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**January 31, 2022**

**Remote Testimony to House K-12 Education Budget Committee  
Honorable Chair, Representative Kristey Williams**

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Room 286-N, State Capitol Building

**Oppose [House Bill 2550](#) – Education Savings Accounts**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 1, 2022, 3:30 PM Room 546-S

Honorable Chairman Williams and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide remote testimony on [HB 2550](#) education savings account bill. The Kansas PTA is opposed to this and other voucher-type programs, in alignment with [our legislative platform](#).

Above all, the Kansas PTA supports keeping public dollars in public schools and the public school system. Private, non-public schools have no requirement to admit every child, no requirement to retain students struggling academically, no transparency reporting requirements on use of funds, and no transparency reporting requirements on the performance and retention of students who use the vouchers. The selective admissions policies of private schools and the absence of a comprehensive system fails to guarantee the access needed to meet “the interests of ALL students in the state,” noted in Section 2 of the bill.

Research continues to grow, demonstrating that private [school vouchers don’t improve student achievement](#). To date, the Kansas private, non-public schools participating in the [tax credit scholarship program](#) have not published any data on the performance and retention of over 2,000 students who have received over \$8 million of public funds. Student retention and outcome data are still not available to make a judgement about this program impact, relative to similar peers in the public schools.

Kansas public schools adhere to the comprehensive package of federal and state reporting requirements, the full Kansas Education Systems Accreditation process, including state assessment participation and publication of student outcome and demographic data. As a parent and taxpayer, we know that our neighborhood public schools actively participate in these accountability processes and compliance measures including: system yearly update

reports, outside visitation team annual report, improvement goals, annual local board of education reporting, staffed by licensed teachers, five-year professional development plans, educator mentoring and induction plans, child nutrition and wellness compliance, early childhood ages and states questionnaire, state assessments as required by federal title programs, annual social-emotional learning training, suicide awareness training, anti-bullying policies and plans, individual plans for study for every student, ACT and WorkKeys participation, data quality reporter training, KIDS reporting, title services reporting, IDEA reporting, and dyslexia reporting.

Second, many parents of students in the public schools would greatly appreciate the opportunity to receive state funds for many of the allowed uses of the individual savings accounts as noted in Section 10 of the bill: (1) student fees; (3) fees for bus transportation among families who live under 2.5 miles from school; (4) educational therapies or services; (5) tutoring services provided by a certified tutor; (8) fees for any nationally standardized norm-referenced achievement test, advanced placement examination or other examination related to admission to a postsecondary educational institution; and (10) tuition and fees charged by a postsecondary educational institution.

Third, the reporting of eligible students under Section 5 of the bill prescribes one single metric that school districts may not even use among many to determine which students receive at-risk services. Plus districts already report state assessment scores to parents. Further, no evidence has been provided by the sponsors of the bill that Kansas Assessments are actually predictive of college and career readiness. And in fact, local districts have found evidence to the contrary, particularly over more established predictors of post-school success like attendance, course rigor, GPA along with poverty, disability and language

Fourth, voucher-type programs end up being more about school choice, than parent choice. Kansas PTA supports the use of public dollars by schools that are required to serve all students, regardless of the educational needs or other differentiating characteristics. Under Section 13, “enrollment of an eligible student in a qualified private school shall be considered a parental placement of such student under the individuals with disabilities education act” meaning private schools are not required to make special accommodations for students with disabilities beyond the private school’s typical instructional services offered to all students, waiving parental rights to an IEP as a function of admissions. This is particularly problematic when we know that federal and state governments have yet to fully fund mandated special educations costing local districts millions of dollars. Private schools can waitlist students if their class sizes exceed safe distancing options needed to adhere to CDC COVID19 safety protocols. Public schools cannot make students wait and tend to operate with larger class sizes, requiring secondary schools in most large districts to closely follow CDC safety mitigation protocols in the face of high community prevalence rates of COVID19, state funding parameters that limit staffing guidelines, and as reflected in the Kansas public schools 96% efficiency rating leaving very little room for districts to pivot ([Taylor et al, WestED, 2018](#)).

Of those private schools who do admit a more diverse population, they are not required to retain those youth whose academic performance or behavior falls below a certain threshold. Across decades of research on school dropouts, one of the top reasons kids give for not

completing high school is that they were PUSHED out by their school ([Boylan & Rensulli, 2017](#)). A Director with the Catholic Diocese openly stated that their private schools essentially blame the student for failing and actively counsel them out.

“There is always going to be a time, as they [students] mature up to high school. And if they don’t start passing some classes, they are not going to graduate from our schools. Because we have a higher academic standard. So we have to transition kids to a different school, just because they are not going to meet the educational requirements. But that is their own choice, because of how they worked in the schools”  
(<https://youtu.be/cGFuVI5qLiU?t=3355>, Director of Development Catholic Diocese of Wichita, KS House K12 Budget Committee, Jan 2021, 56:00 min mark).

The 500,000 Kansas public school students, for whom over 200,000 (42%) are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch, have yet to attend a K-12 public school at constitutionally funded levels in the past 20 years and [won’t be until 2023](#). The Kansas PTA respectfully urges committee members to oppose this bill and instead support the work of the Kansans Can Vision, the Graduation Task Force and the extraordinary efforts of our educators and staff during a global pandemic and staffing shortage. The Kansas legislature is still a full year and a half away from restoring K-12 public schools to constitutionally adequate levels of funding. And now three of those school years of phased-in funding restoration have been disrupted by the global pandemic. Kansas students need you to support public education and remain committed to the Gannon agreement.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We urge you to vote NO on HB 2550.

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**THE PTA POSITION**

*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. [PTA mission and purpose](#) have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago, focused on facilitating every child’s potential and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.*