



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HB 2626

empowerment scholarship accounts; expansion

Sponsors: Representative Lesko, Senators Gould, Klein, et al.

DPA Committee on Ways and Means

DPA Caucus and COW

X As Transmitted to the Governor

OVERVIEW

HB 2626 expands eligibility for the Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts program.

HISTORY

Established by Laws 2011, Chapter 75, the Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (Account) program allows qualified students with disabilities to receive 90 percent of the base level support that would otherwise have been allocated for that student. In order for a student to be enrolled in an Account, they must be eligible to receive disability related services from a school district or have been identified as disabled by either the school district or under federal guidelines. Additionally, the qualifying student's parent must agree to do the following: release the school district from all obligations to educate the qualified student; not enroll the qualified student in a school district or charter school; not accept a scholarship from a School Tuition Organization (STO) in the same year that an Account agreement is signed; and provide the qualified student an education in at least the subjects of reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies and science.

PROVISIONS

- Broadens the definition of a *qualified student*, to include a student who:
 - Attends a school or school district that has been assigned a letter grade of D or F by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) based on the school or district's achievement profile.
 - Previously received an Arizona Scholarship for Pupils with Disabilities.
 - Is the child or legal ward of a member of the United States Armed Forces.
 - Has been identified as a gifted pupil.
 - Previously attended a public school and was deemed eligible to receive a scholarship from an STO.
- Adds the following services to the list of qualifying expenses that Account monies may be used for:
 - Educational therapy or services provided by licensed or accredited paraprofessionals and educational aides.
 - Services provided by public schools, including individual classes and extracurricular activities.
- Prohibits the expenditure of Account monies on computers, transportation expenses and consumable educational supplies.

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- Prohibits the parents of qualified students from filing an affidavit of intent to homeschool, in order to enroll for an Account.
- Specifies that a signed Account agreement does not relieve the previously attended school district or charter school from the obligation to evaluate children for placement in special education programs.
- Allows ADE to retain up to 5 percent of Account monies for administrative costs.
- Requires ADE to provide a copy of the Account contract to the county school superintendent.
- Removes the deposit of Special Education Fund monies to Accounts after June 30, 2013.
 - Authorizes the transfer of monies that would have otherwise been allocated to a recipient's previous school district.
- Subjects Account participants to existing school instruction and enrollment requirements that govern the minimum subjects to be taught, as well as the misdemeanor penalty associated with failing to provide instruction or enroll the student.
- Stipulates that previously qualified students are eligible to apply for Account renewal for the duration of high school, regardless of any changes to their multidisciplinary evaluation team plan.
- Requires ADE to provide the Joint Legislative Budget Committee with annual Account funding estimates.
- Defines *curriculum* and *educated pursuant to an Empowerment Scholarship Account*.
- Makes technical and conforming changes.