

February 2, 2023

Dear Elected Official,

I am writing this letter today to endorse in the strongest possible way the “Sunflower Education Equity Act” (HB 2218). For 19 years I have been personally involved in a local private school as a parent, teacher or administrator. Our children attended this private school for 12 years and during those 12 years we were paying tuition and paying our taxes to support the local public school. It was a significant burden for us as a family but we knew it was a sacrifice that was best for our children and we have never regretted that decision. For the 19 years that I have served in some capacity at a private school it has been painful to encounter other families that truly believed that a private school would be a better fit for their student but were unable to make it happen financially. Some families, even with sacrifices and extra jobs are not able to give their children the educational choice that they believe would be best for their children. It seems like a simple and fair solution to allow some of the finances that are allocated for education to follow the child, so that all families can make the best choice for their child.

In over thirty states, families have some viable options that empower them to choose the best educational fit for their child(ren). I believe it is time that Kansas joins that growing list of states. As an educator I know that one size fits all does not work for every child. We have many families at our school who have some of their children in our school and also have others in either public school or homeschool. It seems right to allow those that know the child best, the parent or guardian, to have the freedom to choose their educational path without having to jump over the huge financial hurdle that they now face. Many of the private schools in our state educate students for about one third to one half of what is spent on the education of the same child in the public setting. But even though this is a great value, paying even these amounts for tuition on top of taxes automatically disenfranchises a large number of Kansas families.

Please seize this opportunity to invest in Kansas children and the future of our state, by giving parents the freedom to choose the best educational option for their child(ren) and pass the “Sunflower Education Equity Act.”

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Allen Siemens
Lead Administrator
Elyria Christian School
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Representative Williams and Representative Carpenter,

I am the parent of one school-age child (and another who will be of school age next year) in Derby, KS and am writing to provide written testimony as a **proponent for HB 2218**.

In 2020, my son, Griffin was diagnosed as dyslexic. At that time, he was in first grade in the Derby school district. He was behind in his reading and speech capabilities and was falling behind. During his time in the public school system, he would come home from school defeated, saying things like "I hate school", "I am stupid", and many tear-filled nights. At the recommendation of his teacher, we investigated the Rolph Literacy Academy (RLA) in Wichita and chose to enroll him for the start of his 2nd grade year. Since his enrollment at RLA, Griffin's confidence and measurable learning milestones (reading, writing, computer skills, and speech) have increased immeasurably. He is now reading at a level close to grade level, has a passion for learning, and has confidence in his intelligence.

Tuition for RLA is 1,300 dollars a month, this is a steep amount for my family. As a Technical Sergeant in the Kansas Air National Guard and husband to a small business owner, many financial sacrifices have been made in order to ensure our child gets the appropriate education. RLA tuition accounts for roughly 15% of my monthly income. My wife Emily and I are firm believers in acts of service, we both have chosen career paths that allow us to be productive and impacting relationships within our community and state. Education is a key component of our ability to have these impacts. I am grateful that we as a family have been able to afford the option to send Griffin to RLA. However, the financial sacrifices we have had to make have us concerned for how long we can afford it. We have investigated moving to Colorado, selling our house, and possibly re-enrolling Griffin back into the public school system. With my youngest son also potentially needing dyslexic focused education we will not be able to afford sending two children to RLA. We are now forced to have the unfortunate discussions of which of our sons will get the education they need.

The Educational Savings Account (ESA) would enable my family and others to educate our youth in a manner consistent with the goals of our great state and nation. As a parent and proud Kansan, I believe it is imperative that we educate our youth to become future leaders to ensure the continued success of Kansas.

I am willing to testify in-person, written-only, or via Webex.

Thank you for your time and your service,
Benjamin P Forsberg
Derby resident
Bpforsberg89@gmail.com
3166400847

As a retired teacher, school administrator and parent, I am providing written testimony as a proponent for HB 2218. Many students, including my son, occasionally require help beyond what a busy classroom teacher can provide. In our case, a math tutor was critical for his success to continue through a college-prep K-12 curriculum. One-on-one tutoring provided him with the support he needed to understand the material. Fortunately, we were able to pay out-of-pocket for this assistance. Our son is now a practicing attorney in New York City but without significant intervention in middle and high school, this outcome would have been derailed.

Unfortunately, not all Kansas parents can afford the tutoring, testing and materials necessary to maximize a student's success. This bill will allow more parents the luxury of providing the necessities.

Dana Hensley
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(316)350-5495 (Cell)

January 25, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing today to express my support for the sunflower education equity program. The sunflower education equity program is hereby established to recognize the right of parents to choose the educational environment that best serves their children.

Kansas Hope Scholarship Act - which would provide education savings accounts for students. In section 3a of the act, it states, "The purpose of the Kansas hope scholarship program is to provide the option for a parent to better meet the individual educational needs of such parent's student." School choice options are now enacted in 32 states. Unfortunately, Kansas is one of the 18 states that does not have a program.

As the superintendent of Central Christian Academy (CCA) in Wichita, I am proud of the work the private schools in Wichita are performing independent of public funds. CCA, Trinity Academy, Sunrise Christian Academy, Classical School of Wichita, Wichita Collegiate School and the Independent School are all, not only surviving, but thriving. In the past three years, CCA's enrollment has increased 24% - an increase that is common across Kansas' Christian and private schools. It is clear that parents want to choose the best school for their children and are willing to invest in their education.

As an educator of children, I have supported public school bond issues in the communities where I have lived over the years. This is because I have a desire for every student to have a great school and I support my many friends who teach and serve students in our public schools. The support that the state of Kansas grants to these schools is supported by the Christian and private schools in the state.

However, if a small percentage of the state's budget could be allocated for the Kansas Hope Scholarship Act, I believe that it would open the door for more outstanding families to find the school that best meets the educational needs of their students. And we believe that some would choose our school.

We are proud that at CCA the diversity of our school nearly matches the diversity of the city of Wichita. However, we believe that, if given the choice, many more qualified minority families would choose to send their students to CCA if they had the opportunity.

As you know, nearly \$17,000 per student is spent on the public education of each child in Kansas, while schools like CCA are accomplishing the same or even better quality of education for approximately half that cost. But, because our families must pay the tuition costs, this creates a barrier that excludes many families from seeking enrollment at our school.

I love the name of the act we support – because its root word is hope. Providing hope to a child through a rigorous and faith-based education is what schools like CCA are all about and we believe that as proud Kansans, our current and future students deserve to be represented and recognized through this legislation. I strongly encourage you and ask you to consider support for the Kansas Hope Scholarship Act.

With hope for a stronger Kansas,

David Landis
Superintendent

Dear Kansas House K-12 Education Budget,

February 6, 2023

My name is Dalena Wallace from District 114, and I am submitting this letter to urge you to pass HB 2218. I am a homeschooling mom who believes that every family should have the opportunity to choose the best school options for their kids. Homeschooling has allowed me the ability to design a unique educational situation for each of my six children that is unique to their individual needs. I will attest to the fact that no two kids are the same or learn in the same way. I understand that not every family has the means or the ability to stay home and offer individualized learning for their children, but I believe that they must have options and the funding to find the best fit.

In addition to being a homeschooling mom, I am also very active in the microschoooling movement. I am the founder and president of Wichita Innovative Schools and Educators, (WISE), a support system and educational collaboration for school founders or education entrepreneurs who are serving families outside of the traditional school system. There is a growing number of individuals who are creating innovative options to better serve children and there will be more opportunities in the coming years. ESAs would allow families to afford these school options and to apply funds directly to the individual child's educational needs. Please vote yes on HB2218.

Sincerely,
Dalena Wallace
8304 S. Partridge Rd.
Partridge, KS 67566
720-339-0708

I am the parent of two school-age children in Derby, KS and am writing to provide written testimony as a proponent for HB 2218.

Our oldest son struggled to learn how to read, despite excelling in so many areas, including vocabulary, mathematics, and social skills. We suspected that he might be dyslexic as early as pre-school, but our concerns were pushed aside until the end of first grade, when he was still struggling with letter direction, writing, and reading. He came home every day believing he was stupid, when that was just not true. The school's response was to work with him on the side, but that was not enough to get him up to speed. We were looking at the possibility of entering special education or holding him back a year, which did not fit our incredibly smart son and his educational needs.

After paying to have him evaluated for dyslexia, which cost \$125, my husband enrolled in a program that would teach him how to evaluate and work with our son's dyslexia needs. This program cost us a few hundred dollars. As a small business owner, and with a spouse in the military, we do not have the ability to do homeschooling and felt that it was fundamentally wrong to take our child from school every day to do tutoring, and homework every night. This would not allow him to be a kid. He should be getting the education to learn to read that he needs in school every day, without stressing him with after-school work. We decided that enrolling him in a private school would provide him the ability to learn to read using scientifically proven methods, and the attention he needed to master these skills during the school day. This program costs our family \$1350 each month of school, a total of \$12,150 a year. This payment is more than our mortgage and we struggle to make ends meet each month because of this choice.

Additionally, we have a younger son who will be in kindergarten this coming semester. It is yet to be determined if he will need reading and writing intervention, but he does currently require speech therapy due to a neurological condition diagnosed by a pediatric neurologist. Through Rainbows United, prior to his diagnosis, we were matched with our local school for special education part-time. Again, we did not think it was right to have him bused alone from his daycare to the school for half days. Since starting his anti-seizure medication his speech has developed significantly, but we have had to enroll him in speech therapy. We see this therapist weekly, a program that costs us about \$500 a year. He will also go through dyslexia screening and may need private schooling as well. Something I don't know that we can afford.

My husband and I were raised in public schools and we have always seen ourselves sending our children to them. We believe that public schools should be able to meet the needs of all children. We consider ourselves fortunate to be able to scrape by and get our children the educational intervention that they need and deserve. Many families do not have that luxury, and often times their children are the ones that need it most. This plan would help us to keep our heads above water financially, while still getting the children the education they need.

Furthermore, I believe that it would be a worthwhile investment to train teachers on how to recognize and work with children like mine that struggle with language development.

My name is Emily Forsberg and I am willing to testify in whatever manner is required, in person, written or via Webex.

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Emily Forsberg
CEO & Founder
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Representative Tim Johnson
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EdChoice Testimony for Kansas House of Representatives K-12 Education Budget Committee

Re: HB 2218
Marc LeBlond
Director of Policy
EdChoice
February 3, 2023

The Sunflower state is home to just over of half a million K-12 students, with 502,000. Of those, 441,000, or 88 percent, attend their public district school. By extension, only 12 percent of Kansan K-12 students attend an educational option outside the traditional public school. [Yet 57 percent of Kansas school parents](#) would choose a different educational option over their district school if they could.

Kansas currently offers its citizens one private choice program, the [Tax Credit for Low-Income Students Scholarship Program](#). Currently, [0.3 percent of Kansas K-12 students](#) have access to private education through a government program, also known as the “EdChoice Share.” Kansas ranks 25th in the nation by this measure.

At EdChoice, our mission is to advance educational freedom and choice for all students as a pathway to successful lives and a stronger society. For many American families, their local public school is their best educational choice. But many others need a different option. In Kansas, policymakers should address the gap between what families want and what they have access to with all deliberate speed.

Additionally Kansas ranks 36th in the United States in NAEP (Nation’s Report Card) [Math Proficiency](#) for 8th graders, and [42nd at Reading](#). Looking at non-academic measures, Kansas ranks [23rd in the nation in incarceration](#) at 698 per thousand, and [29th in the poverty rate](#), at 11 percent.

The empirical data clearly show that Kansas can improve quality of life for its citizens across all these measures by offering parents more options and flexibility in educating their children. Education Savings Accounts, now adopted in ten states, with recent passages in Iowa and Utah, offer parents and students that transformative flexibility.

An "education savings account" in K–12 education – often called an ESA – establishes for parents a government-authorized savings account with restricted, but multiple uses for educational purposes. Parents can then use these funds to pay for: school tuition; tutoring; online education programs; therapies for students with special needs; textbooks or other instructional materials; or save for future



college expenses. An ESA model not only gives parents purchasing power, but it also gives them broad discretion and flexibility over the child's education. It gives them a form of ownership in the same way a Health Savings Account gives the patient ownership over their medical spending.

According to recent polling, [74 percent of Kansas school parents favor](#) Education Savings Accounts, as defined above. In keeping with the EdChoice mission of educational freedom and choice for all, EdChoice supports universal access to Education Savings Accounts, as a means to propel all children into a happy and prosperous adulthood. Universal access benefits all students, and it particularly benefits students from lower income households.

Other hallmarks of a well-designed educational choice program include:

- a high proportion of state aid following the student to the educational setting of their parent's choice;
- broad, flexible use for parents, including transportation and unbundled course options at public school;
- cross-access for students across multiple choice programs;
- administered by an impartial agency, such as Treasury, often in partnership with a private 3rd party;
- parent input on the implementation side;
- and year over year carryover of funds with the options to spend on college.

Milton and Rose D. Friedman pioneered the idea of universal school choice as a mechanism to drive the lasting improvement of our education system. As Kansas policymakers weigh options to improve the quality of public education for all students, they should strongly consider adopting pluralistic choice measures, such as Education Savings Accounts.

Ultimately, every education dollar should follow every child to any educational setting that their parents deem appropriate for their child's needs and talents. The education system in Kansas should be designed with the child—not the institution itself—at the center.

Submitted Respectfully.

Marc LeBlond
Director of Policy, EdChoice

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School Choice Bibliography

If you're looking for a proper bibliography of the empirical literature on the effects of educational choice programs, look no further. Below is a comprehensive and properly cited list of empirical studies conducted to date on the effects of educational choice programs on students, public schools, family satisfaction, segregation, civic values and state finances.

[Reviews of School Choice Research](#)

[Academic Outcomes of Participants](#)

[Program Participant Attainment](#)

[Parental Satisfaction](#)

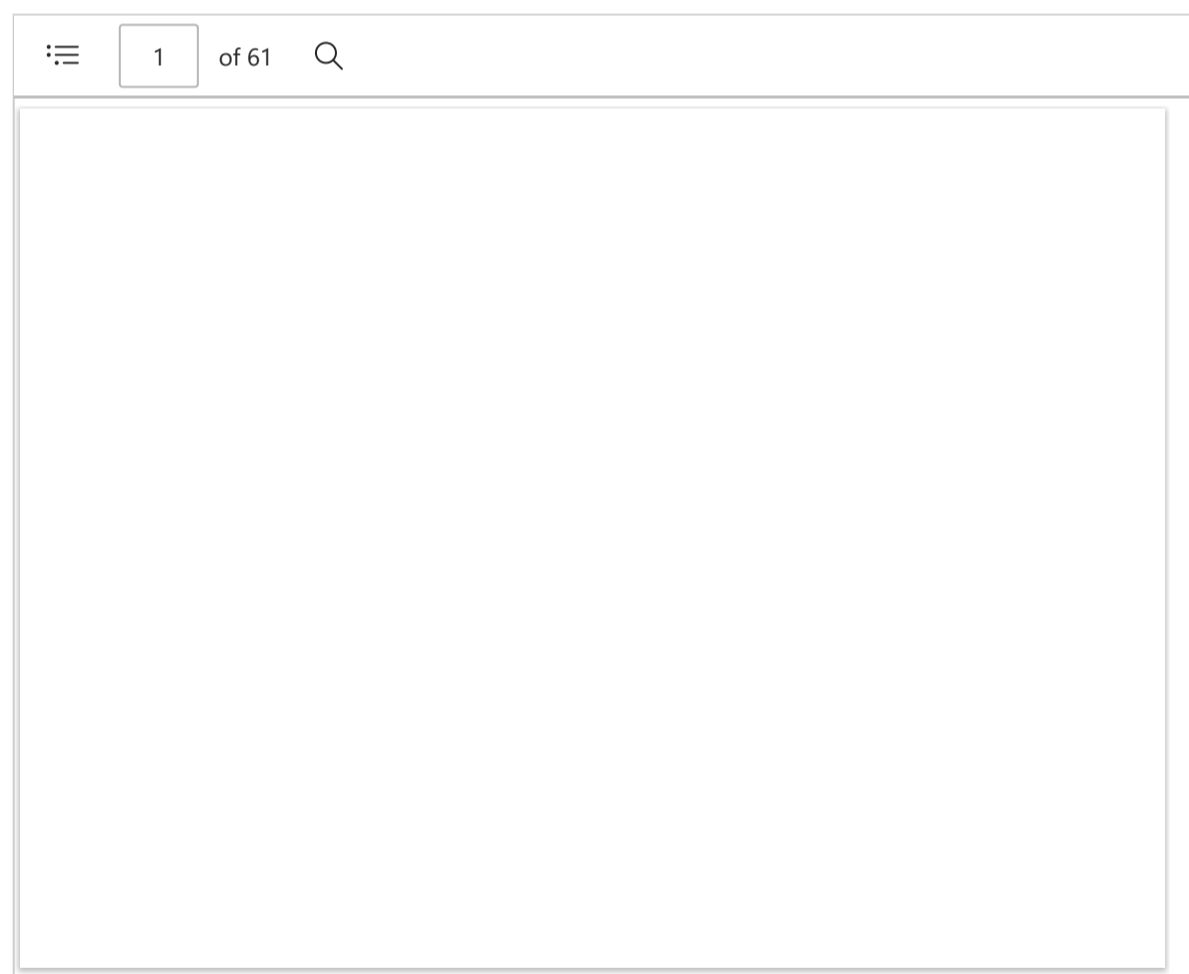
[Public School Students' Test Scores](#)

[Civic Values and Practices](#)

[Racial/Ethnic Integration](#)

[Fiscal Impact on Taxpayers and Public Schools](#)

updated: April 22, 2022



Reviews of School Choice Research

*Studies included in these reviews are empirical by research design and observing the outcomes of publicly or privately funded school choice programs in K-12 education, and research reviews are systematically conducted and establish clear inclusion criteria.

- Jude Schwalbach and Corey A. DeAngelis, Ph.D. (2020). School Choice and Safety: Reviewing the School Safety Evidence on Private and Charter Schools in the U.S., EdChoice, Working Paper 2020-2, retrieved from: <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/05-20-School-Choice-and-Safety-Working-Paper.pdf>
- Huriya Jabbar, Carlton J. Fong, Emily Germain, Dongmei Li, Joanna Sanchez, Wei-Ling Sun, and Michelle Devall (2019). The competitive effects of school choice on student achievement: A systematic review. *Educational Policy*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904819874756>
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- Leesa M. Foreman (2017). Educational Attainment Effects of Public and Private School Choice. *Journal of School Choice*, 11(4), pp. 642–654. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2017.1395619>
- Dennis Epple, Richard E. Romano, and Miguel Urquiola (2017). School Vouchers: A Survey of the Economics Literature. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 55(2), 441–92. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/jel.20150679>
- Michael R. Ford and Fredrik O. Andersson (2017). Taking Stock and Moving Forward: Lessons from Two Plus Decades on the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. *Journal of School Choice*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2017.1350085>
- Evan Rhinesmith (2017). A Review of the Research on Parent Satisfaction in Private School Choice Programs. *Journal of School Choice*, 11(4), pp. 585–603. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2017.1395639>
- Elise Swanson (2017). Can We Have It All? A Review of the Impacts of School Choice on Racial Integration. *Journal of School Choice*, 11(4), p. 507–526. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2017.1395644>
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- Anna J. Egalite and Patrick J. Wolf (2016). A Review of the Empirical Research on Private School Choice. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 91(4), 441–454. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2016.1207436>
- Greg Forster (2016). A Win-Win Solution: The Empirical Evidence on School Choice (4th ed.). Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice. Retrieved from EdChoice website: <http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/A-Win-Win-Solution-The-Empirical-Evidence-on-School-Choice.pdf>
- Danish Shakeel, Kaitlin P. Anderson, and Patrick J. Wolf (2016). The Participant Effects of Private School Vouchers across the Globe: A Meta-Analytic and Systematic Review (EDRE Working Paper 2016-07). <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2777633>. For more information, see: University of Arkansas. Overall TOT Impacts by Year – US Voucher RCTs: Math [Image file], Accessed January 3, 2019. Retrieved from <http://www.uaedreform.org/downloads/2017/04/u-s-voucher-experiments-math-impacts-by-year.png>; University of Arkansas. Overall TOT Impacts by Year – US Voucher RCTs: Reading [Image file]. Accessed January 3, 2019. Retrieved from <http://www.uaedreform.org/downloads/2017/04/u-s-voucher-experiments-reading-impacts-by-year.png>

Patrick J. Wolf and Anna J. Egalite (2016). Pursuing Innovation: How Can Educational Choice Transform K-12 Education in the U.S.?. Retrieved from EdChoice website: <http://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2016-4-Pursuing-Innovation-WEB-1.pdf>

Anna J. Egalite (2013). Measuring Competitive Effects from School Voucher Programs: A Systematic Review. *Journal of School Choice*, 7(4), 443–464. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2013.837759>

Patrick J. Wolf (2008). School Voucher Programs: What the Research Says About Parental School Choice. *Brigham Young University Law Review*, 2(9), 415–446.

Academic Outcomes of Participants

*When considering studies on the effects of school choice programs on the academic outcomes of participating students, we only cite studies that use a random assignment methodology—considered the gold standard in the social sciences. You can learn more about the design and use of randomized control trials in [this helpful blog post](#).

Heidi H. Erickson, Jonathan N. Mills and Patrick J. Wolf (2021): The Effects of the Louisiana Scholarship Program on Student Achievement and College Entrance, *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2021.1938311>

Ann Webber, Ning Rui, Roberta Garrison-Mogren, Robert B. Olsen, and Babette Gutmann (2019), *Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Three Years After Students Applied* (NCEE 2019-4006), retrieved from Institute of Education Sciences website: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20194006/pdf/20194006.pdf>

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Eric Bettinger and Robert Slonim (2006). Using Experimental Economics to Measure the Effects of a Natural Educational Experiment on Altruism. *Journal of Public Economics*, 90(8-9), pp. 1625-1648. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2005.10.006>

Alan Krueger and Pei Zhu (2004). Another Look at the New York City School Voucher Experiment. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47(5), pp. 658-698. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0002764203260152>

John Barnard, Constantine Frangakis, Jennifer Hill, and Donald Rubin (2003). Principal Stratification Approach to Broken Randomized Experiments: A Case Study of School Choice Vouchers in New York City. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 98(462), pp. 310-326. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1198/0162145030000071>

William G. Howell, Patrick J. Wolf, David E. Campbell, and Paul E. Peterson (2002). School Vouchers and Academic Performance: Results from Three Randomized Field Trials. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 21(2), pp. 191-217. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1002/pam.10023>

Jay P. Greene (2001). Vouchers in Charlotte. *Education Matters*, 1(2), pp. 55-60. Retrieved from Education Next website: http://educationnext.org/files/ednext20012_46b.pdf

Jay P. Greene, Paul Peterson, and Jiangtao Du (1999). Effectiveness of School Choice: The Milwaukee Experiment. *Education and Urban Society*, 31(2), pp. 190-213. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0013124599031002005>

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** This paper is an update to the analysis from: Matthew M. Chingos and Paul E. Peterson (2015). Experimentally Estimated Impacts of School Vouchers on College Enrollment and Degree Attainment. *Journal of Public Economics*, 122, pp. 1–12. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2014.11.013>

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Parent Satisfaction

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Legislative Audit Bureau (2017). *Special Needs Scholarship Program* (Report 18-6). Retrieved from Wisconsin State Legislature website: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/lab/media/2753/18-6full.pdf>

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Note: A study is a unique set of one or more data analyses, published together, of a single school choice program. “Unique” means using data and analytic specifications not identical to those in previously reported studies. “Published” means reported to the public in any type of publication, paper, article or report. By this definition, all data analyses on a single school choice program that are reported in a single publication are taken together as one “study,” but analyses studying multiple programs are taken as multiple studies even if they are published together.

- Three studies appear within the Howell & Peterson (2002) publication.
- Egalite (2014), Chakrabarti (2008), Greene and Forster (2002), and Hammons (2002) are publications that contain what we define as two unique studies.

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Education Savings Accounts: Giving Every Child the Chance to Succeed

Written Testimony for the Kansas House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

February 2, 2023

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Will Skillman Fellow in Education
The Heritage Foundation

My name is Jonathan Butcher. I am the Will Skillman Fellow in Education at The Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

After the pandemic, as researchers report steep learning losses across grade levels and subjects, the call for quality learning options is especially urgent. According to a report in the *Topeka Capital-Journal*, one-third of students “fell behind their grade level in math and language arts” after the onset of COVID-19.¹

Lawmakers around the country are acting quickly to give all students, from all income levels and backgrounds, more opportunities in education. In Arizona, home to the nation’s longest-running account option, every school-aged child can apply for an education savings account, similar to the accounts described in the proposal before this committee for “sunflower education equity scholarship accounts.” In West Virginia, all children from assigned schools can apply for an account. In January of this year, lawmakers in Utah and Iowa approved account-style solutions with universal eligibility during National School Choice Week.

Students have serious needs. Lawmakers are appropriately thinking big.

With an education savings account, the state deposits a portion of a child’s funds from the state education formula into a private account that parents use to buy education products and

services for their children.² Lawmakers in 11 states have enacted the accounts or account-style programs.

Again, accounts in the nation’s two largest programs in terms of participation, Arizona and Florida, are similar to this Kansas proposal. Education savings accounts allow parents and students to select multiple learning options simultaneously. It is not unusual for account holders to find a personal tutor for their child, enroll their student in education therapy services, and pay for instructional materials to be used at home—at the same time. Some families may choose a private school, with or without other education services, while others will decide on a set of learning alternatives instead.

Parents want to be able to challenge their students and are prepared to customize their child’s learning experience. One Arizona mom, Amanda Howard, explained in the *Arizona Republic* that doctors had diagnosed her son as being on the autism spectrum, and despite receiving special services in a district school, he had not learned to talk.³ After using an account to select a speech therapist of their choosing, a specialist his parents chose based on his needs, “Nathan has learned to talk and he loves learning to spell and even reading books.... He’s using complete sentences and even asking and answering questions on a regular basis.”⁴

In Florida, Andrea Wiggins, a mom of three adopted children and two biological

children uses an account for her adopted daughter, Elizabeth, to buy instructional materials for use in the home. In an interview, the mom said, “I could reinforce what was and wasn’t happening in the classroom.” Today, Elizabeth has returned to a district school, and her mom says we “wouldn’t be where we are without the intense therapies that I was able to do” because of the scholarship.

In recent years, education savings account operations have been improved in order to offer easier access to parents and more transparency to taxpayers and policymakers. State officials—such as those in Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, and West Virginia—contract with private entities that allow account holders to make purchases only at specific vendors (those that sell products or services allowed by law).⁵ Before a purchase is made, a digital system confirms that the vendor is approved and the account holder is in good standing. Then this system facilitates the payment from the agency to the provider or school. Every dollar a parent spends is tracked and followed from the state to the account holder to the education product or service provider.

In this way, each transaction has protections on three sides: Parents do not have the option to buy items from unapproved vendors; the state or its contractor confirms that a transaction is legitimate before authorizing the transfer of money; and the state must authorize vendors or keep a simple method of approving new providers and making the list of vendors available to account holders.

In 2013 and 2016, researchers found that approximately one-third of Arizona account holders used their child’s ESA for more than one education product or service.⁶

Again, parents’ access to textbooks, personal tutors, education therapists, online classes, and more is what makes the accounts unique among private learning options in states around the country. In 2018, researchers found that more than one-third of account holders in Florida purchased more than one item or service and also found that among these

families purchasing more than one product or service, more than half (55 percent) did not purchase private school tuition—making them “customizers” of their children’s educations.⁷

In 2021, a study of North Carolina account holders found, for the first time, that a majority of account holders used their child’s ESA for more than one product or service. Sixty-four percent of account holders used their child’s ESA to select more than one education item or learning provider.⁸

This report also found that families using the accounts lived in ZIP codes where the average income was close to the statewide median. Fifty-three percent of account holders—more than half—live in areas in which the median income is within \$10,000 of the statewide median. These findings mean that students from families of modest means are benefitting from the ESAs.

According to the report, families using private school scholarships at the same time as they participated in the North Carolina’s education savings account option also purchased more than one item or service. In this state, families can access an education savings account and a K–12 private school scholarship option for children with special needs or from low-income families. Even families that accessed an account and a scholarship used the new opportunities to pay for more than private school tuition, providing evidence that when the accounts are offered to families in addition to scholarships or vouchers, parents will still make education purchases according to a child’s needs.

Finally, researchers have found high levels of parent satisfaction with the accounts. In Mississippi and Arizona, surveys have found 90 percent or more of account holders reporting some level of satisfaction.⁹

The future of learning is an exciting, hopeful place for students from all walks of life—our students should have the opportunity to use an education savings account in the same way that every child can attend an assigned district school.

Every child should have the opportunity to succeed in school and in life.

After the pandemic, as researchers report steep learning losses across grade levels and subjects, the call for quality learning options is especially urgent. Education savings accounts empower parents with the ability to meet every

child’s unique education needs and should be available to all school-aged children. Students need options such as ESAs now more than ever.

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¹ Suzanne Perez, “Test Scores Show Kansas Students Suffered Sharp Learning Loss During COVID-19 Pandemic,” *The Topeka Capital-Journal*, November 28, 2021, <https://www.cjonline.com/story/news/2021/11/28/tests-show-kansas-students-had-learning-loss-during-covid-19-pandemic/8764140002/>.

² Jonathan Butcher, “A Primer on Education Savings Accounts: Giving Every Child the Chance to Succeed,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 3245, September 15, 2017, <https://www.heritage.org/education/report/primer-education-savings-accounts-giving-every-child-the-chance-succeed>.

³ Amanda Howard, “How a Scholarship Helped My Son Learn to Talk,” *Arizona Republic*, May 12, 2014, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/2014/05/12/scholarship-account-helped-son-learn-talk/9011275/> (accessed April 4, 2019).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority, “Education Savings Account (ESA): Information for Schools,” <http://www.ncseaa.edu/pdf/SS-ESA.pdf> (accessed April 4, 2019).

⁶ Lindsey M. Burke, “The Education Debit Card: What Arizona Parents Purchase with Education Savings Accounts,” EdChoice, August 2013, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/2013-8-Education-Debit-Card-WEB-NEW.pdf>, and Jonathan Butcher and Lindsey M. Burke, “The Education Debit Card II: What Arizona Parents Purchase with Education Savings Accounts,” EdChoice, February 2016, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2016-2-The-Education-Debit-Card-II-WEB-1.pdf>.

⁷ Lindsey Burke and Jason Bedrick, “Personalizing Education: How Florida Families Use Education Savings Accounts,” EdChoice, February 2018, <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Personalizing-Education-By-Lindsey-Burke-and-Jason-Bedrick.pdf>.

⁸ Jonathan Butcher, “A Culture of Personalized Learning,” John Locke Foundation, August 13, 2021, <https://www.johnlocke.org/research/a-culture-of-personalized-learning/>.

⁹ Butcher, “A Primer on Education Savings Accounts.”

Greetings,

My name is Julie Christensson and I am willing to testify via Webex or written testimony.

As the parent of two school-age children in Wichita, Kansas, I am writing to you today in support of HB 2218. My oldest son began kindergarten in a public school in Fall 2017. My husband and I had done everything we could to prepare our son for kindergarten but his journey was anything but smooth. What we didn't realize then is that our son is profoundly dyslexic.

In a traditional educational setting, progress is expected in relation to age and grade. By the time a child starts kindergarten, they should know their letters. By the end of kindergarten, they are expected to know and recognize over 100 sight words. By first grade, they should be reading short books (not to mention writing and spelling). But what about the kids that aren't progressing? We did everything possible – reading aloud to our child every single night, working on spelling and sight words every evening in kindergarten. The school resisted assessing him for special education but we pushed and pushed and he finally received an IEP in 1st grade when the results showed he was only in the 2nd percentile for reading. The IEP basically said the school would give him a para. They refused to pull him out of his regular class for reading because they didn't want him to feel “singled out” but somehow this para was going to help him catch up to his peers despite having no special training to do so.

By the Fall of 2019, we had had enough of public school. Our son was traumatized, convinced he was “stupid” and that nobody believed in him. Thankfully, we are lucky enough to live near one of two schools in the state of Kansas that specialized in dyslexia. That was four years ago. Today our son is thriving at Rolph Literacy Academy. The small classroom sizes (no more than 4 kids in each reading class) and teachers trained in structured literacy have created a haven for kids like mine that traditional schools simply cannot help. He is able to move at his own pace in every subject, grouped with kids at his academic level, not just his age. More than anything, RLA has taught my son to love himself again.

While I am ever grateful to RLA, we are ever mindful of how expensive it is to provide our children (our younger son is also dyslexic and attends RLA now) with this opportunity. We have spent over \$85,000 in tuition alone for our boys over the last four years. While it has been worth every penny, this cost has not come without sacrifice for our family. We are your average middle class family – we make too much money to qualify for any financial assistance but we find ourselves budgeting every dollar to be sure we can continue to afford to give our sons' the education they absolutely need. Having an Educational Savings Account to set aside pre-tax dollars for our sons' education expenses would be immensely helpful to our family.

Thank you for your time,

Julie Christensson

316-350-6278

- a) Name of conferee and organization/agency representing (if applicable)
 - a. [JOSHUA SAMUEL MILLAN](#)
- b) Contact information (email required)
 - a. JMILLAN712@GMAIL.COM
 - b. 11712 Canterbury Court, Leawood, KS 66211
- c) Bill number and Bill title/topic
 - a. [HB 2218 Establishing the Sunflower education equity act to provide education savings accounts for qualified students in Kansas.](#)
- d) Position on bill: opponent, proponent, or neutral
 - a. [Proponent](#)
- e) Testimony Type
 - a. [Written Testimony](#)

Testimony

My name is Joshua Millan and I reside in Leawood, Kansas near State Line Road and 119th. I am encouraged by this bill but like many other families who live in border communities, the KC Metro in my circumstance, send my children to school “across the road” in Missouri, but just 1 mile away. (See map on next page to see distribution of private schools near Leawood.

The current bill restricts benefits to qualified schools which must be based in Kansas. This criteria would exclude my family and others similarly situated from eligibility like other Kansans, because the non-government school we send our children to is just across the state line.

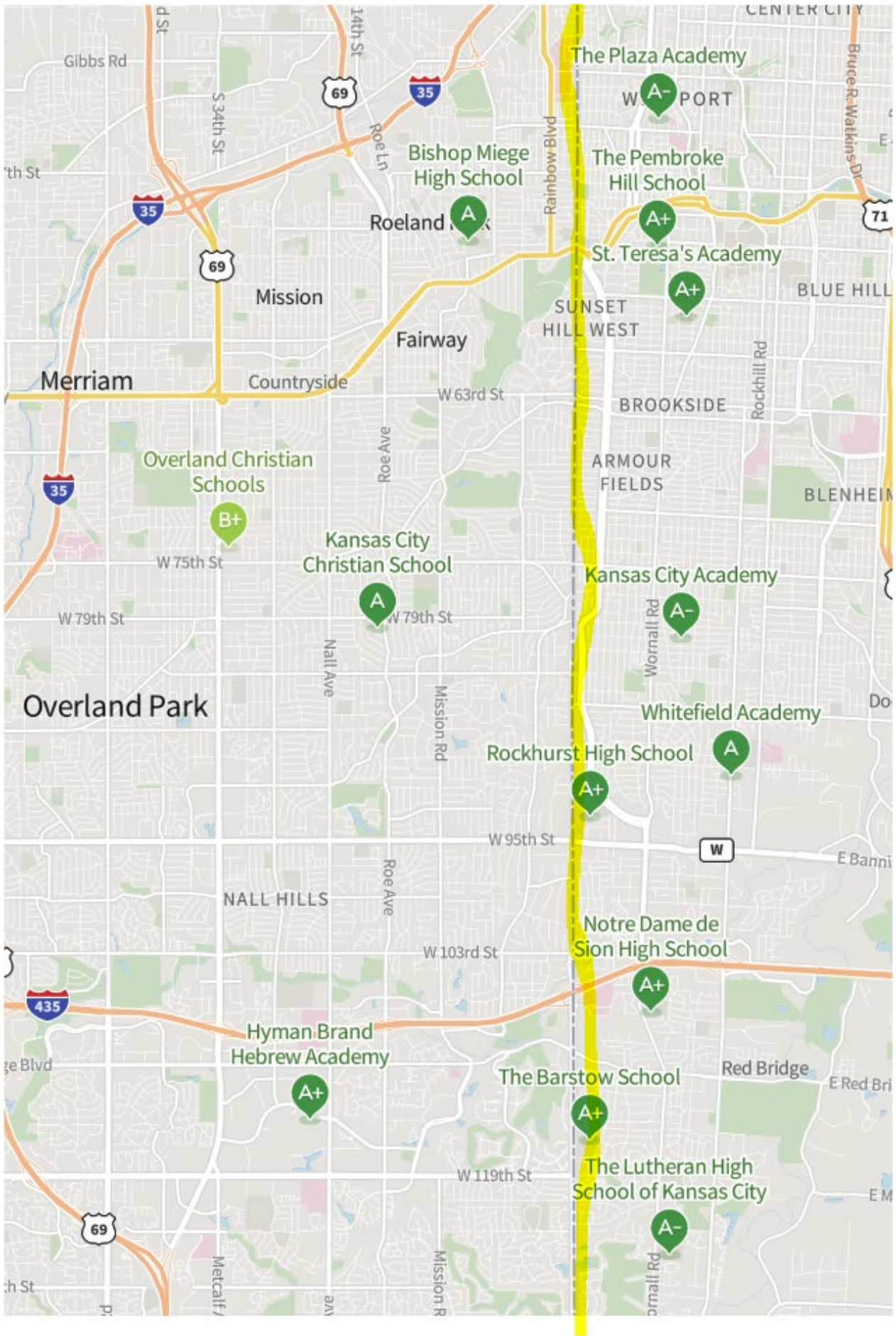
Many of the non-government schools in the KC Metro happen to be on the Missouri side of State Line. While I am in favor of this bill, I think it could be expanded to all students who are also Kansas residents, regardless of whether the school is within the State.

Amending the bill to include this modification would still support the legislative goals of “providing meaningful educational freedom”; “protecting the freedom of parents to direct the education of their children”; allow parents to choose an institution that is in an “environment that best promotes” the unique needs and goals of the student; and to access an “environment that best aligns with the student’s...needs” without bias or discrimination based on geography or location within the State where they reside and the availability of suitable non-government schools within a reasonable proximity to the student.

I commend the legislature for considering this bill and look forward to celebrating its passage. However, I am concerned for my children and other children similarly situated, who reside in Kansas but attend school out of State, not being equally eligible for the benefits this bill provides to their neighbors.

Thank you for your consideration,

Joshua Samuel Millan



HOUSE BILL No. 2218
Session of 2023
By Committee on K-12 Education Budget

Testimony

For AN ACT concerning education, establishing the sunflower education equity act; providing education savings accounts for students; establishing the Sunflower education equity scholarship fund.

February 6, 2022

Presented by Jeanine Phillips

Honorable House Representatives Kristey Williams and Garret Belknap:

I am writing to you as an academic professional, child advocate, and proponent of the Sunflower Education Equity Act. I *BELIEVE* strongly that establishing an Educational Savings Account (ESA) will open up opportunities desperately needed and currently not available to children who have been denied basic life-skills necessary to succeed in school, workforce and other life opportunities.

As I have spent my adult life-time educating myself and thousands of other educators, parents, and professional tutors about dyslexia, language development skills, and science-based reading and literacy instruction, I am submitting my written testimony as a nationally certified literacy interventionist, instructor, and Executive Director of the Phillips Fundamental Learning Center (PFLC). PFLC was established in 2000, as an educational non-profit with a mission *“to empower children, especially those with dyslexia, by teaching them to read, write and spell; educate teachers by providing science of reading-based literacy programs and instruction, and enlightening parents and the broader community to the educational and health needs of their children.”*

In 1995, I completed a professional and national certification, (Certified Academic Language Therapist (CALT)), with a sole purpose to make sure I was adequately prepared to teach my 7-year-old son, who was/is profoundly dyslexic, to read, write and spell, after finding there wasn't a public school in Wichita or surrounding area that could or would address his basic literacy needs. After paying thousands of dollars (funded by a 2nd mortgage and bank loans) to travel to a specialized educational center in Dallas, Texas, for the required three full years, to complete the necessary

courses, classes and workshops, I was astounded to find year-after-year incredible resistance from the public-school administrators to serve children with the proven methodologies I learned in Texas. As I worked with my son and other children who attended public schools, I was constantly met with excuses, road-blocks, misunderstandings, and threats to my professional practice that kept young children from my academically critical services. I am hopeful by offering my testimony and support of House Bill No. 2218, things will change for the sake of Kansas' children who have been denied academic opportunities, especially those who struggle to learn to read. For 15 years I have been a proponent of Educational Savings Accounts (ESA) that would offer parents and guardians a life-line of services for their children who are often times ignored, underserved, disregarded, or refused in many public-school settings today.

In addition to my CALT certification, I am an Academic Language Therapy Qualified Instructor (ALTA-QI), with the credentials and experience to prepare educators, parents and other concerned individuals to recognize and teach children who struggle to learn to read, again especially those who are dyslexic. Sadly many professionals who have sought literacy re-preparation programs from PFLC have been refused access to students within public school settings, or have been banned from using the curricula and educational knowledge within their classrooms or specialized programs, forcing parents who have the financial means to seek and attain services outside of the public school environment, with no accessible services (due to costs, transportation, or other resources) available for those children whose families cannot afford the critical academic services necessary for their children to learn to read, write and spell.

It is time for change, it is time to help parents who want the school experience to be different for their child or children. I am willing to help to the extent that I can to transform education in Kansas. I can't think of a better way than to support HB No. 2218.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanine Phillips
Executive Director of Phillips Fundamental Learning Center
2220 E. 21st St. North
Wichita, Kansas 67214
316-684-READ(7323)
funlearn.org

Proponent Testimony from Odyssey for HB 2218 Establishing the Sunflower Equity Act

Joseph Connor, Founder and CEO of Odyssey

joe@withodyssey.com

HB 2218 Establishing the Sunflower Education Equity Act

Proponent

Hearing Monday, February 6, 2023

Chair Williams, Vice-Chair Landwehr, Ranking Member Winn and other members of the Committee; thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony to you today in support of House Bill 2218—establishing the Sunflower Education Equity Act.

My name is Joseph Connor. I am the Founder and CEO of Odyssey, a company devoted to using technology to enable parents to choose the best education for their child.

For Odyssey, it all started years ago when I founded a national network of micro-school. When we tried to access public funding programs to support their growth we found that one particular type of program—an Educational Savings Account or ‘ESA’—was a great fit, but difficult to use.

The legacy platform was antiquated, lacked adequate safeguards for data, had insufficient financial controls and poor customer service. Odyssey is offering better solutions to allow parents, vendors and states to make the best use of ESAs.

Kansas values education. The Kansas Constitution explicitly provides legal rights for the education of Kansas children. Kansas has always been at the forefront nationally in pursuing all available methods to fulfill this guarantee.

According to the American Federation for Children, twenty-one states—including Kansas—already offer some meaningful form of parental choice in education including options for private schooling.

It is noteworthy that in those states, the overwhelming trend is to expand—not retreat from—parental choice. That is to say, in the real world, those states that have embarked on programs of parental choice find them to be of real value in providing meaningful expanded opportunities for education.

House Bill 2218 is a reasonable positive step in this direction.

The mechanism provided for in the bill establishes competition among vendors for the best solutions to the effective deployment of ESAs in Kansas.

What is true in education is true in Educational Savings Accounts, competition and choice promote excellence.

Proponent Testimony from Odyssey for HB 2218 Establishing the Sunflower Equity Act

We strongly encourage the committee and the Legislature and Governor more broadly to come to rapid agreement on ESA legislation, thus allowing the mechanisms of choice, innovation and competition to promote excellence in primary and secondary education—just as those mechanisms have worked so effectively elsewhere in our economy and culture.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and please consider us a practical resource as the legislative process moves forward. Thank you.

Tyro Christian School

“Knowledge without God is incomplete”

www.tyrochristianschool.com 620-289-4450 P.O. Box 308, Tyro, Ks 67364 tyrochristianschool@gmail.com

February 2, 2023

Terry Byrd, Tyro Christian School
P.O. Box 308
Tyro, Ks 67364
620-289-4450

tccs@tyrochristianschool.com

HB 2218

Position on bill: Proponent

Hearing: Monday, February 6, 2023 3:30 PM Room 546-S

To Whom it May Concern:

I would like to voice my support of House Bill 2218. I am in favor of establishing the sunflower education equity act; providing education savings accounts for students; establishing the sunflower education equity scholarship fund.

In His Service,



Terry Byrd
School Administrator
Tyro Christian School
620-289-4450

HOUSE BILL No. 2218
Session of 2023

By Committee on K-12 Education Budget

Testimony For AN ACT concerning education, establishing the sunflower education equity act; providing education savings accounts for students; establishing The Sunflower education equity scholarship fund.

February 6, 2022

Presented by Tammi M Hope

I will introduce myself as Tammi Hope, a mother, and grandmother. I am taking this opportunity to give voice to those who have the greatest need for this bill. I have two children, both faced with similar learning issues. Both are very bright, talented, and compassionate. The first entered school (over 25 years ago) and shortly after began to struggle academically. Reading and spelling were particularly difficult. As parents, we trusted the educational professionals to know what was best in their area of expertise, yet she continued to struggle. We attempted some tutoring sessions, but did not know how best to meet her needs or the cause of her failure. She limped along until highschool, ultimately dropping out and earning a GED. Around this same time my second child (a decade younger) was facing academic struggles. He was in third grade and his experience was profoundly different. His demeanor and self esteem plummeted as he was faced with the inability to complete daily basic reading, writing and spelling tasks. Our first daughter taught us that these issues would not be remedied through the traditional avenues of public education. He knew this as well. He approached a friend and asked for help only knowing that she was a teacher at a private school. We learned that she was a Certified Academic Language Therapist with the training and skill needed to meet his needs as a dyslexic student. She tutored him for a short while and he immediately began returning to his former self. Being taught with appropriate instruction equipped him with the tools needed to accomplish those BASIC reading, writing and spelling skills. She encouraged me to take the training to complete his instruction. I did so, though the time and cost were extensive. Having been through this with our oldest child, we knew the stakes were high and made the necessary sacrifices. Please understand that the financial and personal sacrifices were great for our extremely low income family.

As a result of my training, I learned why my children struggled. I learned that it was not because of their race. I learned that it was not because we were poor and did not have the money for extra books in the home. I learned that it had nothing to do with reading books to my children or exposing them to rich cultural experiences. I also learned that it had nothing to do with intelligence-my children are incredibly intelligent. I learned that it is the result of a neurobiological difference in their brains and that one in five individuals are born with this difference regardless of their race, background, or socio-economic status. I also learned that children who come from families like mine (low income families of color) are least likely to receive appropriate services.

Because of this knowledge, my children learned that they are not “stupid” and their potential was much higher than they had been led to believe. We had been told on more than one occasion that it was common for some children to perform at a substandard level. My children were considered a part of a substandard performance group.

After highschool, my daughter went on to become a CNA and also continued to painstakingly pursue her education in Social Work at Wichita State University. My son, now 22, is a freelance photographer, videographer, and owns a small production company, as well as an online original clothing store. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities afforded them because my son providentially asked the right person for help.

My aim in sharing this today is that there are multitudes of other families like mine whose story ends differently. The beginning of my story is their story, the story of myriads of children in low economic households without the means or information needed to receive appropriate services. Little has changed for these students over the last 25 years. In fact their circumstances are dire and the consequences are catastrophic. These children often fall into what we now know to be the school to prison pipeline in which many children of color find themselves trapped in an unavoidable system of failure and hopelessness.

I pray that you accept my testimony and seek decision making to go beyond what I have done. I have hoped to give a voice to those who are currently unable to speak. I hope that **you** give them the means to obtain the opportunity to learn the skills to do so for themselves.

Respectfully Submitted.

Tammi M Hope
Wichita, Kansas
316-806-6497

House K-12 Budget Committee

Written testimony in support of HB 2218: Establishing the sunflower education equity act.

Submitted: February 1, 2023

Madam Chair and members of the House K-12 Budget Committee:

My name is Dr. Tad Nuce, and I serve as the Head of School at Berean Academy in Elbing, Kansas. On behalf of our school community, I wish to offer testimony in support of HB 2218. As the leader of a Christian school, I constantly meet families who would love to send their children to Berean Academy, but realistically, will never be able to afford the cost despite relatively low tuition rates (secondary tuition is \$7700 this year). For these low-income families, they have no choice but to choose an area public school, which may or may not meet the academic, emotional, and spiritual needs of their children. Even for middle class families, the cost of enrolling three or four children in a private school is beyond their ability to pay. Currently, true educational choice in Kansas is only available to more affluent families.

I am a proud Kansan whose blue-collar working parents moved often out of economic necessity, forcing me to switch schools 11 times before I graduated from high school. I attended a few private Christian schools when finances allowed, but more often than not, was forced to attend public schools, where I struggled both academically and emotionally. My parents, who recognized I was floundering in a Wichita public school, made tremendous sacrifices to send me to a very small, private school for my final three years of high school. I transitioned from a student contemplating suicide to a young man full of hope and enthusiasm about the future. I attribute this radical change in my life to Christian education.

The Berean families in the Wichita, Newton, Whitewater, and Elbing areas pay a portion of their taxes towards the public school system, and only the public school system. This bill would support true educational freedom, providing parental choice that considers the unique learning needs of each student and the values of their parents. HB 2218 would finally provide a means to make education access equitable because it would give parents the financial freedom to direct the education of their children while providing accountability. As of right now, tax payers in Kansas who send their children to private schools must pay twice for their children's education, which seems very unfair, and limits who can actually attend.

As a conservative, I believe that competition in the business world leads to better products and services for the average consumer. Funding education through a system where dollars follow the student will encourage better educational outcomes for all students - public and private. With the Sunflower Education Equality Act, this opportunity would become a reality. Under the current system (the one I grew up with), only one brand of education is provided to low or middle-income families. The current method only supports the system, rather than the student. Even though there are a variety of other schools in Kansas that are accredited, only public schools receive funding, and thus are the default choice of lower income families like the one I grew up in.

When only one type of school receives all the funding that comes from taxes, this system is favored above all other choices. We are asking for you to support students, not systems. Please provide your support for the Sunflower Education Equality Act, so that true and equitable educational choice for

families can become a reality. Many states have already experienced the benefits of a school choice program - Kansas should be a leader in this movement, not playing catch up.

We are counting on your endorsement for HB 2218, also known as the Sunflower Education Equity Act. If you would like to speak with me personally, please feel free to call at 316-799-2211 or email me at tnuce@bawarriors.com.

Respectfully,

Dr. Tad R. Nuce
Head of School | Berean Academy
Elbing, Kansas 67041

February 2, 2023

Troy Trussell - troy@trussellmedia.com
HB 2218 bill to establish an Educational Savings Account (ESA)
Proponent
Hearing is Feb. 6

To whom it may concern,

I am the parent of 5 school-age children in Wichita, KS and am writing to provide written testimony as a proponent for HB 2218.

Of our 5 children, our 10 year old attends Rolph Literacy Academy, a school that specializes in teaching kids with dyslexia how to learn in a way that is best for them to flourish and succeed better in life.

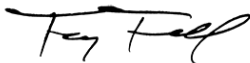
From an early age, we knew our 10 year old was having some issues when his little brother was reading better than him. We were told many times that he was just a slow learner and he would eventually catch up. Well, he never did. Finally, after advocating for our child multiple times, the school he was attending said they didn't have the resources necessary to teach our child. This was well into his second grade year. After this we found Rolph and he was able to begin in the fall of his third grade school year.

The summer before he began at Rolph, we had our son visiting a tutor 3 times a week for \$60 a week, for a total of \$720 that summer. For our family of 7, this was a huge expense we did not anticipate. It was hard and has been hard paying tuition for Rolph, even with the financial aid we receive. We believe an Educational Savings Account (ESA) would help our family tremendously with the cost of school for him.

Since our son has been at Rolph, we have seen major improvement in his learning abilities. His reading is becoming stronger, he's understanding math, he's fell in love with science and he excels in art and theater. He surprised us all memorizing lines to be the second lead in the school play this year.

My name is Troy Trussell and I am willing to testify via written letter only.

Sincerely yours,



Troy Trussell