

February 6, 2023

Josiah Enyart
Freedom Learning Academy/ Father
Proponent
Kansas House of Representatives
K-12 Budget Committee
Testimony for Bill No. 2218

The Sunflower Education Equity Act

My name is Josiah Enyart, and I live in Lenexa, Kansas. I'm a Husband to an amazing wife and mother, a father of 3 incredible children, and an entrepreneurial educational ambassador. That last part means that I'm a teacher who believes that education is not where it is supposed to be, and not only is there a better way, but I want to help build it.

I've created Freedom Learning Academy. I did not do this alone. In fact, I was really just blessed with being in its path as it created itself out of necessity. I could no longer leave my kids, nor work, in the public schools. While trying to figure out what to do next, I was approached by dozens of parents who were also hurt and frustrated at how they're rights as parents and their children's innocence and futures were being ignored, dismissed, and ultimately destroyed. They all had the same wish, to have educational options that were better, and to have the educational freedom to pursue and afford them.

I realized then that something had to be done.

The school I created is a Non-Accredited Private School. All of our parents would love to homeschool, but due a few specific factors, they couldn't. The main factors were: having to work to pay bills and put food on the table, not trusting themselves with the academic responsibilities for their children, and wanting their children in a social environment.

The main factors for not trusting the public school system were: having political and religious values that did not respect their own family values pushed upon their kids, having academic expectations lowered over and over again just to keep funding from the government, and fearing for their children's safety due to a lack of accountability for other student's with behavioral issues.

While there are many other cards at play, those are the main ones that recur on a constant basis as more and more parents contact me looking for alternative educational options.

Although many in the government and educational system do not believe it based on their policies and terms they use for parents, parents are the first, best, and most important teachers for their kids. They are more than capable of raising their kids and educating them, but since we live in a gloriously capitalistic society, funds, time, and resources are limited. The effective education of children should not be something that is neglected or monopolized.

I'm strongly requesting and encouraging the House Education Committee to pass bill 2218 out of committee. Doing so would demonstrate to the great parents of Kansas that the State of Kansas values their rights as the primary decision makers and the keepers of the well-being for their own children.

My school is completely funded by the parents who've enrolled their children and by me. That's it. We do not receive any government money allocated for education, yet we all still pay for it through our tax dollars. As the complaint has been repeatedly stressed, all the money parents pay in taxes that goes towards education, does not help them educate their own children.

What message does it send to the citizens of Kansas that they have to pay money to the government for education but can't use it except in the way that the government tells them they can. What message does it send that they have the "freedom" to homeschool or choose private school, but not only will they have pay out of pocket for that, they will continue to pay towards the system educating other people's kids that they themselves are not even participating in? That doesn't sound like freedom, but like profitable neglect.

The message my parents, and myself as a parent, and every parent seeking alternative educational options hears is that our rights, beliefs, and responsibilities as parents are not valid. We hear that the State believes it knows better how to raise our kids than we do. We hear a resounding silence in response to the need and desire to better educate our children.

So, what would it mean to pass bill 2218? It would show the people of Kansas that they recognize that the State of Kansas prioritizes the best education for children. It would demonstrate fairness and appreciation to the citizens wanting to maintain and nourish their family beliefs and cultures. It would prove that the State of Kansas wants to encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion in their real and actual definitions. Lastly, it would create a powerful change in education that would benefit its current and future constituents by making the educational options that parents want to pursue possible by making them affordable.

As a teacher, it would allow for my full potential to be utilized. I would have the freedom to teach without the hindrances of non academic, destructive ideologies being crammed down my throat. It would allow me to use my skills and passion to maximize my effectiveness as an educator. I would have the freedom to explore and grow as a teacher, and to build and create new learning opportunities for diverse learners. It would encourage me to thrive, not just survive, in my effort to seek success, not just in teaching, but in my life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.

The days of public education being the only affordable education should be over. If we truly want our families, communities, cities, and State to succeed in rising to top of our great country's places to live and raise a family, and academic rankings, we need the Sunflower Education Equity Act to pass immediately.

Thank you for your time.

Josiah Enyart