



NEWS RELEASE

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Rep. Mark Finchem (R-Dist. 11)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REPRESENTATIVE FINCHEM INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO ASSIST GRANDPARENTS ACTING AS PROXY PARENTS

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX (January 11, 2015) - More often than not elderly Americans are on a fixed income, and do not expect to be raising their children's children. HB2174 is about educational choice and finding the right fit for a child's needs, while assisting low income proxy parents - such as grandparents - to improve educational outcomes for some of our most vulnerable young Americans. After all of the discussion is done, this is about the children, about putting them first and setting them up for success.

The Empowerment Scholarship Account program, or ESA, is a State-designed solution aimed at improving educational outcomes. According to several organizations that monitor school choice initiatives the Arizona

ESA program is a shining example of what servant leadership thought can do. As you no doubt know, this is no longer a one-of-a-kind program. Several states have adopted similar solutions.

A key component of the program is allowing participating families to redirect 90 percent of tax dollars, which would otherwise go to their child's education in public schools, into an ESA account to be used exclusively on their child's education – no matter the physical location. This bill is about restoring the power of choice to individuals. There is no one right way to educate our children, those who are parenting them want the right fit for each child, and should have options.

Currently, the ESA program is limited to students with special needs, students in "D" or "F" public school districts, students previously participating in the Arizona Scholarships for Pupils with Disabilities program, students in foster-care who were adopted or who have a plan for permanent adoption, and children whose parents are in the United States military.

“The issue first came to my attention by Tucson resident Geri Ottoboni- Gilmore, said Representative Finchem. “Geri is a grandmother struggling to provide the best education for her two grandchildren. The oldest grandchild is able to access Tuition Grant funds to attend the school of their choice. However, she does not have the resource to help the younger sibling.”

HB2174 is designed to include grandparents who are raising their grandchildren in this successful program.

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