



Shannon Pahls
yes. every kid.
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Representative Kristey Williams, Chair
House Committee on K-12 Education Budget
Kansas House of Representatives
SW 8th & SW Van Buren St.
Topeka, KS 66612

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Chairwoman Williams and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Shannon Pahls, and I represent yes. every kid. We are a nonprofit whose purpose is to enable every family to customize an education that best matches their child's individual talents, values, and priorities. We support H.B. 2218, which establishes the Sunflower Education Equity Act.

Each child is unique, and no one understands their individual needs better than their family. The typical one-size-fits-all education system does not account for this. That is why we support this legislation, which will empower Kansas families to make the best decision for their child's education.

Programs like this are gaining popularity throughout the country. According to a recent poll conducted by YouGov, Americans support ESAs by more than a four-to-one margin. That is bipartisan, with majorities of both Democrats and Republicans supportive of ESAs. Support is even higher among teachers and parents with 59 percent of teachers and 60 percent of parents supportive of ESA programs. These findings show that the public, including those who spend the most time with children like teachers and parents, want a personalized approach to education.



Research has also shown that states with robust school choice policies have seen increased performance in the public school system.

Researchers from Northwestern, UC Davis, and Emory University recently released a study looking at Florida's education freedom policies and how they impact public school students. They discovered that as the scholarship program scaled up, academic and behavioral outcomes improved for students attending traditional public schools. The professors concluded, "our findings from this long-lasting early program show that in Florida, at least, it seems that a rising tide of competition has lifted many boats."

There is also evidence that the expansion of education options can help improve rural school districts.

For example, Arizona has consistently ranked among the top states for education freedom for the past two decades. From 2007 to 2019, Arizona rural students' fourth and eighth grade reading and math scores on the National Assessment for Educational Progress increased by a combined 21 points, while scores in rural schools nationally decreased by two points. On the most recent NAEP, post-pandemic, Arizona's rural students were still up a combined nine points while rural students nationally dropped 17 points from 2007.

ESAs can also be a wise investment for state and public schools. Arizona passed the nation's first universal ESA last year. A recent report from Common Sense Institute Arizona estimates that due to the growth of the program, the state will save \$274 million per year.

When people are allowed to decide what's best for their child, creating an environment where schools are incentivized to innovate, everyone benefits.

H.B. 2218 will remove barriers and empower Kansas families to make decisions that best fit the individual needs of their children. Every child is different and deserves an educational experience that works best for them regardless of their income or background. For these reasons, we respectfully ask for your favorable support of this legislation.

Thank you for your time.

Shannon Pahls
Government Affairs Director
yes. every kid.