

EXPAND SCHOOL CHOICE

Preston Brashers, Research Fellow



TOPLINE: States should adopt education savings accounts (ESAs) and allow parents to direct funding for their children's education to programs that are [right for them](#).

BACKGROUND: The U.S. spends far more on public schools than most [realize](#). For all the money that's spent, educational outcomes should be better. According to the Census Bureau, in the 2023-24 fiscal year, the government spent [\\$983.7](#) billion on public K-12 education, an average of [\\$17,619](#) per pupil. That's far higher than most private schools' tuition. About 57% of the private K-12 schools in Niche's 2026 [database](#) have tuition of [\\$12,000](#) per year or less. Homeschooling costs far less than private school but requires a major time commitment that limits parents' work hours.

Despite generous taxpayer funding, many public-school students receive a poor education and often ideological indoctrination that undermines religion and America's founding. Not all public schools are problematic, but expanding competition and choice [improves](#) outcomes, *including* for students who remain in public schools.

Action Items (States and Congress):

- **States should adopt and expand ESAs**, allowing parents to set aside and invest funds for their children's education, tax-free.
- **States should ensure two-thirds or more of K-12 students are eligible for school choice programs** that allow parents to decide where to send their kids to school and to direct education funding for their own children accordingly.
 - Funding for students in school choice programs should be at least 75% of the per-pupil funding of K-12 public school students.
- **Congress should revoke the municipal bond exclusion for states that don't enact minimum school choice** (ensuring at least 40% of students have access at a 60% or higher level of per-pupil funding).
 - Only allow a 50% exclusion for states that meet those parameters but fall short of the full eligibility and funding thresholds above.

How It Would Make Life More Affordable:

- Public K-12 education costs more than [\\$7,500](#) per U.S. household, including about \$3,400 on average in state taxes, more than \$2,000 in local property taxes, about \$1,200 from other local sources, and about \$900 in federal taxes. School choice acts as a check against public school districts wasting taxpayer dollars.
- Better primary and secondary education and civic virtue can reduce delinquency, crime, and anti-social behavior, while enhancing future productivity.

Related Legislation: ACE Act ([S. 3520 \[118th Congr.\]](#), [H.R. 6795 \[118th Congr.\]](#)).

BOTTOMLINE: School choice and competition keep public school districts accountable to the parents and families they serve.