

CONCERNED  
**WOMEN** *for* **AMERICA**  
LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE

February 5, 2025  
Senate Education Committee  
Testimony in Support of SB 2400

Chairman Todd Beard and Members of the Senate Education Committee, I am Linda Thorson, the State Director for Concerned Women for America (CWA) of North Dakota. My background is in education. I served as a speech-language pathologist in the public-school systems for 26 years and received the 2015 Council for Exceptional Children Teacher of the Year Award.

Today, I am testifying for CWA Legislative Action Committee in support of [SB 2400](#). As our state's largest public policy women's organization, CWA of North Dakota has seven core issues, education being one of them. The goals we are working to see in education are: 1. The quality of education restored to a level of excellence in academic achievement without governmental mandates detrimental to parental rights. 2. School choice options available to parents that will benefit all children.

Educational Savings Accounts, or ESAs, empower parents by providing them with more choices in their children's education. The ESA outlined in SB 2400 provides a government-authorized savings account for families with students in grades K-12 to use for educational purposes. For example, parents can use it to help cover private school tuition or online learning programs, private tutoring, software, or other educational materials.

ESAs are publicly funded, are administered by the state government, in this case, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, and use state funding already allocated for the student. They allow a parent to purchase vetted educational services to tailor a learning experience that meets a student's needs. Contrary to what you will hear from some detractors, ESAs do not destroy public schools. Parents who feel their public school is working need not change. They need not apply to receive the money and can continue as they were.

To date, eighteen states offer students access to an ESA, the amount of which varies from 27% of the state's per-pupil spending to nearly 100%.<sup>1</sup> States with ESAs are Arkansas, Arizona,

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<sup>1</sup> Roco, Emily, State Actions on Education Savings Accounts, (NCSL) National Council for State Legislators, May 03, 2024, [State Actions on Education Savings Accounts](#)

Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, Montana, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, West Virginia, Wyoming, and Utah. <sup>2</sup>

SB 2400 offers universal ESA eligibility, defining an “Eligible Student” as an elementary or secondary student who is a resident of this state and eligible to attend a public school. The opportunity for students to benefit from enhanced educational opportunities and experiences will not depend on where the family resides. Families in rural locations will have the same access to an educational savings account as those in urban cities like Fargo, Grand Forks, and Bismarck.

Educational Savings Accounts will be available to all students whether they attend a public school or another school setting such as a private school or homeschool. The state’s payments range from one thousand dollars to four thousand dollars.

We are not a one-size-fits-all society. How can the state of North Dakota support a one-size-fits-all educational system? It is time for change. Follow Governor Kelly Armstrong’s lead. On January 7, 2025, in his [State of the State Address](#), he declared,

“Our budget will support Education Savings Accounts – funding set aside for each student to direct toward services or tuition across our public, nonpublic or homeschool settings. The money follows the student, not the school, ensuring every student has the tools they need to prepare for college, a career or the military.”<sup>3</sup>

The goal of providing quality of education to a level of excellence in academic achievement is best accomplished when parents are empowered to provide more choices in their children’s education. Support Educational Savings Accounts.

**I urge a “do pass” on SB 2400**

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<sup>2</sup> Mercier, Jason, 29 States Now Have Some Form of ESA, Education Choice Tax Credit or Education Tax Scholarships, March 26, 2024, Mountain States Policy Center, [29 states now have some form of ESA, education choice tax credit, or education tax scholarship](#)

<sup>3</sup> North Dakota Office of the Governor, January 7, 2025, [Armstrong outlines property tax relief and reform plan in 2025 State of the State Address to Legislature | North Dakota Office of the Governor](#)