



Kansas PTA
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Testimony to House Committee on Education

Honorable Chair, Representative Kasha Kelley
Sue Mollenkamp, Committee Assistant, 785-296-7671
Sue.Mollenkamp@house.ks.gov Room 151-S
Hearing, 1:30 pm Location: 112-N, Fri, Feb 21, 2014

Testimony Kansas PTA Opposed to SB22 – Vouchers, corporate scholarship bill

Chairman Kelley and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns regarding SB22 – corporate scholarships. My name is Mary Sinclair and I serve as a member of the Kansas PTA advocacy team. The Kansas PTA is here today in **opposition to this voucher bill**.

First, no vouchers. PTA does not support the unconstitutional use of taxpayer funds to private/parochial schools which are not required to serve all children or follow public accountability.

Second, school choice is not parent choice. Vouchers give choice to private schools, not parents. Private/non-public schools by definition can be selective about who they choose to admit and to reject. Further, the Scholarship Granting Organizations are not prevented from setting other additional restrictions on students receiving scholarships, so funds could be limited to gifted students, athletes, specific ethnic or religious groups.

Third, lack of accountability. Any non-public school providing education to elementary and secondary students is eligible for taxpayer scholarship funds. There are no standards for eligible schools, such as accreditation by the state or independent accrediting organizations. Students are not required to be tested so there is no measure of results. Schools are not required to report outcomes such as graduation rates or college preparation.

Fourth, this bill is unnecessary and counterproductive. Opposition to this bill does not mean we are “trapping kids in failing school” as accused by the state’s recent budget director. Rather opposition reflects the data-driven preference to provide K12 public schools with suitable resources to meet the needs of all Kansas kids. The logic is clear:

- a. Our K12 public schools are charged with a goal – to help ALL youth achieve a defined set of [education standards](#).
- b. The non-partisan Kansas Legislative Post-Audit Research Division was charged with a study ([2006](#)) – to determine the costs of achieving that goal, by analyzing the expenditures of Kansas school districts in relation to their student achievement.
- c. Our state legislators swore an oath to uphold the Kansas Constitution, and toward that oath, committed to funding public schools based on the Leg Post-Audit study results. The cost study findings showed actual costs to be about \$4,492 per pupil in 2009 base state aid, which this legislature voted into [state statute](#).

- d. Based on the empirical evidence available ([KASB, 2012](#)), the most plausible explanation of student achievement gaps and any restricted capacity of public schools to respond to parent requests is a function of the significant funding gap. This issue is not school failure, but legislative failure by the amount of \$654 per pupil in base aid.
- e. Vouchers for private/non-public schools and for-profit charter schools are education settings in which students with disabilities or living in poverty are more likely to experience worse outcomes than their peers in the K12 public system.

Finally, this bill is financially untenable. As noted last year in hearings, SB22 appears to put the resident school district on the hook for transportation costs and potentially special education services. The tax accounting for the \$10 million cap has yet to be clarified. Home schools would apparently be eligible, meaning schools could receive scholarship support even if they do not charge tuition or have expenses similar to public or other private schools. The 70% corporate tax credit reduces significant revenue from the State General Fund, causing further downward pressure on our K12 public schools.

THE PTA POSITION

The National and Kansas PTA oppose vouchers, as noted in our legislative platforms and [2014 legislative priorities](#). Our mission and values have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago: to facilitate every child's potential by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Kansas PTA opposes the use of vouchers, scholarships or tax credits toward the tuition of non-public schools that can discriminate in admissions, provide sectarian religious instruction or "compete" under different rules than public schools; we affirm the Governor's position that vouchers would not be effective in the state of Kansas.

National PTA Position regarding School Choice:

- National PTA supports educational choices within public schools and believes that parents should be involved in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of public school choice plans.
- National PTA opposes any private school choice proposal and/or voucher system that diverts public funds to private or sectarian schools.
- National PTA believes home schools and other nonpublic schools should meet the same educational standards as public schools.

On behalf of the Kansas PTA, we emphatically oppose this bill and we thank you for your time and consideration.

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Kansas PTA is a nonpartisan association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. The PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities.