

From: Rachel Whitaker, Parent of two students currently attending the Shawnee Mission School District

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Position: Opponent

HB2550 — Establishing the student empowerment act to provide education savings accounts for certain students to use to attend participating private schools.

HB2553 — Allowing K-12 students to transfer to and attend school in any school district in the state.

Written testimony only.

Dear members of the Committee,

I am writing to state my opposition to the proposed bills listed above. As a parent of two students currently attending school within the Shawnee Mission School District, I believe strongly that the public school system needs to remain a high priority within the state of Kansas. We chose to work and raise our family in Kansas, knowing that it provided a strong public school experience. Our students attend school with children from a variety of racial and economic backgrounds. They learn to work together. This is preparing them for “real life” experiences they will have after graduation. My children have flourished in the public school system. They are taught by caring, passionate, and highly knowledgeable teachers. I worry that tax dollars being diverted from the public schools will decrease the quality of educational opportunities available in our area. I have a student who utilizes the gifted program. She has peers in the program from both public and private schools. I am concerned that programs such as those for gifted students will not be maintained if funding is diverted. Public schools provide equal opportunity for learning for all students, no matter their background or knowledge level. We need to maintain a strong public system for the betterment of our society.

Having students continue to attend the district closest to their homes provides a sense of community and belonging. We are able to provide bussing transportation efficiently to the closest schools and neighborhoods.

Please continue to support our public schools systems. It benefits us all.

Thank you,
Rachel Whitaker