



ESA Is Not OK!

Please vote NO on HB 1005, related provisions in HB 1001, and SB 413



The Indiana School Boards Association and the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents **oppose** the creation of education savings/scholarship accounts (ESAs). The ESA program proposed in House Bill 1001 and House Bill 1005 provides parents who opt out of public school with the equivalent of a taxpayer-funded debit card loaded with an estimated \$5,000 to \$7,000 to spend at their discretion on private schools, home schools, tutoring, camps, and any number of private education products and services. We urge lawmakers to build on the good budget for public education passed in 2019 by continuing to address the teacher pay gap and funding a tuition support increase that keeps pace with, or exceeds, inflation. Public funds should fund public schools, which are open to all children and are a state constitutional duty.

CLAIM: Parents are clamoring for expanded options amid frustration with virtual learning during the pandemic.

FACT: Parents are pleased with how traditional public schools have responded to the COVID-19 crisis. An Education Next survey conducted in November and December found that 65% of parents give their local public schools an A or B grade, up from 60% prior to the onset of the pandemic.

CLAIM: Indiana ranks near the top for state support of public education.

FACT: When including all sources of funding (not just state support), Indiana ranked 39th in the U.S. for public K-12 per-pupil expenditures in 2018, down from 22nd among states in 2004. At the same time, Indiana has spent more than \$1 billion in taxpayer dollars on private school choice over the past 10 years.

CLAIM: ESAs are fiscally accountable because expenses are pre-approved by the State Treasurer's Office.

FACT: Nothing in HB 1001 or HB 1005 requires expenses to be pre-approved or approved by the State Treasurer.

CLAIM: The State Treasurer's Office will ensure that the ESA program is fiscally accountable.

FACT: The legislation grossly underfunds state oversight. The amount of money available to the State Treasurer's Office for ESA oversight is capped at no more than \$250,000 per year (see page 34 of HB 1005).

CLAIM: ESAs are academically accountable because students take ILEARN or a correlated assessment.

FACT: Testing applies only to a subset of students who use an ESA to attend an accredited nonpublic school. Homeschool students in the ESA program *do not* have to take a statewide assessment or report any academic performance measurements whatsoever.

CLAIM: ESAs have fiscal accountability because funds can only go to *approved* vendors.

FACT: There are no academic qualifications for an individual to become an approved tutor, and vendors of education courses and programs do not have to prove that their curriculum works before they are approved and allowed to accept ESA money.

CLAIM: Special education students need ESAs.

FACT: The amount of money in an ESA will not be nearly enough to match the comprehensive special education services that traditional public schools provide, including access to qualified, licensed professionals. If a student is too difficult or expensive to teach, a private school is under no obligation to accept that child.

CLAIM: ESAs do not siphon money away from public schools.

FACT: The choice expansion proposals in the House-passed budget are funded directly out of the tuition support appropriation at an estimated two-year cost of \$144M, which will further deplete the monies available to support traditional public education.

CLAIM: ESAs are consistent with the philosophy of the money follows the child

FACT: Public schools are government entities designed to improve society by educating the young citizens of tomorrow. They are funded by taxes collected from everyone. Everyone is better off with an educated populace. School funding does not support any individual child, but the overall public school system. ESAs operate on the premise that education is only a parent's business and thus only the parent's problem.