

Proponent Testimony for SB 21
Written testimony only
Chloe Chaffin, private citizen
Submitted 1/18/23

Hello, Chairwoman Tyson and members of the committee. I thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony and I ask that you please vote in favor of passing SB 21 this session.

I am sure you have already heard many times in this hearing what it would mean to Kansas students and families to be relieved of some of the financial burdens of back-to-school time. You have probably heard how it will make shopping more equitable for central Kansas families who cannot hop the board to Missouri for their shopping the way Kansas City area families can. You have heard how it will keep those Kansas City area sales in Kansas, full stop.

All of these points are extremely wise, but I wish to add the inverse perspective, not as a student trying to stretch my budget, though I am, but as a future educator who has felt a lot of insecurity in my career choice recently.

It's no secret that many teachers all over the nation are routinely dipping into their own pockets to pay for classroom supplies. It is not that they are wealthy people, already receiving wages far below other professionals with equivalent degrees, but it is that they feel they have no other choice if they want full participation from their students. If they don't bankroll these supplies, the students whom they adore may not be getting what they need from the school's budget. These budgets haven't gone as far since the rise of pandemic-related inflation and new school nursing and janitorial needs, it's plain to see. Though the tax on these purchases may seem small, the impact adds up when these teachers are buying entire classroom sets of materials at back-to-school time. Passing the tax holiday in SB 21 is just one small way to recognize and repay their generosity.

As previously mentioned, I have been increasingly nervous about my decision to major in education over the past year or two. I am still a preservice teacher in my junior year at Washburn University and though I love the field of education, seeing the news about massive teacher shortages, record-low approval of the profession, inflated class sizes, and rampant burnout among even the most veteran teachers makes me question if I am really going to be able to serve in the ways that I will be needed. I look at the states around us and I see mixed responses to these challenges. Last year I saw how Oklahoma City University cut its early childhood and elementary education programs altogether because this tense climate disincentivizes enrollment. At the same time, I saw that Michigan passed a bill to start paying student teachers. This feels like a really pivotal moment for my classmates and me who are still waiting on the sidelines, curious to see what the legislator will do with our fates here and now. If Kansas is not an education-friendly environment, will future teachers go out of state for schooling?

I hope that after this hearing we can breathe a sigh of relief. I hope we can look forward to stocking and decorating our classrooms without worrying about what it will do to our bank accounts during our first year out of college and out of our part-time student jobs.

My dad works for a bank. I cannot ever imagine him needing to bring his own printer paper and staples to the office. My mom is a library clerk at an elementary school in Olathe. She routinely purchases her own supplies for students. Teachers shouldn't need to pay to get paid. Let us together ease that burden.

I don't expect a magic cure, but to improve the workplace satisfaction and retention of Kansas educators, I would urge you all to pass SB 21 and give these generous teachers a little extra breathing room. Thank you for your consideration.