

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 26, 2000 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senators Hensley and Jones - Excused

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

Conferees appearing before the committee: Keith Spencer, Corp. Commander, JROTC
Tim Heath, Wilbur Middle School, JROTC
Clint McBroom, Pleasant Valley Middle School, JROTC
Jeff Pollard, Northwest High School, JROTC
Melody Ferguson, Parents in Control
Angela Ferguson, Knollwood Baptist School
Mark Tallman, KASB

Others attending: See Attached Sheet

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lawrence, who welcomed members of the Junior ROTC members from Wichita, who were present to share their experiences with the committee. She called on Lieutenant Trager, Army Instructor, to introduce the cadets.

Cadets Keith Spencer, Tim Heath, Clint McBroom and Jeff Pollard gave a brief summary of what the program has contributed to them in terms of leadership skills, self-esteem, better grades, community service and an understanding of what it takes to participate in the day-to-day activities that support the corps, school and community life.

Chairperson Lawrence stated to those present that they could see why she is so sold on this program that gives such a great opportunity for leadership and character building skills.

One of the committee members asked how many programs there were like this around Kansas. The reply was that there are several communities including Wichita, Derby, Junction City, Topeka and Kansas City. Dodge City has expressed an interest in starting a program and visited Wichita to view the program. It was also stated that no cadets knew of any dropouts at either the high school or middle school level.

The Chairperson thanked the cadets and continued with proponent conferees on:

SB 295 Kansas education opportunities certificate pilot program

Melody Ferguson, Parents In Control, told the story of her daughter, Angela, and her struggles in public school. Angela earned the money to attend Knollwood Baptist School and has had a productive student life. (Attachment 1)

Angela Ferguson distributed her testimony (Attachment 2) and spoke her quest for a job that would allow her to pay tuition and have time off for school activities. Since leaving public school, she has been very happy with her two years at Knollwood Baptist School.

The Chairperson thanked the proponents and called on opponents of the bill.

Mark Tallman, KASB, spoke in opposition to the bill, (Attachment 3) and summed up his testimony by stating, "Let private schools continue to be what they should be: a privately funded and independently governed alternative . . ."

As there was no further meeting time, the Chairperson stated that the remaining conferees would have a chance to testify sometime next week

Testimony on the bill was submitted by Chris LeBlanc (Attachment 4), Andy Bias (Attachment 5) and Ann Heberger (Attachment 6).

The meeting was adjourned.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE GUEST LIST

DATE: January 26, 2000

NAME	REPRESENTING
1LT Andy T. Tragen	450259 JROTC/Leadership
Samantha Smith	NW JROTC
Jeff Pollard	Wichita NW JROTC
Tyler Burns	Wichita-Wildcat Middle
Alex Cole	Wilbur middle school
Kevin Diemer	Wilbur middle school
Dana Dean	NW JROTC
Oliver Ngo	Wichita - Pleasant Valley
Becky Hernandez	Wichita - Pleasant Valley M.S.
Carolyn L. Campbell	USD 501
Kendra McBroom	JROTC
John Johnson	West High JROTC
Cash Shively	Heights JROTC
Matt Shelly	Heights AFJROTC
Nathan Yeal	Heights AFJROTC
Janice Perry	Curtis JROTC
Tabatha Lewis	Curtis JROTC
Owen Davis	Wichita - Pleasant Valley
Clint McBroom	Wichita - Pleasant Valley

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE GUEST LIST

DATE: 1/26/00

NAME	REPRESENTING
Tim Heath	Wilbur Middle School
Bruce Dimmitt	Independent
Ally Frang	TSD 501
Helene re → HELBY SMITH	Sen. Tyson Cantan
Jacque Duke	USD 501
Fanny George	SQE
Clara Remyer	USD 233
Melody Ferguson	Right to Life
Angela Ferguson	SB 295 ← KCS
Mary Kay Culp	KBS - SB 295
Mark Tallman	Ks. Catholic Conference
Denise Apt	KASB
Craig Grant	USA / KCA
Jim Youally	KNEA
Jim Sullinger	USD #572
Kay O'Connor	KC STAR
Ken Liles	St Rep Dist 14
Gene Smith	South Knollwood Baptist Church

SENATE BILL 295

Madam Chairman. Members of the Committee. My name is **Melody Ferguson**, and I represent Knollwood Baptist School, and my daughter, Angela, who is a student there.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of Senate Bill 295. I support this bill because of the experiences of my children, who all attended school in USD 501. Angela attended USD 501 through the 11th grade. She was in LD classes, and could barely read and spell. Her other academic skills, although considered passing by LD standards, were not what they should have been. I was told repeatedly that she was working at her highest potential in those classes. Angela complained constantly that she was doing the same work every year, from the same books, and was never given an opportunity to advance any further.

She had wanted to attend the private school through our church for many years, starting around 3rd or 4th grade. However, as a single working mother with 3 children, I could not afford the tuition costs, even with the substantial discounts offered to families who are members of the church. My income was such that we did qualify for free lunches and reduced tuition and books. In 1998, Angela decided that she really wanted to attend KBS, and got a job so she could pay her own tuition. She took the entrance tests, and was admitted. She voluntarily agreed to an extra year of high school, as she was far behind in the academic standards of an A-C-E school, and needed to get caught up enough to be able to graduate. Angela paid for every penny of her tuition for the 1998-99 school year, and has done the same for the 1999-2000 school year. Two of her cousins, one 4 months older and one four months younger than her, graduated this past May. Angela has never complained about the extra year, and has greatly enjoyed it.

She finished her first year at KBS on the B-Honor Roll, and completed a total of 96 paces – 60 are required to get full credit for a year – 12 paces for each of 5 subjects. She was awarded a plaque for most paces completed for the students in grades 9-12. Her reading and spelling skills have greatly improved, as well as her other academic studies. She is planning on attending Bible Baptist College in Springfield, Mo on a 4 year program.

Angela participated in Basketball during her 1st year at KBS, and she participated in Volleyball and Basketball this year. She also participated in the schools choir program. Angela has grown a lot, has much more confidence, and is a better educated person because of her 2 years at KBS. She had few friends in public school, as she felt she didn't really fit in anywhere. At KBS, she knows everyone in the school, they know her, and she has many friends. Her involvement in the sports program has further improved her confidence.

My biggest regret as a parent is that I was unable to give her these advantages from Kindergarten, and that my sons never received it. Both of my sons, Dale and James, dropped out of school at the High School level. Only Dale has gone on to get his GED.

Angela has received a much better education through KBS than she would have had she continued in public school. In my opinion, she now has a much better chance at success in college, and her life after school. I have two granddaughters, ages 6 and 4, and it is my sincere hope that this program will be approved so that Sarah and Nea can have the opportunities that their father, uncle and aunt did not have.

Again, I thank you for allowing me to testify here today. I will stand for questions at the pleasure of the committee.

SENATE BILL 295

Madam Chairman. Members of the Committee. My name is **Angela Ferguson**, and I represent students from public and private schools.

When I attended public schools, I worried about students bringing weapons to school. As a private school student, I don't have to worry about that at all. I also don't have to worry about discipline problems because of drugs and alcohol at school.

At KBS, there is a friendliness that can't be found in the public schools, due to the sheer number of people who attend. It is impossible to know everyone in the school. At KBS, I know the names of every student, as well as every teacher. We are all friends, and I have the opportunity to be a roll model to the younger children.

In USD 501, I was placed in the LD class, and they taught me the same things every year, from the same text books. I was not allowed to advance in my education. I wanted to learn; I wanted to better myself; and I knew that if I stayed in the public schools, that was not going to happen. I decided that since my Mom couldn't afford to put me in KBS, I would have to work myself through. I have worked a lot of different jobs trying to find one that would give me enough hours to earn the money I needed to pay my tuition, but which would still allow me the time off to participate in school sports and other activities. This has not been easy!! I currently work at Brookwood Dillons.

I will be graduating this year, and I FEEL GREAT ABOUT MYSELF, MY EDUCATION, AND THE THINGS I HAVE ACCOMPLISHED IN THE PAST 2 YEARS. If vouchers had been available in Kansas, it would have helped me a lot. I would have been able to attend KBS from an earlier grade level, and been able to accomplish more. However, I don't regret anything, and am very happy that I have been able to attend KBS for the past 2 years.

Thank you for letting me have this opportunity to testify. I will stand for questions at the pleasure of the committee.



TO: Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Mark Tallman, Assistant Executive Director for Advocacy
DATE: January 25, 2000

RE: Testimony on S.B. 295

Representing:

Kansas Association of School Boards
United School Administrators of Kansas
School for Quality Education
USD 500 (Kansas City)
USD 512 (Shawnee Mission)

Outline of Testimony

1. Vouchers mean public financial support of private, usually religious, schools.
2. Private schools should not receive public funding because they are not required to operate in the same manner as public schools: there are "Different Rules."
3. Vouchers will not significantly expand student choice unless significant changes are made in the requirements of private schools.
4. The contention that private schools have better student performance is unsupported because of differences in the populations they serve.
5. A voucher system will weaken public education by casting it as the "choice of last resort."

1. Vouchers mean public financial support of private, usually religious, schools.

A. S.B. 295 sends state money to private schools. Vouchers are often represented as aid to families, not private schools. In fact, vouchers, like public school funding from the legislature, are public funds, raised through taxation, appropriated by government to pay for the cost of operating a school.

Under S.B. 295, the parents are never in possession of the money. If a child is eligible to receive an “educational opportunity certificate,” and the child enrolls in an “educational opportunity school,” the State Board of Education determines the amount the certificate is worth under a formula in the bill. The Director of Accounts and Reports *issues* a warrant for payment to the parent of the child but *delivers* the warrant to the school, not the parent. The school then redeems that warrant to pay for the cost of enrollment of the child. The parent may not spend the voucher money on anything else and has no control over how the school spends the money; the only choice is whether or not to enroll in an educational opportunities school.

Compare this to the funding of public schools. When a child is enrolled and attending a public school on September 20, the child is counted under the school finance system. Each child enrolled generates budget authority for the district under a formula determined by law, and the State Board sends state aid. If a parent chooses not to enroll in the public school district, the district does not receive funding.

Let’s put it another way. Suppose the legislature changed the school finance law so instead of a state aid payment, each district receives a certificate or warrant for each child that enrolls based on current weighting factors and base budget per pupil, which would then be redeemed for state funding. That would be the same system proposed for private schools in S.B. 295. If that system was used for public schools, would anyone seriously argue that the state was no longer funding public schools; that it was only giving money to parents?

B. A voucher system simply extends public funding to private schools, which violates the Kansas Constitution. Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution, which is the fundamental law adopted by the people, reads;

The legislature shall provide for intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement by establishing and maintaining public schools, educational institutions and related activities which may be organized and changes in such manner as may be provided by law.

Constitutions are designed to **limit** the powers of government. A “strict interpretation” of this article clearly shows that people gave the Legislature the responsibility to promote education **only** through the mechanism of public schools and institutions.

C. This is especially true of religious schools. Furthermore, Article 6, subsection 6 (c), states: “No religious sect or sects shall control any part of the public education funds.” In 1966, the people of Kansas not only rejected the idea of public funding of religious instruction, they clearly rejected giving public education funds to churches for any purpose. Any school controlled by any church cannot receive public funding for educational purposes. As noted above, S.B. 295 or any voucher plan that transmits public funding to private religious schools is unconstitutional on its face. The Legislature cannot disregard the intent of the constitution.

2. Private schools should not receive public funding because they are not required to operate in the same manner as public schools: there are “Different Rules.”

A. With public funding comes public accountability. What do we mean when we talk about public education? We mean that all children have an equal right to attend and benefit from this system. Because every citizen has the right to receive a public education, every citizen is obligated to share in its cost through taxation. Because every citizen shares in the burden of maintaining public schools, every voter shares in the governance of those schools through the political process. If I disagree with any aspect of public education, I can run for my local school board, the Legislature or the State Board of Education, or I can vote to “throw the rascals out.”

B. Vouchers offer private schools public funding without either the obligation to serve all children or accountability to the electorate that is footing the bill. Under a voucher plan, my taxes will be supporting a religious or independent school that my child may be unable to attend or that is operating in a way I oppose. What a private institution does is none of my business - until I am asked to fund it. It then becomes my business.

Because of the difference between a publicly supported and private, independent school, state and federal laws regulating each are dramatically different. These differences are spelled out in detail in the KASB publication, *Different Rules*. These differences are understandable if private schools are privately supported; but they make no sense if private schools are to be publicly supported and “compete” with public schools. Competition only works if the rules are the same. Here are some examples of the different obligations that would remain under S.B. 295.

Current Law: Public Schools

SB 295: Educational Opportunity Schools

Eligible Children

Must provide educational services for all children who reside in the district, regardless of space.

Only required to enroll children up to the limit of capacity, after reserving space for children required or entitled to attend.

Admission Criteria

Must serve children regardless of educational ability or special needs.

May establish any admission criteria, as long as “certificate eligible children” are admitted under the same basis.

Excluding Children

May only expel children after due process and for limited periods of time as provided by law.

Are not required to give student due process rights and may expel permanently.

Program Requirements

Must offer defined K-12 education programs, special education programs, vocational education, health and nutritional programs.

May offer whatever courses and programs they wish, which may be much less expensive than many programs required of public schools. May demand that the public school district provide many services.

Employee Rights

Must provide due process rights (tenure) to teachers and collectively bargain with employees as provided by state law.

Are not required to provide due process to teachers or collectively bargain.

Free Transportation and Textbooks

Must provide transportation services to children who live more than 2.5 miles from school and free textbooks to disadvantaged children.

Are not required to provide transportation or free textbooks.

Tuition and Budget Limits

Must provide a free education, with limited ability to charge fees, and must operate under budget limits and financial controls set by the state.

May charge whatever tuition and fees the school deems appropriate, may raise funds from any sources without limit.

Public Access

Must comply with open meetings and open records laws.

Are not required to comply with these laws.

3. Vouchers will not significantly expand student choice unless significant changes are made in the requirements of private schools.

A. Under vouchers, public demands on private schools will change. Supporters of vouchers point to public opinion polls showing that many Americans favor the concept of school choice, including vouchers. What voucher supporters rarely point out is that the same polls show much stronger agreement that under a voucher system, private schools should be required to serve a wider range of students. For example, the 1997 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll asked the question: "Do you think non-public schools that receive public funding should or should not be required to accept students from a wider range of backgrounds and academic ability than is now, generally, the case?" Seventy-eight percent (78%) said yes. (Only 48% of respondents supported the idea of vouchers.) As noted above, S.B. 295 does not make any change in requirements for private schools.

We believe that with public funding should come greater public obligations. Supporters of vouchers should understand that if they are successful, the requirements on private schools will increase. Regardless of how a voucher system begins, greater governmental intervention will follow.

B. Parents already have educational choice in Kansas, within limits. Those limits would remain under S.B. 295. Children may attend any school that is in compliance with the compulsory attendance law if they (1) meet the admission requirements, (2) can afford tuition, fees, books and supplies, and (3) have transportation or lodging required to get to schools.

Let's look more closely at S.B. 295.

First, it does not make any change in private school admission requirements. If a child doesn't qualify for admission, there is no choice for that family.

Second, it does not limit the costs of tuition, fees, etc., to the value of the voucher. If tuition and other costs, from books to uniforms, exceed the combination of a voucher and the family's ability to pay, there is no choice for that family.

Finally, it does not provide transportation or living costs. If a family doesn't have a car, if parents are working during inconvenient hours, if there is no "educational opportunity" school within commuting distance, there is no choice for that family. Therefore, the legal ability of parents to choose is not changed at all under this bill.

C. Choices are increasing within the public system. Public schools are not opposed to the idea of choice; in fact, the past ten years has seen an explosion of new opportunities for students: magnet schools, charter schools, alternative schools. Thousands of students attend districts where they are non-residents under local policies; tens of thousands are given choices of schools within districts.

If public schools assign children to a particular school or refuse to admit students from other schools or districts, it is almost always because of space or program limitations; by an understandable desire to first meet the needs of children "required or entitled to attend that school." S.B. 295 uses that same language to give "educational opportunity schools" that same ability.

4. The contention that private schools have better student performance is unsupportable because of differences in the populations they serve.

Within the national debate over vouchers, supporters often argue that public schools - particularly *inner city* public schools - are failing; and that vouchers would allow the students in these schools to “escape” to better private schools. Fortunately, our state has data that allows us to look at issues of school performance more critically.

A. State data shows that school performance is closely tied to the socio-economic status of students served. All public school and state-accredited private schools participate in the Kansas assessment program and are issued building report cards by the State Department of Education. From these and other sources, some important facts emerge.

First, there is a significant difference in student academic performance between economically disadvantaged children and children with families of higher incomes. This difference is between 10 and 15 percentage points in average scores on the state math and reading assessments. It is widest at the elementary level and narrows somewhat at the high school level.

Second, according to report card information, approximately 31% of students in accredited schools in Kansas are economically disadvantaged. However, in the largest private school system in the state, the four Catholic dioceses, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students is approximately 11%. In other words, the Catholic school system has only about one-third the rate of student poverty as the public school system. But the public school districts listed in S.B. 295 are each far above the state average: In USD 457 (Garden City), the percentage of economically disadvantaged student in grades K-6 is 52%, in USD 259 (Wichita) 53%, in USD 501 (Topeka) 63% and in USD 500 (Kansas City) 70%.

Third, although there are many exceptions, public schools and districts with very high percentages of economically disadvantaged students tend to have low test scores, and those with very few disadvantaged students tend to score higher. This strongly suggests that inner city schools are not “failing” because they are bad schools; instead, it means that these schools must take on a far more challenging student population.

B. Private schools have the same challenges in educating low-income children as public schools. Because S.B. 295 is limited to lower income students and because vouchers are often touted as a way to help poor children do better in school, it is important to ask whether private schools have a better record in serving poor children than public schools.

We reviewed school report card information for accredited private schools in the four counties affected by S.B. 295. What we found was remarkably consistent with public school performance. For private schools that reported data, the trend was very clear: as the percentage of lower income children increases, average test scores, particularly in reading, declined.

For example, we reviewed school report card information for the 14 Catholic elementary schools in Wichita that reported socio-economic data. Four of these schools had an average score on the state assessment above 70, well above the state average of 64. All four had fewer than 5% disadvantaged students. The three Catholic schools with disadvantaged populations between 10% and 20% had reading scores very close to the state average of 64. But of the five schools with greater than 20% disadvantaged students, four were below the state average. In fact, the reading score for the Catholic school with the highest percentage of disadvantaged students (47%) scored almost 20 points below the state average.

Likewise, on the state math test, four of the five Catholic schools with more than 20% disadvantaged students scored below the state average, and the “poorest” school was again more than 20 points beneath the state average. These patterns were equally strong in Wyandotte, Shawnee and Finney Counties. We have attached the data for your review.

Our point is not to be critical of these schools. We understand the difficult task they have undertaken. Catholic school personnel in these communities understand the difficult job public schools face. But please understand that many public schools in the four districts listed in S.B. 295 have far more disadvantaged students than **any** private school in their community.

That brings us to our final point.

5. A voucher system will weaken public education by casting it as the “choice of last resort.”

The inescapable message the Legislature would send by enacting a voucher system is that public schools are failing. It is easy to look simplistically at school report cards and other information to suggest that our most challenged public schools are “failing.” But the evidence strongly suggests that if private schools served the same student population, they would have the same results.

Giving students a voucher to attend private school does not mean they will receive a better education, unless you believe that you receive a better education simply from having wealthier classmates. Most public schools with very low numbers of poor children have test scores equal to or greater than any private schools.

If a voucher system is created, which parents of children at challenged public schools are the most likely to make use of vouchers? In other words, which children are the most likely to be admitted to private schools and have the family resources and stability to attend? Precisely the children and families public schools most need to retain on behalf of all children: the parents committed to education; the ones who become room mother and fathers, who have a car to help on class trips, who come to teacher conferences and concerts and school nights.

Which parents and children are the least likely to use vouchers? The parents who never come to teacher conferences; who can’t be found to sign special education plans, who don’t have phones or cars or permanent addresses, who are dealing with their own lack of learning and employment skills. Which students are least likely to be served in private schools? The learning disabled and disruptive and emotionally disturbed; the children who are absent and falling behind. Some parents don’t want their children going to school with “children like that.” But should the state encourage them to withdraw their own children from public education?

However well meaning the idea of vouchers and choice, the message it sends to families about public education is this: give up and get out. And who is left in public schools? In a free market world of school competition, it is the children nobody else wants.

Let private schools continue to be what they should be: a privately funded and independently governed alternative. Our challenge should be to make public schools work for all children. We are working hard to do so and we are seeing it happen. We ask your help in making that a reality.

**PRIVATE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE FOR SEDGWICK COUNTY BASED UPON
1998-1999 STATE DATA**

PRIVATE SCHOOLS:

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	Pop.	Low	Reading	Math	% Ethnicity
		SES	Index Score	Power score	
BETHANY LUTHERAN ELEM WICHITA	51	0	59.4	54.4	94% W
HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN	222	0	62.2	58.1	95% W
ST PAULS LUTHERAN ELEM [CHENEY]	48	0	66.8	57.6	100% W
ST THOMAS AQUINAS ELEM	642	1	73.1	61.9	94% W
SCHOOL OF THE MAGDALEN ELEM	464	2	70.2	61.5	86 W
BLESSED SACRAMENT CATHOLIC	412	3	70.8	56.5	94 W
ST ELIZABETH ANN SETON CATHOLIC	621	3	73.0	59.7	92 W
ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI ELEM	782	3	62.8	61.1	91 W
RESURRECTION CATHOLIC SCHOOL	218	5	64.6	72.1	93 W
ST MARY PARISH CATHOLIC ELEM [DERBY]	216	7	58.5	69.7	94 W
ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC ELEM	294	13	65.4	52.4	15 AA, 77 W
ST PETER CATHOLIC ELEM-SCHULTE	296	14	63.7	67.4	93 W
ST CECILIA ELEM	148	18	64.7	55.2	94 W
ST JOSEPH CATHOLIC (WICHITA)	147	21	58.9	61.5	10 H 84 W
ST ANNE CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY	227	21	54.7	50.6	11 AA 78 W
ST PATRICK CATHOLIC ELEM [WICHITA]	211	21	55.3	49.4	36 H 60 W
ST JUDE CATHOLIC ELEM	273	22	69.5	56.3	23 H, 74 W
HOLY SAVIOR CATHOLIC ACADEMY	105	47	44.3	42.7	95% B
State Average		31	64.14	59.7	81 W

**PRIVATE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE FOR WYANDOTTE COUNTY BASED UPON
1998-1999 STATE DATA**

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Pop	% Low SES	Reading	Math	Ethnicity %
			Index	Power Score	
GRACE LUTHERAN	97	0	51.9	51.0	76 B, 22 W
ST PATRICKS ELEM	353	0	66.4	54.5	88 W
CHRIST THE KING[KANSAS CITY]	247	9	59.2	64.9	16 B, 10 H 74W
SACRED HEART ELEM [BONNER SPRINGS]	133	11	63.0	39.4	92 W
ST JOHN/HOLY FAMILY	145	32	65.2	48.0	21 H, 72 W
OUR LADY OF UNITY	136	35	51.9	46.0	63 H, 32 W
HOLY NAME	126	38	41.0	42.2	11 B, 71 H, 18 W
ALL SAINTS CONS ELEM	268	60	48.7	36.9	84 H., 15 W
State Averages		31	64.14	59.7	81 W

PRIVATE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE FOR SHAWNEE COUNTY BASED UPON 1998-1999 STATE DATA

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Pop.	% Low SES	Reading	Math	Ethnicity %
			Index	Power score	
CHRIST THE KING	331	0	72.6	61.7	94 W
MOST PURE HEART MARY ELEM	515	5	68.9	58.2	91 W
HOLY NAME ELEM	240	11	57.9	46.5	91 W
TOPEKA LUTHERAN ELEM	227	13	71.0	61.7	93 W
OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE ELEM	138	18	65.4	43.4	99 H
ASSUMPTION ELEM	195	24	57.9	50.8	13 H 82 W
SACRED HEART ELEM[TOPEKA]	138	31	54.3	45.7	92 W
State Average		31	64.14	59.7	81 W

PRIVATE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE FOR FINNEY COUNTY BASED UPON 1998-1999 STATE DATA

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Pop.	% Low SES	Reading	Math	Ethnicity %
			Index	Power score	
ST. DOMINIC ELEM	151	5	68.8	58.1	10 H 81 W
ST. MARYS ELEM	86	36	53.8	63.7	62 H 35 W
State Average		31	64.14	59.7	81 W

Dear Senate Committee members,

I am very interested and concerned about SB #295 which would enact educational opportunities certificates in Kansas as a pilot program. I am a constituent of Sen. Christine Downey and I am very appreciative of your committee listening to testimony regarding this bill. As a teacher I know she has felt the heartache of trying to educate children that don't always have the basics such as food, clothing and shelter. These children exist in all cultures, however a great majority of them are of Hispanic, African-American and Asian descent. These underprivileged kids are more vulnerable and are at high risk for educational failure. I see this bill as a small step in the right direction toward providing poverty-stricken parents the opportunity and the actual means to decide what is in the best interest of their children. This will dissolve the financial barrier of the educational equation, allowing parents to choose the school that best meets the needs of their children.

My experiences as a school nurse in both religious and public schools in Newton have shown me the many faces of approximately 4000 K-12 students. Often times they are too proud or embarrassed to admit they are tired, cold or hungry. Instead they may act out, sleep or avoid speaking altogether in an effort to be more like their peers. These factors only hinder them further on their journey to becoming productive members of society. The city of Newton has a large Hispanic community that is growing more each day. St. Mary's Elementary is made up of appx. one-third Hispanic students. It is a tremendous sacrifice for the parents of these students and their parishes to educate them in their choice of school and to pay their taxes to support the

local public schools at the same time. Yet they continue to do so. Their families and mine have not made this choice because the public schools here are bad. Our schools are all actually pretty full. This is simply a matter of wanting our children taught the same morals and values at school that we provide at home. A law that makes funding available to low-income parents will allow them to help their children break out of the cycle of impoverishment that seems to repeat itself with each generation.

Having attended nursing school in Wichita and then working there for many years, I had first-hand experience with the large indigent population both in the hospital setting and out. Through the health dept. I was able to visit many families living in poverty and even the more destitute ones without homes at all. Most of these parents wanted their children to achieve and do better than they were able to do for themselves. The public schools in the larger cities bear the burden of educating these children due to the vast number localized in the same communities. If the independent/religious schools could help relieve this burden, both the public schools and even more important the children at risk can improve their chances of success dramatically.

As a Newton parent and representative, I would like to thank you for considering my testimony in favor of SB #295 and allowing equitable choices for poverty-stricken parents.

Chris LeBlanc

Chris LeBlanc

Good morning, my name is Andy Bias; I live at 3921 Pine Knot Ct in Wichita, Kansas. I am here this morning to address the proposed Senate Bill 295. When asked if my position were in favor or against I indicated in favor. However, even though I am in favor of increased opportunities for our youth I am concerned at what expense is this option being offered. Even though I have a personal connection with Holy Savior Catholic Academy I am a strong believer in our public school system. So it is important how SB 295 is proposed and what impact could it have on the public school system.

Upon review I understand the need to have qualified applicants be income eligible. However, to restrict applicants with regard to test scores promotes a negative connotation that only those students not making it need apply. I would think that if we are truly trying to address enhancing opportunities for those that can't afford a variety of choices that we would be more inclusive.

A lottery component already exists in the proposal. Why not lower the criteria, expand the pool size and implement the lottery sooner. This would allow for income eligible applicants who are excelling to also have increased options, if their parents so desired.

What I don't think is healthy is to take students that may have some educational challenges and place them in a private or parochial setting and say to them and to the school, succeed now or else. As though they would have all the answers to the issues that these students have been facing all of their lives. What we must do is set the program up to succeed and not fail.

Access to participating schools or school districts should not be limited to simply regular availability. Under the current proposal only schools with vacancies willing to accept and work with students who may have some challenges need apply. Others can indicate a willingness to participate but simply state that there were no vacancies or that there were more qualified applicants on their waiting list.

These are only a handful of issues that should be addressed to achieve success. I would hope that a thorough review of the overall objectives and proposed outcomes be weighed and measured so that our youth do gain additional educational opportunities without compromising their existing ones.



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To: Chairman Barbara Lawrence and members of the Senate
Education Committee

From: Ann Heberger, MAINstream Coalition

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 295 -- "Kansas Educational Opportunity
Certificate Pilot Program"

The MAINstream Coalition believes that a strong public educational system is the bulwark of Democracy, and opposes any effort to dilute or diminish the effectiveness of the schooling that is already in place. The state's business should be to support, without reservation, excellence in its most important service ... public education.

Voucher programs in other states have yet to prove their effectiveness, despite millions of public and private dollars invested. Therefore any money expended in Kansas, especially for an experimental pilot program when education budgets are already at risk, is a foolish investment of taxpayer dollars.

MAINstream's main objection to any voucher program is that they are a clear violation of the separation of church and state. Public schools, and only public schools, should be funded with public dollars. The potential to use public dollars to advance religion in private schools makes any voucher plan suspect.

Funding, if available for vouchers, would be more wisely invested in real school reforms such as new books, more teachers, more teacher training, and building and equipment up-grades. If the children chosen for the proposed program are truly needy educationally and financially, would they not be better served if the dollars were invested in programs that have already proven their success?

The MAINstream Coalition further questions the accountability of voucher programs. Private schools are not required to account to the public regarding the expenditure of funds, the quality of their educational programs, or their academic results. No state sponsored voucher program, experimental or not, should be undertaken without strict adherence to all the rules and regulations required of public schools (i.e. curriculum standards, access, teacher certification, non-discrimination, etc.)

Once again, MAINstream believes that voucher programs are not a way to improve public education, and opposes Senate Bill 295.

Thank you,

Ann Heberger, Public Policy Committee Co-Chair

Senate Education
1-26-2000
Attachment 6