



Arizona State Senate

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Chair, Committee on Education
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Statement

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Statement from Senate Education Chair Sen. Allen on ESAs and Native American Students

"Education is about the child, not about the money or the institution that provides the education. Parents have the responsibility and inalienable right to direct the education of their children. Children are individuals who have different learning capabilities, gifts and talents. Choice in education gives parents the ability to find and provide that special education that might be needed.

Arizona's Empowerment Scholarship Accounts, or ESAs, give parents another choice when the District/Charter schools do not provide what is needed for their child. Would you not want that choice if it was your child?

Schools Superintendent Hoffman, in an article in the Arizona Republic on May 22, wants to put the blame onto the parents and the American Federation for Children, who she said, "was exploiting Native American students situation..." Sorry, Superintendent Hoffman, it was the Department of Education who approved these ESA scholarships two years ago and it was your department who sent the letters to these parents telling them that they were in violation of the law and that they must pay the money back. It was your letter that caused American Federation for Children to come to their defense.

American Federation for Children is defending those parents and more importantly the children who are being harmed by this decision.

First, the families should be held harmless for the administration of the program. Second, the law gives the parents the money and allows them to use that money for the education of their children. These families are located on the Navajo Reservation and the private school is located on the reservation, but Window Rock is in two states, Arizona and New Mexico.

We have a similar situation at the Arizona-Mexico border, where children who live on the Mexico side of Nogales go to school on the Arizona side. The important point is that these Navajo children are getting an education that their parents feel is superior to what was available. Fighting for what is right for children should be Superintendent Hoffman's focus."

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