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NO on SB 2400

ESAs and public money for private education and home education have put many of us in a quandary.

On one hand, those who participate in non-public school are still paying school taxes and the money would help to "balance the scales" and reimburse those families so they aren't paying for education twice.

On the other hand, public money comes with public strings.

We could discuss and debate the reasons for or against accepting public money for private or home education, but the fact remains that some want it and others don't. So what are we to do?

I am vehemently opposed to public funding of private education in the form of tax credits, ESAs, vouchers or other wealth redistribution programs. However, as a homeschool mom and leader, my primary concern is for homeschoolers and their freedom. I know from my connections with homeschoolers around the country that the advent of ESAs have impacted communities. Some states, like OK, have had new restrictions put in place. Other states like NH, AZ and FL have had attempts at further restrictions but have been able to fight them off.

NH, AZ, FL and six other states have managed to "make everyone happy" by separating homeschoolers who opt-in to ESAs from homeschoolers who don't. These distinctions are referred to as firewalls and this is how they work:

- A homeschooling family applies for/enrolls in ESA program.
- Upon acceptance to the program, they withdraw their letter of intent to homeschool or agree not to file a letter of intent.
- They are given an ESA account, usually a digital wallet, from which they can make purchases for goods and services in an online marketplace. Other eligible expenses, if not offered in the marketplace, can usually be reimbursed by submitting documentation.
- These students are educated at home under a separate designation under the law, such as "ESA Student," are under their own ESA portion of ND law and are not under the ND homeschool law.
- Homeschoolers who do not wish to participate in the ESA program do nothing different. They file their letter of intent, as usual, and continue homeschooling under the homeschooling statute.

And there you have it! Everyone is happy!

Homeschoolers who wish to receive ESA money can and are subject to the rules, policies, restrictions, requirements, commitments and contracts of the program according to the ESA law and are classified as ESA students or something similar.

Homeschoolers who don't apply for and accept ESA money are protected from any ESA program rules, policies, restrictions, requirements, commitments or contracts as they continue to operate under the homeschool law and are still classified as homeschoolers.

I have attached a spreadsheet documenting how other states are handling homeschoolers and ESA programs.

I appeal to you to amend SB 2400 to include a firewall protection for homeschoolers, creating a distinction between traditional homeschoolers and those who accept ESA money. Without that amendment, I urge you to vote NO on SB 2400.

Sincerely,
Kristy Rose