

To: Kansas State Legislators

March 7, 2015

My name is Susan Lindstrom and I am the Program Coordinator at New Directions Learning Academy in Topeka, Kansas. We are a diploma completion program for adults over 18 whose class has previously graduated without them. We have been in existence for almost 20 years serving students who for various reasons were not successful finishing high school as a traditional student in the 9-12<sup>th</sup> grades. Currently we have a location inside Fairlawn Plaza Mall, and one inside Shawnee County Department of Corrections. Proudly we partner with 8 sponsoring school districts from which our students receive their diploma upon completion of all district requirements.

When our program first began ALL students came to the computer labs to work onsite, which was incredibly difficult for the majority who had job and family responsibilities that took higher priority. Then the opportunity to access classes virtually arose and the interest in our program soared because of the convenience to students not having to drive to a location during our actual hours of operation. The first year we had 3 students work virtually, then in every year that followed those numbers increased by leaps and bounds. Moms could work after kids were tucked in, dads could work after their 3-11 shift. Access is 24/7, 365 days per year. Our students thrived on this option.

New Directions Learning Academy is a program of integrity. This year we had 658 students enroll in both locations. At Fairlawn Plaza we enroll students 1<sup>st</sup> semester August & September, and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, January & February. Our Shawnee Co. Jail program enrolls students at least weekly, or whenever a new inmate arrives who is interested. As of March 1<sup>st</sup>, we had issued 965 report cards for classes completed and have had 38 students graduate. We are expecting 30 more by the end of the year. Last year we graduated 80 students, many who have gone on to post-secondary education, moved forward in their career choice, or got a decent paying job for the very first time ever! Our community is better off because these students have graduated.

It will be detrimental to our students, our sponsoring school districts, our community and our state if funding is completely gone that allows students the opportunity of accomplishing their goal of graduating and receiving their diploma. These students become taxpayers improving our local economy, while improving their own lives and the lives of their families. Please do NOT take away their opportunity to survive and thrive.

Please do NOT pass HB2403 and SB273; our entire state will lose!

Most Sincerely,



Susan Lindstrom

Program Coordinator, New Directions Learning Academy

slindstrom@sckesc.org

March 7, 2015

My name is Kelly Long. I am a student at New Directions Learning Academy in Topeka, Kansas.

The NDLA program benefits students like me who can't go to school during the day. A virtual school is ideal as it allows me to work from home around my full-time job.

It is important for programs like this to be available to students like me.

Please don't cut funding for virtual schools for adults.

Sincerely,

Kelly Long

March 6, 2015

I think it is good to have virtual education for adult students over 18, because it makes it easier for adults to get a high school diploma. I think they should keep funding for these virtual programs.

I currently attend New Directions Learning Academy in Topeka, Kansas. If this program was not available, I am not sure that I would be able to finish high school through a GED program.

Tiffany Bloomer

March 6, 2015

To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my concern regarding proposed cuts to the funding for virtual programs for adult students.

I currently work as a teacher at New Directions Learning Academy in Topeka, Kansas. As a teacher, I have observed various students in their educational endeavors. There is nothing more gratifying than seeing an adult student with a diploma in hand!

Our students range in age from 19 to 82. Many of our students have families and full-time jobs. For these non-traditional students, virtual learning is not only a convenience, it is a necessity. Many of our students work on courses after they have finished a long day at work, and/or after they have put their children in bed. Our students often work late into the night, during the time that most traditional schools are closed.

If funding for virtual schools is cut, there is always the chance that adult students could achieve a high school diploma through a GED test. However, many of the students that we encounter lack the basic skills to pass such a test. Many students come to us without any high school credits. Some of these students have a difficult time with fifth grade English and mathematics. Yet these students have the desire to finish their high school requirements. When they do finish, the look of pride on their faces really is something to be seen.

Our particular program has been open nearly twenty years. In that time, we have grown into a very successful program in which students are able to enroll and take classes at no cost. Since 2010, we have issued over 3,500 grade cards for completed classes. We have helped more than 972 students graduate, and we are hoping to hit 1,000 by the end of the current school year. It is anticipated that the number of graduates will compound in the future, as our enrollment continues to increase as word-of-mouth spreads regarding our program.

Our particular program works with eight school districts in the Topeka and surrounding area. These include USD 341, Oskaloosa USD 341, Perry LeCompton USD 343, Seaman USD 345, Silver Lake USD 372, Santa Fe Trail USD 434, Washburn Rural USD 437, Shawnee Heights USD 450, and Topeka Public Schools USD 501. In addition, our service center based in Clearwater, Kansas works with numerous other school districts in Kansas including those in Wichita, El Dorado, and Pratt among others.

Adult education programs for virtual learners are vital to our community and our state. I urge you to reconsider the abrupt cuts that have been proposed. These cuts would be devastating to virtual programs, and they would leave hundreds of students in Topeka with no means to pursue their dreams of completing their high school requirements. If cuts must be made, I would ask that a gradual decrease in funding over several years be considered.

Thank you,

  
Lisa Wolf, NDLA

Phone: (785) 228-2336

Text: (484) 393-5472

Fax: (785) 228-9278

Friday, March 6, 2015

To whom it may concern:

I am a 31 year old student attending New Directions Learning Academy. I am also a Store Manager at Subway; I work 45-60 hours a week. If it wasn't for being able to get online and do my work, I wouldn't be able get anything done. I need this program, I don't want to be in food service my whole life and this is the only way I can support my family and continue my education. I am only 11 credits away from graduating!

Please don't take this away from me or the rest of the people trying to better themselves!!

Thanks,  
Leslie Johnson

March 7, 2015

Dear legislators,

I am an 18 year old student at NDLA. I was a 3.5 GPA student at Topeka High, and when I got pregnant I continued on with my senior year. I had my son at the beginning of my second semester of my senior year and I was struggling to raise a newborn and get my high school done as well. Because I was more focused on my son than my education I unfortunately didn't graduate with my class.

I enrolled into NDLA and I started in August of 2014, and I will graduate in May of 2015 with a diploma from Topeka High. The advisors have been a great help along the way. They helped me file for financial aid through FAFSA, and assisted me in applying to the colleges that I am interested in. They also showed me how to put together a solid resume.

I would be devastated if cuts were made to virtual education for adults. My brother attends NDLA and has 1 more year left; my boyfriend was looking into the program and asked well.

Please reconsider the proposed cuts to virtual education for adults!

Sincerely,

Heaven Lokay

Saturday, March 7, 2015

To whom it may concern:

I worked my first year in Topeka at New Directions Learning Academy. It is great program and one that I believe is way better than passing a test. This would be very disheartening for a portion of our population if programs like these get cut. I saw many adults come to this school because they have been in the working force and have earned the chance to be promoted and can't because they do not have a high school diploma. These students do not have the confidence to pass the GED and come to this school to recover credits that they need in order to graduate and thus get their promotion that they have worked hard for. The students who benefit from these programs are trying to turn their life around or are those who have turned their life around and are trying to get ahead. It would be very sad if funding like this gets cut.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Walker

March 7, 2015

Dear legislators,

I am writing to urge you to reconsider the cuts that have b

I currently work as a special education teacher, and I can't teach in a traditional timeline. If students want a diploma and I have known many kids who struggled making good decisions and then. These same kids later became very much positively contributing members of society. Success is largely the result of their ability to complete diplomas later in life after they had

Imagining that every child comes from supportive backgrounds or that all students can complete high school on time is unrealistic. There are many valid extenuating circumstances that may interfere with a student's ability to complete high school by age 18. These are not limited to "poor choices." Medical reasons, family reasons (including the death of a parent), and financial reasons may be factors that cause students to drop out of traditional high schools. Living situations may often force students to choose a job over school. Several of the students that I have come into contact with work full time—even two full time jobs—by the time they are 16. Some families face homelessness, and finding a new home becomes their central focus.

If adults decide that they want to obtain a diploma later in life, over time as they work to support their families, the funding should be there to support them in their endeavors.

I urge you not to cut funding to virtual programs for adult education!

Sincerely,

Marion Dawson

sharemylesson  
www.sharemylesson.com

She may  
send a  
new one before  
Sunday

To the House Committee:

I urge you to continue to fund diploma completion programs like New Directions. They serve such a vital purpose in the lives of people who have fallen through the cracks or need a second chance.

For so many reasons, such as poverty, home situations, choices, and a lack of control over their lives, people need options to finish high school to better themselves. Taking away this safety net will severely limit options for way too many people.

I don't know why there is any consideration for cutting off the most needy among us any more than I understand the vicious attacks on public education, but voters are going to start holding their representatives accountable for such obvious and harmful legislation.

Sincerely,

Kate Scarbrough,

[kbrodie54@yahoo.com](mailto:kbrodie54@yahoo.com)

Lifelong public high school teacher and voter

In regards to Bills (HB 2403 and SB 273)

March 8, 2014

My name is Lori Caldwell. I have been administrative assistant for New Directions Learning Academy for ten years. We have offered virtual access to adult students wanting to earn their high school diploma for just a few years now, but our adult diploma completion program has been offering services in Topeka for 19 school years.

A new bill is being considered on Monday that would eliminate funding for all adult, virtual students in Kansas.

I am a proponent for keeping the virtual schools online and available for all students, regardless of age.

We are on track to reach 1,000 graduates in these 19 years of service to the Topeka, Kansas community. There are 1,000's more adults in Topeka who still need a high school diploma. More adult students have found success fitting classes into their schedules by working virtually. Enrollment and graduation numbers have increased with 21st century learning.

Imagine the struggles a single parent has providing for their family with a job that doesn't require a high school diploma. Those jobs are hard to come by today and harder to keep while tending to family needs.

Now, imagine that you can help!

I am writing today on behalf of our students and the students of programs like ours across the state.

Please help adult education keep moving forward instead of backward!

Do not pass this bill to eliminate funding for adult, virtual students!

Please accept my written testimony,

Lori Caldwell

lcaldwell@sckesc.org

2818 SW Prairie Rd

Topeka, Kansas 66614

785-408-6713

Hello,

My name is Jamie Rogers and I am giving written testimony that I am totally against this bill because I am over 18 years of age trying to get my diploma. It would break my heart to learn I could no longer complete classes at NDLA to obtain my diploma.

Thank you,

Jamie

[oblivious03@yahoo.com](mailto:oblivious03@yahoo.com)

Dear Kathy Holster

I am writing this letter today to express my views on HB 2403 and SB 273. I am here to give you my support of virtual learning programs and share my views on them . Having participated in such programs I would like to explain my point of view. Programs like New Directions are very important to the population of our state for the fact it helps enhance the lives of men and women who have yet to receive their Hs Diploma!

From what I understand HB 2403 and SB 273 are woking against such programs and will hurt a certain percentage of the population that is very vulnerable ! People like myself who have not received their diploma or who have gone through this issue know how critical it is to the very survival of our lives. Without programs like NDLA I feel we are being excluded from a very important part of life that will lead to many struggles! We all know that life without a High school diploma will surly limit job prospects and in many cases will lead to poverty. The ability to attend NDLA is truly life changing , these programs give us a fighting chance , a chance to redeems ourselves !

My experience at NDLA was a great one at that. The teachers there are very supportive towards their students and truly care for each person that walks through the door! I have noticed the mindset of these teachers are very different from any teacher I knew in high school.

They are shepherds to a forgotten people ! What I have seen with my own eyes is amazing, the teachers are willing to go out of their way to push their students to excel in their studies. Not only are they teachers , but they are also counselors that are willing to help guide a way to whatever field of study you wish to approach in the future! Whether it is trade school or a college degree. My feelings are if you do end up limiting the success of such programs you in term will surly limit the progress of people that live in this very state. These programs are essential to people who are willing and want Improve their lives !

Help fight for these people, help us fight against the struggles that will come if we don't receive our diplomas. The greatest way to help us do this is by giving us the option to help ourself ! Teach these men to fish rather than letting them reach a position that will in many cases rely on you giving them fish (welfare). People do wish to Improve their situations and it is important to give them the outlet to do so.

Thank You

A. Smith  
[smith38931@yahoo.com](mailto:smith38931@yahoo.com)

To whom this may concern,

March 8, 2015

My name is Brenda McLaughlin. I am 24 years old, and I am a student at New Directions Academy. I have been going to this school for a few years. I have one credit left to graduate. I have worked so hard to get this far. I have two children, and I work full time.

Before I went to New Directions, I went to Let's Help to try to my G.E.D. Let's Help was not flexible with my hours. Due to having a child and working long hours, I could not continue school. A few years later I heard about New Directions Academy. The teachers at New Directions are unbelievably motivating and helpful. The hours were flexible; I could even work from home. I was very pleased and proud that I was on the path to getting my high school diploma. Although I have worked some late nights and sacrificed time with my children to make a future for them and for myself, I have completed 23 credits through NDLA, and I am now one credit away from graduating! My daughter is 5 years old, and I tell her how important it is to go to school. I tell her that mommy will be graduating this May, and mommy will be going to college next fall to be a veterinarian technician.

When I heard the news from my teachers about the two new bills I was devastated, and I began to cry. I cannot imagine what it will be like for other adults who have the goal of completing their high school requirements if these bills are passed and funding is cut for schools like New Directions. I believe that adults should have a second chance for making a life for themselves and for their families. To me, a diploma is not just a piece of paper I am going to store away, it represents my future and I my commitment to make something of my life—to be somebody. New Directions gives adults the opportunity to work when they can whether it be before work, after work, or just in between taking care of their children. Most adults are unable to attend classes from 8-4 during the day. In addition, most adults have a very difficult time passing a G.E.D test. New Directions gives us a wonderful opportunity to finish our high school requirements, and it provides the flexibility that adults, like me, need.

What I ask is to please reconsider the funding cuts that have been proposed. These cuts could impact the lives of many adults and the families they support.

Thank You,

Brenda McLaughlin, NDLA student  
[brendamclaughlin80@yahoo.com](mailto:brendamclaughlin80@yahoo.com)

Name: Rebecca Grader.

I am a student of New Directions Learning Academy.

I am opposed to Hb 2403.

My name is Rebecca Grader. I am 35 years old. I left high school at the age of 18, second semester of my senior year, a mistake I have lived with for the last 17 years. I was excited to find New Directions, because getting my high school diploma is very important to me. I thought about getting my GED, but having an actual high school diploma is something that means more than just a piece of paper to me. It means possibilities for a better job, possibilities for more schooling, but most importantly it would give me pride, and a feeling of accomplishment. Currently I am a senior at NDLA, and only have one class left to finish before graduating.

This program is very important to me because I am a single mother, and work full time, most weeks I work around 70 hours. It is nearly impossible for me to find time for anything. Being able to complete my classes from home, and on my own time has been a life saver for me, because right now, I would not be able to attend classes or have specific times that I would need to be online to complete classes due to my long work hours. I am working towards my high school diploma so that I can get a better job that I wouldn't have to work so many hours at, and would have more time to spend with my son.

I think NDLA and other programs like it are very important to have available. I think its important to be able to work towards your diploma, on the time you have available to better yourself. I think everyone deserves a chance at a better life, and I do believe that programs like this do give you a chance to better yourself.

Becky Grader

[beckygrader@yahoo.com](mailto:beckygrader@yahoo.com)

My name is Danielle Smith and I am giving my written testimony. I am a student at New Directions Learning Academy for the 2014-15 school year and I am against the proposed bill. I dropped out of highschool at the age of 18, due to many reasons much having to do with health. others not so much. I found out about NDLA when I was about 19 or 20 and finally put myself forward this year because I want something better for myself. I feel that programs like NDLA are beneficial because they allow a person who hasn't been in school for a long time to relearn things they knew and learn things they had no idea about. They allow us to retain information easier as opposed to trying out for a GED and having cram all things in your brain at one time to take a high stress test that then determines if you get your GED or come back to do it all over again. I tried it with the practice test, sitting for 7 hours is NOT realistic for me. After I left that classroom I could barely walk the next two days due to my disabilities as well as only having 10 minute breaks and a 30 minute lunch break. NDLA also puts me in constant contact with teachers to answer my questions when I need them to, as well receiving the help and motivation I need to keep moving forward toward my graduating Having teachers that want to help adults achieve getting a diploma and actually getting to walk if they chose to do so is amazing, and very much a blessing. It is allowing those of us to have a chance to make our lives better and gives us a second chance. Education is important, and I regret dropping out of school when I did, but I am beyond thankful for this second chance and I hope everyone involved really thinks long and hard and puts themselves in the shoes of us, because losing everything I have already worked so hard for would just be crushing. Remember If you were in our shoes, Would you want someone to take your education and hard work away? I would hope the answer is no. Thank you for listening to what I have to say.

Danielle I. Smith  
New Directions Learning Academy Student.  
[dannies101887@gmail.com](mailto:dannies101887@gmail.com)

Hi, my name is Jennifer I did not finish High school. When i came to Topeka I found New Directions program and I new it was going to be a awesome choice and my dream to get my Diploma.I love it, love all the Advisors THEY ARE ALL AWSOME. They help you in everything they can. I joined in 2013 I just got done and im so HAPPY AND PROUD OF MYSELF!! My kids look up to me so i did this for them. But if you all close New Directions you will be taking ALOT of opportunitys away from Adults. That takes away dreams to finish school and get thier Diploma!! So they could have a better job and go to collage..SO PLEASE THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING!!

[tinkerbello9scooby@yahoo.com](mailto:tinkerbello9scooby@yahoo.com)

I'm writing this cause I appreciate New Directions Learning Academy and it's helped me over the last couple of years and I only have 10 classes to go, please don't take the opportunity away from us adults as individuals and the option away for us to complete our high school diploma. I'm for keeping it going so myself and every other adult that wants to better themselves by completing their diploma can do so. Thank you,

April Schmidt

[aapricot1982@gmail.com](mailto:aapricot1982@gmail.com)

This Mindy wentling, I want to say that new directions has helped me come a long way and I feel it's only fair for others to have the same chance. Please do not close new directions because I needed help and they went above and beyond to help me reach my goals, they can do the same for others just like me. Thank you!

Mindy Wentling

[mindyandroger21@outlook.com](mailto:mindyandroger21@outlook.com)

My name is tiffany friedhofen i am currently enrolled in new directions learning academy, i am set to graduate this may. I became a mother at a young age that put me in a position with no way to turn but dropping out i lost all hope until i heard about new directions. It has provided me with a great opportunity i started this year with a full 8 classes an i am now currently on my last class sarah finan, craig Hernandez, an lisa wolf have pushed me an pushed me to achieve my high school diploma an helping prepare to further my education. I have referred many people to new directions its a great opportunity i would hate to see close down!

tiffany friedhofen

[dezikiah1012@gmail.com](mailto:dezikiah1012@gmail.com)

Closing down new directions is a huge mistake! A lot of elder people and parents take advantage of this program. It really helps people, especially when they are needing to work at home online because of having kids. I have 3 children austen this has helped me achieve many goals and get back on the right track! I can say I was blessed to have the option to go to new directions. Don't take away something so amazing to so many people!  
Sincerely,

Kristal Schmidt

[kbaby2326@gmail.com](mailto:kbaby2326@gmail.com)

Hello Kathy. I am an 18 year old student at NDLA. I was a 3.5 GPA student at Topeka High and when I got pregnant I continued on with my senior year. I had my son at the beginning of my second semester of my senior year and I was struggling to raise a newborn and get my highschool done as well. When I was more focused on my son than my education I unfortunately didn't graduate with my class. I immediately looked into my options. I enrolled into NDLA and I started in August and I will graduate April 15th with a diploma from Topeka High. The advisors have been a great help along the way. They helped me file for FAFSA and they got me all the information I needed for all of the colleges I'm thinking about attending. They showed me how to make a well put together resume and how to fill out my application for college. I would be devastated if NDLA were to shut down. My brother attends and has 1 more year left and my boyfriend was looking into the program as well.

Heaven Lokay

[heavendlokey@gmail.com](mailto:heavendlokey@gmail.com)

In regards to Bills (HB 2403 and SB 273)

Dear Mrs. Holscher,

My name is Stephen Quoshena, a proponent for keeping the virtual schools online and available for all students, regardless of age. I don't represent any organizations, but I am a proud citizen of Shawnee County and a taxpayer. It deeply bothers me that such funding cuts would directly impact such important programs for those that fell behind in education. People need these type of programs as means to move forward in education. Without it some will fall further and further into the bottom rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. Education should always be a top priority in any society, especially in the United States.

Sincerely,

Stephen Quoshena

Written Testimony

[paradox776@yahoo.com](mailto:paradox776@yahoo.com)

March 8, 2015

To whom it may concern:

I currently attend New Directions Learning Academy in Topeka, Kansas. I have three kids, and I take them to school, to appointments, and to activities daily. They sure keep me busy! So, the only time I have to study is at night as a virtual student.

The NDLA program has helped me to be very successful as a student, because I get to study at my convenience (and from home most of my time). I have already made good progress towards completing my high credits. Thanks to the flexibility of this virtual school, and the help of the NDLA teachers, I have the ability to complete my dream of getting my high school diploma.

I urge you to please reconsider the proposed cuts to the funding of virtual schools for adults. These cuts would be devastating for students like me. If funding for virtual schooling is cut, there is a good chance that I will not accomplish my goal to get my diploma.

Thank you,  
Deysi Juarez Ramirez