

Senate Bill 128 Proponent written testimony

Chairman Tyson and Committee members:

My name is Jeff Walter and I live in Butler Co. I am writing you regarding SB128 or "The Ad Astra Opportunity Tax Credit" bill. I would like to share my history with private education and how it has impacted my family for four generations.

My story begins with my grandpa, He was a private school teacher for most of his life. He felt that parents should have the choice to send their children to the school of their choice and dedicated his life to that end. This included living and raising 3 children on the meager wage the schools could afford to pay. To being forced to paint houses with his kids during the summer so that his own children could afford the tuition at the same school that he taught at. The education his children received at these schools made such an impact that every one of my grandpa's grandchildren also received an education from a private school. I am the only one who did not graduate from a private school. That was my parents and my choice, but I see the benefits it awarded myself so much that my daughter currently goes to a private school. The same one my grandpa taught at, my uncle, dad, sister, and myself attended.

I want to point out that none of my family are extremely wealthy, I'm not saying we are poor but just average middle class families. I remember when I was a kid my dad working weekends and extra hours to earn enough to pay for our tuition. My mom who is a piano teacher taking on more students than most would deem reasonable. Even with all that, I remember hearing them talk about being behind on the tuition many times. For my family I believe so strongly in the need for private education that along with my wife working in the kitchen at the school. We relocated my family and downsized our house just to make sending her to our school sustainable. We are blessed and happy to make these sacrifices for this. I do know many families that even if they where to make the changes we have still could not afford to send even one of their kids.

Me personally, I will admit I rebelled against my parents choice to send me to a private school. I was a rebellious child and I chaffed at the rules put on me. When I transferred to public schools for my last 2 years of high school I was shocked by the difference. While I did enjoy some aspects of it. Looking back, I can see how it negatively affected my early 20's. As I got older, I started to see what a blessing it was to be sent to a school that aligned and taught my faith and values. All of this to say that it built a foundation in me that has carried me through life. I honestly can not imagine where my life would be with out that foundation.

I feel this bill should pass as we pay taxes for schools we are not using. Parents have the right to choose for themselves what kind of education the receive. Many parents would either welcome the financial relief this bill would bring. Others would for the first time have a glimmer of hope that they could afford to send their children to a school that aligns with their beliefs and views which has been denied to them up till now.

Thank you for your time.

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