

House K 12 Budget Committee

House Bill 2119: The Student Empowerment Act

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Proponent Testimony

February 8, 2021

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Heidy Ramirez and I am a mother of six children who have or are currently attending Catholic schools in Dodge City, Kansas. Thank you for this opportunity to share my story and my support for Educational Savings Accounts and how this would greatly ease the difficulty of accessing educational opportunities for my children.

Placing my children in a Catholic school that mirrors our family faith and cultural values has been a key goal for my husband Carlos and myself.

We find that our children thrive and develop best in the small, faith-based environment of our Catholic community and schools it supports.

Affording this best fit for our children has been very difficult for our family and we have faced many challenges, especially as our employment has not always been predictable due to the shifts in the economy.

Some of our children have qualified for Low Income Tax Credit Scholarships. But our fluctuating income has led to having some of our children qualify while others do not. This is so hard on the children because they cannot be certain if they will be able to stay in school with their teachers and friends.

An Educational Saving Account would allow us to plan ahead and establish the stability our children need so much for the best learning environment and in thinking of their futures. We would be deeply grateful for this help from the people of Kansas.

A key element of Catholic education is teaching children to give back and build up their communities. Our oldest daughter owns her own small business and our second is planning on a career in Social Work so she can help others in her home town, I believe that her Catholic Faith has had a deep impact on their desire to help others and I know that the return on the investment through ESAs will be great for rural Kansas.

It is very important to us to and our kids to complete their education in their Catholic School. We still have a four year old that will soon begin Kindergarten and we are hoping he can attend the same Catholic school our first kid attended 15 years ago. Catholic education reflects our family life and our Kindergartener will graduate in 2031. That will be 26 years of our family challenging ourselves to keep them there. If this bill passes it will be very helpful for my family, and will bring stability for our kids and family. Thank you for this opportunity.