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COMMITTEES
ELECTIONS, Chairman
EDUCATION
FEDERAL RELATIONS

DISTRICT 16

Arizona House of Representatives Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear Senator Gray and Representative Kern,

The recent request of the Superintendent of Public Education asking the Legislature for an increase in the amount of funding for administering the ESA program has prompted me to take a closer look at the department's fiscal needs, challenges, and responsibilities. After a review of the numbers, I am unable to make recommendation due to a lack of detail regarding how the monies are utilized. I believe in order to make an educated and appropriate decision, an audit of the agency's financial situation is in order. Additionally, I believe that the situation is dire enough, seeing that we have many parents who have been disenfranchised by the situation, that this audit should be conducted as soon as possible.

Therefore, I would like to request that you add an agenda item for the upcoming JLAC meeting that calls for a special audit of the Arizona Department of Education's ESA program. In particular, I am interested in knowing the following: I would like to request that the Joint Legislative Audit Committee approve the Auditor General to conduct a special audit of the Department of Education's Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) Program. The special audit should include a review of:

- 1) ESA Program staff's caseload, including the number of active ESA Program accounts and new applications assigned to each staff member, and a workload analysis related to ESA Program staff's responsibilities for administering the ESA Program.
- 2) ESA Program revenues and expenditures for fiscal years 2018 and 2019 and estimated ESA Program revenues and expenditures for fiscal year 2020, including ESA Program administrative expenditure details.
- 3) The timeliness and quality of the ESA Program's phone customer service, including incoming and return call wait times.
- 4) ESA Program deadlines that impact applicant and account holders, including how those deadlines were established and if the deadlines are being met.
- 5) The Department's implementation status for recommendations from the Auditor General's 2016 performance audit of the ESA Program.
- 6) Other areas the Auditor General deems appropriate.

The special audit should also include information from other states, best practices, and recommendations, as appropriate.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly Townsend", written over a horizontal line.

Representative Kelly Townsend

cc: Lindsey Perry, Auditor General