

Testimony SB 196

Senate Education Committee

Thursday, March 7, 2013

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

I am here to support SB 196. Overall, this bill will be good for Kansas, for Kansas parents with school age children and for the benefit of all public schools. The goal of all of us is to provide the very best educational opportunities for our children. I believe that charter schools will offer another option which can offer unique; original and perhaps different approaches to education. The more variety the better chance for all of Kansas children to excel and become intelligent, responsible citizens. Competition in educational opportunities will definitely improve all schools. You can see this in the myriad of post secondary schools in this country.

It could possibly curb some of the overcrowding issues that are prevalent in some districts. It will possibly increase the money it receives from the State for districts that open charter schools, as many of the students who enroll will not have been students enrolled prior in any public school.

I would like to address some specific sections in the bill beginning with the fiscal note:

Of course, this could be a non-issue if the Governor's plan is implemented. But until then,

New Sec. 28: I would suggest that you amend the bill that a contribution could be made to any public school not just charter public schools. I don't know what matrix was used to pick 28,000 taxpayers, when over the last several years there haven't even been 5,000 total students enrolled in charter schools. I would suggest that if 28,000 taxpayers contributed \$5,000 each to schools in one year, I don't think we would have a funding problem.

Most charter schools have failed because of financial reasons, not because of teaching or meeting the qualifications set by the board.

Therefore, this bill would encourage more schools to open and their chances of staying open are better since there would be monetary assistance.

Some arguments against public charter schools:

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- 1) That teachers are not represented by a union, this bill does not preclude any teacher to join or be represented by a union. Teachers can choose for themselves, and have made the choice to work in this charter school system.
- 2) That this bill is unconstitutional, the State Board does approve the authorizer and requires an audit every year.
- 3) Special education need children are not accepted; not all public schools can meet the specific needs of every student and have to send them to other schools that have the resources.
- 4) That there is no oversight but there is stricter requirements as listed in New Sec. 19 (2) the charter school contract can be terminated if the charter school does not increase the percentage of post secondary graduation certificates; the public schools are under no requirement to meet any post graduation goals.
- 5) The unfounded argument that charter schools can pick and choose their students. Although there are requirements specific to the school, charter schools are created because the administrators of them want to help children and will not deny them arbitrarily.

I would suggest that in New Section 11 the 5 year sunset of charter schools if they do not meet the assessment requirements be amended to apply to all public schools.

In summary, charter schools will open up educational opportunities for parents and their children. It can provide different styles of teaching that will help children excel instead of struggle. In all cases the requirements are higher and will produce great results for both child and parent.

**Thank you! I stand for questions;**

**Darlene Cornfield**

**Northfield School**