

## **Capitol Report SB 255 3-4-2023 – ESA Bill, Oppose**

**Action Needed 3/4:** Calls/Emails are continued to be needed to the Missouri Senate Education Committee members and to your personal state senator to **OPPOSE SB 255** - *Establishing the Education Savings Account program*.

If you are concerned about preserving your home school freedoms call, email, come to the Capitol Tuesday to personally visit your state senator. They NEED to hear from you, their constituent.

**The Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee completed the hearing on SB 255, *Establishing the Education Savings Account program*, sponsored by Senator Rick Brattin. The Committee has scheduled SB 255 to be in Executive Session on Tuesday, March 7, 8:15am, in the Senate Lounge. There will not be any testimony. They will vote on SB 255 as “Do Pass” or not. If it passes in the Senate Education and Workforce Committee, SB 255 will head to the Senate floor.**

SB 255 provides a taxpayer, government funded Education Savings Account Program which will be used by parents to enroll their students in private education and tutoring.

FHE has testified that our members and friends want it to be clearly stated in the bill that it does not include a homeschool. There is opposition to including such language, therefore it is imperative the senators hear from you, their constituents.

SB 255 is a government funded Educational Savings Account program in which a home school is not clearly excluded. FHE opposes a home school being a “qualified school” of government funded ESAs and educational vouchers. Along with government money comes regulations requiring accountability to the program. This would add more regulation on a home school than is required by the Missouri compulsory attendance statute, RSMo 167.031.2. It is enticing and luring homeschoolers to forfeit their freedoms. For a parent to have the freedom to educate their child as they see fit is what makes homeschooling work.

1. FHE opposes attempting to draw home educators into government systems with bribes or enticements. This would include ESA (Education Savings Account) bills/programs which are funded by government money.
2. FHE does not ask for any government assistance or handouts.

3. FHE opposes all attempts to force or coerce registration of our students in any manner.

An example of the added regulation on a home school is the MOScholars Program right here in our state. Although the program is funded by private money, because of accountability to the government sponsored program, there have been requirements that exceed our private home education provision in the compulsory attendance statute, RSMo 167.031.2. The MOScholars program requires:

1. Standardized testing. RSMo 167.031.2(2)(a)c requires a record of evaluations which may include a standardized test, but it is not required.
- 2.. Student privacy of a home school student or parent's personally identifiable data is not protected by student privacy laws.
3. The state regulations of the MOScholars program, because of accountability to the program, must show their records to the Education Assistance Organization upon request.
4. The state regulations of the MOScholars program require a criminal background check of all persons 18 years of age and older living in the home.

The MOScholars program is a volunteer program aimed at those with IEPs and those either entering school for the first time or coming from the public school. These new homeschool families are lured and enticed into the program by the money. They do not realize the freedoms they are giving up when they participate in the program.

Examples of the unintended consequences of ESA/Voucher programs:

1. One example is the fight the West Virginia homeschoolers are currently fighting.

In 2021 West Virginia passed an ESA law which included homeschoolers. The West Virginia homeschoolers worked hard to protect the freedoms of traditional homeschoolers. It has been less than 2 years since the ESA bill was passed. The legislature is now reversing assurances they gave to the

traditional homeschoolers. The West Virginia homeschoolers are now back at the legislature this session again fighting for their homeschool freedoms.

2. Another example is Alberta, Canada. They had the most homeschool freedom in Canada. Then, homeschoolers were offered vouchers. At first only those receiving the vouchers were under the accountability regulations, then Alberta decided that all homeschools should be under added regulation.

Christopher Klicka wrote in his book Home Schooling: The Right Choice, January 2000, pages 216-217:

"I serve as Vice Chairman of the Board of Home School Legal Defense Association of Canada. The province of Alberta had always been one of the least regulated provinces to home school in until, in the early 1990s, legislation was passed to give all home school parents a government voucher of \$500 per child. The very next year, complex requirements were enacted for all home schoolers, transforming Alberta into one of the most regulated provinces. When questioned, the Alberta Minister of Education explained the new regulations were necessary since they had to know about the homeschoolers since many were receiving the voucher money."

For more information about the above examples go to: <https://homeschoolingbackgrounder.com/the-great-school-choice-double-cross/>

It was a hard fought fight here in Missouri to secure the freedoms homeschoolers have enjoyed for almost 40 years. Let's not sell our freedoms out for a few dollars. Let's stand together to continue to enjoy the homeschool freedoms we are enjoying today.

Therefore, FHE opposes SB 255.

If you agree with FHE's position on SB 255, call or email the Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee members and your state senator immediately. Ask him/her to oppose SB 255, *Establishing the Education Savings Account program*.

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Although FHE cannot tell you what to write to your senator, we are often asked for help in what to say. Here is a possibility.

Dear Senator XXXX,

As a homeschooler, I stand with Families for Home Education in respectfully

requesting that you vote no on SB 255 unless an amendment is added to clearly state that a home school is not included in the ESA program. Voluntary or not, homeschool families should not be required to provide more information that our law in RSMO 167.031 requires of us. Nor do we want our hard fought freedoms to provide what is best for our children's education to be forfeited through accepting government money which always comes with strings.