
Proponent Testimony of SB75

For the Senate Education Committee

1/28/2025

Dr. Kimberlee Gill

Superintendent of Maranatha Christian Academy,
Accreditation Commissioner for the Association of Christian Schools International,
Board Member of the Great Plains Alliance of Christian Schools

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 75 on behalf of providing educational opportunities to Kansan children through a tax deduction.

I began my educational career in 1989 at Maranatha Christian Academy as an English and Speech and Drama teacher. My father was furious because I had four other offers from public schools, but I chose to take the job at \$12K a year because as I interviewed, I wanted to be mentored in what it was like to teach the whole child: physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually. I was a product of public education, and with my research and observations in getting a first job, I found Maranatha. The entire atmosphere was different than anything I had ever seen.

I had never seen students doing so well academically or so strong spiritually. I wanted to be a part. The plan was to serve and to learn how to be the best teacher I could be for only a couple years. Then, I would go make money! Though the Lord had me move on from Maranatha, I have served in private Christian education now for 36 years, only to return to my home school of Maranatha as superintendent this past April. In addition, my expertise in accreditation as an accreditation commissioner for the Association of Christian Schools International, as well as my deep research over educational freedom (I have a 275-page dissertation reviewing all policies across the nation) have led me to be on several boards, including the Great Plains Association of Christian Schools, the Colorado Association of Private Schools, and most recently and as of yet unpublished, the Association of Christian Schools International National Advisory Board for Policy and Advocacy.

Today, I am testifying without the financial motivation of a paid lobbyist. The motivation is pure: I want to see every child have the opportunity for the best education available to them.

This bill would allow Kansans more access to schools like mine, many others represented in this room today, which demonstrate significantly higher test scores, a highly individualized education, spiritual nurturing, and parent empowerment. As a movement, we believe that parents—not the state—are the primary educator. Who knows the needs of the child best? The deep sacrifices I have seen over the years, of teachers and of parents, would astound you. Single moms working three jobs, teachers sacrificing retirement and vacations, and families volunteering for hours to help keep tuition affordable. The opponents of this bill—who have never met our families—will tell you that state programs like SB 75 will take money from their school and give it to the rich. That statement is a complete lie. My retirement account also will testify to that. For me, the sacrifice on

behalf of the thousands of students that I have had the privilege to serve has been worth it. I know that those who join me in the room will agree.

Opponents of this bill state that your passing will hurt the public-school sector. That, too, is untrue. We have as a country really implemented educational freedom since inception, but with guiding laws beginning in 1991 in Wisconsin. It is a bi-partisan issue, with educational freedom being realized in many blue states—AND Washington, D.C. Have any schools closed? NO. Have any teachers lost their jobs? NO. Does all the data show that as school options increase that test scores increase? YES. Sounds like Capitalism, doesn't it.

Instead, somehow our country, got confused in that providing education should look more like the model of a Communist state: Government chooses your school for you. Thank you for handing over your children. But hey, if you're rich, do what you want. As a matter of fact, during my tenure in Colorado, the state teacher's union passed a resolution: "...capitalism inherently exploits children, public schools, land, labor, and resources." Colorado is just one state over.

Finally, I would encourage you, especially for the eastern part of the state, to review the laws that I helped to pass in Missouri. Without the passing of broader choice as in SB 75, it is difficult for administrators like me—who want to empower parents—not to encourage them to just hop over the state line to access funding for their children. Missouri has now allocated \$75 million dollars to support not only those in poverty, but special needs children, foster children, and military families to do what is best for their children through empowerment scholarships.

Likewise, Oklahoma has expanded educational freedom opportunities to serve homeschool families and special education families as well. I know you will also be hearing testimony about the states now moving to universal or nearly universal educational freedom.

I believe Kansas can attract families to our state, increasing the tax revenue base, if we would just acknowledge PARENTS should have the autonomy and supported ability to choose their child's education.