



December 8, 2017

Support the Educational Freedom Accounts Act, S.2163 and H.R.4576

On behalf of our activist community, I urge you to contact your senators and representative and ask them to support the Educational Freedom Accounts Act, S.2163 and H.R.4576, introduced by Sens. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Mike Lee (R-Utah) and Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.). The bill would expand school choice in the District of Columbia by creating education savings accounts that may be used for any student whose parent chooses not to enroll him or her in the public school system.

Education savings accounts (ESAs) have been set up in several states, including Arizona, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee, typically for the purpose of providing educational alternatives for students with special needs. ESAs give parents of special needs students the state and local funds that would have been used on the student in public schools in an account that the parents may use to pay for alternative education for their child.

Essentially, the taxpayer money that parents pay into supporting public education is able to be used for their own child, should they not choose public school. A commonsense expansion of this program is broadening eligibility beyond special needs students, to include any student whose parents choose not to enroll their child in public school. Parents should be able to choose their child's education, and use in the private system the funds that would ordinarily be used by the government on their child in the public school system.

The Educational Freedom Accounts Act (EFAA) turns this into a reality in the District of Columbia, giving parents more control over their child's education by making alternatives to public school financially accessible.

The EFAA includes language and provisions which offer extensive discretion to parents in determining which educational option is best for their child. It would allow any parent who chooses not to enroll his or her child in DC public schools to establish an ESA to be used on the child's educational expenses at any number of participating providers outside of the public school system. It defines 'participating providers' most broadly as "an entity that provides educational services or products," and including explicit protection for religiously affiliated providers, giving parents utmost discretion in where to use ESA funds for their own child's education.

The calculation used under the bill to determine the amount deposited into each ESA is also tailored to fit the income level of the child's family, by percentage of the poverty level. This method of allocating funds has been seen as most effective in the states that have used it. States that use this or a similar percentage calculation in their existing ESA programs receive over 100 percent of the value of public school per-student spending, exemplifying the programs' effectiveness in increasing the value of education.

The Educational Freedom Accounts Act expands the avenue for school choice from the six states with existing ESA programs to our nation's capital, and opens up eligibility for the program to any family that chooses it. This would not only be a positive step toward school choice, but also a significant bridge built between the public and private sectors of education. For these reasons, I urge you to contact your senators and representative and ask them to support the Educational Freedom Accounts Act, S.2163 and H.R.4576.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Brandon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Brandon
President, FreedomWorks