

February 12, 2019

Written Testimony: In Opposition to House Bill 2150

K-12 Budget Committee

Submitted by Katherine Kersenbrock-Ostmeyer, Children and Youth Action Network for the Kansas Council for Exceptional Children and Director Special Education Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center

Honorable Chair Williams and Committee Members,

As the Kansas CAN representative --- (Children and Youth Action Network for the Kansas Council for Exceptional Children), a local Director of Special Education, a parent of an adult child with Tourette Syndrome, and a small business owner: I am providing opposition to House Bill 2150.

We are opposed and concerned about the effect of voucher/scholarship legislation for our children and youth. Noted below are several specific concerns associated with this legislation.

- 1) Working with 3 private schools in our Northwest Kansas Region I can attest to the fact that bully behavior is not isolated to public schools. Furthermore, I can find no research that indicates bullying is less likely in private school settings than in the public school environment.
- 2) Within the legislation proposed nothing is designated to solve bullying issues in either public or private schools.
- 3) As both a parent of a child with a disability and a special educator I can share that bullying occurs more frequently among our children and youth with disabilities. It appears inconsistent that these students will in many instances not be afforded opportunities to change schools and utilize a voucher/scholarship due to the fact that private schools are not required to accept **all** students. Furthermore, Public accountability is lacking for private schools, whereas local education agencies are held accountable by federal and state laws and regulations. Public schools must adhere to requirements for highly qualified staff, but private schools typically are not held to these requirements. Private schools are not obligated to participate in the regular assessments toward measuring student achievement, nor are they even bound to the requirement of an individualized education program (IEP) if they do accept a student with disabilities.
- 4) As a local small business owner I am extremely frustrated that at both the federal and state level we even consider using public money for private schools. Nationally less than 9% (and recent research indicates less than 6%) of students attend private schools. The monies diverted out of public education for private schools impacts the public school program. These deficits are made up in local

taxes or reduced service for the 91% or more attending public schools.

5) And, finally and perhaps most importantly---the simple fact is that public education funds should fund public education and not private education. I respect the rights that parents can choose to send their children to a private school or home school but the public, as a whole should not pay for it.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to provide written testimony on this important topic.

Additional information concerning vouchers and charter programs related to Children with Disabilities can be found at:

<https://www.cec.sped.org/Policy-and-Advocacy/CEC-Professional-Policies>