

Written opponent testimony

**House Education Committee
February 4, 2021
Greg Tice, USD 267 Renwick Board of Education
Kansas Association of School Boards**

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my concern over HB 2119 and what it will do to impact student's learning in Kansas. I have been a school board member for nine years in USD 267 Renwick. During that time I have seen how our public schools are continually asked to do more and be more accountable, how the needs of our students are increasing, and how we are making our public education system better in Kansas to serve all students. This bill does not address the goal of providing better education for any, let alone all, students in Kansas. It also creates an equity problem by taking funding away from public schools which impacts programs that need funding in the public school system.

The main problem with this bill is that there is no accountability for student success. I certainly understand the desire to allow school choice, but while the Kansas Legislature continues to put accountability measures in place for our public schools, there are no accountability measures for private schools or home schools. Private schools and home schools do not have the same testing requirements or graduation requirements that public schools have. Will they be required to take a civics test if that bill passes or take a computer science class if that bill passes? There are also different levels of accreditation for private schools. Some are 'accredited' but not by the State of Kansas. If they cannot meet the accreditation requirements by the State of Kansas why should they be able to receive funding? We are not setting our students up to be successful if these alternatives to public education are not held to the same standards.

I have also heard arguments that private schools have done a better job of keeping students in the classroom during the pandemic. Our number one goal in USD 267 this year has been to keep students in the classroom and we have achieved that. We have 1,800 students in our district and we have been in the classroom every day. I have seen that the ability for schools to keep students in the classroom is largely based on the size of the school district. Larger schools have had more difficulty keeping kids socially distanced, but more importantly, the quarantine times had a tremendous impact on keeping enough staff available to teach. We were even using bus drives to help in our cafeterias. Private schools can do this by keeping kids on waiting lists and typically private schools are not as large as our larger school districts. That does not mean they are doing a better job, it means they are doing the same thing our similar sized schools are able to do.

Public schools are continually asked to do more and it requires funding. Private and home schools are not required to provide the same level of services. Special Education continues to require more funding yet the State does not meet its obligation, by law, to fund. The public schools bear this burden out of per pupil spending which this bill does not account for. There are more social and emotional issues with students than ever before. In our district we tried to cut our counselors and social workers. It did not work to do that because of the needs of our students. I have heard that occupational and speech therapists have had great years for their businesses last year because the schools were not open to provide those services (free of charge) to the students. We are now required to have a dyslexia program. All of these programs take funding and if more funding is syphoned from the public schools we will not be able to sustain the programs required by the State of Kansas. This ends up creating an equity issue for education in Kansas.

Please consider all implications of what this bill would do to the education of all students in the State of Kansas. I would urge you not to vote for this bill because it does not hold private and home schools accountable to the same standards as public schools, it will make it more difficult for public schools to maintain programs that the State of Kansas requires, and it will create an equity issue for student education.

Thank you for your time.

Greg Tice, USD 267 Renwick BOE