

# **Senate Education Committee**

## **Testimony Supporting SB 60**

AN ACT concerning schools; relating to the Kansas state high school activities association;  
relating to participation by certain students.

February 2, 2015

By

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Chairman Abrams,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 60. We feel that this legislation will give us more flexibility to give all our children access to the best education available to meet their individual needs. Families are complex because each individual is unique, and different children require different learning environments. Our family is especially unique because it is made up of our birth children and also two sets of sibling groups, which we have adopted. While all children pose challenges to parents and schools, children who have experienced the instability of being in state custody add additional complexity.

We have nine children in all and we summarize here our family schooling situation:

Our oldest two children graduated at the top of their classes from the former IQ Academy, a part of the Manhattan public schools, a virtual school. Our son was salutatorian 3 years ago and now has a 3.85 gpa in college. Our daughter was valedictorian last year and presently has a 4.0 gpa in college. Please refer to the letters attached, to see the difficulties we experienced in matching available educational opportunities to the skills and interests of our children. IQ Academy afforded our two oldest children much opportunity academically, far exceeding that available in our local school. However, IQ Academy could not provide sports and activities available locally.

Our next son is a sophomore at Fredonia High School. He has ADHD and needs the physical outlet that sports give him. He is very talented in football, lettering as a freshman and sophomore and starting on the varsity team. This year he was All League Honorable Mention Defensive Linebacker. An on-line education would probably not be suitable for his learning style. However, having the opportunity for a different learning situation from traditional public school, one more hands on, would be beneficial to him. He is struggling to make the grades currently.

Our 4<sup>th</sup> child is also a full time sophomore at Fredonia High School. He excels in band and enjoys cross country. He is a 4.0 student. With him, we have had to push the school district to keep him challenged in his current learning situation. We felt like we had hit a dead end when it came to getting him AP classes. Please refer to the attached letter, dated January 21, 2014, explaining our efforts in trying to get him an IEP as a gifted child just to get him access to AP classes. As of this year the school now has 4 AP classes available through their

Greenbush program. So I guess that is some progress. I still am not impressed with their online option though. He is getting college credit for his Anatomy and Physiology class through Independence Community College, but that was difficult to work out because ICC doesn't generally grant college credit for sophomores.

Our 5<sup>th</sup> child is an 8th grader. I homeschool him part time and he is attending Manhattan Virtual Academy part-time. He will transition to full time at MVA next year. His love is fishing and outdoors and likes the freedom he has to adjust his schedule. Also he lost his hearing in his right ear this past year due to illness. He finds classroom situations difficult for him to hear in. Therefore the on-line school is more suitable for him.

Child #6 is also in 8th grade but he attends Fredonia Middle School. He loves athletics and has tried several different sports. He has RAD and it was difficult for me to fight the constant power struggles at home. However, he also struggles with addictive behaviors. Unfortunately, through the public school setting he has gained access to pornography (through poorly monitored ipads that the school provides) and to chewing tobacco. He has also been offered weed. All of this has happened at school or as the result of a school provided device. At school he ran a search on "how to make meth" and the school's monitoring system did not catch that. We are very unhappy! Michael was adopted when he was five. We are doing our best to help him overcome his past, and we would like more schooling options with him to better meet his needs.

Amber is 6th grade and attends Fredonia Middle School. She is doing well and is looking forward to athletics next year. She struggled with reading and had a hard time feeling the need to learn in the home environment. However, because she is competitive, she has greatly improved at public school since she is determined to keep up with her peers.

We have two younger children, Avarie age 5 and Kaishawn age 2. What their needs will be educationally is yet to be seen.

We have four children by birth and five through adoption. We care deeply about quality education. We have primarily homeschooled in the elementary years. After that we evaluate how to best meet their learning and physical needs. Education is not a one size fits all situation. This can easily be seen in our family.

We ask the state to consider this legislation, which could make it easier for families like ours to have more education options while still being able to participate in extra-curricular activities and athletics. We know that it is in the state's interest to provide all Kansas children with the best education possible, and parents are in the best position to determine how best to tailor the educational options available to their own children's interests and abilities.