

Testimony of Keara Richardson
Before the Senate Committee on Education
In Support of SB 114
Wednesday, February 12, 2025

Good afternoon. My name is Keara Richardson. My husband and I have homeschooled our many children in Wallace County for 14 years. I have called Wallace County, Kansas “home” my entire life, minus 4 years of college. I, myself, am a graduate of Wallace County High School and had the pleasure of competing as a student-athlete in 3 sports for all four years of high school. In 2023, with the passage of SB 113, our homeschooled children were able to play sports for our local public school, USD 241. If you’re unfamiliar with rural Kansas communities, sporting events are often a main source of entertainment, and quite often the ONLY source of entertainment, so this opportunity was welcomed in our home. Our 4 children (3 high schoolers and 1 middle schooler) began to wear Wildcat uniforms and represent Wallace County Schools.

Although we were excited, we were also aware that the new law was not welcomed by everyone at the school, but we knew our children would be playing with friends they had known their entire lives, so we felt confident it would be a good experience. Our children had the same responsibilities as the enrolled students in following the district’s rules and policies: communicating absences with staff, following cell phone usage rules, dress codes, codes of conduct, among other things.

After hearing through other students that our Senior daughter was not going to be allowed to participate in the district’s annual Senior Night, we inquired of administration what their policy was. After that meeting an emergency board meeting was called creating policy preventing homeschooled students from participating in Senior Night, sighting the language of SB 113 as justification for the exclusion.

At the annual Activities Banquet, none of the homeschooled children were allowed to receive letters or be recognized in the pictures of award winners. Even though their coaches all confirmed that the requirements of letter-winning set forth in the school handbook had been met, the administration made the decision not to award them letters strictly because they are homeschooled. This administrative decision was never communicated directly to us, but was confirmed by a school board member who inquired on our behalf.

Our school district used SB 113, a law meant to INCLUDE non-public school students, to exclude and discriminate AGAINST them. This resolution would protect non-public school students from such discrimination and ensure that school districts use the law, lawfully. Every non-public school student that has a legal right to these activities should not have to be burdened by unnecessary exclusion and the discriminatory behaviors a district may hold. I would ask you to support this resolution and put an end to any future discrimination of non-public school students. Thank you.