

VOUCHERS FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

HB2626 empowerment scholarship accounts; expansion

Sponsor: Representative Lesko

Summary:

- Expands the state's private school voucher program by allowing the following students to be eligible for the voucher (called the "Empowerment Scholarship"):
 - Any student who attends a school or school district that has been assigned a letter grade of "D" or "F."
 - Gifted students.
 - Those students who previously attended a public school and were determined to be eligible to receive a "scholarship" from a school tuition organization (STO).
 - Those who previously received the "Arizona Scholarship for Pupils with Disabilities."
 - Child or legal ward of a member of the United States Armed Forces.
- A student is eligible to apply for renewal of their "Empowerment Scholarship Account" until the student finishes high school.
- Prohibits a parent of the recipient of an "Empowerment Scholarship Account" from filing an affidavit of intent to homeschool in order to have use an "Empowerment Scholarship."
- A signed "Empowerment Scholarship Account" agreement does not relieve the school district or charter school the pupil previously attended from the obligation to evaluate the pupil for placement in special education programs.
- Allows "Empowerment Scholarship Account" monies to be spent on licensed or accredited paraprofessionals and educational aides and services provided by a public school.
- Prohibits monies in an "Empowerment Scholarship Account" from being spent on: computers or technological devices; transportation to and from school or to and from another qualified service provider; and consumable educational supplies including paper, pens and markers.
- "Empowerment Scholarship Account" participants are subject to existing school instruction and enrollment requirements that govern the minimum subjects to be taught.
- Requires the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) to transmit a copy of a student's "Empowerment Scholarship Account" contract to the county school superintendent in the county that the student resides in if the student will be educated pursuant to an "Empowerment Scholarship Account."
- Authorizes the ADE to retain up to 5% of "Empowerment Scholarship Account" monies for administrative costs.
- Requires the ADE to determine a period that is between July 1 and March 1 of each year during which it will accept applications for the following fiscal year. On or before May 30 of each year, the ADE must provide the Joint Legislative Budget Committee with annual "Empowerment Scholarship Account" funding estimates.

Click here to read HB2626 as transmitted to Governor Brewer:

<http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/50leg/2r/bills/hb2626s.pdf>

Bill status: Passed the House on February 29 by a vote of 38 ayes – 16 nays (the Republicans supported, and Democrats opposed). Passed the Senate on March 26 by a vote of 20 ayes – 8 nays (the Republicans supported, and Democrats opposed). A technical amendment was adopted in the Senate, so the bill was again voted on by the full House during Final Read on March 29, and it passed by a vote of 39 ayes – 15 nays. HB2626 was transmitted to Governor Brewer on Thursday, March 29.

House “final read” vote on HB2626: Passed 39-15 on March 29.

Eddie Ableser	NV	Lela Alston	N	Ben Arredondo	N
Cecil P. Ash	Y	Brenda Barton	Y	Kate Brophy McGee	Y
Chad Campbell	N	Heather Carter	Y	Tom Chabin	N
Steve Court	Y	Chester Crandell	Y	Jeff Dial	Y
Karen Fann	Y	Steve Farley	N	Eddie Farnsworth	Y
John Fillmore	Y	Tom Forese	Y	Ruben Gallego	N
Sally Ann Gonzales	N	Doris Goodale	Y	David Gowan	Y
Rick Gray	Y	Albert Hale	N	Jack W. Harper	Y
Matt Heinz	NV	Katie Hobbs	N	Russ Jones	NV
Peggy Judd	Y	John Kavanagh	Y	Debbie Lesko	Y
Phil Lovas	Y	Debbie McCune Davis	N	Nancy McLain	Y
Javan "J.D." Mesnard	Y	Eric Meyer	N	Catherine H. Miranda	NV
Steve B. Montenegro	Y	Justin Olson	Y	Lynne Pancrazi	NV
Daniel Patterson	NV	Justin Pierce	Y	Frank Pratt	Y
Terri Proud	Y	Martin J. Quezada	N	Amanda A. Reeve	Y
Bob Robson	Y	Macario Saldate IV	N	Carl Seel	Y
David Burnell Smith	Y	David W. Stevens	Y	Anna Tovar	N
Michelle Ugenti	Y	Steve Urie	Y	Ted Vogt	Y
Jim Weiers	Y	Jerry Weiers	Y	Bruce Wheeler	N
Vic Williams	Y	Kimberly Yee	Y	Andy Tobin	Y

AYES: 39 NAYS: 15 NOT VOTING: 6 EXCUSED: 0 VACANT: 0

Senate vote on HB2626: Passed 20-8 on March 26.

Paula Aboud	N	Sylvia Allen	Y	Frank Antenori	Y
Nancy Barto	Y	Andy Biggs	Y	Judy Burges	Y
Olivia Cajero Bedford	N	Rich Crandall	Y	Adam Driggs	Y
Steve Gallardo	N	Ron Gould	NV	Linda Gray	Y
Gail Griffin	Y	Jack Jackson Jr.	N	Lori Klein	Y
Leah Landrum Taylor	NV	Jerry Lewis	Y	Linda Lopez	N
David Lujan	N	John McComish	Y	Al Melvin	Y
Robert Meza	N	Rick Murphy	Y	John Nelson	Y
Michele Reagan	Y	David Schapira	N	Don Shooter	Y
Steve Smith	Y	Steve Yarbrough	Y	Steve Pierce	Y

AYES: 20 NAYS: 8 NOT VOTING: 2 EXCUSED: 0 VACANT: 0