

Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty: Makes case for new Education Savings Account legislation

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Policy brief explains how ESAs can help low-income “gifted and talented” students
December 18, 2017 – Milwaukee, WI – Last Friday, State Senator Alberta Darling [introduced bipartisan legislation](#) to create the nation’s first Education Savings Account (ESA) dedicated to the needs of Gifted and Talented students. The bill promises to further empower families and give low-income children more resources and opportunity to access educational services. As explained in the brief, the new ESA bill provides a \$1,000 per year Education Savings Account (ESA) to 2,000 low-income families of gifted children throughout the state. The ESA is available to all children – public and private – and can be used for a number of programs related to “gifted” education, i.e. tuition, textbooks, curriculum, online learning programs, Advanced Placement exams, or music or art lessons. A parent could choose to use the ESA at any education providers, such as a public, private, or charter school, licensed tutor, or a nonprofit organization approved by DPI.

[A new policy brief by WILL’s Dr. Will Flanders](#) makes the case for how Wisconsin is struggling to educate gifted and talented students and why an ESA may help the problem. Currently, no additional funding is provided to school districts for the education of gifted kids. Shockingly, 63% of districts do not employ a teacher dedicated to gifted education. In 13% of school districts, there are no Advanced Placement exams taken by students. These problems are amplified on low-income students, especially those in rural and urban districts. State law disincentivizes private schools in the choice program from identifying children as gifted and talented.

By further empowering families over their children’s education, an education savings account could unlock an entire new market of service providers for low-income children who are gifted and talented. “Far too often, education in the United States puts the needs of our best and brightest on the back burner. Under this bill, gifted students of all sectors will have access to supplemental services that previously could have been out of reach,” said WILL Research Director Dr. Will Flanders.

The full policy brief can be found [here](#).

WILL has been on the forefront in advocating for Education Savings Accounts, including authoring a policy report last summer on the subject, “[ESAs: A Primer for 21st Century Education Policy.](#)”