

## Proponent Testimony of SB75 For the Senate Education Committee

2/28/2025 Bart Kooiman - US citizen, Kansas resident and small business owner

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 75.

Thank you for your service to this great state.

My name is Bart Kooiman. My family and I have made Kansas home for over 20 years. We love it here. My wife and I are parents to 2 high schoolers. We are pleased with their development into young men that are respectful, hardworking, humble, kind and most importantly their walk as Christ followers. However, we also wish one would clean his room and the other to take out the trash without being told.

44 years ago, my mother was the 1<sup>st</sup> kindergarten teacher of Baldwin Christian School in Baldwin, Wisconsin. That class consisted of 6 kids, one of those kids believes, to this day, that his ears are somewhat deformed from this teachers' choice of punishment by pulling his ear when he was misbehaving. You're right, that student was me.

For the next 8 years I attended this small country Christian school.

Then my mother took a job as a teacher at Phoenix Christian School in Phoenix Arizona. It was a big adjustment for my little sister, Jill and I. My new school, Westwood H.S. had over 800 in the sophomore class alone. I remember to this day when the guidance counselor told me I would be lucky to see any of my football teammates during the school day. I was 15, and I panicked. What could we do? Mom was making \$21,000 a year as an elementary teacher. Fortunately, my grandparents stepped in and paid for me to be enrolled in Valley Christian school in Mesa Arizona.

In fact, just 3 years ago, when our school was raising funds to finish construction on four classrooms, my mother called me up and said that my grandparents had left an inheritance, and it was time to put it to good use and help complete the project.

Why do I share this story?

I've been blessed. I've heard arguments against school choice. My favorite one is: only "rich kids" go to private school. OK, why? Because they can afford it? Let's give the poor a choice.

2/3rds of Kansas kids are not at reading level. 2/3rds  
of Kansas kids are not at math level Absenteeism is at  
epidemic levels.

Many of these kids are confused and unsure where to even aim.

This does not sound like excellence, it doesn't even sound like mediocrity.

Government-run schools and our education system is broken.

Today, 33 states have some sort of school choice option. Kansas does not. Kansas is not the leader. That's ok, we can start now.

In Kansas, our voice of "choice" is upside down in the worst ways. For example, in 2023, eleven thousand people came to Kansas so they could "choose" to end their pregnancy because their states had more abortion restrictions. That means 77% of abortions in 2023 were performed for out-of-state residents. What does that say about the priorities of our state? Is that what you want our state to be known for? In Kansas, parents can freely choose to end the life of their unborn child, but they cannot choose which school their child attends. (Data from Topeka Capitol Journal 12/13/24)

If you are against school choice, I ask and pray that you have a change of heart.

If you're for school choice...be encouraged, keep working and praying that Kansas will catch up.

**Let's have taxpayer money follow the kids, not the institutions.** We don't say food stamps can only be used at Dillon's. They can be used at Walmart, Aldi....we give choices.

In Kansas, our government makes it easier for parents to end the life of their unborn child, than to choose the school their child attends.

Thank you.

Bart Kooiman