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Please contact:

Cascade Policy Institute
4850 SW Scholls Ferry Rd.
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

Phone: (503) 242-0900
Fax: (503) 242-3822

www.cascadepolicy.org
info@cascadepolicy.org

4850 SW Scholls Ferry Road
Suite 103
Portland, Oregon 97225

t: 503.242.0900
f: 503.242.3822
info@cascadepolicy.org
www.cascadepolicy.org

QuickPoint! – Proposed Oregon ESA Law Would Offer Students Choices While Breaking Even for Public Schools

By Steve Buckstein

[Senate Bill 437](#), under consideration this legislative session, would offer Oregon K-12 students the flexibility to choose the educational options that best meet their individual needs through a universal Education Savings Account program. ESAs deposit a percentage of the funds that the state otherwise would spend to educate a student in a public school into accounts associated with the student's family. The family may use the funds for approved educational expenses such as tuition, tutors, online courses, and other services and materials.

The fiscal impact of a universal ESA program for Oregon has been evaluated in [an analysis](#) released by Cascade Policy Institute. The [fiscal "break even" for state and local school districts](#) would be reached at an annual amount of \$6,000 for each participating student with disabilities and/or in a low-income household and \$4,500 for all other students. These dollar amounts are proposed in an amendment to the bill.

Of course, fiscal impact should not be the primary measure of this or any well-designed school choice program; but it is a political reality that a fiscal burden should not be imposed on the state at a time that all budgets are under pressure. An ESA program would offer Oregon families as much choice as possible in how their children take advantage of educational opportunities funded by the state. For more about the Educational Opportunity Act: The Power of Choice, visit schoolchoicefororegon.com.

Steve Buckstein is Senior Policy Analyst and Founder of Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.