

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. My name is John Fuchs. I am a homeschooling father from Overland Park and partner at the Seigfreid Bingham law firm in Kansas City. I grew up homeschooling in North Central Kansas, near Concordia, where I played community baseball, soccer, basketball, and Salvation Army Football in 5th and 6th grade.

Unfortunately, those community-based programs ended and I had to choose between continuing to homeschool and athletics if I stayed in Concordia. So, when I was about eleven years old, I had numerous conversations with my family about whether I should enroll in public school to participate in athletic activities or continue homeschooling. Ultimately, we decided to move away from rural Kansas, primarily to allow my siblings and I to pursue additional athletic opportunities while continuing to homeschool.

After completing high school through homeschooling, I went on to play Division II football at Southwest Baptist University. I graduated with honors in three years from Southwest Baptist, and proceeded to the University of Virginia School of Law.

I know that I would not have had the same opportunities that have shaped my life if I had remained in Concordia. I do not want other students in Kansas to face that same choice.

In Kansas, I believe local decisions on this issue are appropriate because the choices, challenges, and opportunities are very different for students and schools where I live now in Johnson County compared to more rural districts, like Concordia's. This bill would allow decisions to be made by each school board in light of their specific circumstances.

I also believe that the current rules prohibiting all districts from allowing non-traditional or homeschooled students from participating in school activities creates a particular disadvantage for rural districts and their students compared to the opportunities available to students in more urban areas. If there had been a district in Kansas that would have allowed me to play football while continuing to homeschool that would have made that district very appealing to my family.

Ultimately, it is my hope that my son and daughter will not have to make the same choices that I had to make at twelve years old. I hope that they will have many opportunities to participate in athletics, band, and other activities, regardless of the venue and method of their academic training.