pie is only so big. The ESA voucher program will exponentially grow, especially without regulation, standards, or oversight. Once rules for these tax dollars are properly in place, only those who need it will use it, or have to deal with the scrutiny of producing results. Without accountability, the voucher program is guaranteed to encourage abuse, misuse, and will