

Approved: 2-9-2000
Date

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Senator Barbara Lawrence at 9:00 a.m. on January 25, 2000 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senator Hensley - Excused

Committee staff present: Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes
Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department
Jackie Breymeyer, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Senator Ranson
Representative Landwehr
Bob Voboril, Kansas Association of Independent and
Religious Schools (KAIRS)
Delia Barnett, Holy Savior Catholic Academy
Mary Kay Culp, Kansas Catholic Conference
John Schlyer, Wichita
Ken Liles, South Knollwood Baptist Church
Kelly Yoakum, Topeka

Others attending: See Attached List

SB 295 Kansas educational opportunities certificate pilot program

Vice Chairperson Langworthy called the meeting to order and called on Senator Pat Ranson, who was present to speak a few words on the bill before testimony was given.

Senator Ranson stated that this is an idea whose time has come. This is happening in other states. Whether it will be this bill or another, we should go forward with some type of pilot program.

Representative Landwehr distributed her testimony (Attachment 1). She stated that school choice has been found to be constitutional and went into the details of the program.

Bob Voboril, KAIRS, submitted testimony (Attachment 2) and stated that this bill is a good place to start discussion. It is a pilot study that will cost nothing. He is hopeful it will get the attention it deserves.

Delia Barnett, Wichita, appeared in support of the bill. (Attachment 3) She stated that her school serves both the Catholic and non-Catholic community, with a largely African American population. The bill will allow children educational opportunities they may not have elsewhere.

Mary Kay Culp, Kansas Catholic Conference, appeared on the bill (Attachment 4), stating that it is an exceptionally well written bill, that her organization can fully support; it gives parents a genuine choice in education.

John Schlyer, parent, had testimony distributed, (Attachment 5) and stated that the bill will be applauded by all parents who do not now have a choice to attend the schools they desire for their children.

Ken Liles, representing families of South Knollwood Baptist Church and Knollwood Baptist School, thanked the committee for the opportunity to appear. (Attachment 6) He would like to see this bill as one that would free the middle class as well as the poor to choose a system that teaches moral and spiritual values.

Kelly Yoakum, Topeka, submitted testimony (Attachment 7), and asked the committee to give the bill serious consideration.

Dr. Gerald Kerr, stood to give a few additional comments in favor of the bill.

Due to time constraints, Vice Chairperson Langworthy stated the meeting would be continued tomorrow and adjourned the meeting.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE GUEST LIST

DATE: January 25, 2000

NAME	REPRESENTING
Mark Tallman	KASTB
MARK DEBETTI	KNEA
Craig Grant	HNEA
Jim Yonally	USD #512
Carolyn L. Campbell	USD 501
Kelly Finney	USD 501
Maggie Kerr	
Kerry Stewart	@P.L.
Andy Bras	HSCA
Dee Barnett	HSCA
Bob Voboil	KAIRS
JOHN SCHLYER	
Gerald Kerr	SELF
Jim Langford	DOB
Jim Allen	KEC & KFHC
K Kelly Yonakum	Students of KS Public Schools Parents
Beth Henry	Parents In Control
David Miles	Associated Press
Diane Gjerstad	Wichita Public Schools

KEN LILES
Wenish Apt

SOUTH KNOXWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH
USA / KCK

State of Kansas
House of Representatives

HOME ADDRESS: 1927 N. GOW
WICHITA, KANSAS 67203-1106
316-945-0026
E-Mail—blandweh@ink.org
OFFICE: SUITE 175 W STATEHOUSE
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1504
(785) 296-7644



TOPEKA

BRENDA K. LANDWEHR
Representative, Ninety-First District

**Kansas Educational Opportunities Act
Certificate Pilot Program
House Bill 2504 & Senate Bill 295**

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS—
SRS SUBCOMMITTEE
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CHAIR—
CHILDRENS ISSUES COMMITTEE

The Kansas Educational Opportunities Certificate Pilot Program would provide financial assistance necessary to avail such children and their parents an opportunity to exercise choice in the selection of schools.

Four unified school districts have been chosen to participate in a pilot school choice certificate program during the next four years. The Unified School Districts include: USD #259, Sedgwick County; USD #457, Finney County; USD #500, Wyandotte County; and USD #501, Shawnee County.

Educational Opportunities Certificates will be certificates in an amount equal to 80% of the amount of base state aid per pupil for the school year. One hundred enrollment certificates will be provided on an annual basis to students who wish to attend nonpublic school. In turn, the public school district would receive \$1,000 per student.

The certificates will be awarded to "certificate eligible children" and redeemed by a parent at an education opportunity school. The children must meet the following criteria: current residents of Kansas; enrolled in grades 1-5; eligible for free meals; scored below the 40th percentile on national achievement tests; and enrolled in a unified school district during the previous year.

Under the Kansas Pilot program, the State Board of Education will be responsible for the administration of the pilot program. Schools may choose to participate on a volunteer basis by a submitted application to the State Board of Education.

State of Kansas
House of Representatives

HOME ADDRESS: 1927 N. GOW
WICHITA, KANSAS 67203-1106
316-945-0026
E-Mail—blandweh@ink.org
OFFICE: SUITE 175-W STATEHOUSE
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1504
(785) 296-7644



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BRENDA K. LANDWEHR
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**Kansas Educational Opportunities Act
Committee Testimony
Senate Bill 295**

WHY SCHOOL CHOICE?

School Choice is being implemented across the nation. In the states that have tried it, results have been positive.

In Wisconsin the results have been astounding.

School Choice has resulted in the following:

- High levels of parent satisfaction
- High levels of student satisfaction
- Increased parental involvement
- Improved Discipline
- Improved Attendance
- Significant improvement in academic achievement

School Choice has been found to be constitutional.

- The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program was upheld as constitutional as high as the Wisconsin Supreme Court.^{1 2}
- In its June 1998 opinion, the Wisconsin Supreme Court stated in its opinion that

¹In a historic 1998 ruling, the court sustained all aspects of Wisconsin's expanded choice program, holding that it complied with both the U.S. Constitution and the state constitution. The United States Supreme Court declined to hear the case so the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling stands.

²Wisconsin Supreme Court found that the Wisconsin Educational Opportunities program met the 3-part test for constitutionality, providing a neutral benefit directly to children of economically disadvantaged families on a neutral-religious basis. Jackson v. Benson. The test for constitutionality is known as the "Lemon" three-part test: (1) program must have a secular legislative purpose; (2) could not have the primary effect of advancing religion; (3) could not result in excessive governmental entanglement in religion.

The Wisconsin Educational Opportunities met the test because (1) the purpose was to provide low-income families the opportunity to have their children educated outside the public school system and (2) religious schools only received aid after parents made numerous private choices.

the program did not violate the separation clauses of the Constitution.³

School Choice could close the gap separating white and minority test scores.

- After reviewing the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, researchers from Harvard University and the University of Houston concluded that the similar success could be achieved for all minority students nationwide and close the gap by somewhere between one-third and more than one-half.

School Choice found to improve math scores.

- A later study out of Princeton University also found the Milwaukee choice program significantly increased the mathematical achievement of students who had participated in the program.

Ohio initiated the nation's second publicly funded school choice program. In 1995, Ohio initiated a pilot voucher program in Cleveland which included religious schools and also has had academic success and has been upheld constitutionally.

- Constitutionally upheld. The court found the plan violated neither Ohio's constitution nor the U.S. constitution.⁴
- Academic Success. A study by University of Texas and Harvard University found the students scored five percentile points higher on the reading tests and 15 percentile points higher on math. A study by Indiana University concluded that the voucher students outperformed the public school control students.
- Reaffirmed minority equality. The study results were significant test scores of poor minority students living in urban areas normally fall by one or two percentage points each year they are in school.
- High levels of satisfaction. Additional findings showed high levels of satisfaction with the program
63% of parents using the scholarships were "very satisfied" with the "academic quality of their schools."
vs.

³because it is neutral between religious and secular options, and parents or children direct the funds and operates primarily to the benefit of children, not religious schools. Justice Donald W. Steinmetz, declared "The simplistic argument that every form of financial aid to church-sponsored activity violates the Religion Clauses was rejected long ago." Moreover, "Not one cent flows from the state to a sectarian private school under the [plan] except as a result of the necessary and intervening choices of individual parents."

⁴Judge Lisa Sadler ruled that the legislatively approved Cleveland plan violates neither Ohio's nor the U.S. Constitution... because the "nonpublic sectarian schools participating in the scholarship program are benefitted only indirectly, and purely as the result of the genuinely independent and private choices of aid recipients," including religious schools in a voucher program does not violate the First Amendment.

only 30% of those who did not receive a voucher were happy with their public schools.

[Transition Paragraph]

KANSAS EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES CERTIFICATE PROGRAM ACT

Unified School Districts 259 (Sedgwick County), 457 (Finney County), 500 (Wyandotte County and 501 (Shawnee County) have agreed to participate in a pilot school choice certificate program in the 1999-2003 school years. One hundred enrollment certificates will be provided on an annual basis to students who wish to attend a non-public school.

The certificates will be awarded to "certificate eligible children" which include children who (1) are residents, (2) are eligible to be enrolled in grades 1-5, (3) are eligible for free meals, (4) have scored at or below the 40th percentile on national achievement tests; and (5) were enrolled in a unified school district during the previous year.

Educational Opportunities Certificates will be certificates in an amount equal to 80% of the amount of base state aid per pupil for the school year, awarded in the name of the child to be redeemed by a parent at an educational opportunities school.

Administration

Under the Kansas pilot program, the State Board of Education will responsible for the administration of the pilot program. The Board will be responsible for...

- conduct all of it required activities without excessive entanglement in the free exercise of nonpublic school matters.
- depositing money received in an educational impact aid fund for the school
- promoting the program by preparing and publish program descriptions and applications on an annual basis. (See sections (3) and (5));
- establishing procedures to protect against enrollment decreases of more than one-hundred pupils
- approving and distributing the monies based on an impact aid formula
- implementing a lottery selection procedure when applications exceed one-hundred.
- providing enrollment certificates to eligible students.
- evaluating the pilot program upon completion of the 2002-03 school year

Participating Schools.

Schools may choose to participate on a volunteer basis by submitted an application to the State Board of Education. In order to participate, the school must qualify as an "educational opportunities school" which means any accredited nonpublic school (1) located within the boundaries of a pilot school district and (2) operated by a governing authority that has elected to participate in the pilot program. Those schools that choose to participate will be permitted to

apply for a grant of state funds and will be responsible for...

- determining consistent admission requirements
- admitting eligible children
- limiting enrollment not to exceed school's enrollment capacity
- providing assurance that enrollment costs to eligible children will not exceed regular enrollment costs
- publishing relevant data

[Conclusion]¹

1. Information contained in this testimony regarding the Wisconsin and Ohio school choice programs was compiled by The Heritage Foundation and published in "School Choice 1999: What's Happening in the States".

THE CASE FOR RADICAL REFORM

By Howard Fuller

Howard Fuller, former Milwaukee Superintendent of Schools and founder of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University, issued a dramatic wake-up call for the conference and called us to recognize the urgency of school reform. In the following excerpts from his speech, Dr. Fuller offers eight points setting the framework for the reform debate.

Number One: Our struggle has to always be about children.

While I believe that the current system works well for many kids the current system DOES NOT work well for a significant number of kids, many of whom are poor and are kids of color. We cannot lose a single one of these kids. As long as there is a child out there who cannot read, who cannot write, who cannot compute, who cannot think, who cannot analyze, we have to do this work.

Number Two: In order to help those kids who need help the most, we need a radical departure from our current system of education.

We have to create an entirely different system. The most powerful innovations in education must occur in the classroom between teachers and children. In order to be a successful teacher today, you have to break rules to educate children.

Number Three: There are a myriad of strategies out there that could make a difference for our children. Their potential impact will be diminished if we do not find ways to empower poor parents to be able to exercise influence on the nature and direction of their children's education.

The height of hypocrisy in America is for people whose children are taken care of to oppose choice for poor parents. They argue that to let these people

go means that you would destroy the system. The question is — Is it about the system or is it about our children? Choice is not the issue in America. The issue is who has choice.

Number Four: We must be totally committed to empowering people who now lack power. We must change the complexion of the debate.

We have to bring people to the table whose children are affected everyday. We have to understand that when you have a strategy of empowerment it means you truly do hear the voices of the disenfranchised.

Number Five: We must work as hard on ensuring that we have excellent options as we do to make sure the options are available.

We have to be absolutely clear and firm that this movement is about improving student achievement. It is not about making excuses.

There are 3 things you must have if a system is to be accountable:

- ★ **Standards.** It is actually possible to write them in a language that people can understand?
- ★ There has to be a way to **assess whether the standards are being met.**
- ★ **Consequences.** You don't have a system of accountability if the only people held accountable for bad teaching are the children.

Number Six: This is going to be a long struggle, and the protectors of the status quo are not going to go quietly into the night.

For them it is about power and about control.



Number Seven: We must understand the impact of things that are happening to our poorest children outside of the schools.

While poverty cannot be used for an excuse not to educate our children, you also cannot ignore the impact of not being white and poor in America. It does have an impact on your life's chances. Poverty, crime, hunger and gangs are all factors in these children's lives, and those of us who are out here for them have got to fight to deal with those conditions as hard as we fight to deal with those conditions once they get into the building.

Number Eight: We must tell no lies and claim no easy victories.

The difference in our movement has to be "If you do not succeed with kids then you should not exist." What we have to do is, we have to tell the truth about what is happening. Every time we don't tell the truth, we play a part in destroying these kids' lives.

We are committed to the truth — to our children — and to the notion that they can learn, and that we can turn this around for all of our children. ✨

(The entire text of Howard Fuller's speech is available from the Center.)



A VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE BOX

Christopher Whittle
Founder, The Edison Project

I got a note from Jeanne Allen a couple of weeks back, and it was giving me my marching orders for today. It said, "Here's a couple of things that I want you to do... It would be great if you could impress upon us, one, why we need change; two, why we in fact do have problems; and three, what the solutions are..." And then she ended with this, in only the way Jeanne knows how: "You could also make the case that being for-profit doesn't quite equate with leprosy."

So for the fun of it, I'm going to start with that. Here are some of the things that for-profits have brought you: Band-aids. Ben & Jerry's. Virtually all the books that your children read, in and out of schools. All the clothes you are wearing today. The computer you cannot do without, whether it's Apple or IBM. *The Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, USA Today. Everything your house is made of. The World Series, both the Yankees and the Padres.

The insurance you may one day desperately need. Prozac, Rogaine, and Viagra. So if for-profits can do that, I really rest my case. And maybe, just maybe, they can provide good schools.

I make light of this because it's an issue which honestly doesn't merit grave debate. As Michael Joyce so well said this morning, "education is the only sector in American society that doesn't benefit from the potential of free enterprise."

Why do we need change in our schools? ... Some say that our schools aren't nearly as bad as they're being made out to be, that all this talk of reform is this right-wing conspiracy that we all are participants in, and though I disagree with their line of argument, I actually do understand why they feel compelled to make it.

They feel under enormous attack. They read newspapers in which various people overstate the case against public schools, and their reaction is to overstate the case for them. And they are right to say that we have some good public schools, but they are wrong to leave the impression that all is

well. We have some big problems, and by analogy I'll give you my view of the extent of those problems.

On your way home tonight to whatever city you came from, you'll go to the ticket counter and you will be asked the two most asked questions in the history of man: "Have your bags been in your possession at all times since you packed them?" And "Have any persons unknown to you given you any items to carry on board?" By the way, I remembered that. I didn't have to go look at that. If you hear that a thousand times, you begin to get it.

Now let's say that instead of those questions you were asked the following: "Sir, the FAA has asked that we inform you that your chances of surviving this flight are good, about 80 percent. Only 20 percent of our flights don't make it. Would you like a window or an aisle?"

Under those conditions there would be no air travel in the United States. No one would get on a flight. And yet in education we are submitting our children to odds very similar to those. Most American children get through reasonably good schools in reasonably good shape. But some meaningful percentage, and you pick it—15, 20, 25—leave our schools, before or after graduation, unable to read satisfactorily, unable to do math at levels that success in our society absolutely requires, and unaware of critical cultural information that binds us together as a country.

And in a sense, their educational flights went down, but because they went down quietly, because they went down over a period of years instead of one terrible, awful moment, because, as Howard said this morning, their parents may lack the power to effectively complain, and because children themselves can't really complain, for all these reasons, we let this go on. And we let not thousands but more than 10 million of our children start their lives with less than they deserve.

And so until reading and writing and adding and subtracting becomes as dependable as a flight, as dependable as a phone call getting through, as dependable as having a baby safely for mother and child, then

the answer to "Do we need change in our schools?" is we need lots of it and we shouldn't settle for less....



"Why do we in fact have problems like this?" Well, let me start with this. It would be great if there were an evil empire out there that made this happen, but there isn't... It's not because of those kind of motivations on the part of some person or organization... I think there are three big anti-change characteristics to the school systems that we currently have.

Number one... an inability to invest in change. It's not that we don't spend a lot on our schools. We spend enormous amounts.

But we don't spend to change them. To go back to Prozac, I don't know what Prozac cost to develop. But a typical drug is \$100, \$200, \$500 million dollars just to create. When did we ever as a society spend anything approaching that to design our schools?

There is virtually no research and development in the American school system. You go to any superintendent in the United States, and I know I've talked to a third of them at one time or another, and you say, "What's your R&D budget?" You'll get two reactions. You'll get a smile or you'll get a laugh.

Reason number two that we have these kind of difficult problems is an inability to maintain leadership over long periods of time. Major change does not happen in two years. It doesn't even get started in two years.

... But the life of an average urban superintendent in the United States is less than that of a First Lieutenant in Vietnam. It's a couple of years.

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Testimony for Senate Bill 295

Bob Voboril, Kansas Association of Independent and Religious Schools (KAIRS)

January 25, 2000

SENATOR LAWRENCE and MEMBERS of the SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE:

Today is an historic day because in this new decade we open a new round of discussions on the topic of school vouchers. It has been nearly eight years since Representative Kay O'Connor launched the first round with her one-woman crusade for parental choice. She was called quixotic, misguided, eccentric, and isolated - by her friends.

No states had vouchers. One had education tax credits. There were no Education IRA's. There were no private voucher programs. Phi Delta Kappan and Emporia State didn't bother to ask citizens about vouchers because support was thought to be negligible.

For eight years we have had a President and a Secretary for Education who attack vouchers at every turn. At any whisper of vouchers our friends in the public schools preclude discussion with charges of 'separation of church and state.' Candidates who dared support the issue were smeared in their next campaign as 'anti-public school.'

What has been the result of the first round of discussions?

Three states have vouchers: Wisconsin, Ohio, and Florida. Iowa, Minnesota, Louisiana, Illinois, and Arizona have tax credits. Sixty private voucher programs are distributing tens of millions each year to low-income families, half a million dollars in Kansas alone. Home schools, charter schools, private Christian schools, and private-for-profit schools have exploded onto the scene. At the national level, we now have education savings accounts for

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Attachment 2

post-secondary education. The Supreme Court has been given several opportunities to strike down vouchers and tax credits as unconstitutional and has declined every time. The Kansas House of Representatives has twice passed a combination parent/teacher tax credit by large margins. The Phi Delta Kappan and Emporia State surveys report increasing support for vouchers, including majority support for partial vouchers. More telling, parents are voting with their feet. Enrollment in non-public schools is rising. Nor do folks accept the canard that non-public schools hurt public schools. Religious and independent schools operate shoulder to shoulder with outstanding public schools in dozens of cities. Why? A rising tide of support for education raises all boats.

What would have happened with a more supportive President? What would have happened in Kansas if the Senate had held honest and serious discussions? It was against all odds that Round One was a success for advocates of school choice.

Round two begins today. Kay O'Connor is no longer alone. The cavalry of public opinion has arrived. Legislators Lawrence and Landwehr, Glasscock and Tanner are charging ahead. I hope you join them.

Because I believe that in this round your challenge is no longer if we should have vouchers. The question is how and when. Whether or not you pass this bill, by 2010 there will be vouchers or tax credits everywhere. Every election is bringing fresh support. Will this be the Senate committee that begins a serious discussion of vouchers? Or will it be someone else? It is, pardon the expression, your choice.

Why are vouchers and tax credits suddenly so irresistible? I would suggest that there are four powerful forces that are emerging:

- 1) "Freedom of choice" is a fundamental principle of democracy. If education is so essential, then why isn't every parent free to choose the best school for her or his child?
- 2) Discrimination against the poor violates everyone's sense of fair play, yet that is what we do. The upper and middle classes can afford to live in any district they want and enroll their children anywhere they choose. Only the poor don't get to choose. That's not fair.
- 3) It is becoming increasingly repugnant to most citizens that parents are penalized when they enroll their child in a school that teaches religious values.
- 4) Nearly every other country in the world helps fund the education of all children, regardless of the type of school they attend. The United States is behind the times, and it's time we caught up.

This bill is a good place to start the discussion. It is small. It is a pilot study. It will cost nothing. I hope you will pass it out of committee so that it gets the discussion it deserves.

Floyd Flake was an eleven-term congressman from New York City. He is Black, and he is a Democrat. Today he runs his own Christian school. Last February he observed, "The right to choose your child's school is the next major Civil Rights battle." The Reverend Flake is correct. Complete parental choice is now too powerful an idea to be ignored or shouted down. I say, let this historic battle for parents' civil rights begin in Topeka, Kansas. Today.

January 25, 2000
Delia Barnett, Program Administrator
Holy Savior Catholic Academy
Proponent

I support Senate Bill #295 for several reasons. First, Holy Savior Catholic Academy has small class sizes, which afford students more individual attention. We also have a Synergistic lab which offers students real life employable skills, such as; video broadcasting, flight simulation, and an investment module, just to name a few. We also utilize the CCC computer program, which has modules in every discipline that allows students to learn at their individual levels. Holy Savior is also a Title I school, which allows for student remediation in reading and math. Our school serves both the Catholic and non-Catholic community. We are largely African American in population. However, we are culturally diverse. We also service special needs students. I believe that this bill will allow school systems to work together to assist each other in their primary goal which is to educate our children.

As an African American single parent raising four children, I can truly see the benefits of this Bill. It will allow children across the state to have educational opportunities they may not have otherwise. I know how important it is to be able to exercise choice in the selection of schools for your children. Our children are our greatest investment and our last hope. The only way we can prepare our children for the future is to provide adequate academic environments that encourage and support the primary educators, who are the parents. Once a parent knows that they have the opportunity to exercise choice in their child's education, then the type of relationship required between the parent and school can develop. As parent involvement increases so does the success of the children.

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 295

January 25, 2000

Mary Kay Culp
Associate Director of Education
KANSAS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Senator Lawrence, members of the Senate Education Committee thank you for allowing me to speak to you today. My name is Mary Kay Culp and as Associate Director of Education for the Kansas Catholic Conference, I represent the five Catholic Bishops of Kansas on education policy issues in the state legislature. They represent 400,000 Kansas Catholics, 100,000 of whom are the parents of Kansas public school students and 60,000 of whom are the parents of Kansas Catholic school students enrolled in our 112 Kansas Catholic schools. I am here today to testify in favor of Senate Bill 295, the educational opportunities certificate pilot program act for low-income students.

We think S.B. 295 is an exceptionally well written bill, that we can fully support. It is in answer to a call by parents, especially low-income parents, for genuine choice in education. It should not be judged solely on academic achievement, but also on the level of parental satisfaction it endeavors, of which academic achievement will surely be a part.

I bring this up because it is rumored there may be an attempt to join this bill with the Tanner/Glasscock pilot research voucher bill which is now in the process of being written. Described in the Kansas City Star yesterday as a voucher opponent, Rep. Glasscock's sponsorship of a pilot voucher research bill leaves voucher supporters uneasy about the motivation for that bill and its plan to allow the State Department of Education alone to choose the researchers to assess its results. We will also watch it closely to see if it includes the level of autonomy afforded religious and independent schools that is included in S.B. 295, which we applaud.

The only suggestions we wish to make on S.B. 295 is that the number of children to be included be raised significantly, and that Junction City in Riley County be added to the list of eligible sites.

As the parents of two young adults, my husband and I paid nearly \$40,000 we barely had over the past 15 years to send them to Catholic schools. I ask you to give truly low-income parents the same opportunity we had; the chance to see that our children had the three "R's", but in an environment which included that fourth "R", religious values. That was very important to us, and as a result, it appears to be very important to our kids -- now young adult Kansas citizens. In that regard, however, it is pertinent to note, that this bill doesn't ask that tax monies fund that fourth "R" -- the certificates of SB 295 will be in an amount equal to 80% of the base state aid per pupil per year.

Independent and religious schools serve a secular purpose. Parents should be able to use the public funds set aside for their child's education at any institution which they believe can prepare their child to be a good citizen and a productive member of our society. Society has the right to a measure of accountability and this bill provides it by requiring that certificate schools be accredited by the state or nationally recognized and respected accrediting organizations.

We urge your support of Senate Bill 295.

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Attachment 4

A Parent In Favor of the Voucher Initiative

The greatest opportunity for financially disadvantaged children to move out of the cycle of poverty is through the power of a good education. Parents are the best advocates for their children's wellbeing, and nobody wants a child to succeed more than their parents.

You only need to sit through a youth sporting event and *watch the expressions* of delight and agony upon the parents faces, when their 5th grader almost makes a basket or maybe just gets into the game to play a few precious seconds before the final buzzer sounds. Parents care deeply about their children succeeding in this life....that is one of the greatest challenges of being a parent*what choices do we make to assure our child's happiness and success in life.*

Today, in our great nation, we are given the opportunity to make choices that will help our children succeed in life:

We choose good nourishment for their physical health, however there are parents who do not have a choice to buy healthy food for their children because they do not have the financesthese fellow citizens are assisted in acquiring food for their family through the food stamps, community food pantries and many other programs funded by our tax dollars.....This is a good thing we do.

We choose warm clothing to get our children through those cold winter days, however there are parents who do not have the financial means to adequately cloth their children. They have no choice because they have no money....they are provided small amounts of our tax money to help cloth their childrenit is a good way to spend some of my money.

As parents we choose safe neighborhoods to live in and secure homes for children to grow-up in where they have few fears of being physically harmed by those who live around them. Some American Citizens cannot make that choice because they do not have the money to be able to buy a home or rent a home in a secure area.....so we often provide labor and our tax money and church contributions to help low income parents make the choice to live in a home of their own....it is the Christian way of life and it is the American way.

As parents, my wife and I choose to send our children to a school where discipline, both individual and classroom, is stressed as part of a Christian focused curriculum. We watch our budget closely to be able to afford the additional expenses it takes to be able to make this "choice" of education for our family. However, there are many families in Wichita, who, because of low family incomes, are not able to make the choice of where they send their children to attend school..... and there has been little effort by the government over the past years to allow our tax dollars to assist needy parents in making that choice.

The State of Wisconsin began a school choice, voucher program for low income families in Milwaukee in 1990. It was very successful and was modified in 1995 to include both independent and religious schools. The legal system challenged and it was decided through the courts that since the state gave the vouchers to the students and not directly to the schools that it did not violate the church-state separation.

What do those parents in Milwaukee say about their "choice"Low income families targeted by the Parental Choice Program were among the strongest supporters.....more than four out of five people (81 percent) with incomes less than \$11,000 per year favored the existing voucher program.

Their top three goals that the Milwaukee voucher program was meeting were: preparing students to be good citizens; preparing students to succeed in college; and preparing students to succeed on the job.

Your decision to move this voucher bill into law in Kansas will be applauded by all parents who seek to provide for their children those same three goals, especially by those who do not now have a choice to attend the schools they desire for their children.

John Schlyer
Wichita, Kansas



Testimony for Senate Bill 295

January 25, 2000

Ken Liles

3621 SW Woodvalley Pl.

Topeka, Kansas 66614

Madam Chairman, my name is Ken Liles and I represent the families of South Knollwood Baptist Church and Knollwood Baptist School. I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak in favor of Senate Bill 295.

I support this bill because it provides an educational choice for families to put their children in system that reflects their values. I believe it is a sacred and inalienable right for a family to teach their own values to their own children. I believe that the most important thing we can teach our children is godly character.

For twenty-five years, our church bussed children from the Northeast side of Topeka to our Sunday school. In all those years, I can't remember a single student of our Sunday school attending our private Christian school. The reason was simple. They couldn't afford it. Under this bill, those students would have qualified to send their students to our school. I believe that a values-based education could have made a difference in the lives of most of those children.

I believe this because I am an example of what a values-based education can do. My father told me that I would be in prison before I turned seventeen if I kept up the life I had lived up to that time. I have not doubt he was right. But at age seventeen, under the consistent teaching of godly parents, I gave my life to Jesus Christ and He gave me a new heart and a new desire to do right. I was not religion that made the difference but the regeneration of my heart and life that has made the difference and kept me out of prison so far.

My wife and I have six children. We have experienced every form of education you can imagine. When we lived in Iran for thirteen years, we home-schooled the children

TESTIMONY OF: K. KELLY YOAKUM
1131 S. W. Medford Ave
Topeka, Kansas 66604
785-357-6443

January 24, 2000

SENATE BILL No. 295: Kansas Educational Opportunities Certificate Pilot Program Act

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in favor of the concept of SENATE BILL No. 295. I applaud the members of the committee for exploring this concept.

Today I am here to represent several categories:

- 1) A former Public School Student.
- 2) Former Elementary Education/Special Education and Early Childhood Development /Multi-Cultural Education student.
- 3) A constituent and Kansas Taxpayer.
- 4) Finally and more importantly, a parent of a child in a Kansas Public School. District 501 Topeka Public Schools.

I do want to thank each of you for your consideration of this pilot program. Your willingness to explore options for the children of Kansas will speak volumes of your personal commitment to REAL EDUCATION and the children of Kansas.

I must voice my one disappointment that in that this proposal does not include all the children of Kansas. I see this as unfair to the middle class Blue Collar Taxpayer. If a Taxpayer has an abundance of money or minimal money there are better opportunities for their children. But those of us with just some money are left out.

As a child I would have been considered "at risk" in today's public school system. I was a child of a single parent living in poverty, welfare/food stamp recipients, and living in a public housing ghetto. Rescued by another family member just before my seventh grade year, I was brought into a middle class environment. That was my salvation! I do understand the need to help those with little.

I am thrilled that the concept of school choice is being considered. Perhaps one day all the children of Kansas, without regard of family income, will enjoy this blessing!

As an Elementary Education student at Kansas University I worked as a paraprofessional in the Lawrence Public School system. I have been aware of the drastic need for options in Education. The Status Quo is not working effectively for all students.

As a constituent and taxpayer I want an accounting of my tax dollars. I believe that a strong education system will benefit the State of Kansas in the growth of industry, low crime, low prison populations, low welfare percentages, high employment rates, and higher average income levels.

As a parent I want to be able to give my third grade son the opportunity to do better to reach his potential. My son is not gifted but instead, he is the only child of older parents who spend a lot of time with him. As his teachers have said, he knows a lot about a lot of different things. He loves to learn! David's interest in science and social studies is incredible! Unfortunately, because David is not "gifted", not an at risk student, not on a "Free Lunch" ticket, or falls into a specific population group his options are limited.

I am unable to pay private school tuition in addition to other costs every family faces such as, but not limited to; childcare, mortgage, food, clothes, medical expenses, vehicle payments, insurance and maintenance, and State and local taxes.

Ladies and Gentleman please empower the parents of Kansas children the option to choose the educational opportunities for their children. Please give Senate Bill No. 295 careful consideration

Thank you for allowing me this privilege today and thank you again for thinking "outside the box".

Senate Education
1-25-2000
Attachment 7