



Dear Lawmaker,

On behalf of Americans for Prosperity and our activists across the state, we strongly urge you to support the creation of Education Savings Accounts (ESA) in West Virginia.

Everyone agrees that every student is special and unique, with their own blend of talents, gifts, and aptitudes. And, that the purpose of education is not to force students to conform or become better test takers, but to enable each student to have the skills and understanding to unleash their full potential, and embark on a pathway to living a fulfilled and purposeful life.

This is why West Virginia parents and students are eager for more opportunity in education, and for solutions that respect the dignity of each student and avails to him or her the necessary freedom to receive the education they deserve.

Education Savings Accounts are one of the most innovate ways in which policy makers can empower students and families to discover individualized pathways to the education that best suits each child's unique needs.

ESAs are flexible, and cover education related expenses that range from tuition to tutoring, supplemental education material, to online courses and classes. Most of all, they create a funding system built around students, rather than a funding system built around buildings. Only by creating an environment that allows bottom-up solutions to address the individual needs of every student we can hope to give more families access to a flexible, 21st century education. ESAs are one of the best policy tools we can employ to achieve this goal.

Families who choose to enroll in an ESA will receive a portion of the state tax dollars allocated to their child in order to customize their student's education. These funds may only be used for educational expense that have been approved by the State Treasurer's Office.

These approved services should ensure parents have access to a whole host of educational services, such as: Ongoing services provided by a public school district; tuition and/or fees at non-public schools; courses that lead to trades credential; nonpublic online learning programs; alternative education programs; after-school or summer education programs; tutoring services; educational therapy services; fees for transportation for students to travel to and from an education service providers; and any other qualified expenses as approved by the State Treasurer's Office.

Each ESA's funding value should be equal to 100 percent of the statewide average net state aid share allotted per pupil based on net enrollment adjusted for state aid purposes. This amount would be roughly \$4,500 annually for each ESA enrollee. Funds in an individual ESA should roll over if unused. The amount at which each ESA is valued should not be limited arbitrarily or reduced from at least this amount. It is vital for the success of each ESA student to have access to an adequate amount of funds to successfully pursue the education that is right for them.

Student eligibility should not be arbitrarily limited and should be available to every West Virginia student public school student. Families should not face unreasonable burdens utilizing the new program. Allowing existing state education funds to be portable and flexible ensures this program remains fiscally responsible by not creating new spending, and works to actually save taxpayer dollars.

Our organization will *not* support ESA legislation that fails at the ends outlined above. It is crucial that lawmakers strive for creating a “gold standard” with regards to the structure of the state’s ESA program not only for the sake of giving our students the educational freedom they deserve, but to demonstrate to the nation that West Virginia is a leader when it comes to robust educational options, encouraging them to follow our example. The above criteria represent the bare minimum of such a standard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Huffman', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jason Huffman
West Virginia State Director
Americans for Prosperity