

Written Opponent-Testimony before the House K-12 Education Budget Committee
In opposition to
**HB2550 — Establishing the student empowerment act to provide education savings
accounts for certain students to use to attend participating private schools.**
by Becky Plate, Eudora, Kansas
February 1st, 2022

Madam Chair, Members of the Committee:

It is my great honor to serve on the Board of Education for the Eudora USD491 Schools. This testimony is my own. I do not speak for the school district or the board as a whole, and this testimony should not be construed as the will of that board. I submit my testimony in opposition to HB2550 out of concern for the wellbeing and education needs of all Kansas students, and of those in my district.

HB2550 violates the adequate and equitable requirements of article 6 of the Kansas Constitution by utilizing a false definition of the “Eligible student”. This bill does not offer equitable eligibility to all Kansas students, partly because there are huge swaths of Kansas where no accredited private school is available to attend. It also does not offer equitable eligibility because any private school which may be available in the area where a student lives is free to refuse admission or to dismiss any student they choose, including students with special education or behavioral needs. This bill also does not require that the private school accepting funds from this kind of an account cap their tuition and fees at the amount that is being deferred away from the student’s community public school, which would further encourage discriminatory admission practices by the private schools based on the student’s socioeconomic status.

HB2550 infers a false premise that students are better served in private and for profit programs than in public schools. The implication that private schools provide a superior education, is not supported by research. There is ample evidence that private schools do not categorically outperform public schools academically.¹⁻⁵

HB2550 is fiscally irresponsible. It would allow the diversion of public tax dollars away from the State General Fund, in order to fund private and for profit programs who do not offer the same high level of budgetary and curriculum transparency and accountability that is demanded of our public schools. It would also create an undue burden of expense to the state by way of the costly management and accounting requirements by the Treasurer’s office.

In conclusion, HB2550 favors private and for profit schools in urban centers, who may pick and choose their students over those who serve all in every community. It favors discriminatory programs over all-accepting ones. It favors exclusive private companies over those established to serve everyone in the community. HB2550 is fiscally irresponsible in both how it diverts public funding to private programs, and in the costly undue management burden it would place on the Treasurer's office. I urge you to oppose HB2550.

1. Jonathan N. Mills & Patrick J. Wolf, Univ. of Ark., The Effects of the Louisiana Scholarship Program on Student Achievement After Four Years (Apr. 2019).
2. Megan Austin et. al., Russell Sage Foundation J. of the Social Sciences, Voucher Pathways and Student Achievement in Indiana's Choice Scholarship Program (2019).
3. David Figlio & Krzysztof Karbownik, Fordham Institute, Evaluation of Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship Program: Selection, Competition, and Performance Effects (July 2016).
4. *E.g.*, Jonathan Plucker et al., Ctr. for Evaluation & Educ. Policy, Univ. of Ind., Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, Technical Report 1998-2004, 166 (Feb. 2006).
5. *E.g.*, U.S. Dep't of Educ., Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Three Years After Students Applied (May 2019); U.S. Dep't of Educ., Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts Two Years After Students Applied (June 2018); U.S. Dep't of Educ., Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts After One Year (June 2017).