

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 9-12th 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.

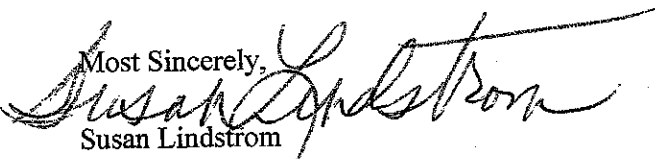
When our program first began ALL students came to the computer labs to work onsite, which was incredibly difficult for the majority who had job and family responsibilities that took higher priority. Then the opportunity to access classes virtually arose and the interest in our program soared because 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 1st semester August & September, and 2nd 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 1st, 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

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