

Chairwoman Williams and members of the K-12 Education Budget committee, my name is Brittany Jones. I am an attorney and the Director of Policy and Engagement for Kansas Family Voice, formerly Family Policy Alliance of Kansas.

Kansas Family Voice believes that Kansas should be a place where life is cherished, religious freedom, & families thrive. We believe families thrive when they have freedom to choose how and where they educate their children. It is for these reasons that we urge your support of HB 2553.

HB 2553 provides more educational flexibility for Kansas families. In an ever-changing educational environment, parents need every tool available to place their children in a learning environment that fits their child's individual needs. Open enrollment is a simple way to empower parents to choose.

School choice is based on one simple idea that parents should have the ability to send their kids to any school that will help their children thrive. It is a child and family centric model. It is not about pitting one type of schooling against another but simply empowering families to make the best choice for them. It further helps public schools be more competitive with each other.

There are currently several states with open enrollment programs similar HB 2553. These states are Colorado, South Dakota, Idaho, Iowa, Michigan, Florida, Nebraska, Arizona, Utah, and Delaware.<sup>1</sup> A 2017 study found that 37% of districts students in the Phoenix area participate in open enrollment.<sup>2</sup> In Colorado, research found that over 145,000 students – 16% of the public-school population – attend a public school that is not based on their residency.<sup>3</sup>

A major surprise to many is the effect that open enrollment has had on rural areas. School choice is often considered an urban and suburban phenomenon, but many of the biggest users of inter-district choice, by

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<sup>1</sup> <https://schoolchoiceweek.com/public-school-transfer/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://azcharters.org/2017/11/02/are-district-attendance-zones-obsolete/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://readycolo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ODODfinal.pdf>

percentage of students utilizing choice programs, are in rural communities.<sup>4</sup>

Open enrollment is a piece of what it would mean to give families more choice in Kansas. Families are clearly limited by things like geography, transportation, and extra-curricular activities. Further, students often want to go to school in the community where they have friends. This bill does not attempt to address or dissuade families from making decisions based on this thing, but it does provide families with other options and begin to give them some control.

Open enrollment is a piece of what we need to do in Kansas to improve our student outcomes and put parents in the driver seat of their kid's education.

I ask that you pass HB 2553 favorably.

Thank you!

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<sup>4</sup> <https://readycolo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ODODfinal.pdf>