

House K-12 Budget Committee

Written testimony in support of HB 2218: Establishing the sunflower education equity act.

Submitted: February 1, 2023

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Madam Chair and members of the House K-12 Budget Committee:

My name is Dr. Tad Nuce, and I serve as the Head of School at Berean Academy in Elbing, Kansas. On behalf of our school community, I wish to offer testimony in support of HB 2218. As the leader of a Christian school, I constantly meet families who would love to send their children to Berean Academy, but realistically, will never be able to afford the cost despite relatively low tuition rates (secondary tuition is \$7700 this year). For these low-income families, they have no choice but to choose an area public school, which may or may not meet the academic, emotional, and spiritual needs of their children. Even for middle class families, the cost of enrolling three or four children in a private school is beyond their ability to pay. Currently, true educational choice in Kansas is only available to more affluent families.

I am a proud Kansan whose blue-collar working parents moved often out of economic necessity, forcing me to switch schools 11 times before I graduated from high school. I attended a few private Christian schools when finances allowed, but more often than not, was forced to attend public schools, where I struggled both academically and emotionally. My parents, who recognized I was floundering in a Wichita public school, made tremendous sacrifices to send me to a very small, private school for my final three years of high school. I transitioned from a student contemplating suicide to a young man full of hope and enthusiasm about the future. I attribute this radical change in my life to Christian education.

The Berean families in the Wichita, Newton, Whitewater, and Elbing areas pay a portion of their taxes towards the public school system, and only the public school system. This bill would support true educational freedom, providing parental choice that considers the unique learning needs of each student and the values of their parents. HB 2218 would finally provide a means to make education access equitable because it would give parents the financial freedom to direct the education of their children while providing accountability. As of right now, tax payers in Kansas who send their children to private schools must pay twice for their children's education, which seems very unfair, and limits who can actually attend.

As a conservative, I believe that competition in the business world leads to better products and services for the average consumer. Funding education through a system where dollars follow the student will encourage better educational outcomes for all students - public and private. With the Sunflower Education Equality Act, this opportunity would become a reality. Under the current system (the one I grew up with), only one brand of education is provided to low or middle-income families. The current method only supports the system, rather than the student. Even though there are a variety of other schools in Kansas that are accredited, only public schools receive funding, and thus are the default choice of lower income families like the one I grew up in.

When only one type of school receives all the funding that comes from taxes, this system is favored above all other choices. We are asking for you to support students, not systems. Please provide your support for the Sunflower Education Equality Act, so that true and equitable educational choice for

families can become a reality. Many states have already experienced the benefits of a school choice program - Kansas should be a leader in this movement, not playing catch up.

We are counting on your endorsement for HB 2218, also known as the Sunflower Education Equity Act. If you would like to speak with me personally, please feel free to call at 316-799-2211 or email me at [tnuce@bawarriors.com](mailto:tnuce@bawarriors.com).

Respectfully,

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