

To: Interested Parties

From: GBAO

## Research Shows Arizona Voters Want More Accountability & Transparency For Arizona's ESA Voucher Program

Recent focus groups and a survey<sup>1</sup> show that Arizona voters are broadly supportive of initiatives to reform the Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) voucher program through greater transparency, accountability, and student safety measures.

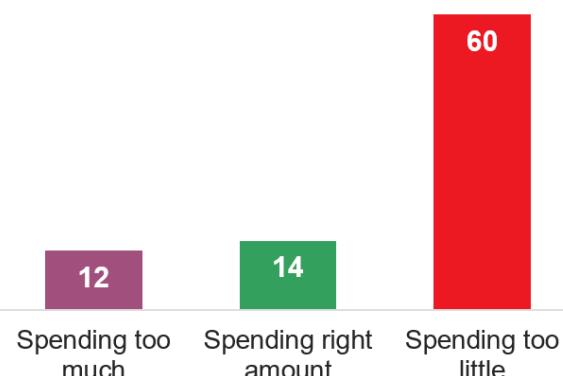
Voters believe Arizona's public schools are severely underfunded – resulting in school closures, program cuts, and staffing shortages – and view unchecked voucher spending as worsening the problem. Once they learn how the current ESA voucher program operates, voters strongly support adding guardrails to ensure students are safe, to ensure the public can see how funds are being used, and to make it so that taxpayer money cannot be spent on luxury items or vacations. A majority also believes ESA vouchers should be reserved for families who truly need the support, supporting an income cap rather than the status quo that allows wealthy families to receive funds.

This memo highlights key findings regarding the ESA voucher program from recent focus groups and a voter survey.

### Key Findings

- A majority of voters do not think Arizona public schools receive enough funding.** During focus groups, voters brought up unprompted concerns about the ways low funding is impacting public schools in Arizona. School programs are being cut, teachers aren't paid enough, and students don't have the resources they need. In the survey, a majority of voters say that Arizona is spending too little on public education.

Money spent on Arizona public schools



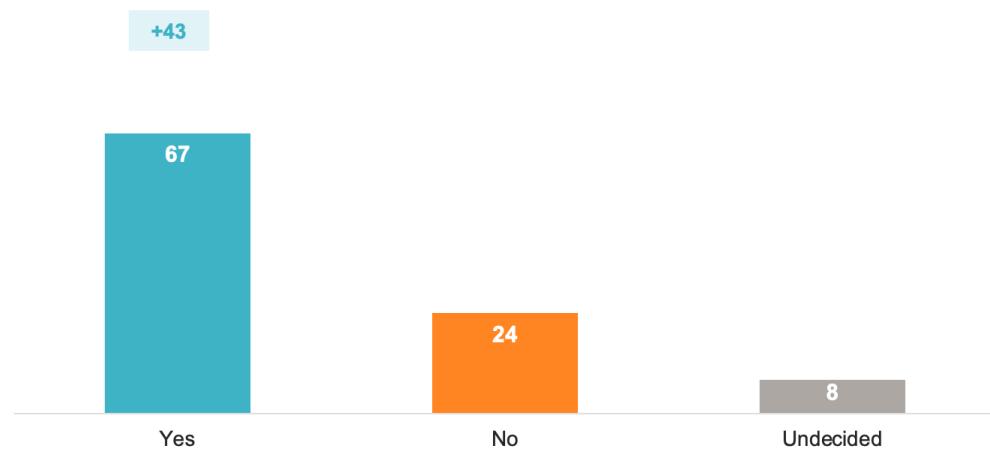
*"Schools are losing funding, losing programs. Teachers have not been paid in decades. So there's a shortage of people even wanting to do it, which is kind of disheartening. I mean, that's really sad. On top of that, it feels like it's losing the community." – Latino Voter*

<sup>1</sup> On behalf of the Arizona Education Association, GBAO conducted 4 focus groups, 2 online with white voters and 2 in-person with Latino voters in Phoenix from October 27-28, 2025. GBAO additionally conducted a survey of 800 likely voters statewide. This survey was conducted November 5-9, 2025 and reached respondents on landlines, cell phones, and text-to-web. Results carry a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval.



- **Two-thirds of voters support making changes to the ESA voucher program to make it more accountable & transparent.** Overall, 67% say they would vote yes on a suite of policies to strengthen oversight of the ESA voucher program. This support extends across partisanship, race, parental status, and geography.

### ESA Accountability Vote



- **Voters overwhelmingly back core accountability measures for the voucher program.** Strong majorities support requiring fingerprint clearance cards, mandating schools to disclose how ESA voucher funds are used, ensuring participating schools are accredited or administer a nationally recognized test, and prohibiting the use of voucher dollars on luxury items.

### Proposal Changes

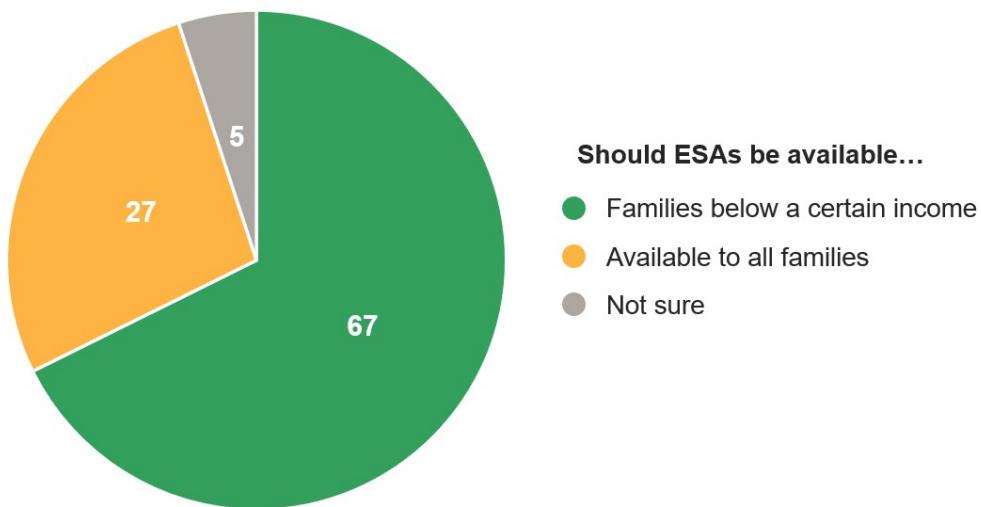
*Next are some proposed changes to the ESA voucher program. Please indicate if you support or oppose each proposal.*

|  | % Support | % Oppose |
|--|-----------|----------|
| Requiring staff at qualified private schools to have a valid fingerprint clearance card                        | 86        | 9        |
| Requiring qualified private schools to disclose total ESA funds received and the number of ESA students served | 81        | 15       |
| Requiring qualified private schools to be accredited or administer a nationally-recognized assessment          | 77        | 17       |
| Restricting the use of ESA dollars, including prohibiting luxury items   | 73        | 21       |

*“When it comes to money, you should be able to know down to the dollar where money goes to and when they’re hiding stuff.” – Latino voter*

*“I believe having more oversight on the ESA program is a good idea. Knowing that families are spending the funds recklessly is very disheartening” – White voter*

- **Voters also back adding an income cap to ensure the program is fair and targeted.** Nearly 70% believe ESA vouchers should only be available to families below a certain income, and focus groups underscored that these funds should support those who truly need assistance, rather than go to families who can already afford private schools.



- **Voters support reforms because they will bring needed accountability, transparency, and fairness to the ESA voucher program.** They want clear limits on spending, income caps to ensure funds go to families who truly need them, and safeguards to prevent the misuse of taxpayer dollars on luxury or non-educational items. Overall, voters support reforms in order to ensure resources are used responsibly, strengthen oversight, and prioritize students and public schools.

*“As it currently stands, anyone can get access to [ESAs] & this takes money away from public schools & people who don’t really need it can abuse it. By passing, only the most needed people will receive the funds & they will be used for the right things.” – Latino Voter*

*“We need transparency in our schools and how money is spent!” – White voter*