



MYTHS VS. FACTS: SCHOOL CHOICE IN ARIZONA

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DEBUNKING THE MYTHS ABOUT UNIVERSAL SCHOOL CHOICE IN ARIZONA

Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs is trying to eliminate universal school choice, claiming it would “bankrupt” the state. But in August 2024, the Arizona Department of Education released its revised budget for the year—and had a \$4 million education funding surplus. Governor Hobbs should prioritize what is best for Arizona families instead of spreading disinformation about school choice.

MYTH: SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS COST MORE THAN EXPECTED.

FACT: THE COST PER STUDENT HAS NOT CHANGED, AND ENROLLMENT IS SURGING.

- The Arizona legislature’s original [fiscal note](#) emphasized uncertainty about school choice participation rates, which led to a rough estimated cost of \$65 million for 2024 and \$125.4 million for 2025 for the state’s Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs). However, [enrollment has outpaced projections](#) since the program launched, growing from approximately [12,000](#) students in 2022 to an estimated [36,078](#) students in 2024.
- **Despite this rapid growth in school choice enrollment, the amount of funds given to each parent (\$7,200 per pupil) has not increased.**

MYTH: SCHOOL VOUCHERS DO NOT SAVE ARIZONA TAXPAYERS MONEY.

FACT: SCHOOL CHOICE COSTS TAXPAYERS LESS THAN FAILING PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

- **The Arizona Department of Education [recently announced](#) a \$4 million surplus for the 2024 school year despite the higher-than-expected enrollment in the school choice program.**
- A national study analyzing fiscal data through 2018 revealed that school choice programs, on average, saved state and local taxpayers between [\\$1.80 and \\$2.85](#) for every dollar invested.
- If a student chooses to use an ESA and leaves their public school district, a significant portion (\$3,300–\$7,500) of their per-pupil education dollars remain in that district. This means the school district still receives thousands of dollars for a student it does not have to educate, which enables more money to go toward the students who remain in the school district.

MYTH: SCHOOL CHOICE MEANS ARIZONA PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE LOSING REVENUE.

FACT: ARIZONA SCHOOL DISTRICT REVENUES HAVE QUADRUPLED SINCE 1993.

- **The first school choice program launched in 1993, and between 1993 and 2022, Arizona school districts’ total statewide revenues [quadrupled](#), even though school choice enrollment significantly increased. Even adjusting for inflation, total revenues more than doubled.**
- During the same time period, Arizona school districts added more than 800 new schools and over 200,000 new students.

MYTH: SCHOOL CHOICE POLICIES HARM PUBLIC EDUCATION.

FACT: SCHOOL CHOICE STRENGTHENS PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS.

- A 2021 [study](#) from the School Choice Demonstration Project for all 50 states plus D.C. that measured the availability and accessibility of private, charter, homeschool, and public school choices found that **higher levels of educational freedom are significantly associated with higher student achievement levels across the state.**
- The study also found that Arizona led the Nation in terms of overall educational freedom.

