

Chairwoman Tyson, Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Laporte and I'm here to testify in opposition to SB509 on behalf of the homeschool communities I represent. I am on the Board of Directors for Midwest Parent Educators which is a large regional homeschool group serving the Kansas City metro area and surrounding counties. I am also the President of the KS state homeschooling association, CHECK, which has representatives from homeschool groups across our state including areas such as Colby, Salina, Hutchinson, Manhattan, Lawrence and Wichita.

Thank you for your efforts to relieve tax burdens for all Kansans, for your care for families regarding educational expenses, and for your consideration of the thoughts and concerns of KS homeschoolers.

No thank you to tax credits for homeschool families.

Anytime government money is involved, including diverted tax dollars, government regulations follow, whether or not they are included in the language or intent of the original legislation.

In both Oklahoma and West Virginia, inclusion of homeschoolers in government-funded school choice resulted in proposals for new legislation to regulate all homeschoolers, not just those who chose to take the funding. The philosophy behind seeking to regulate all homeschoolers is that the state has incentivized homeschooling by including it in government-funded school choice programs.

In Arizona, 17 bills seek to add wide-ranging regulations to their government funded school choice program. It is unclear at this point how many will directly impact homeschooling, but these bills have the stated goal to make most aspects of the program mirror that of the public schools. What the government funds, it controls.

Homeschoolers have been thriving in KS for 40 years without government funding. Homeschooling has increased in KS without government funding. In fact, Kansas is one of the top 5 states with the highest growth in homeschooling. The growing homeschool community is best positioned to help families navigate financial challenges for educational expenses.

In the short term, offering government money may seem like a good solution -- especially in a tough economy. But in the long term, including homeschoolers in this legislation opens the door to erosion of homeschool freedom for all.

John Adams said, "Liberty, once lost, is lost forever." No amount of money is worth the loss of educational freedom. John Adams also said "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." For the sake of all homeschoolers, now and in the future, we are being vigilant. Please remove us from this legislation.