

Out-of-State ESA Voucher Expansion Moves Forward Despite Voter Outrage, More Pressure Needed

Last week, Senate Bill 1224 out-of-state ESA voucher expansion passed the Senate Education Committee on party lines 6 to 3. These are the senators who voted to send your Arizona tax dollars to out-of-state private, religious schools:

[Kate Brophy McGee, LD28](#)
[Tyler Pace, LD25](#)

[Sonny Borrelli, LD5](#)
[Paul Boyer, LD20](#)

[Rick Gray, LD21](#)
[Sylvia Allen, LD6](#)



Dozens of Arizonans from all over the state, the [Indigenous People's Caucus](#), parents and community leaders from the Navajo Nation, current ESA parents, Phoenix-area CEOs, and many others attended the hearing to oppose SB1224 but were not allowed to speak. Meanwhile, representatives from the Goldwater Institute, the American Federation for Children, and EdChoice were all allowed to testify in favor of the

bill, confirming that SB1224 is being pushed by out-of-state dark money interests. The number of voters who opposed SB1224 in the state "Request to Speak" system outnumbered those in favor by a 5 to 1 margin, but the six politicians named above disregarded all these facts to bring Arizona taxpayers [one step closer](#) to being forced to subsidize private schools across state lines.

The real severity of the bill's financial hit is unknown. Legislative analysts say they can't know the number of current and future out-of-state private schools that could siphon Arizona tax dollars if the bill passes. However, the existing ESA voucher program already costs Arizona taxpayers [\\$110 million per year](#), having grown a staggering 7,000 percent since its inception in 2011 as a program for students with disabilities. Every dollar is one taken directly from Arizona district and charter schools.



The bill gets a routine review Monday in Senate Rules for constitutionality and proper format. (If you haven't already used Request to Speak, this is one more chance to put your name on the record as formally opposing this bill.) The next step, a vote of the entire Senate, could come as soon as Monday afternoon. To stop this misguided, harmful bill, it's crucial to immediately do the steps in the **Call to Action**:

Calls to Action!

- **Contact Sen. President Karen Fann** (KFann@AZLeg.gov or 602-926-5874) and ask her to kill the bill because Arizona taxpayers shouldn't be forced to subsidize private schools in other states.
- **Contact your senator** and ask them to oppose SB1224 because it's not what their constituents want done with our tax dollars.
- Share our [SB1224 fact sheet](#) and [video](#) with your friends and family via email and social media so they can call and email too.



ALL CALL



Oppose SB1224

out of state ESA voucher expansion to NM, CO, UT, NV & CA



Call Pres. Karen Fann
(602)926-5874

Email KFann@AZLeg.gov



Email, call your local senator and speak **AGAINST** SB1224



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SAVE OUR SCHOOLS
Strong Schools, Strong State

Bills we're watching:

SB 1491



literacy; dyslexia; screening; appropriations

Funds dyslexia support and teacher training

Sen. Paul Boyer

This bill would implement the recommendations of the interim committee which studied this issue, give schools an extra year to implement the requirements for dyslexia support and teacher training passed last year, and appropriate \$1 million in FY 2021 to fund those efforts. Scheduled for Senate Education Committee, Tuesday.

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SCR 1003



Oppose

personal property tax; exemption
Exempts first \$1 million of personal property used for business purposes from taxation

Sen. JD Mesnard

This bill would increase the state's exemption for personal property used for agriculture purposes or in trade or business from \$185,811 to \$1 million. The bill's [fiscal note](#) estimates a direct General Fund cost of \$1.5 million starting in FY 2023, and a corresponding increase of the state's K-12 education formula cost. This means the state would have to come up with \$1.5 million more every year from the general fund in order to maintain current funding levels for K-12 education. Cutting revenue for public schools when our state is at the bottom of national rankings sends our state in the wrong direction. Awaiting a Senate floor vote.

HB 2762



Support

Project Rocket pilot program; appropriations

Creating a grant program for low-rated schools with high percentages of low-income students

Rep. Michelle Udall

The program would allocate \$42.6 million per year for 3 years to D- and F-rated schools, as well as to C-rated schools with high percentages of low-income students. Participating schools would have to create an improvement plan, then report on how their plan improved performance. The \$150 per student this proposal adds is a drop in the bucket compared to what's needed. Increasing the allocation to \$800 per student could close Arizona's high school graduation rate gap by 1/3 or more. Nevertheless, this is notable because it means that for the first time, lawmakers in the majority party are acknowledging what all educators know — students living in poverty need more support. Dubbed "Project Rocket," the program is based on [an Avondale school district program which ended with all schools in the district showing improvement](#). Awaiting House Education Committee.

HB 2186



Support

appropriation; gifted education programs

Appropriates a one-time \$5 million for gifted ed in 2020-21

Rep. Jennifer Pawlik

This bill builds on the work of the bipartisan study committee that met between the 2019 and 2020 sessions, and would make the recommendation of the study committee law. (The committee [recommended](#) an ongoing appropriation of \$1 million or a one-time appropriation of \$5 million for gifted programs.) Awaiting first reading and committee assignment.

CLICK HERE
to read the
SB1224 Fact Sheet.



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SB 1060



Support

**special education; group B weights
Allows districts to apply for grants
for ultra high cost students**

Sen. Sylvia Allen

This bill would allow school districts to request extra funding from the Department of Education's Extraordinary Special Education Needs Fund for students whose education costs more than 3 times the statewide per-pupil funding average. The bill also contains modest increases for a few special education weights: Speech Language Impairment, Other Health Impairment, and Self-Contained Severe Intellectual Disability. It's far from enough, but it's a respectable step toward better funding for students with special needs, the vast majority of whom choose public schools. Awaiting a Senate floor vote.

SB 1215



Support

**Teachers Academy; counselors;
social workers
Expands AZ Teachers Academy
tuition assistance for counselors
and social workers who commit to
work in AZ schools**

Sen. Sean Bowie

Having enough counselors to know and care for the students at a school is critical to student wellbeing and safety and supports their ability to learn. Arizona has the [highest student-to-counselor ratio](#) in the nation, 924 to 1. (The American School Counselor Association [recommends](#) a ratio of 250 to 1.) Tuition assistance is debt re-lief for potential students and would make a real difference in alleviating Arizona's counselor shortage. Scheduled for Senate Higher Education and Workforce Development, Monday.

SB 1193



Support

**Office of Indian Education;
assistance
Funds the Office of Indian
Education**

Sen. Jamescita Peshlakai

This bill would appropriate \$2 million from state lottery funding for the Office of Indian Education to hire 5 full-time employees. This office is tasked with meeting the educational and cultural needs of Native students, but has never had state funding. It currently employs one person (using federal dollars) to support 22 tribes and 55,572 students. Arizona's Native American schools and students are desperately under-resourced, with students [falling far behind](#) the rest of the nation in test scores, graduation rates and school resources. Teen suicide on the Navajo reservation is 4 times higher than the [already high rate](#) in Arizona overall. Assigned to Senate Higher Education and Workforce Development; not yet on an agenda.

SB 1224



Oppose

**empowerment scholarships;
qualified schools; reservations
Expands ESA vouchers across state
lines**

Sen. Sylvia Allen

Would expand ESA vouchers outside of state lines to New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and California. Arizona is the only state in the nation using taxpayer funds to pay for private religious vouchers in other states. The costs of this expansion are not known. The existing ESA voucher program already drains more than [\\$110 million per year](#) in state funding directly from Arizona's public schools, and is rife with [accountability](#) and [mispending](#) issues. No Arizona student should have to leave the state to get a great education, and Arizona tax dollars should remain in Arizona. Scheduled for Senate Rules Committee Monday (a formality), then awaits a full vote.

SB 1234



Support

additional assistance; restoration **Accelerates DAA restoration for FY2020-21**

Sen. Sylvia Allen

This bill would invest \$135 million of the state's current budget surplus toward restoring [District and Charter Additional Assistance](#), which was severely cut during the last recession and still not fully re-stored. DAA and CAA are flexible funding for district and charter schools that can be used for building improvements, textbooks, classroom materials and technology, as well as to supplement staff salaries. With schools statewide in crisis, the money can't come soon enough. Lack of funding to properly maintain and replace equipment and infrastructure [may ultimately cost the state more](#) than if schools had been adequately funded all along. Scheduled for Senate Rules Committee Monday (a formality), then awaits a full vote.

SB 1357



Oppose

schools; access; instructional materials; review Limit individualized support and responsive teaching in district and charter schools

Sen. Sylvia Allen

This bill would add significant bureaucracy by requiring all district and charter books, instructional aides, mandatory and optional reading materials to be pre-approved the year before school starts, even before teachers meet their students. It would eliminate teachers' ability to work with parents and specialists to assist struggling students, making it illegal for district and charter teachers to give students individually tailored support, including gifted students and special needs students. With responsive, individualized instruction often cited as a reason parents support "school choice," this bill suggests the 95% of Arizona students in district and charter schools don't warrant the same responsive teaching as their private school peers. Passed the Senate Education Committee. The sponsor has promised to amend the bill to address educator concerns.

HB2521



Support

administrative costs; limit; STOs Decreases allowable administration costs for STO vouchers from 10% to 5%

Rep. Aaron Lieberman

This fiscally sound measure promotes transparency and accountability. Donations to Arizona's STO voucher program are dollar-for-dollar credits from the state's general fund that [surpassed a lifetime total of \\$1 billion in 2016](#), reducing the funds available for public education (and other state programs). The STO voucher program can currently keep *(continued to the right)*

10% of donations to use for administration. STO organizations in other states spend 3% to 5% on administration; anything more than that simply [lines administrators' pockets](#). Lowering admin fees is important because it keeps more of the money where it should be: serving the kids. This is just one of multiple similar measures introduced in both chambers by lawmakers from both parties. See mirror bill **SB1214**, sponsor: Sen. Sean Bowie. Awaiting first reading and committee assignment.



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