

# WAITLIST FUNDED: Lawmakers Increase Funding for Special Needs ESA

JACKSON, MS, UNITED STATES, May 29, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, Mississippi lawmakers voted to increase funding for the state's Education Scholarship Account (ESA) program. House Bill 42, which provides state funding for K-12 schools, increases funding for ESAs from \$3 million to \$5 million, ensuring that more students can participate in the program.

Mississippi's ESA program offers parents of students with special needs the opportunity to choose the educational setting and services that best meet their child's needs. Funds can be used for allowable expenses like private school tuition, educational therapies, and tutoring. Families are overwhelmingly satisfied with the ESA program – according to a recent PEER report, 99% of parents reported overall satisfaction with the ESA program, 88% are satisfied with the disability and special education services provided by participating nonpublic schools, and 93% of parents reported improvement in their child's specific disability while participating in the program.

Nearly 350 students currently receive ESAs, but over 150 more students are on a waitlist to participate. The \$2 million increase in funding should be sufficient to eliminate the waitlist completely.

Empower Founder & CEO Grant Callen released the following statement:

"We are incredibly grateful to Mississippi lawmakers for increasing funding for the state's ESA program. This investment means that families who have been waiting—some for years—will finally have access to the educational resources their children need and deserve.

Parents of children with special needs face unique challenges, and this program has been a lifeline for so many families. Legislative leaders, including Lieutenant Governor Delbert



Hosemann and House Speaker Jason White, have publicly expressed support for eliminating the ESA waitlist, and today they delivered the promise of a brighter future for hundreds of students with special needs.

We applaud our leaders for prioritizing these students and taking meaningful action to ensure that opportunities are not limited by zip code or diagnosis.

Waitlisted families also deserve recognition for their relentless advocacy and fighting for their children's futures. Dozens of these families bravely shared their personal stories, and lawmakers listened. When parents get engaged in the political process, they can truly move mountains."

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