

Senate Education Committee

Proponent of SB 60

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February 2, 2015

Dear Chairman Abrams,

My husband and I decided from the beginning that we would homeschool our children, but it was more than just a decision. We felt called to raise our children in this way. Now, after 7 years, I feel that it defines us. After having experienced learning for the joy of learning and the freedom of selecting our subjects and schedules, I cannot image any other way. I am delighted to see them develop their relationship with the Lord and each other. I am pleased to watch them become children of the finest character.

Apparently, Kansas has no law allowing homeschool students access to sports in the public school. My best understanding is that due to an absence of a law, the Kansas High School Athletic Association made their own requirements. Middle school students can take online courses and must attend one class in the school. I have heard that high school students must attend five hours in the school. I truly understand that the athletic association does not want students to be able to drop out and still participate in sports.

My daughter, Mary Claire, is the oldest and the first to want to play sports through the school. She was a little nervous about the band class, but that was really no problem. The trouble came with the online program. First, the school was late in getting her enrolled so we started three days late. Then, I had many problems loading the necessary programs onto my computer. After a frustrating few days, I took my computer to the shop where it stayed for over a week. Finally able to start, we found the school laden with errors. We discovered it was dropping her answers as if she had left them blank. Then, it was quizzing her on material not covered in the lectures. Later, I was told that the lectures were shortened to make them a more reasonable length, but the questions relating to the cut material kept popping up.

We decided to switch to the other online school nearly a month late. This program worked better, but it was very time-consuming. Our internet out in the country is quite slow, and the nature of the program was slow. Without a book for reference, she had to take many notes and then had to do many writing assignments in every subject every day. It was great for learning; it just took so much time that she was spending about ten hours to complete one online day. We could have muscled through it if we had started on time, but after seven to eight weeks, we had only completed five extra days.

She took her meals at the computer, stayed up late, woke up early, and gave up all free time to accomplish this. She was having to turn down party invitations and was becoming exhausted. I was having to devote so much time to helping her I felt I was neglecting her brothers' education. All of our previous joy in homeschooling was gone.

I talked to the Christian Academy in our area, and they said she was welcome to play basketball there. Mary Claire decided to switch, and she has been very happy with her decision. She is back to multiplying polynomials in her Algebra, conjugating verbs in Spanish, and enjoying it! The girls there have been terrific. The downfall is that the Christian Academy is 45 minutes away from the farm we bought. It is much more difficult to get her to practice there and take care of her six little brothers at the same time. Ideally, she would play for the public school without the online program.

When we lived in Colorado and Iowa, students were allowed to do just that. I am not sure what the requirements were in Colorado, but in Iowa I had to submit some paperwork and then show progress either through a portfolio or testing in order to participate in any part of the public school. Then the school received partial money from the state.

I think a similar law would benefit Kansas. In the small homeschooling circle I am in, I know of two families who would have benefited from it. One family gave up homeschooling, and the other gave up basketball. I think all homeschooling families would support it because you only have to go through these requirements if you wish to participate in the schools in some way. I think local schools would benefit because they need more students. The local recreational football team would not have had enough boys without my boys. The high school did not have enough girls for both a varsity and a junior varsity volleyball team. I think the state would benefit because they would be spending educational dollars more efficiently, instead of paying for online teachers when a mother is both capable and willing to teach her children. I think such a law would make homeschooling more appealing to other families and save the state money.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tricia Stockebrand