



STATE OF ARIZONA

JANICE K. BREWER
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

April 4, 2012

The Honorable Andy Tobin
Speaker of the House
Arizona House of Representatives
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Re: House Bill 2626 (empowerment scholarship accounts; expansion)

Dear Speaker Tobin,

Today, I vetoed House Bill 2626 (empowerment scholarship accounts; expansion), which would have expanded Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs) to students well beyond those allowed under current law.

Last session, I signed Senate Bill 1553 into law, creating ESAs in order to provide students with disabilities an increased array of options. I have publically applauded the Superior Court decision and the legal efforts to defend this powerful tool to expand educational opportunities for special-needs students. I remain encouraged that this ongoing litigation will result in a favorable outcome.

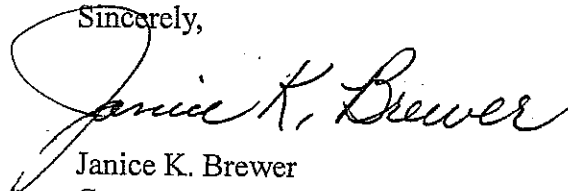
My long-time advocacy and support for school choice has been based on the free-market principle that giving parents and students choices between competing opportunities for education provides a benefit to the entire system. Last year, in addition to signing Senate Bill 1553, I approved an expansion of parents' rights and unveiled my school choice website to help provide parents with the information essential to guiding their children's educational future. This session, I signed Senate Bill 1047 (school tuition organizations; credits; administration), aimed at addressing the needs of families who find themselves on waiting lists for scholarships necessary for their children to attend the school of their choice.

The state of Arizona needs to work towards a system of different educational settings to cater to the different ways in which our students learn. A well-equipped system with choice competition and innovation — these are the keys to our educational system. Local school districts, charter schools, home school, private and parochial schools all have an important role to play.

There is a careful balance we have to maintain. We must enhance educational options wherever we can, but we must also ensure that government is not artificially manipulating the market through state budget or tax policy in a manner that would make an otherwise viable option so unattractive that it undermines rational choice in a competitive market.

The JLBC fiscal note for Senate Bill 1553 pointed out that ESAs can have an upfront cost because students would "be funded under both programs for one year." My budget office estimates House Bill 2626 will generate a cost to the general fund. As I noted in my veto letter dated April 2, 2012, it remains unclear what the state budget will provide for publically-funded schools, both district and charter. This is among the reasons I vetoed this bill. I recognize that several provisions of House Bill 2626 are intended to improve the implementation of Senate Bill 1553. I will be willing to reconsider these provisions of House Bill 2626 and to engage in a dialog on the merits of appropriate areas of expansion of ESAs once the FY 2013 budget is complete. In the meantime, I look forward to working with the bill's sponsor to address the needs of all of Arizona's students.

Sincerely,



Janice K. Brewer
Governor

cc: The Honorable Steve Pierce
The Honorable Debbie Lesko