

SB 75 Opposition Testimony

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Megan Langford, langford.megan@gmail.com

Parent in Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for reading my testimony and listening to the concerns of Kansans. I am writing to voice my opposition to SB 75.

I grew up in public schools, and my kids are growing up in public schools. Our public schools not only educate our kids, they prepare them for being integral members of society. A strong public education system provides benefits to the entire society, not just the individual students. Diverting public tax dollars to those who choose to homeschool or send their kids to private school undermines the state's ability to fund our public schools, potentially leaving an underfunded public school system.

Public dollars need to stay in public schools. Public schools accept and educate ALL students. They cannot pick and choose which students to accept. Private schools can choose to admit only the best and brightest students, leaving other children behind. Vouchers like this tax credit program do not provide real choice. Instead of providing tax credits to Kansans choosing not to send their kids to public school, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education, which is currently underfunded by \$173 million.

Please vote no on SB 75. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Megan Langford

SB 75 Opponent Testimony

Madame Chair, members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Laporte and I am a homeschool leader in Kansas, both in my area of Kansas City and across the state. I am here to testify in opposition to SB 75. First, I will repeat what we have asked in the previous iterations of this type of legislation: Please remove homeschoolers from this legislation. If we receive the same “No” answer we have received before, we then urge you to amend subsection (c) to make the tax credit non-refundable for homeschoolers. A non-refundable tax credit will allow families to keep their own money without receiving any extra government funding.

Although I share the same value of educational freedom as proponents of this legislation, I disagree strongly with the assumption that government funding will lead to more educational freedom. Homeschoolers in Kansas already have educational freedom. For forty years, homeschool families at all income levels have educated their children successfully without any government funding. Homeschool students score above average on achievement tests regardless of their family’s household income.

Government funding will not lead to more educational freedom.

You may be thinking that there is a simple solution, which is, “Don’t take the money.” Unfortunately, it’s not that simple. Government funding leads to regulation for all, and government subsidies lead to higher prices for all. While it is true that families who take the funding do exchange their freedom for additional regulations, families who do not take the funding do not make that agreement. This bill will have a negative impact on all homeschoolers even if they don’t use this refundable tax credit.

Government funding leads to regulation for all.

In one example, Grove City College did not take any direct federal funding. A few students chose to use their federal financial aid funding to attend the college. The federal government said that Grove City College must come under federal regulation because of this indirect funding. After the Supreme Court ruled on this case, Congress passed legislation mandating that if an institution received any federal funding, even indirectly, the entire institution was subject to federal regulations. As a consequence, every student at Grove City also came under federal regulation, even though most students did not use any government funding.

In the U.S., K-12 universal choice programs like this legislation have passed recently in a few states, so we don’t have much of a history yet. But the disturbing trend of increased regulation attempts on all homeschoolers has already risen across West Virginia, New Hampshire and Oklahoma. Some may argue that these bills could have been introduced regardless, but that is

not the experience of homeschool leaders in those states, who confirm the increase in regulatory legislation once school choice legislation was passed.

In countries with a longer history of school choice, such as Canada, Sweden, Australia and South Africa, educational freedom has been all but erased. School choice started with virtually no regulations, but now private schools receiving tax funding must teach a government approved curriculum and participate in government standardized testing.

In Alberta, Canada, government funding for homeschoolers was offered the first year with the assurance that if you didn't take the money, you wouldn't be held to the same standards as those taking the money. The very next year, that exemption ended, and all homeschoolers were required to either take the money, or their homeschool diplomas would no longer be valid.

In Sweden school choice legislation was eventually followed by education reform legislation that prohibited Bible reading and prayer in government funded private schools and banned homeschooling altogether.

Government subsidies raise prices for all.

Infusion of government funding into any private sector causes price to rise. College tuition is a relevant example. The Center for College Affordability and Productivity's report showed that increased government aid resulted directly in increased tuition costs (Gillen, 2009).

In states with universal school choice programs such as Arizona, Florida, Nebraska, Iowa, and Oklahoma, tuition prices have increased by 25% on average, far above inflation. This puts a financial burden on families who don't accept the government subsidy, in addition to those dependent on the funding to make private education affordable for the first time. When regulations come, schools will find it very difficult to stop taking government funding, because they will have built their budget on that "free money." Educational freedom and choice have not increased, but decreased.

In Florida, St. Paul Catholic School announced an increase in tuition of \$4000-\$5000 per student. "If we don't take full advantage of this dramatically expanded funding source, we will be leaving money on the table and it will revert back to the state," Monsignor Robert Gibbons stated. To get there, he said, "every family in the school will need to apply for the voucher."

In its YouTube video, which no longer is available to the public, St. Paul officials stressed that parents would not pay more per student unless they forgo a voucher. At the same time, though, Gibbons said it was important that families pay a portion of the cost "so we don't just become another public school where the government is funding the education."

Based on these and other historical realities, we have ample reason to be concerned that this legislation will not protect against future regulations or government-induced price hikes.

Increased regulation and prices will amount to less educational freedom for all. Our request for the legislation to be non-refundable for homeschoolers would be much less costly for taxpayers and would be much less risky for homeschoolers.

Thank you for your consideration, and we appreciate your support for homeschool families in Kansas.

Dear Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB75, which redirects public education funding to private and non-credentialed organizations. This bill weakens our public schools, undermines professional educators, and subsidizes private choices at the expense of the public good.

Voucher programs in other states have shown the harmful consequences of diverting public funds:

- **Weakened Public Schools:** As public dollars are siphoned away, public schools face budget cuts, leading to larger class sizes, fewer resources, and reduced programming—disproportionately affecting students in rural and low-income areas. If schools in small, rural regions have to close down, people will move away, speeding up the already growing problem of depopulation in rural Kansas.
- **Limited Accountability:** Non-credentialed organizations and private schools often lack the same transparency and accountability standards required of public schools, leaving families with fewer protections and guarantees of quality education.
- **Worsened Inequity:** These programs primarily benefit wealthier families, as vouchers often fail to cover the full cost of private tuition, leaving lower-income families without access while public schools lose funding.

Public funds should stay in public schools, where they serve all students equitably, not just a select few. Including non-credentialed organizations further devalues the role of highly trained teachers, undermining the quality and professionalism essential to education.

I urge you to vote against SB75 and protect Kansas public schools and the students and communities they serve.

Sincerely,

Marisa Larson

Manhattan, KS

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Michele Latta

Parent in Shawnee Mission school district, private citizen, etc.

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75.

Establishing school vouchers as refundable tax credits poses several challenges and is harmful to public education.

First, school vouchers divert funds from public schools which are essential for maintaining and improving the quality of education for all students. Redirecting these funds will harm the award-winning school districts in this state and, more specifically, the Shawnee Mission school district where my kids attend school. And taking away resources from these schools will cause families to want to move elsewhere which will cause home values to decrease.

Second, refundable tax credits for school vouchers benefit families who can already afford private education which widens the gap between affluent and low-income families. This can lead to increased inequalities by race and income as wealthier families are more likely to take advantage of these credits leaving disadvantaged students in under-resourced public schools. I sent my kids to a private school when they were younger. That was my decision knowing that I was already paying taxes for the public schools.

Third, many private schools do not have the necessary resources or expertise to adequately support students with special needs. My child has special needs and it was not until I sent him to public schools that his educational needs were finally met. Public schools are mandated to provide services and accommodations under federal law. It's only been recently that special education has been funded properly in the state of Kansas. Diverting funds to private schools through vouchers will undermine the support available for special needs students in public schools.

Finally, research has shown that school vouchers do not consistently lead to improved academic performance for students. Public funds should be invested in evidence-based strategies that have a proven track record of enhancing educational outcomes.

In closing, I am asking you to vote no on bill SB 75.

Dear Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB75, which redirects public education funding to private and non-credentialed organizations. This bill weakens our public schools, undermines professional educators, and subsidizes private choices at the expense of the public good.

Voucher programs in other states have shown the harmful consequences of diverting public funds:

Weakened Public Schools: As public dollars are siphoned away, public schools face budget cuts, leading to larger class sizes, fewer resources, and reduced programming—disproportionately affecting students in rural and low-income areas.

Limited Accountability: Non-credentialed organizations and private schools often lack the same transparency and accountability standards required of public schools, leaving families with fewer protections and guarantees of quality education.

Worsened Inequity: These programs primarily benefit wealthier families, as vouchers often fail to cover the full cost of private tuition, leaving lower-income families without access while public schools lose funding.

Public funds should stay in public schools, where they serve all students equitably, not just a select few. Including non-credentialed organizations further devalues the role of highly trained teachers, undermining the quality and professionalism essential to education.

I urge you to vote against SB75 and protect Kansas public schools and the students and communities they serve.

V/r,

Stefano LeGrande

Lenexa, KS

SB 75 Opposition Testimony

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Jacqueline Lightcap, jacquelightcap@gmail.com

Parent and school board member in USD 437 Auburn-Washburn

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to SB 75. Although called an “education opportunity tax credit,” make no mistake, this bill is a voucher bill that will cause harm to Kansas public schools and shortchange the education of our youngest Kansans.

Here are a few reasons why vouchers are bad for Kansas’s public schools.

- **Vouchers hurt student achievement.** In states that have implemented a similar program, unaccredited school vouchers hurt student achievement more than the 2020 pandemic (sources below).
- **Vouchers undermine public schools.** They divert resources away from public schools, attended by 90% of students, to fund the education of a few select students.
- **Private school vouchers do not offer real choice.** Private schools can choose their students. Public schools are bound by law to accept all students.
- **Vouchers fail to provide accountability to taxpayers.** Vouchers for private schools do not have appropriate oversight, which is critical when using public tax dollars.

As a parent to two products of Kansas K-12 schools (one is in college and one is a high school senior this year), I can personally speak to the quality of our public education system in preparing students for postsecondary success. Seven years of serving on a public school board has also shown me the amazing work done by our schools on a daily basis. Public schools keep students at the center of their budgetary decisions; why would we want to divert funding from them, making it harder to do their critical work?

Public tax dollars should be used to fund services benefitting **all** citizens. I urge you to vote no on SB 75.

Jacqueline Lightcap
Topeka

Sources: R. Joseph Waddington & Mark Berends, Impact of the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program: Achievement Effects for Students in Upper Elementary & Middle School, 37 J. of Policy Analysis & Mgmt. 4, 738-808 (Aug. 2018); Atila Abdulkadiroğlu, Parag A. Pathak, & Christopher R. Walters, Free to Choose: Can School Choice Reduce Student Achievement?, 10 Am. Econ. Journal: Applied Econ. 1, 175-206 (Jan. 2018); David Figlio & Krzysztof Karbownik, Inst. (July 2016); U.S. Dep’t of Educ., Evaluation of Ohio’s EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, Competition, & Performance Effects, Fordham Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Two Years After Students Applied (June 2018).

January 26, 2025

Testimony to the Senate Education Committee

Name: Rebecca Linn

Title: Parent of students in Shawnee Mission School District and PTA Board Member

Email Address: rlk81640@gmail.com

Bill Number: SB 79 Education Opportunity Tax Credit

Hearing Date: Jan 28, 2025

Proponent, Opponent, or Neutral: Opponent

Oral or Written Only Testimony: Written

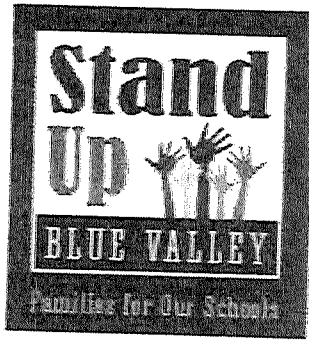
Dear Distinguished Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 79. I am a parent of one young student in an SMSD elementary school and another enrolled in the Pre-K program as well as a PTA board member. Education tax credits or vouchers only serve to subsidize the private choices of some parents thus have the same negative impact as vouchers. Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers.

Please oppose **Senate Bill 79**, thank you for your consideration.

Rebecca Linn

Overland Park, KS



Be informed.
Get involved.
Vote.

Written Opponent testimony for Senate Education Committee on SB 75
Jan 28, 2025

Patty Logan, Chair

On behalf of Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony opposing Senate Bill 75 on behalf of Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools. We are parents and patrons in the Blue Valley School District. We advocate for legislation that supports our community's Blue Valley Schools, and work to help citizens understand the importance of their votes to our schools.

Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools Opposes SB 75

AN ACT concerning income taxation; relating to tax credits for education expenses; providing an education opportunity tax credit for taxpayers with eligible dependent children not enrolled in public school.

SB 75 amounts to a **voucher program** where parents who enroll students in private schools are given their state taxes back to be used for tuition. While we support families' rights to send their children to private schools or to homeschool them, we DO NOT support giving tax money to non-public entities that don't serve all students and are not required to have state accreditation, public oversight, or any measure of accountability for the tax dollars received.

Specific concerns about SB 75:

State abdicating its responsibility to students and taxpayers to oversee use of tax dollars

SB 75 would divert tax money to private schools that are not required to be accredited. Parents and unqualified private school teachers and administrators may not have the knowledge or tools to support and teach all students. Without state accreditation, private schools may graduate students who are not college or career-ready. The State has the responsibility to ensure that taxpayer dollars being spent to educate Kansas children are being spent in a fiscally responsible and effective manner.

Student support nonexistent

SB 75 does not provide for any infrastructure to support students and families that is present in public schools. Blue Valley Schools have a school counselor in each building who guides students in course selection and college applications, to name just a few services. Students are assessed for learning disabilities and can get the support they need from teacher specialists. Parents may miss important delays that, if caught and supported in the public school, could be overcome or minimized by the time a student reaches graduation. SB 75 is not good for the children.

Unprecedented refund of tax money not being used is not how our system works

The legislature is tasked with deciding how to responsibly collect and distribute tax dollars to benefit our state as a whole. We strongly object to the idea that an individual would get credit on their state taxes for services they have chosen not to use. This is a very slippery slope in that there are many services essential to the well-being of citizens and communities that not every taxpayer needs or uses. If a taxpayer attests that he or she does not drive on highways, should they have that portion of their taxes returned? We sometimes hear the argument that residents who don't have children should not pay taxes to help fund public schools. Will this be the next step?

State would subsidize private schools even over the amount of taxpayer's owed income taxes with OTHER TAXPAYERS' income tax contribution

"If the amount of the tax credit allowed by this section exceeds the taxpayer's income tax liability imposed under the Kansas income tax act for such tax year, the excess amount shall be refunded to the taxpayer."

This provision amounts to not only an individual income tax refund/credit but goes a leap farther in refunding tuition costs that would come from income taxes paid by OTHER taxpayers. We strongly object to being forced to subsidize non-public education that may include non-accredited schools without teacher certification or robust student safety, may teach any sort of religious curriculum and have no public oversight, among other concerns.

The fallacy of "dollars following the student"

Citizen-funded public education for all is a cornerstone of our democracy. It is the responsibility of the state to provide K-12 education for all. This is funded by providing school districts with BASE aid determined by the number of students enrolled - but the dollars are NOT specific to the individual student. This is a fallacy that has been perpetuated by those who support diversion of tax money away from public schools.

The BASE aid amount is simply the calculation used to distribute money to each district. Blue Valley Schools doesn't have an account for each student that they draw from. State money is pooled and used to meet the needs of over 22,000 students - with classroom teachers, yes, but also specials teachers (P.E., art, music), special education services (reading support for example), library services, counselors (who help high school students with college and career applications), school nurses, and the list goes on. Public schools need to be funded and supported to meet the needs of ALL of the children of our community. Encouraging parents to withdraw from public schools, via the carrot of a tax refund, should not be the goal of the Kansas legislature.

Harmful effects on our communities and our state

Kansas's population growth has slowed over the past 10 years. Kansas has been known for excellent public schools. People and businesses move here for our schools. In Blue Valley, in fact all of Johnson County, excellent public schools factor into the decision of many relocating businesses and people. In this way, Blue Valley Schools are the economic driver of our area. Any policy that removes funding from public schools is harmful to communities and Kansas overall.

Lack of public oversight of the schools benefiting

Public schools have a locally-elected School Board, are required to administer and report the results of State Assessment testing, are required to publish budget documents detailing the use of tax dollars, and have many other processes in place to ensure rigorous oversight.

SB 75 provides for NO public oversight as to how the tax money is spent. There is no requirement for a local elected authority in lieu of a Board of Education. No requirement to document how the benefiting schools use the money they get as a result of this tax refund/voucher program. There will be no way to know who is reaping financial rewards, quite possibly at the expense of students.

There is no oversight or accountability built in to ensure students are benefiting.

SB 75 includes no requirement for state assessment tests or other standardized exams. There is no way to track whether the students participating in the program, individually or as a group, are keeping pace with grade level, if they are proficient, or if they will be ready to graduate. There is no oversight to ensure that students have the opportunity to master all core subjects.

After careful consideration, we believe the answer to whether this program would actually benefit Kansas students and represent responsible stewardship of Kansas tax dollars is clearly "No." We ask that you vote NO on SB 75.

January 27, 2025

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education

NAME: Victoria Lynch

TITLE: Parent, Instructional Coach and Educator

EMAIL ADDRESS: VLuhrs@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: SB 509 (Education Opportunity Tax Credit)

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only Testimony

Dear Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for your time serving Kansas. In 2005, I interned at the capitol, and I watched the Education committee every time it was in session. Thank you for considering what's best for Kansas kids each day.

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 75. I have seventeen years of experience as an educator in Kansas schools including serving both the Kansas City, Kansas and Shawnee Mission Public School Districts and know the inner workings of our schools well. I urge you to oppose SB 75 because private schools do not meet the needs of ALL Kansas kids like the public schools do. Over the years, I have supported teachers and families as they transition to public schools because the private school down the road will not meet their students' needs or because their parents were unable to meet their needs in a homeschool setting. Our public schools deserve funding to meet the needs of the kids in our neighborhoods, regardless of their ability. We welcome everyone. Using public dollars for private schools and homeschooling drains the public schools of needed resources for successful student learning. We do not know that this experiment will work. Private schools are not held to the same accountability standards and are not required to participate in state testing, and in other states this gamble has NOT paid off for student achievement. Don't let Kansas make the same mistake.

Additionally, this will not be good for our home value. We live in the neighborhood where I work and where our children attend school. People chose our area because the public schools are great, and the homes are affordable. Public schools are economic drivers. Businesses and families look for quality public schools when relocating, and we are so proud of our historic part of Overland Park. Please do not divert public tax dollars to private schools in the bigger areas of the state – keep public funding public for all Kansas kids.

Please vote no on SB 75.

Victoria Lynch
Instructional Coach
Overland Park

OPPONENT TESTIMONY SB 75 by Ann Mah
Written only
Presented to the Senate Committee on Education
Tuesday, January 28, 2025

CHAIRWOMAN ERICKSON AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in opposition to SB 75. This bill creates the education opportunity tax credit. In other words, it is an attempt to once again expand the voucher scam for private schools, something that Kansans do not need or want, and undermines our commitment to public education.

Perhaps now we can stop the pretense that the tax credit scholarship program was ever about helping low-income students go to better performing schools to achieve academic success. It is now clear this is all about defunding and privatizing public education.

How does this bill hurt public schools and public school students? First, it promises help that is not delivered. The poorest students cannot afford the best private schools, even with scholarships and tax credits. They likely have to provide their own transportation, and that alone can be a disqualifier. And there is no proof that scholarship students do better in private schools since there is no oversight, no specific reporting required, and the legislature seems to have no appetite for oversight of private schools that receive public funding, while requiring a multitude of reports from public schools. And the expansion to unaccredited schools is beyond the pale. Evidently the committee just doesn't care where the state's education dollars go or what is taught.

The fact is, "school choice" is just that. The schools choose the students. Let me relate the application process for just one private school in Topeka that is approved and has participated in the scholarship program. They require a photo of the student, two years' grades, and two years' state assessment scores. Then the school may do additional assessments to be sure the student is academically prepared. Students should not evidence any significant learning disabilities or behavioral problems. The student's parents must show that they are Christians and active in a local church. Is this what Kansas parents and taxpayers want? Does it sound like a student who is struggling in public schools would be welcomed here? I don't think so.

Kansas public schools don't have the luxury of rejecting hard-to-teach students. We are required to take every student. If they are unloved, unfed, unclothed, beaten, broken, or damaged, we still take them and help them to be the best, most successful person they can be. We believe that is what most Kansas taxpayers want. They do not want to remove funding from public schools and give it to schools with unique agendas and no oversight.

Vouchers have never withstood a vote of the people in any state when the people were given a chance to speak. Most recently, the states of Nebraska, Kentucky, and California rejected private school vouchers. In Nebraska, 58% of voters threw out their existing voucher system. In

Kentucky, 65% of voters rejected vouchers and it lost in every single county. In Colorado, 55% of voters rejected a constitutional change. If you are so sure this is what Kansans want, let's put it on the ballot and find out.

Perhaps the biggest charade is that students would go to schools on tax credits that are better than public schools. Under tax credits and scholarships, it is a fact that students can use taxpayer money to leave nationally-recognized and awarded public schools to go to a poorer performing private school. That should never be allowed. We also know that public schools that are demographically similar to private schools perform as well as those private schools.

How are public schools hurt by SB 75? Here is just one example. If a family with three students, say, 1st, 3rd, and 8th grade, leaves a school, the school can lose \$25,000-\$30,000 in funding (assuming the students are on free and reduced lunch). However, the school saves nothing in expenses. They must continue to provide the same number of teachers, bus routes, and classrooms as before. For small, rural schools near metro areas, this can be particularly devastating if a few families leave. Further, if a private school takes a special needs student but cannot provide the required services, those services must be provided by the public schools. In these cases, the state pays both the private school tuition along with state aid to the public school. A double whammy for taxpayers.

This committee should be about doing what is best for all students, not just some. The notion that "the money should follow the child" is also hooey. When I pay my state taxes for K-12 education, that money goes to educate all children, not just my child. It is a tax I pay to provide education for the general welfare of the state and public good of all. Whether I have children in school or not does not matter. I pay the same tax. When I pay taxes for public golf courses, I don't get to take those dollars and head to a country club that I might like better. The state does not owe me a custom golf experience and it doesn't owe my child a boutique school! It's another ridiculous notion pro-voucher advocates use to confuse the issue.

Providing an adequate and equitable education for all Kansas children is the state's number one obligation. What parents and taxpayers want is a strong public education system. If public schools need help, then provide what they need so every student truly has a chance, not just some students. Don't kneecap schools with reduced funding. Don't pit them against private schools that are competing on an unlevel playing field. That is what our state, our families, and our students deserve. I urge the Committee to reject SB 75 and instead work on keeping our public schools strong.

Respectfully submitted by

Ann Mah

Former State Representative District 53

Former Member Kansas State Board of Education District 4

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Jamie Mast, jamiekmast@gmail.com

Parent in USD 232 De Soto school district, product of USD 427 Belleville (now USD 109 Republic County)

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 75. I appreciate your time and willingness to learn about my opposition to bill SB 75 and hope that my perspective will be helpful in considering what happens with this bill.

I am so proud to have been born and raised in Belleville, KS and educated in public school in that rural setting. I still care fiercely for that community, as well as rural Kansas communities in general, even though I now live in Shawnee. For this reason, I strongly oppose bill SB 75 because passing this bill would take money and opportunities from the rural communities that make up most of Kansas and redistribute to people who have access to many more opportunities as it is.

Though my four sons, who attend USD 232 De Soto, have plenty of public and private school options available to them in Shawnee, my niece and nephew, who attend USD 109 Republic County, do not. By implementing SB 75, money and resources would be redistributed to the settings that have private schools available, mainly urban settings, leaving those without these options to pay for it.

More succinctly, my primary concerns with bill SB 75 are:

- This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools in that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a private choice to receive a religious or other non-public education, many who can easily afford that choice anyway.
- A strong public education system provides benefits to the entire society, not just the individual students. The potential consequences of diverting public tax dollars to those who choose to homeschool or send their kids to private school undermines the state's ability to fund our public schools, potentially leaving an underfunded public school system.
- There are no controls in place to ensure those receiving these tax credits are providing the children with a quality education or any education at all. Kansans expect accountability for how our tax dollars are being used.
- Rural students (and communities) are harmed as public school resources are drained and students in rural areas lack little to no private options.

In closing, as written, SB 75 is not fair to all Kansans, and has few safeguards to prevent fraud. Our rural communities desperately need their public schools to survive and thrive, and SB 75 will very likely have the exact opposite impact on these communities. Please do not advance SB 75.

Thank you,

Jamie Mast

To: Senate Education Committee

Subject: SB 75 - Opposition Testimony (Written)

From: Cathy Matlack, cjmatlack@gmail.com

Parent of 3 children who graduated from De Soto School District

Chair Erickson and members of the committee,

Thank you for providing an opportunity to give written testimony to your committee. I want to voice my opposition to SB 75.

I believe in public school and have three adult children who graduated from De Soto school district. One is a teacher, one a physician, and one in private business. They were well-prepared for college and graduate school.

Tax credits for those who choose private schools undermines the benefits and funding needs for public schools for all communities in Kansas, where 90% of our students get their education. Not only is it a choice for parents to use public schools, public schools also have a choice of students they admit - leaving kids with special needs, disabilities, or English as their second language in public schools, with reduced funding if this bill were to pass.

I grew up in rural Kansas, where there were no options for private schools. That is still the case in my home community. These tax credits will mostly benefit those in Kansas urban areas with rural taxpayers subsidizing private school tuition for families in Johnson County and Wichita.

Thank you for giving serious consideration to what's best for Kansas families and our next generation. Please vote no on SB 75.

Thank you,

Cathy Matlack

2140 West 89th Terrace

Leawood, KS 66206

January 27, 2025

I am submitting written testimony in opposition to SB 75. Let me start by highlighting a few key facts about my educational path.

- I attended Catholic schools and graduated from Bishop Miege High School.
- We sent two of our four children to Pembroke Hill High School, a non-religious private school in KCMO.
- We sent two of our children to Shawnee Mission public schools from K-12.

I know A LOT about both public and private schools.

My mom CHOSE to send me to Miege. My husband and I CHOSE to send two of our children to Pembroke.

These were personal choices. As parents, we are free to make decisions about each child's educational path. That should never change. BUT, in no way, is it right for the good taxpayers of Kansas to fund our personal choices about a school.

It wasn't up to my neighbor to make going to Pembroke more affordable for my family any more than it's my responsibility to help fund my neighbor's choice to send their son to St. Agnes.

In what world is it OK to use public funds to pay for private schools? These families are already paying tuition. Why would we give them a tax break?

This is a terrible decision in terms of economic development as well. Our strong public schools play a critical role in attracting new businesses to the area – and in luring young people back to raise their families here.

I strongly oppose this bill – and if you care about Kansas – you will see that this will weaken our state.

Please vote on behalf of ALL of your constituents. Not just the big donors urging you to do this.

Nancy Mays
2114 W. 51 Street
Mission Woods, Kansas 66205

Jan. 27, 2025
Vote NO on SB75
Senate Education Committee

Dear committee members,

Why do we have to keep debating this over and over. School vouchers are bad. **Public dollars belong in public schools.** Sending kids to a private school is a CHOICE parents make, just like joining a country club or buying an expensive car.

Other people's taxes should not be used for those choices. And tax dollars should not be siphoned from public services!!

Please stop this nonsense!

Debby McDonald, private citizen/taxpayer
8115 Nall Ave
Prairie Village, KS 66208

Opponent Testimony of SB76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10th, 2025
Lilly McElroy
Assistant Teaching Professor, University of Kansas

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Lilly McElroy and I am writing today to voice my opposition to SB76. As a college educator, I strive to create a classroom environment in which all of my students are treated with respect and dignity. After all, the student population at the university comes from varied social and economic backgrounds and it is imperative that each of them be recognized as a person of worth. This is crucial for their learning and development. One of the ways that I show students the respect they deserve is by using their chosen names and preferred pronouns and I am appalled that a bill like SB76 is under consideration in our state. It would effectively make it actionable to treat human beings with decency. The bill's only purpose is cruelty.

While I teach adults, I'm also concerned about the negative impact SB76 would have on transgender youth because it would limit the support they can receive in their communities. Suppressing social transition does not help youth but instead actively harms them. We need to make sure that we are supporting young people instead of passing bills that would make their lives harder.

Finally, I would like to state that this bill would be a severe government overreach that aims to limit individual autonomy. Not only do I fear that SB76 will cause people pain and suffering, but I fear that it will curtail our First Amendment rights.

Thank you for your time.

Best,

Lilly McElroy

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Julie McInerney

Parent in the SMSD district, teacher in the Blue Valley District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing this letter as a parent of elementary school aged children in our Shawnee Mission public school district and as a teacher in the Blue Valley public school district. This Bill is terrifying for public schools. **Public tax dollars belong with public schools!** Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers. Education Tax Credits divert funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education to subsidize the private choices of some parents thus having the same negative impact as a voucher program. This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a private choice to receive a religious or other non-public education, many who can easily afford that choice. Instead of providing tax credits to Kansans choosing not to send their kids to public school, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education that is currently underfunded by \$173 million. **Private schools are not available to all, private schools get to choose who to accept.** We should not be reducing state revenues by providing funding for families to funnel that money to private schools that can pick and choose which children they want to serve. Families with children with special needs, disabilities, or those for whom English is not their first language will not benefit from these tax credits as few private schools can accommodate their needs. Private schools can choose to admit only the best and brightest students, leaving other children behind. Vouchers like this tax credit program do not provide real choice. **Public schools are a public good.** For many benefiting from these tax credits, especially those with multiple kids, they will receive annual refunds and will contribute nothing towards the public goods in our state that all Kansans benefit from. Public schools are a public service and paid for by everyone, regardless of whether they use them or not. Just as we would not give a tax rebate to people who buy books instead of using a public library or who own private vacation homes instead of camping in national parks, the government should not refund private school tuition to parents who choose not to send their children to public schools. A strong public education system provides benefits to the entire society, not just the individual students. The potential consequences of diverting public tax dollars to those who choose to homeschool or send their kids to private school undermines the state's ability to fund our public schools, potentially leaving an underfunded public school system.

Please consider all of these things when voting! Strong public schools, means strong communities!

Respectfully,

Julie McInerney

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75

Senate Education Committee

January 27, 2025

Emily Meissen-Sebelius

Parent, Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75. I am writing to voice my opposition to this bill. I believe public schools benefit the entire community and state, they provide opportunities for ALL children, they have layers of public oversight, and are uniquely qualified to receive public support for these reasons.

As a parent, I strongly believe that public schools are the bedrock of our communities, in our rural, suburban and urban areas of the state. As a family, we chose to live in Kansas, and Johnson County, specifically because of the high quality public schools. Strong public schools attract quality businesses and employers, as well as create a robust future workforce for our state. Johnson County is evidence of this in practice, as well as other areas of the state where public schools serve as community and economic hubs.

Very importantly, public schools provide opportunity to ALL children, regardless of income, religion, academic needs or abilities. Parents who would like to, can choose to send their children to private schools, but I believe that **public funds** should be reserved for **public schools** only, specifically because of their very unique accountability and mission to serve ALL children. Public schools cannot deny admission and diverting public funds to private schools that can set limits on whom they serve, is unfair and a poor use of our public dollars, particularly in a bill like SB75 which is not reserved for low-income families. I am also concerned with using public funds for private schools that do not have the same accountability and oversight as our public schools, creating a system vulnerable to fraud and abuse of our tax payer dollars.

As a family, we have had very positive experiences with our public schools, and I think it is incredibly important to keep public funding with these institutions to continue to improve and build upon them, making them even better for all in the community who would like to and/or need to access public education. Our teachers and staff are professional, caring and incredibly competent. We should be fully funding special education and creating innovative opportunities to attract and retain teachers. The legislature should be doing EVERYTHING within its power to support our public schools, teachers and students, and in turn our state economy. Bills like SB75

do just the opposite. I'd urge you to keep public funds tied to public schools and vote in opposition of SB75.

Thank you for your consideration, and sincere thank you for your service to our great state.

Emily Meissen-Sebelius

Parent of a Kindergartener, 3rd grader and 7th grader in Shawnee Mission School District
Prairie Village Ks.

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Kris Meyer, kmeyerkc@gmail.com
Former Kansas Principal, Advocate for Public Education, Parent

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on Senate Bill 75. I am testifying today as a former principal, parent of two high school-aged daughters, and passionate advocate for public education. As someone who has dedicated nearly two decades to supporting Kansas students, families, and educators, I know how critical public schools are to our communities, our democracy, and the future of our state.

I oppose SB 75 because it diverts public tax dollars away from our public schools—schools that are open to all children, regardless of ability, background, or income. Public schools are a cornerstone of our society and provide limitless benefits not just to the students who attend them but to our communities. This bill creates inequities and places an undue burden on public schools, which continue to serve the majority of Kansas children.

Public Tax Dollars Belong with Public Schools

Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools, which are accountable to taxpayers and serve all students. SB 75 takes funds that could be used to improve public education for every Kansas child and instead subsidizes the private choices of a select few. This tax credit has the same detrimental impact as a voucher program, reducing the resources available for public schools that educate the majority of Kansas students. Kansas is already \$173 million short of meeting its obligation to fully fund special education. Instead of using tax dollars to help public schools meet the needs of students with disabilities and other challenges, this bill diverts those funds to families who can already afford private tuition.

Private Schools Are Not Accessible to All

Unlike public schools, private schools can choose who they serve. They are not required to admit students with disabilities, English language learners, or those who face significant academic or behavioral challenges. This creates a system where public schools are left to serve the most vulnerable children with fewer resources while private schools can pick and choose the students they want. SB 75 does not provide real choice for all families. Rather, SB 75 creates inequity by funneling public dollars to private institutions that exclude many Kansas students.

Vouchers Are Welfare for the Wealthy

This tax credit program overwhelmingly benefits wealthy families who already have the financial means to send their children to private schools. By reducing their tax burden, these families contribute less to the public goods and services that benefit all Kansans,

including public education. Meanwhile, families in rural areas or those who rely on public schools will suffer as resources are drained from the system.

Public Schools Are a Public Good

Public schools are a shared investment that benefits everyone, whether or not they have children currently enrolled. Just as we do not give rebates to people who buy books instead of using public libraries or who own private land instead of camping in state parks, we should not refund private school tuition to families who opt out of public schools. A strong public education system creates an educated workforce, strengthens our economy, keeps children engaged and out of trouble, and ensures that all children have the opportunity to succeed.

SB 75 undermines this shared responsibility by prioritizing private education over the public good, leaving public schools underfunded and less able to serve the students who depend on them.

No Oversight or Accountability

This bill lacks the necessary oversight to ensure that public tax dollars are being spent effectively. There are no requirements to verify the quality of education provided by private or homeschool programs benefiting from these tax credits. Kansans deserve transparency and accountability for how their tax dollars are used, especially when it comes to educating our children.

Impact on Rural Communities

SB 75 also disproportionately harms rural areas, where private school options are limited or nonexistent. Rural taxpayers will be forced to subsidize private school tuition for families in urban areas, leaving their own public schools with fewer resources. This will further widen the gap between rural and urban education, to the detriment of rural students and communities.

Conclusion

Public education is *NOT* a private commodity. Public education *IS* a public good that serves every child and strengthens every Kansas community. As a former school principal of a Title I school, I have witnessed how public education improves lives and often shatters the cycle of poverty, fortifying entire communities. It is critical that we protect and strengthen this institution for the benefit of all Kansans. For these reasons, I urge the members of this committee to oppose SB 75.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Our kids and educators are counting on us.

Virginia Meyer
24913 Stillwell Rd Lawrence, Kansas 66044
Vrmeyer7@gmail.com
February 2, 2025

Senate Education Committee
Kansas State Legislature

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing to you as a lifelong Kansan and a deeply concerned citizen in strong opposition to Senate Bill 75.

Like most Kansans, I believe in the values of hard work, community, and the power of education. A high-quality, accessible public education system is the bedrock of our society, ensuring that every child—regardless of background, income level, or inherent ability—has an equal opportunity to succeed. By investing in public education, we strengthen not just individual students, but our communities, our economy, and our state as a whole.

Senate Bill 75 would divert taxpayer dollars away from public schools, which serve the vast majority of Kansas children, and instead funnel those funds into private institutions that are not equally accessible to all students. This bill does nothing to help the most vulnerable children who rely on public education. Instead, it shifts resources away from the students and schools that need them most, widening the gap between those with means and those without.

Public tax dollars should serve the public good. Redirecting funds to private schools weakens our public education system, punishes hardworking families who depend on it, and creates a bleaker future for Kansas students. If we truly want to invest in our children's future, we must focus on strengthening our public schools—ensuring they have the resources, teachers, and programs necessary to provide a comprehensive education in science, math, history, the arts, and beyond.

I urge you to reject Senate Bill 75 and instead focus on policies that enhance, rather than undermine, our public education system. The future of Kansas depends on it.

Sincerely,
Virginia Meyer
Leavenworth County, Kansas

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Matthew Mikolajchak, Matthew.mikolajchak@gmail.com

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 75. My wife and I are relatively new to the area and now have a 2 year old child who we plan on enrolling in the SM school district once he becomes of age. We're staunch advocates of the public school system and understand the value of our public schools for an educated society and vitality of our communities.

SB 75 seeks to undermine the very fabric of our community by taking tax dollars out of the system. Education Tax Credits divert funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education to subsidize the private choices of some parents thus having the same negative impact as a voucher program. We should not be reducing state revenues by providing funding for families to funnel that money to private schools that can pick and choose which children they want to serve. Families who can already afford the choice to send their kids to private school will benefit greatly, while funding for public schools and other state services pay the price.

Public schools are a public good. For many benefiting from these tax credits, especially those with multiple kids, they will receive annual refunds and will contribute nothing towards the public goods in our state that all Kansans benefit from. Our tax dollars should not go to private and homeschools that lack oversight, leaving the public uninformed as to whether or not our tax dollars are really being spent to improve the lives of children.

The bill is unpopular across the majority of every day folks in the region and should not move forward in its current form.

Thank you,

Matthew

January 26, 2025

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

To the Kansas Senate Education Committee:

As a Professor Emerita and parent of two grown children, I strongly oppose SB 75. I have taught hundreds of college students, and those with private school or home-schooling backgrounds did not outperform (and in some cases, definitely underperformed) public school students. Public education is fundamental to a healthy democracy, and any efforts to divert funds to other models is short-sighted and frankly wrong.

I support the right of parents to pay for private school for their children if that's their preference, but they should indeed pay for the whole amount, not expect others to subsidize their choices when a free education is already available to them.

State government has a moral duty to support all Kansas children: those with disabilities, those from impoverished families, those who live in rural areas. Please live up to your duty by voting to provide all Kansas children a quality education. Vote against SB 75.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Milakovic

Dr. Amy Milakovic
14752 Eby St.
Overland Park, KS 66221
milakovica@yahoo.com

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB75

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75.

I do not believe vouchers should be used in Kansas. There is no oversight or accountability of our public tax dollars, and private schools are allowed to discriminate in admission based on any number of criteria. Our public schools accept and educate all children regardless of their ability, religion, or other circumstances.

I am asking you to vote no to bill SB 75.

Sincerely,

Deana Miller

Private Citizen

Wichita, Kansas

SB 75 Opposition Testimony

Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Susan Minto shaguemail@yahoo.com
Parent and employee of the Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 75. Here are a few reasons why.

- Education Tax Credits divert funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education to subsidize the private choices of some parents thus having the same negative impact as a voucher program.
- This tax credit voucher would reduce state revenues needed to fund public goods such as our public schools (that educate 90% of Kansas kids), roads, infrastructure, state parks, and more.
- Rural students (and communities) are harmed as public school resources are drained and students in rural areas lack little to no private options.
- These tax credits will primarily benefit those in urban areas of our state. Rural taxpayers will end up subsidizing private school tuition for families in metro areas such as Johnson County, Wichita, and Topeka.
- Quality education is an economic driver. My family moved a literal mile across the state line from West Plaza (KCMO) to Westwood, KS for the sole purpose of sending our children to Kansas public schools. Even though we moved a short distance now shop (and pay taxes) in Kansas not Missouri.

I urge you to oppose SB 75.

Sincerely,
Susan Minto
Westwood, KS

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Erin Monaghan
Parent in USD497 school district

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75. I am a parent of children who attend public schools. I strongly oppose the school voucher bill and urge you to vote against it.

As someone who has experienced firsthand the value of public education, I can confidently say that our public schools are the foundation of our communities. They accept and educate every child, regardless of ability, background, or financial circumstances. Public schools do not pick and choose; they are a public service that uplifts society as a whole.

Public education is a public good. Our tax dollars should be invested in the schools that serve every child and are accountable to taxpayers. This bill diverts critical funding away from public schools and directs it to private schools that are not obligated to serve all children or to meet the same accountability standards.

Instead of creating a system that subsidizes private choices for a few families, many of whom can already afford private education, we should prioritize fully funding special education. Right now, Kansas underfunds special education by \$173 million—a gap that hurts children with disabilities in every public school district across the state. Redirecting funds to private schools does nothing to address these urgent needs.

One of the most troubling aspects of this bill is that private schools are not required to accept all children. Families with children who have special needs, disabilities, or who are learning English will find limited, if any, options in private schools. These students, along with countless others, will continue to rely on public schools for their education, but with fewer resources if this bill passes.

This is not true choice. It's a false promise that leaves many children behind.

This bill primarily benefits wealthier families, who already have the means to send their children to private schools. By providing tax credits, the state essentially helps wealthy families reduce their tax burden at the expense of our public schools and other critical public services. Rural taxpayers, in particular, will be subsidizing private school tuition for families in metro areas, even though rural communities often have no private school options.

Public education is not about individual benefit—it's about collective good. Just as we all contribute to public libraries, roads, and parks regardless of how often we use them, public schools are a shared investment in our state's future.

Public schools operate under rigorous oversight to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used responsibly and effectively. Private schools, on the other hand, are not held to the same standards. There are no guarantees that public funds directed to private schools or homeschools through vouchers will be spent on quality education—or any education at all.

Kansans deserve transparency and accountability when it comes to how our tax dollars are spent. This bill undermines that principle.

I am deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill will have on rural communities. Public schools are often the heart of rural areas, providing not just education but also jobs, extracurricular opportunities, and a sense of community. Draining resources from these schools to fund private education in urban areas will harm rural students and communities that already face significant challenges.

I ask this committee to consider the long-term consequences of this bill. It diverts resources from our public schools, weakens the educational foundation of our state, and creates inequities that hurt our most vulnerable children. Instead of supporting voucher programs, let's work together to fully fund public education, including special education, and ensure that every child in Kansas has access to a high-quality education.

Thank you

Erin Monaghan
533 Lindley Dr
Lawrence, KS 66049

SB75 Opponent

Written only, due to laryngitis

We homeschooled our children K-12 on one income. With the educational freedom we experienced all those years in Kansas, SB75 is the type of bill we foresaw coming.

Public schools run on public money, private schools run on private money. SB75 will change private schools into public schools with an expansion of government!

As you heard on the campaign trail, this is a time when the government needs to be more budget savvy and lower property taxes. You probably did not hear a peep on school choice.

1. A tax credit amount up to one's tax liability then a voucher-type payment will require an expansion of government bureaucracy.
2. You still have not looked at the results of last years Kansas open-enrollment policy.
3. A tax credit for low income scholarship program act already exists in K.S.A 72-4351. Will this be dissolved since now there is money for all?
4. Public school enrollment is declining. SB75 directly encourages a further decline.
5. There is no wording to prevent future stipulations on the receipt of the government money. Nothing is ever free.
6. Onerous penalties (K.S.A. 79-3228(e)) for not following the exact confusing instructions. (New Section 1, h-k)
7. This was rushed though with the people not able to read SB79 until Friday and not know of a hearing until Monday, when testimony needs turned in. Why the rush?
8. I realize this is a very political issue. Sen. Masterson and Rep. Hawkins spoke at Maranatha private school, with other legislators invited to listen. They spoke on their affirmation of a school choice policy this year. Don't be hesitant to vote no.
9. The focus should be on bills that will align public schools with the core academics and fundamentals until mastered. Less demands of health and labor through ESSA and less analyzing and screening of every child as if they are all at-risk with massive data collection (SLDS).
10. If your goal is to slowly dissolve the current public schools with their pensions and unions, this might do it.
11. VOTE NO on SB75

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Nancy Moneymaker

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Maki Moussavi
Parent in Shawnee Mission School District, USD 512

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75.

I write this as a parent to two children in the Shawnee Mission school district, and as someone born and raised in Manhattan, KS who attended public school and went on to receive a post-graduate education.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed Education Tax Credit bill, which diverts public tax dollars from our public schools to subsidize private education. Public tax dollars belong in public schools that serve all children and are accountable to taxpayers.

This bill takes funds that could strengthen our public schools—schools that accept and educate **every child**—and redirects them to subsidize private education choices, many of which exclude students with disabilities, special needs, or those for whom English is not their first language.

Private schools are not required to accept all students, nor are they subject to the same accountability and transparency as public schools.

Moreover, this program disproportionately benefits families who can already afford private education, essentially functioning as a voucher system or tax break for the wealthy. Meanwhile, public schools, particularly in rural areas, will face reduced resources, leaving students without viable alternatives. Instead of siphoning funds into private education, the legislature should focus on fully funding special education, which is currently underfunded by \$173 million.

Public education is a cornerstone of our society, benefiting all Kansans by creating an educated and productive citizenry. Just as we don't refund private library memberships or private camping fees, we should not provide tax credits for private school tuition.

Diverting public funds away from public schools threatens the quality and equity of education for all children, especially in rural communities.

I urge you to reject this bill and prioritize investments in our public schools, ensuring they have the resources to serve every child in our state. The well-being of the citizens should be the primary consideration above all else. You are in office to serve your constituents, not a partisan agenda.

Sincerely,
Maki Moussavi

SB 75 Opposition Written Testimony

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Taryn Myers

tarynmyers@gmail.com

Kansas Citizen, USD 266 parent and Employee in USD 266 Maize Kansas School District

Chair Erickson & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to SB 75. I am a parent of two children who attend public schools in USD 266, Maize, Kansas—one in 7th grade and the other in 10th grade. I have also spent five years as a paraprofessional in an elementary school and currently serve as a substitute teacher across the USD 266 district. My experience, both as a parent and as an employee of the public school system, has been overwhelmingly positive. However, it has also been eye-opening to witness firsthand the challenges and struggles our public schools face.

Passing SB 75 would have a profoundly negative impact on our public school system. Based on my experiences, I can confidently describe our schools as operating on a shoestring budget. They do their best with the limited resources they have, but it is simply not enough.

I have also served as President of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) in our district, with eight years of experience at the elementary school level and four years—and counting—at the middle school level. I've seen how schools in my area manage to fill resource gaps only because of the dedication and support of our nonprofit PTO. However, not all public schools are this fortunate.

The special education departments, in particular, face even greater struggles because their needs are so significant. I've personally witnessed teachers and staff pouring their own money into resources their students need daily—resources that the state budget already fails to provide adequately. Redirecting public tax dollars to private schools through SB 75 will only exacerbate these issues.

Legislators should be focusing on addressing the \$173 million shortfall in special education funding—not diverting public funds to private institutions. Using public dollars for private schools will drain even more critical resources from public schools, which are already stretched thin. Public tax dollars belong in public schools.

I've summarized my key concerns below:

- SB 75 diverts money that could strengthen public schools, which serve all students, to families who have made a private choice for religious or other non-public education—many of whom can already afford this choice.
- This bill would disproportionately harm rural communities, where students have little to no access to private school options, further draining public school resources in these areas.
- Families with children who have special needs, disabilities, or are English language learners will not benefit from these tax credits, as few private schools can accommodate their needs.
- Families who can already afford private school tuition will benefit the most, while funding for public schools and other essential state services is cut.

As a concerned citizen of Kansas, I fail to see how SB 75 benefits the majority of Kansas children. I urge you to vote NO on SB 75. Our public schools are already struggling, and we cannot afford to take even more resources away from them.

Thank you for your time and your service to our great state.

Sincerely,

Taryn Myers

Kansas Citizen, Parent, and Employee in USD 266 Maize Kansas School District
tarynmyers@gmail.com
Sedgwick County, Maize, Kansas

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Jeaveen Neaderhiser
[Parent in the Shawnee Mission School District]

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75.

I am a parent of two children in the Shawnee Mission School District. My husband and I made the decision to switch our children out of our area Catholic school into our local, public, neighborhood schools, to provide them an affordable and enriching education. This was an important step for both of us to prepare our girls for real-world employment and vocational opportunities with diverse learners. Not only do the Shawnee Mission Schools provide enrichment opportunities and signature programming for students, at no cost to the parents, but also special education and related services by high quality staff.

Each of our children had been evaluated and identified in need of special education services; services that could not be provided by their Catholic school, with the fidelity and oversight granted in the public schools. After a while, we did not see the value of continuing to pay taxes to fund the public schools, while continuing to pay tuition, which increased every year. As this tuition eventually became cost prohibitive, it made sense to my husband and I to make the switch to our local public schools.

While there were many academic and athletic opportunities through the Catholic school, there weren't the electives offerings and extra-curricular activities like our local, neighborhood, public schools offered. For our girls, these were important to us for them to have, to prepare them for life as adults.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, and the growing needs of students and communities around us, we found that the private school our children attended could not adequately address their needs; particularly with mental health, gender differences, religious differences, to name a few. We made the move to public school where each of our children could "find their people," and feel like they belonged. We wanted our children to feel accepted by their peers. I can report that, through public school education, they have made fast friends. They have made connections with their classroom teachers and other school staff overseeing activities. School staff are open and accepting of all students, no matter their color, creed, gender identity.

I oppose Senate Bill 75 because it would divert funding from neighborhood, public schools to private, parochial, and homeschools. Additionally, I anticipate that, with the funding of vouchers, private and parochial schools may be inclined to increase their tuition rates even more, to profit from a voucher system, resulting in limited access for the students who would really need specially designed instructional supports.

As a taxpayer, and citizen, it is my opinion that public dollars could be better used to improve existing facilities and programming, so children can attend in their neighborhood schools with their peers, rather than be bussed to a school or program out of their area. As someone who has had children with special needs, I can tell you that finding support services which are affordable and available are difficult enough; paying for these services can be even more difficult. Public schools can be the first line of defense in providing early intervention for children and their families. Local, public schools also provide a social safety net to families in need. It is for these reasons that I ask you to vote "NO" on Senate Bill 75. Thank you for your consideration.

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Adrienne Newlin | adrienne.newlin@gmail.com

Parent + small business owner + homeowner in Blue Valley School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to share my opposition to SB 75. I am a parent of a Blue Valley district graduate as well as a current Blue Valley district student. I also have nephews in the Shawnee Mission School District. I am a small business owner, property owner and someone who works hard to support public schools in our community.

This is a harmful bill to residents of Kansas. Successful public schools are the reason many seek to make a move to our state. Supported and thriving public schools have a positive impact on our property values, crime & safety, our businesses (and the desire for companies to bring more businesses to a city).

- This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a private choice to receive a religious or other non-public education, many who can easily afford that choice.
- Instead of providing tax credits to Kansans choosing not to send their kids to public school, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education that is currently underfunded by \$173 million.
- Rural students (and communities) are harmed as public school resources are drained and students in rural areas lack little to no private options.
- Private schools can choose to admit only the best and brightest students, leaving other children behind. Vouchers like this tax credit program do not provide real choice.
- Public schools are a public service and paid for by everyone, regardless of whether they use them or not. Just as we would not give a tax rebate to people who buy books instead of using a public library or who claim to not use roads and highways, the government should not refund private school tuition to parents who choose not to send their children to public schools.

Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers. I ask that you please turn down this bill and focus on supporting the initiatives that benefit ALL Kansans and allow our state to thrive and grow. Vote NO on SB 75.

Adrienne Newlin
Overland Park, KS

SB 75 Written Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Samantha Neill - sjneill13@gmail.com
Parent of Students in Buhler USD 313

Chair Erickson & Members of the Committee,

I am writing this testimony in opposition of SB 75. My main concern about this bill is the fact that it will cost the state upwards of \$125 million the first year alone for these tax credits for non-public tuition. We have seen tax-credit/educational savings accounts in other states such as Arizona, resulting in a \$1.4 billion shortfall in the state budget. If it is our hope to be fiscally responsible with Kansas tax dollars, this is not the way to do it.

I am a 22-year educator in Kansas public schools. I am a parent of 2 public school students – as are 90% of the parents in Kansas. I am proud of the education my students are receiving. I am proud that my taxes are used to provide quality education for almost 490,000 children in Kansas. I do believe that this should be our focus.

Strong public schools grow strong communities. Strong communities create local and state economies that allow all Kansans the opportunity to flourish.

I would ask you to oppose this type of tax credit that is proposed in SB 75.

Respectfully,
Samantha Neill
Buhler, KS

SB 75 Opposition Testimony

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Joan Nicholas, getorganized2010@att.net

Parent of 3 Shawnee Mission School District Graduates

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

In these fraught political times I appreciate and respect anyone who offers their time and expertise to serve in political office, so first off I thank you. I also appreciate you listening to the testimony of the people of Kansas on policies that impact all of us. I am writing to voice my **opposition to bill SB 75**.

My sons received an excellent education in the SMSD public school system, and they graduated well prepared for success in their next steps in life. Importantly, you and all the people of Kansas and around the country who now work with my sons benefit from the stellar education public schools provided them. We are all better when we have well-educated kids.

I grew up attending private schools and I appreciate the religious education and broad learning I received there. But this was a choice my parents made, and they found a way to pay for this choice. They would never have expected their tax dollars to fund their decision to choose private schooling for my siblings and me.

I firmly believe that public tax dollars should remain with our public schools because:

- Public schools accept and educate all children ~ regardless of special needs, income, privilege, culture, beliefs, or any other barrier a private institution can put in place to reject a child from their system.
- Public schools are accountable to taxpayers through certifications, testing scores and other measures and ways private institutions and homeschooling are not.
- Many families who choose private education can afford the tuition; they do not need their choice subsidized by my tax dollars.
- Public schools can only be as good as the amount of funding they receive.
- Education Tax Credits divert money that could be used to improve public education to help parents pay for a choice of a private education. Therefore, this bill will have the same negative impact on our children's public education as a voucher program.
- As I said before, the City of Leawood, the State of Kansas and other parts of the United States where my sons have found themselves working so far in their careers are better because my sons received a high-quality K-12 education in the public school system. If you pass SB 75 or other policies that take money away from tax-funded public education you are hurting yourself, your family, your constituents, and beyond by reducing the numbers of well-educated citizens. **ANY policy that takes public tax dollars away from public schools hurts the entire community.**

SB 75 Opposition Testimony

**Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Joseph Nicholas (joseph.h.nicholas@gmail.com)

Private citizen

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to bill SB 75.

I oppose this bill for several reasons:

First, this bill will reduce funding for cash-strapped public schools and fund cash rich private schools. To be honest, it is shameful for a state that has historically had a well-funded exemplary educational system to now have a system where public-school teachers regularly provide teaching supplies from their own pocket.

Second, this bill will increase the education gap between the haves and have-nots. As funds are taken away from public schools and given to private schools, the quality of education in Kansas public schools will undoubtedly decline. This will lead to more families who can afford private education sending their children to private schools, which, in turn, will further reduce funding for public schools. Eventually, we will be left with a two tier system where wealthy children have access to adequate education, and poor children do not. As we learned from *Brown vs Topeka Board of Education* "separate but equal" is not constitutional; "separate but unequal" is even worse.

Third, this bill, if enacted, will lead to a pointless waste of taxpayer dollars in defending inevitable lawsuits. Without a doubt, this legislation will be challenged, which could lead to a protracted and expensive court battle. Our current Attorney General is certainly not one to shy away from any lawsuit that garners him additional media exposure, but he doesn't have the best track record in winning them.

In short, this bill is nothing more than an attempted tax dodge by the wealthy at the cost of our children's education. I urge you to vote no on SB 75 for the good of public education in Kansas.

Thank you for your time,
Joseph Nicholas

SB 75 Opposition Testimony Written only

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Ann Norbury, annknorbury@gmail.com

Private Citizen

Chair Erickson and members of the Committee

I write to state my opposition to SB 75.

As a parent of three Shawnee Mission School District graduates. I value their public school education. Each daughter attended Kansas universities and earned master degrees.

As a former public school teacher, I champion public schools that serve ALL students. Public funds should support public schools. I am opposed to any voucher system that would fund private schools

I am concerned about draining funds from public schools in rural districts. Of the 105 Kansas counties, many rural districts do not even have an option of a private school. In rural districts, the public school is the center of the community. A voucher plan would decimate rural public schools by directing funds to private schools in wealthy suburban areas. Private schools do not have accountability. This is basically unfair.

The Kansas legislature has an obligation to fund public schools that serve all students. I request that this committee vote NO on SB 75. Please direct your efforts to strengthen public schools throughout Kansas.

Thank you,

Ann Norbury

Shawnee, KS

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Carrie Numelin
Parent in Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75.

Please consider NOT providing tax credits to Kansans choosing not to send their kids to public school, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education that is currently underfunded by \$173 million

This would further the disparities among the public schools.

Please vote no on bill SB 75.

**SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee**

January 28, 2025

Erin Parrett erinparrett79@gmail.com

5th grade teacher and parent in the Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 75.

I am both a teacher and parent in the Kansas Public school system and I strongly oppose SB-75.

A strong public education system provides benefits to the entire society, not just the individual students. The potential consequences of diverting public tax dollars to those who choose to homeschool or send their kids to private school undermines the state's ability to fund our public schools, potentially leaving an underfunded public school system.

Please vote **NO** on bill SB 75.

Thank you for your time!

- Erin Parrett

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Emily Rose Patrick
Assistive Technology Specialist
SMSD USD512
Parent of 3

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I would like to share my reasons for opposing Bill SB 75. I am in my 10th year working in public education. I work primarily within special education. When private school and home school students need services they come to their neighborhood public school. Services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, vision, hearing, and assistive technology support are not offered in private schools. Part of access to a free and appropriate public education means the public schools will meet these needs when private schools can choose not to offer additional support. Taking funding away from public schools for individuals who are choosing not to access public schools is shameful. Private schools can choose who they accept and choose who they support. The students that need us the most will be left with the least. Public dollars are for public schools.

Please protect ALL students, including those who need us the most. Vote no on SB 75.

Respectfully,
Emily Rose Patrick

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Susan Patterson
Resident in and graduate of the Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

As a lifelong Kansas resident, a proud graduate of Shawnee Mission School District, and the parent of a Shawnee Mission graduate currently excelling in her third year of pre-med studies at the University of California at Davis, I write to strongly oppose SB 75 and the proposed tax credits for private education.

My daughter's success and my own achievements are rooted in the foundation provided by public schools. Public education is not just a benefit to individual families; it is the backbone of an educated society and a vital component of our community's well-being. Shawnee Mission schools provided us with inclusive, high-quality education that prepared us to thrive in higher education and beyond. The idea of diverting public tax dollars away from institutions that provide this essential service to all children, regardless of their circumstances, is alarming and counterproductive.

Public Tax Dollars Belong with Public Schools

Public schools are accountable to taxpayers and serve every child who walks through their doors. SB 75 undermines this system by diverting public tax dollars to private schools, which are not bound by the same standards of transparency, accountability, or accessibility. Private schools have the right to select their students and may exclude children with disabilities, those learning English, or those who do not meet certain academic or behavioral criteria. This leaves public schools with fewer resources to meet the needs of the students who depend on them the most.

Rather than subsidizing private choices that many families can already afford, the legislature should focus on fully funding public schools, particularly special education, which is currently underfunded by \$173 million. Diverting tax dollars to private schools harms public schools' ability to provide essential services, especially in rural areas where private school options are virtually nonexistent.

Vouchers Are Welfare for the Wealthy

SB 75 provides significant financial benefits to families who already have the means to pay for private education while offering little to no benefit to families in need. Wealthier families, especially those with multiple children in private schools, will reap annual refunds, reducing their tax burden while contributing little to the public goods—such as schools, libraries, and infrastructure—that benefit everyone. Tax credits for private education unfairly prioritize the choices of a select few over the collective needs of all Kansans.

Public Schools Are a Public Good

Public education is a cornerstone of democracy. It creates a well-informed citizenry and strengthens our economy by producing skilled workers. Public schools provide opportunities for children from diverse backgrounds to learn, grow, and succeed together. Just as we all pay taxes to support public services like libraries and national parks, whether or not we personally use them, we must all contribute to our public schools. Allowing tax credits for private education undermines the principle that public goods serve everyone and require shared responsibility.

Lack of Oversight and Accountability

Another troubling aspect of SB 75 is the lack of oversight for private and homeschool programs that would receive public funds. Kansans deserve to know that their tax dollars are being used effectively to improve education. This bill fails to ensure that private schools are meeting basic educational standards or that students are receiving a quality education. Without accountability, there is no guarantee that these funds will benefit children or the broader community.

Impact on Rural Communities

SB 75 also unfairly disadvantages rural communities. While urban areas may have access to private schools, rural students and families depend almost entirely on public education. Diverting funds away from public schools to subsidize private education in urban centers will drain resources from rural districts, further exacerbating inequities and harming students who already face limited options.

I urge the legislature to reject SB 75 and instead focus on fully funding public education, especially special education, to ensure that all Kansas students have access to a high-quality education. Public schools are the foundation of a strong and equitable society, and we cannot afford to weaken that foundation by diverting tax dollars to private interests.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Susan A. Patterson".

Susan Patterson
6622 Outlook Drive
Mission Kansas 66202
(913) 424-4553

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Emily Penke

Parent in Shawnee Mission school district

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share
my opposition to bill SB 75.

My concern is this bill includes the usual trouble with vouchers in that there is no oversight or accountability of our public tax dollars, and private schools are allowed to discriminate in admission based on any number of criteria. Our public schools accept and educate all children regardless of their ability, religion, or other circumstances.

I am asking that you vote NO on bill SB 75.

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Melinda Preston

Parent in Shawnee Mission school district

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75.

Not only did I grow up in the Kansas public school system, but I am currently sending my own children to Kansas public schools because I know how important public school is to children not only across this state, but the nation as a whole. I have noticed my children seeing few opportunities offered due to cutbacks since the time I was a student and it breaks my heart. This bill will 100% continue to degrade what we can and should give our children. Not only that, but it is an attempt to dismantle public education in order to give a reason to remove funding all together. This bill may try to make it look like a good thing, but we can see directly through it. It is shameful and if you care for our children and our future as a prosperous nation, you will not let this bill pass.

Please, this bill will not make Kansas better. It will hurt the proper education of the vast majority of our children. It is not the way forward. Vote NO on bill SB 75. Thank you.

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Rebecca Obold-Geary
Olathe, Kansas
Private Citizen

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 75. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

I am opposed to SB 75 for the primary reason that a refundable tax credit for families whose school age children do not attend Kansas public schools is a misuse of taxpayer funds. In addition, there are no income limits, no accountability to show how much is being paid in tuition and no requirements for the school of attendance. Rural families and rural Kansans will most likely be subsidizing more urban areas. Again, this is a misuse of taxpayer funds.

In closing, as a Kansas taxpayer, I urge you to vote no on bill SB 75.

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Lane Odle
Parent in Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75. For decades, my mother worked in the public school system, serving children of all walks of life. I've seen how access to an equitable education can be transformative for Kansas kids and families.

As a product of the public school system, I was proud to enroll my daughter in the Shawnee Mission School District. She has had great teachers and diverse experiences, building friendships with kids who have special needs and are neurotypical – many of whom would not be supported at a private school.

Despite our positive experience, I've seen firsthand how limited budgets and resources have impacted the quality of education. Offering vouchers for families, who have elected to opt out of the public school system, is not sustainable. Kansas can barely afford to fund its current schools. Across the state, aging buildings need updates, teachers are missing supplies, and schools are understaffed. Moving to a multi-school system would strip our state of one of its most valuable resources – educational access for all.

My family and I do not support bill SB 75, because it is harmful to Kansas kids, educators, and the future of our state.

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Robin Olson olsonrobin711@gmail.com

Former parent in the Olathe School District, Grandparent of children in the Wellsville School District, retired teacher from the Kansas State School for the Deaf

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for your service to all the citizens in Kansas. I am writing in opposition to SB75. Here are a few of my reasons for opposing this bill:

- Kansas has a robust public education system that requires schools to educate EVERY child, regardless of income, culture, or disability. This bill would take away much needed funding from the students that need it most. One of my children required special accommodations to access the general education curriculum. Even if we had wanted to attend a private school, they would have been denied admittance based on the need for accommodations. That child has graduated from college, works full time and is raising a family. Our other child who did not need accommodations is working on a PhD and assisting at the university they attend. As a teacher, I had MANY students who were forcibly dismissed from private schools due to inability to access the curriculum or make sufficient progress. These students enrolled in our public school with accommodations and went on to learn, thrive, graduate and become contributing members of society.
- The way I understand the funding, this bill will, in effect, pay families, regardless of income, to either homeschool or send their children to private schools. Families who can already afford the choice to send their kids to private school will benefit greatly, while funding for public schools and other state services pay the price. Families in rural areas will not have such a choice and their children's education will suffer as much needed funds are diverted to wealthier, urban areas.
- Tax credits for private education are another way for wealthy families to reduce their tax burden and avoid paying their fair share.
- There are no controls in place to ensure those receiving these tax credits are providing the children with a quality education or any education at all. Kansans expect accountability for how our tax dollars are being used.

Thank you, again, for serving all citizens in Kansas. Kansans are typically pragmatic, thoughtful, and free thinking. Please keep these points in mind and vote NO on SB75. Keep Kansas public schools strong so that ALL Kansas kids can have the opportunity to learn, thrive, and become pillars of our society.

Sincerely,
Robin Olson Lenexa, Kansas

SB 75 Opposition Testimony

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Melinda Parks melindaparks85@gmail.com

Parent of Shawnee Mission School District graduate
Parent of current teacher in Turner School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to SB 75. I am a lifelong Kansan, having graduated from a rural Kansas high school and the University of Kansas. We raised our daughter in the Shawnee Mission School District, and she now teaches in the Turner School District.

I believe one of the best traits of our state historically has been our focus on quality public education. This was universally true across the state. Public education was important to my grandparents, to my parents who were educators, to my husband and I and to our children, who are all educators. Strong public schools are critical to the ongoing maintenance of high-quality communities where people want to live and work.

I am vehemently opposed to SB 75 and voucher programs in general. First and foremost, public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers. Education Tax Credits divert funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education to subsidize the private choices of some parents thus having the same negative impact as a voucher program. This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a private choice to receive a religious or other non-public education, many who can easily afford that choice. Instead of providing tax credits to Kansans who choose not to send their kids to public school, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to **fully fund special education** that is currently underfunded by \$173 million. Tax credits for private education are another way for wealthy families to reduce their tax burden and avoid paying their fair share.

Second, private schools are not required to accept all students. Public dollars should provide funding to schools who will accept any child, not those that can pick and choose which families they want to serve. Families with children with special needs, disabilities, or those for whom English is not their first language will not benefit from these tax credits as few private schools can accommodate their needs.

Finally, public schools are critical to the development of healthy communities in our state. Public schools are a public service and paid for by everyone, regardless of whether they use them or not. Just as we would not give a tax rebate to people who buy books instead of using a public library or who own private vacation homes instead of camping in national parks, the government should not refund private school tuition to parents who choose not to send their children to public schools. A

strong public education system provides benefits to the entire society, not just the individual students. The potential consequences of diverting public tax dollars to those who choose to homeschool or send their kids to private school undermines the state's ability to fund our public schools. In addition, there is a significant risk that some children may not receive adequate education if parents or guardians seek to receive the tax credit and yet provide little or no education in exchange. The lack of accountability for education provided for private or home schools makes this a real risk to Kansas students.

Again, I ask that you vote NO on SB75 for the sake of maintaining strong Kansas public schools, fully funded, accountable and available to all children.

Sincerely,

Melinda Parks

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Jennifer Partusch
Parent in Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75. Education is an essential foundation of our democratic society. Kansas must fully fund schools for all of our youth. Diverting money for parents to spend on alternatives to public education dilutes an essential service. We certainly wouldn't allow citizens to spend law enforcement budget dollars on personal home security systems, and neither should we parcel out education funds to individuals.

I have two current students in Shawnee Mission schools and two older children who graduated from Shawnee Mission schools. We were a homeschooling family until my oldest child entered 9th grade. When that firstborn child was already reading on a 6th grade level the summer before being eligible for kindergarten, it became clear to our family that whether public or private, a traditional school setting might not be the best fit. However, even during our homeschooling years, I was glad that my family's tax dollars went to public schools because I recognized that not all families have the resources to educate their children elsewhere. I saw how families often transitioned between public schools and other options for myriad reasons, but it was critical that the public school option always be there when nothing else was viable. I was personally grateful for our strong public schools when I went through a divorce and my changed family circumstances forced the difficult decision to end our homeschooling years.

I am tired of the ongoing attempts in our state to drain money from our educational system. Our children are our future and providing them with the opportunity for a high quality public education must be a priority. I ask you to defend this essential public service and vote no on bill SB 75.

Thank you for your time.

Jennifer Partusch

Opponent Oral Testimony of SB76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10, 2025
Wren Porcaro

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 76. I am Wren Porcaro from Kansas Senate District 31.

I'll be straight to the point: I simply cannot understand what purpose this bill serves besides being discriminatory towards transgender and gender non-conforming students.

Firstly, what possible harm lies in calling someone a different name—or different pronouns—that leaves legislators so scared? Here's my two cents: there is none. The only reason I could see for this bill's introduction is a wish to limit people's free speech and free expression. It is a wish that contradicts the very beginning of the bill's text which affirms the importance of free speech. It is a wish that even contradicts the principle of America as a free nation.

Now, I know that some students may try to get teachers to call them silly nicknames, and to my understanding this bill would prevent that (without parents' permission, at least), but we both know that's not the purpose of this bill. In my opinion this bill is clearly designed to target an extremely small portion of students and deny them the dignity they deserve. When I say small, I mean small. 2022 data from the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law estimates there are approximately 2,100 individuals 13-17 identifying as transgender in Kansas. When compared to the 2024 Census Bureau estimates of Kansas population under 18, very roughly 700,000 people, it becomes clear how inane it is to waste time trying to introduce a bill to prevent somewhere around 0.3 percent of our state's student population from being called the name they want. That's 0.3 percent. In a group of 100 people, that's not even one person.

Besides, this bill doesn't even consider legal name change orders by district courts as defined in K.S.A. 60-1401 and 60-1402, meaning that students who cannot get their birth certificate changed or amended (sometimes due to strict requirements in some other states or due to cost issues) can still be called an incorrect name by school officials and students without any potential repercussions, even if the student has a legal name change order.

Finally, I don't understand why this bill even mentions postsecondary educational institutions—not only do the provisions of the bill only apply to minors, but it would simply

be odd for a public university or other postsecondary educational institution to limit the free speech of students and educators, potentially preventing them from using the name and pronouns that they wish to use. That is simply a limitation that goes against legal precedent affirming students' First Amendment rights and right to free expression at public universities.

This bill simply has no purpose but to aid and abet in the harassment of young and vulnerable transgender students. It is unnecessary, it is harmful, and it is discriminatory. It allows students to harass their peers by calling them the wrong name. It allows, and even in some cases requires, teachers to harass their students by calling them the wrong name.

Using someone's preferred name and pronouns is not a matter of ideology, it is a matter of dignity and respect. I would not call Chair Erickson or any other Member of the Committee by their first name, or by a title such as "Mr." if they use "Ms.,"/"Mrs." (or vice versa). I see no difference between this and people choosing a name that they wish to use. Calling me by my legal name would simply be wrong, because no one knows me by my legal name. They know me as Wren because that's how I introduce myself and ask people to refer to me, and people respect that. To support this bill shows to me that you don't respect transgender students and that you don't respect me.

I urge you to consider the harm that this bill causes, in exchange for... what exactly? I believe the harm that this bill causes vastly overshadows any potential for harm that its absence could cause, for what exactly is the harm in calling someone the name that they use? It's clear to me: there is none, at least other than some vague fear of "pronouns" and "gender identity" by some members of this Committee or their party.

I thank Chair Erickson and the Members of the Committee again for this opportunity to provide testimony against Senate Bill 76. I urge you to oppose this harmful bill.

Thank you.

Wren Porcaro

February 10, 2025

SB 75 Opposition Testimony (Written Only)

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Angie Powers, private citizen

angierpowers@gmail.com

Chair Erickson and members of the committee,

Thank you for your work representing Kansas voters in Topeka. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 75, based on my experiences as a mother of two Kansas public school graduates and as a public school educator for 25 years.

Our public schools are the cornerstone of Kansas communities, operating under rigorous requirements to serve all students, regardless of background, ability, or circumstance. Unlike private schools, public schools do not pick and choose which students or families they serve. Senate Bill 75 would divert public funds away from these schools, weakening their ability to deliver on the promise of a quality public school for every Kansas child.

Voucher programs, like those in Senate Bill 75, historically fail to benefit families most in need. Private school tuition often exceeds voucher amounts, leaving vouchers accessible primarily to families already planning to send their children to private schools. I respect every family's right to choose the best educational setting for their children, but public funds should not be diverted to subsidize private schools that are not held to the same rules and accountability as public schools.

This bill would be especially harmful to rural communities, where private schools are often nonexistent. Public schools are the backbone of these areas, and reallocating funds to private schools in urban and suburban areas would leave rural schools with fewer resources to serve their students' diverse needs.

As a mom and an educator, I've seen the transformative impact of public schools on both my children and my students. Public schools bring students from all walks of life together to learn, grow, and prepare for the future. They work tirelessly to improve and meet the needs of every child.

If Senate Bill 75 passes, it will weaken neighborhood public schools. Public funds belong in public schools, which serve all students. I urge you to oppose this bill and instead support policies that strengthen Kansas public schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Angie Powers