



SUPPORT THE EDUCATION
SAVINGS ACCOUNTS FOR
MINNESOTA STUDENTS
ACT **SF1000/HF1109**

FUND STUDENTS, NOT SYSTEMS IN MINNESOTA.

Minnesotans need greater choices in education now more than ever. Whether to overcome statewide learning loss from COVID-19 or to address ongoing individual academic challenges, choices matter.

Every child is different. Every family has unique needs. If you like your public school, you can keep it. But for those who are not being served well, the Education Savings Accounts for Minnesota Students Act empowers parents and families to craft an education to help their child flourish.



SF 1000/HF 1109 would create **Education Savings Accounts** to empower parents and families to customize their children's educations. They would use these accounts to pay education-related expenses including private-school tuition, tutoring, supplies, transportation, and extracurricular activities and individual classes at local public schools. These accounts would work like HSA or FSA spending accounts, with a debit card available to pay for eligible expenses. A third-party benefit administrator would manage the accounts to ensure compliance with Minnesota's regulations.

FAST FACTS:

- ESAs are targeted to lower-and middle-income families (up to four times the income standard for reduced-price meals, about \$200,000 for a family of four).
- They will not prompt a mass exodus that will destabilize public education. The bill initially caps the available ESAs at 5 percent of public-school enrollment (approximately 43,000 students), then grows annually by 3 percent.
- The selection criteria will prioritize kindergartners and students in public schools.
- Funding will come from the state, and not use local education dollars from property taxes.
- Funding will equal the adjusted state per pupil formula allowance of \$6,863, and provide additional state funds for students with disabilities.
- Six other states, including three so far in 2023, have enacted similar programs.
- Empowering parents is widely popular; 68 percent of Democrats, 82 percent of Republicans, and 67 percent of Independents support school choice in a recent poll, and 75 percent of Minnesotans support ESAs.

WHAT ESAs DO:

- Give choice to lower and middle-income families to customize their children's education.
- Provide superior accountability through robust regulations and the watchful eyes of parents.
- Provide a proven stimulant to improving public schools' performance.

WHAT ESAs DO NOT DO:

- Do **not** lower public school outcomes or funding. Abundant evidence shows choice improves the academic outcomes and does not reduce funding for public schools.
- Do **not** limit student choices to brick-and-mortar schools. Rather, they give families access to a wide array of private and religious schools, online schools and homeschooling.
- Do **not** violate the U.S. or Minnesota constitutions. The U.S. Supreme Court and numerous state supreme courts have held that similar programs are constitutional. Participating schools must meet federal antidiscrimination laws.

THE REALITY THAT SOME MINNESOTA LEGISLATORS REFUSE TO FACE.



PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE FAILING MANY STUDENTS, AND MANY STUDENTS ARE LEAVING.

- Public school enrollment has dropped for the third consecutive year.
- Minnesota public schools lost 22,000 students from the 2019-20 school year to the 2022-23 school year.
- Many families that left public schools during the COVID-related closures have chosen not to return.
- Minneapolis' public schools have fewer than 28,000 students in grades K-12 in the 2022-2023 school year. That represents a decline of 39% in one generation. The district had 46,000 students in the 2000-2021 school year.

STUDENTS ARE ENROLLING IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

- Private school enrollment in the 2022-23 school year increased for the third consecutive year, recording an increase of 3% from the 2021-22 school year.
- Private school enrollment grew by 6,812 students from the 2019-20 school year to the 2022-23 school year.

DECLINING TEST SCORES.

- Minnesota student performance on national reading and math assessments are the lowest in 30 years.
- As of spring 2022, only about 45 percent of students statewide are performing at grade-level in math, and just under 50 percent of students do not read at grade level, as measured by the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments.

EDUCATIONAL DISPARITIES PERSIST ACROSS RACE AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS.

- Despite significant increases in funding, the public-school establishment continues to fail underserved populations. Money is not the answer.
- Willful blindness is the kind explanation for the failure of some elected officials to face and address these large disparities.

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