

Cody Christline
Lawrence, KS
Senate District #19

Dear Honorable Chairman Tyson, Vice-Chair Peck, Ranking Minority Holland, and Committee Members:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill SB128, the Ad Astra Opportunity Tax Credit. My wife and I are parents of 5 children ranging in ages from 4-14. Having ourselves been educated in public schools, our intention for our children was that they would attend public schools as well. Over the course of the last several years, our faith in the public school system has drastically deteriorated. We witnessed what was once a capable group of competent, caring teachers being subjected to teach in unreasonable environments as a result of poor decision making at the district level. Among others things, the result of these decisions was forcing teachers to teach virtually and using a hybrid model during the COVID pandemic, an ongoing unrealistic teacher to student ratio in some schools while other schools are underutilized, and the implementation of multi-grade classrooms in some, but not all schools across the district. The effects of the pandemic's prolonged disruption of our schools (as decided upon by the school board and at the district level) coupled with continued poor decision making at the district level when facing school budget deficits, has resulted in problems in the classroom academically and behaviorally. Academically, a majority of students are behind resulting in a disproportionate amount of resources being funneled to help them catch up and keep up. Behaviorally, children forgot what classroom expectations were during the pandemic. Teachers spend too much time attempting to discipline students rather than teaching. Unfortunately, in many instances, parents aren't supporting teachers' efforts by reinforcing good behavior at home.

In addition, the Lawrence district has intensely pursued an agenda of being equitable and inclusive. While being equitable and inclusive are values we should all be teaching and living out, the school district has become so laser focused on these ideas that the goal of educating children has been lost. The educational experience of our own children, who are expected to behave and have great academic potential, has been sacrificed in the public schools in the name of equity and inclusion. Moreover, the district has overstepped their authority by introducing liberal social ideas to our very young children that are inappropriate to discuss in the classroom. As parents, these conversations should be happening at home and have no place in our schools.

Having moved our children to private schools this fall, the change is glaring. They are exceeding our expectations academically and being held to the behavioral standards that should be expected of any student. The cost of tuition for our family is great, but we have adjusted our budget in order to ensure that our children are in a school where they can reach their full potential. Unfortunately, many families do not have this option. SB 128 would allow families like ours to potentially consider other educational options that may not be possible for them without the financial support from this bill. I kindly ask for your support of SB 128.

Thank you,
Cody Christline
Lawrence, KS