



TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION

FAQ: WHAT STATES OFFER EDUCATION CHOICE?

KEY POINTS

- 31 states and Washington, D.C., have choice programs serving 700,000 students
- Legislators provided \$500m for ESAs, which will allow about 50,000 students to participate in year 1.
- Demand for options is high: 80,000 students are on waitlists for Texas' public choice options.
- Private education options in Texas have declined by 10% over the last 8 years because parents cannot afford them.

WHAT ARE ESAs?

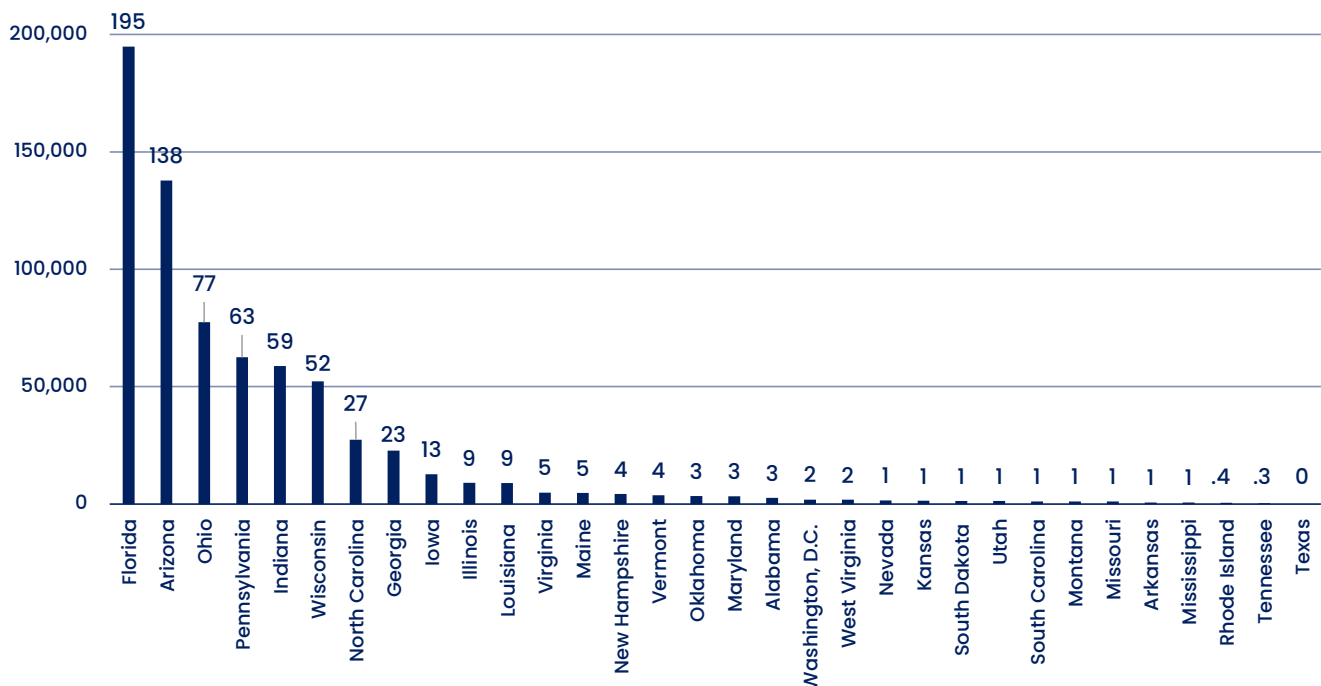
ESAs give parents access to the learning environment that best serves their children: parents can pay for tuition at any accredited school of a parent's choosing, as well as for tutoring, books, transportation, or other qualified educational expenses.

NATIONAL EXPANSION

Since Wisconsin established the first modern choice program in 1990, 30 other states have started programs. More than 700,000 American students participated in choice programs by the end of the 2022-23 school year.

With school closures and learning loss during Covid, families needed additional educational options. In response, legislators in seven states created new choice programs, more than at any other time in history. There are now universal ESA programs in 10 states: AZ, AR, FL, IA, NC, OH, OK, UT, and WV. In addition, 8 of the 10 most rural states as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau have choice programs: ME, VT, WV, MI, MT, AR, SD, and AL.

PRIVATE CHOICE ENROLLMENT BY STATE, 2023 (IN THOUSANDS)



OUR LOCAL NEED

Texas families need options:

- **Districts:** The new Supplemental Special Education Services program served 80,000 students in its first year, while 32,764 more students were wait listed by June 2023.
- **Charters:** Public charter schools educate more than 360,000 students, but another 66,500 sit on wait lists.
- **Private:** While many parents want the option of a private school, they simply cannot afford them. As a result, the number of these schools has declined from 1,325 to 1,192 (by 10%) over the last 8 school years (2014-15 to 2022-23). These educational opportunities are declining.

THE EXODUS MYTH

Critics claim that choice programs lead to a massive exodus of students and public school funding is cut. This is false. Data from the last decade shows that:

- first year take-up rates¹ averaged 0.9% of eligible students, and

- take-up rates increased to 2.17% of eligible students by the program's fifth year.

Through HB 1, Texas lawmakers provided \$500 million for ESAs. With an ESA value of \$10,000, about 50,000 students could participate in the 2024-25 school year, which is less than 1% of Texas' 6.28 million school-age children.

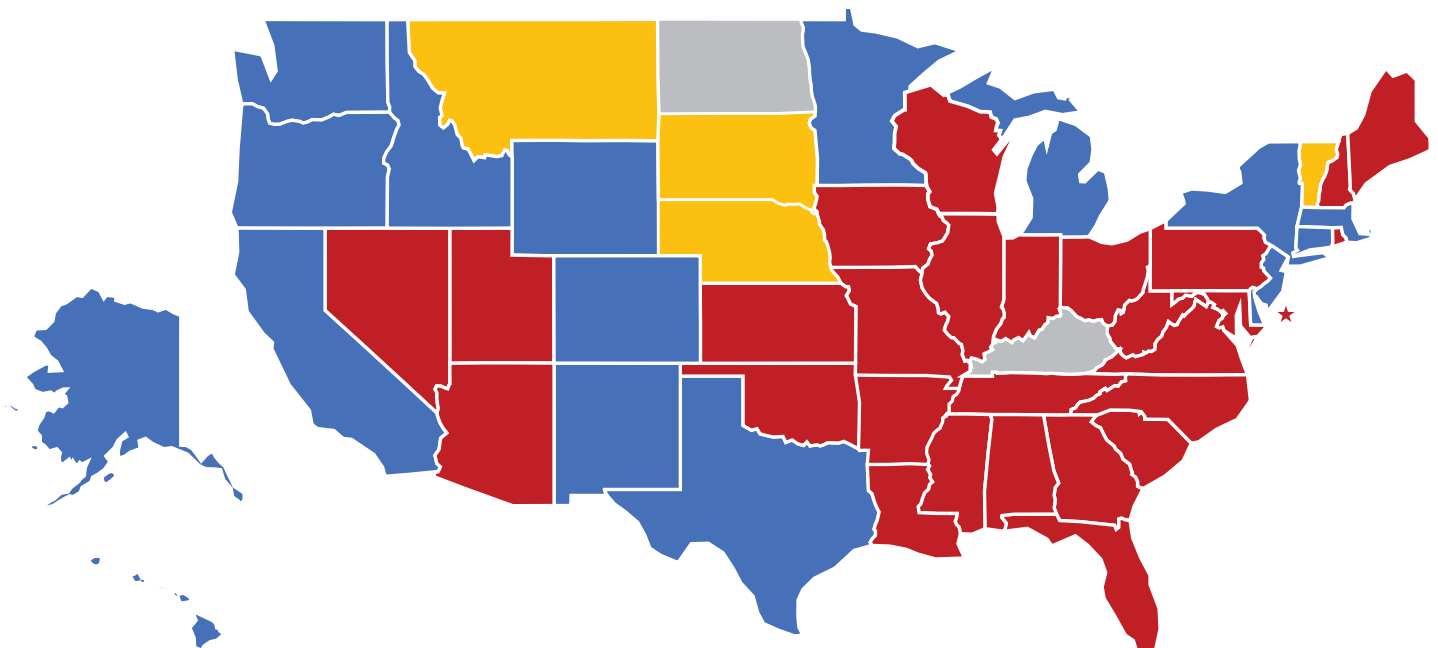
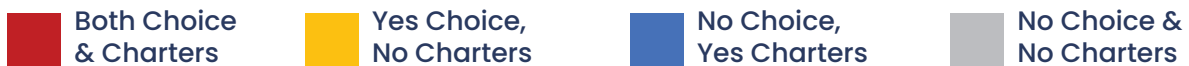
VOICE FOR CHOICE

"Hard work paired with a strong moral foundation makes education powerful. My family's success wouldn't have been possible without school choice, which gave us access to that environment. Without my parents being blessed with the choice of which school to send us to we would not be where we are today. So when people say that school choice doesn't work, I simply show them my family."

- Hera Varmah, Florida choice student

1. Take-up rates are the percent of eligible students who participate. Data courtesy EdChoice (May 2022).

EDUCATION CHOICE IN THE US (2022-23)



Courtesy: American Federation for Children, 2023 National Landscape for School Choice; National Alliance for Public Charter Schools