

Testimony for Public Hearing
Senate Appropriations Committee
SB 273
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Cathy Martinez
3104 S. Gordan Ave.
Wichita, KS 67217

Hello, my name is Cathy Martinez. I am a virtual student with Project Encore of South Central Kansas Education Center.

I am writing to express my opposition to SB 273. I am opposing the elimination of virtual funding for anyone who is 18 years and older. I want to share my story and explain how much having a virtual program like Project Encore has meant to me.

I come from a very broken home. My father was an alcoholic. After the first semester of my freshman year, my father made the decision for me to drop out of school to participate in an out-of-state homeschool program. After completing their curriculum, I thought I had a high school diploma. Fast forwarding seven years later, God placed a call in my life to work with youth and families-especially youth and families struggling with addiction and its effects. I saw firsthand what an addiction to alcohol can do to a family. It's been my heart's desire to strengthen and impact families for Christ. To accomplish this, I recognized my need for additional education and training. After many failed attempts to enroll in college, I learned my high school education was from a school that wasn't accredited with the state of Kansas. None of the colleges in Kansas would accept my education. As you can imagine I was devastated. Many responded to my situation with "Well go get your GED". In my mind at the time I felt getting a GED was taking the easy way out for me and my situation. Also, I thought I had a high school diploma and that is what I wanted. This is where Encore came into the picture. I learned about Encore through a friend and immediately enrolled. I'm happy to say, I completed my high school education and will walk across the stage to accept my diploma in May. My plans are to enroll in college either in the fall 2015 or spring 2016.

I feel in part that I'm living out my calling because currently I'm a Family Life Pastor. I work with families and many of them struggle with addiction and they come seeking Biblical counsel. As stated before, I feel I lack some education experience and training. I'm so grateful the opportunity Encore provides was around. I was able to obtain a high school diploma that satisfies the state's requirements and now in turn I will be able to attend college and live out my dream. This will not only better me and my family but also the families that I work with now and will work with in the future.

Virtual programs like Encore are important by helping students like me to achieve their dreams which will also better our communities and our state. Please consider to continue funding virtual programs for people 18 and older.

Thank you for your time and consideration.