



Madam Chairman Baumgardner
Members of the Education Committee

The Opportunity Project (TOP) Early Learning Centers

Monday, March 16, 2020

Support for S.B. No. 473, Relating to Low-Income Family Postsecondary Savings Accounts Incentive Program and Contributions From Charitable Organizations

The Opportunity Project is a 501 c (3) charity based in Wichita, Kansas. TOP Early Learning Centers provide educational day care and preschool in three of Wichita's poorest geographical areas. Dedicated to creating school readiness for at-risk children, TOP's mission is to deliver a high-quality early learning experience to children living in poverty, providing them the tools needed for emotional, academic and lifelong success.

TOP strongly supports S.B. No. 473, relating to low-income family postsecondary savings accounts incentive program; including military servicemember dependent children; allowing contributions from charitable organizations; amending K.S.A. 75-650 and repealing the existing section.

Children who grow up in poverty should not be denied a college education because they are unable to pay for it. Yes, there are scholarships and grants available, but we all know this oftentimes is not enough to cover all the expenses related to a four-year degree. The parents of these children have different challenges than middle- and upper-class parents - they have difficulties coping with day-to-day living expenses, therefore long-term financial planning (required for saving for higher education) isn't even on their radar. This often results in a mindset that "a higher education is for someone else's children, not mine."

We believe passing S.B. No. 473, which would amend K.S.A. 75-650 to include charitable organization as contributors to low-income family postsecondary savings account incentive programs, would help eliminate negative mindsets of low-income families concerning the higher education of their children. Allowing charitable organizations such as TOP Early Learning Centers to contribute, and allowing for the matching monies from the State of Kansas, would give poor families hope for their children's futures, allowing them to begin encouraging their children to greater aspirations in life, which oftentimes require a college degree.

CORPORATE OFFICES

1625 N. Waterfront Pkwy.
Suite 100
Wichita, KS 67206
316.260.3353

TOP South

4600 S. Clifton
Wichita, KS 67216
316.749.4900

TOP North

2330 Opportunity Drive
Wichita, KS 67219
316.977.9800

TOP Northwest

2665 N. Arkansas
Wichita, KS 67204
316.361.2000

Specifically, TOP does not want to see the positive outcomes its low-income graduates have had in preschool (that have influenced their success in kindergarten through 12th grades) be ceased because of an inability for charitable giving be made to their postsecondary savings accounts. We know you will agree, these kids, just like their wealthier peers, have bright futures ahead of them. Therefore, we urge you to pass S.B. No. 473. We thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Barry Downing

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry L. Downing". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the printed name.

Founder, TOP Early Learning Centers