

Testimony of Rebecca Love Elder, Head Administrator of
The Northfield School of the Liberal Arts, 501 (c) 3 Corporation, to the
Senate Education Committee Regarding SB 196
February 21, 2013

Of course Kansas can proudly claim the pioneer spirit and, through that spirit, many legacies that have been proudly and responsibly passed down and have continued to build up all those who become involved in their vitality. One of those legacies that prompts my testimony today as a proponent of SB 196 was literally, at one time, in a field, the field of education. Personally, but not at all uniquely, I can point to a great-grandmother who came to the Ark Valley around Douglas from Loogatee, Indiana, married a husband and a farm but never let the vigilance and work they demanded separate her from a love of poetry, grammar and a dogged preservation of the educational tools that she considered imperative for a free people's maintenance of freedom. Eldora Dugan Love published, from her prairie homestead, two books of poetry and was editor of a women's journal called The Christian Home. Her son, Walter Love, would go to school from age 9 to 15 then leave to help on the family farm after his father suffered injuries in an accident. Upon returning to Mulvane High School in 1908, at age 19, he was a year older than the teacher, who would soon become Mrs. Ray Garvey. His son, Robert Love, would start Wichita Collegiate School (after he helped pass one of the earliest Right to Work laws in the nation), the first private, non-parochial, school in Kansas in 1959 with other interested parents that now boasts an enrollment and endowment that credibly lend evidence to the wisdom and initiative that helped lay its foundations. His children, of whom I am one, chose to pioneer with parent directed homeschooling in the 1980's and then to establish, in his box factory in Wichita, another enterprising educational effort, the Northfield School of the Liberal Arts, which has enjoyed two decades of preserving the liberal arts as an educational assumption and sharing with nearly 50 % of its student population scholarship opportunities that they would not have found any place else in Wichita, not because of wealth but because of willing resourcefulness, stringent efficiencies and self-sacrifice. It is the continuity of this school that has brought me to this place today to ask of the Kansas legislators, one more time, a nod to freedom and a justifiable allocation of the people's own resources in the necessarily wide open field of education.

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Perhaps even more importantly than the state's acknowledgement of the enduring value of personal initiative, and of personal sacrifice as innovation in a field, Kansas needs to exhibit the assumption of trust as the essential condition in which disparate parties can approach common challenges. This bill makes a call for trust to be asserted by both opponents and proponents. We need a variety of approaches to the field of education, just like any other human enterprise, because we are comprised of a variety of presuppositions, resources, aptitudes, methodologies and organizational arrangements. The people of the state of Kansas will thrive and the pioneer spirit continue to support great legacies only if their reasonable and observable differences are seen as strengths and a responsible opportunity for personal freedom to have its fullest and most charitable expression. This attitude alone will keep all fields of endeavor, particularly today under discussion as the field of education, fertile and effective in achieving its common purpose.