



Senate Committee on Education

Testimony in Support of SB 32

Mr. Terrell Davis

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1-26-2021

We are pleased to support SB 32 introduced by the Kansas Board of Regents. For those of you who served on this committee last year, you may recall that USD 259 requested SB 335 which was heard and work extensively by the Senate education Committee last session and Sub for SB 335 passed the full Senate by a vote of 37-2 on February 27, 2020. Unfortunately like many bills Sub. SB335 became a casualty of the unexpected quick ending to the 2020 session. We had intended to reintroduce our bill again this year but were delighted to learn last week that the Kansas Board of Regents did so first. Therefore we are happy support SB 32 and would like to take a few minutes to explain the importance of SB 32 to USD 259 and the students and their families who are currently working their way through our program.

Famous Educator Booker T. Washington once stated, "I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has had to overcome while trying to succeed."

We have heard about the classroom to Prison pipeline that occurs in many classrooms, We have heard about the need for more College students of color to graduate with a four year degree, we have even heard about the great argument that many students are selecting to not attend college because of the fear of college debt, well here is a program that combats all of those potential concerns and sends students who are in the bubble from the classroom to College! These students are not IB/AP Students, nor are they AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) Students, these are students who are in the middle, they have potential, but they could just as easily fall through the cracks. They sit in classrooms making anywhere from a 2.5 to 3.0 GPA, they get in trouble from time to time, not because they are bad kids, but because they are bored, they walk the halls going to class, but not too fast as they haven't realized or been told that this class could change their lives. These kids are in the "bubble" and this program captures them and inspires them to see that they can become whatever they desire, they are good enough! This program changes the Trajectory, and we need you to help US by passing SB 32 to give these kids a chance to experience college and to catch the College Learning Bug! The program I am mentioning is the Early College Program in USD 259. This program is now in year 2 and has 98 students enrolled. We are currently enjoying a 90% success rate with only 2 students out of the 100 who enrolled having to drop out of the program. Next year our plan is for the original cohort to start taking college classes at Friends University, and if you pass this bill, we would love to finalize a plan for a second program to launch at Wichita State University. We are serious about removing obstacles and helping students to conquer remaining obstacles on their way to obtaining a college degree or a career of their field of choice!

We are not asking for additional money, we are asking for local authority to pay for tuition for these students. Our goal is to continue to raise money necessary to cover tuition but we would like the statutory authority to use district funds to pay what is not raised. By granting us this authority districts will be able to negotiate tuition with local Colleges/Universities, and/or Community Colleges and Technical schools for students. Local control allows for districts to partner with local Higher Education schools to provide the best program for students and families.

In closing, another great thought from Educator Booker T Washington is “If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.” As we look at lifting our nation, our state, and our communities from the Covid-19 pandemic, we must look at lifting all students to the best they can be. Our Superintendent always reminds Wichita, that Public Education is an economic driver, here is an opportunity to improve the lives of students, their families, and our communities!

We stand in support of SB 32.

Very truly yours,

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