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March 13, 2019

KS Representative Kristey Williams, Chair
K-12 Budget Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Representative Williams and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing the submittal of testimony on HB 2395: Amending the Kansas school equity and enhancement act and other statutes related to the education of elementary and secondary students, and making appropriations to the department of education.

As a proud resident of Kansas House District 20, which includes the Blue Valley and Shawnee Mission school districts, holder of a degree in secondary education, but most passionately, as the mom of a blended family of seven children with combined K-12 education experience of 90 years (70 in public schools, 20 in private schools), I write in vehement opposition to HB 2395. I write from the perspective of a Kansan whose children benefitted from "pre- Brownback experiment" public schools and in the stead of my neighbors with children currently in public schools, stakeholders whom are unable to submit testimony on their own behalf because they are mostly out of town on long scheduled Spring Break, if the Committee Chair was unaware.

The primary concern with HB 2395 is that it doesn't address the primary concern of the K-12 Budget Committee: funding our schools at a constitutionally required level and adjusting for inflation. It's time. Our schools, economy and property values are depending on this basic work getting done. Additional and equally important concerns are that it takes away \$213M in funding in section 36, eliminates the required funding goal of 93% for special education and sneaks in school vouchers, disguised as a program to address "bullying." A school voucher by any other name is a school voucher. I believe in public money for public schools. Period.

While other parents will speak to their children's current special education needs and the dire effects of this bill, I would like to share a success story. My son was diagnosed with apraxia of speech when he was 18 months old, having the receptive skills of a 3 year old, but expressive skills of a 5 month old. The diagnosis also came with ominous predictions of likely math and science learning deficits along with global muscle coordination issues. He entered kindergarten with virtually unintelligible speech and an IEP to address these issues which carried through to 8th grade. Not only did he swim in college, he graduated with an engineering degree from Dartmouth College in 2017. Thank you, public school special education!

As noted above, our family has a combined 90 years of K-12 experience: 62 in Kansas public schools, 8 in out of state public schools and 20 in private schools. We feel very strongly that public schools are the cornerstone of our democracy and an engine that drives our economy and property values. First, our tax dollars should never go to private schools in any format under any guise. Period. Second, the voucher program parading as a solution to bullying is riddled with illogicality. "Depending on the environment, some groups—such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) youth, youth with disabilities, and socially isolated youth—may be at an increased risk of being bullied." (<https://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/index.html>) A quick perusal of Kansas accredited private schools at <https://uapps.ksde.org>, reveals that the majority of schools are religiously affiliated. So, the students most at risk for bullying, LGBTQ and those with disabilities will be given taxpayer dollars to take to schools where LGBTQ is typically an "abomination" in the eyes of the school's religious affiliation and isn't required to provide special education services? It's not even a "what if" scenario as we have just seen St. Ann's Catholic School in Prairie Village deny a child admission based the parents' LGBTQ status. Not surprisingly, transferring your bullied child to such a school is NOT a recommended solution from DHSS: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/get-help-now/index.html>, let's not send our tax dollars there, either.

In summary, I urge the members of the K-12 Budget Committee to vote against HB 2395 in its current form, because it does not address the inflation requirement that could end litigation, eliminates \$213M in funding in section 36, removes the required funding goal of 93% for special education and dishonestly creates a voucher system to drain public school funds.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

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Owner, KC College Connect