

2608 S.E. DRIVE
WICHITA, KANSAS 67216
(316) 264-1817

STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 345-S
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612
(785) 296-7355
mike.petersen@senate.ks.gov



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SENATOR MIKE PETERSEN

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 251. My comments today are limited to a program that is very important to me and my family- virtual education and a concept to help give some of our most disciplined students an opportunity for postsecondary education.

First, I am here to ask for your support to protect virtual education funding in the Senate education plan.

For many legislators, virtual education is an unfamiliar concept. For me, however, it is part of my daily life. I am hoping my family's experience will help illustrate the role the program plays for many Kansas children.

My two children have been virtual education students enrolled in Lawrence Virtual School. My wife and I have seen the vast advantages virtual learning has provided our sons.

Throughout the last several months, I have monitored school finance deliberations in the House committee and now this committee. In particular, I have paid close attention to the funding discussion for virtual education. I have heard inaccurate accounts of funding comparisons between virtual students compared to brick and mortar students. I have heard people say virtual education is just not working. Nothing could be further from the truth.

My wife and I have met so many people through virtual education and we have seen the differences it makes in the success for families. We hear all the time students have different learning styles. Some students simply like virtual education better. After all, computers and technology are the future. Students born today certainly function on a different wavelength than I did as a boy. Other students have situations where virtual schools are a better atmosphere because they have been bullied to the point they will not attend school.

In addition, virtual schools can provide equal access to learning in all corners of the state. My children live in Wichita but get a quality education from a virtual school in Lawrence. I know of families in rural western Kansas that are part-time or full-time virtual students. Virtual education gives Kansas an opportunity to keep families in rural Kansas. Otherwise, how do we expect to keep families from gravitating toward the metroplexes? Keep the opportunities available, whether it be a full-time virtual student or part-time taking Advanced Placement classes or German, which may not offered in their traditional school because the population is too small.

Second, I have attached a concept that would give students who graduate before the count date of their senior year 95% of the base state aid as a scholarship to a college or tech school located in

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our State. 5% to the school district they would have attended. The Department of Education can keep 2% of the scholarship for administering the fund.

This is a bill I introduced late however after hearing Commissioner Watson's testimony a few days ago, I decided we may need to consider this sooner. You may recall one of the metrics used to determine success was how the student was doing after graduation. Were they attending college or had they completed a technical certificate. Some of our students from low to middle income families may not be able to attend due to financial reasons. According to legislative research latest available year data around 340 Students Graduated this early. Many more students enter their senior year needing just a few credits. These students might choose to take a couple of extra credits or summer school to take advantage of these scholarships. This would save the amount of the weightings possibly making this program cost neutral or even a savings. Keeping these motivated students in our State would only benefit our economy with a well-educated work force. Once our counselors, students and parents learn about this opportunity I believe many of these students would take advantage of it.

I stand here today and ask you to maintain the current funding level for virtual education and to consider the creation of student opportunity scholarships to help more of our at risk students have the opportunity to obtain a Kansas based post-secondary education.

Senator Mike Petersen

District 28

Mike Petersen

SENATE BILL No. 248

By Committee on Assessment and Taxation

5-5

1 AN ACT concerning education; relating to the state board of education;
2 creating the student opportunity scholarship program.

3
4 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

5 Section 1. (a) There is hereby established the student opportunity
6 scholarship program, which shall be administered by the state board of
7 education. On and after July 1, 2018, a student may be eligible to receive a
8 student opportunity scholarship if such student: (1) Attended an accredited
9 Kansas high school for at least three consecutive years; (2) graduated from
10 a Kansas high school prior to September 20 of the year in which such
11 student would have been enrolled in grade 12; and (3) is enrolled in or
12 plans to attend a postsecondary educational institution in Kansas.

13 (b) To receive a student opportunity scholarship, an eligible student
14 shall provide the state board: (1) Proof of enrollment in a postsecondary
15 educational institution within one year of graduation from high school; and
16 (2) any other information deemed necessary by the state board.

17 (c) There is hereby established in the state treasury the student
18 opportunity scholarship fund, which shall be administered by the state
19 board of education. All expenditures from the student opportunity
20 scholarship fund shall be for student opportunity scholarships and the
21 administration of the student opportunity scholarship program. All
22 expenditures from the student opportunity scholarship fund shall be made
23 in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of
24 accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved by the state
25 board or its designee. All moneys received for the purposes of this section
26 shall be deposited in the state treasury in accordance with the provisions of
27 K.S.A. 75-4215, and amendments thereto, and shall be credited to the
28 student opportunity scholarship fund.

29 (d) The state board shall provide a student opportunity scholarship to
30 any student who meets the requirements of subsections (a) and (b). A
31 student opportunity scholarship shall be paid directly to the postsecondary
32 educational institution that the eligible student attends. If the annual cost
33 of the student's tuition at such postsecondary educational institution is less
34 than the scholarship amount, the remaining money shall remain in the
35 student opportunity scholarship fund and the state board shall continue to
36 pay an amount equal to the annual cost of tuition to the postsecondary

Proposed Amendments for SB 248
Senate Committee on Education
Prepared by Tamera Lawrence
Office of Revisor of Statutes
May 11, 2017

1 educational institution for each year that the student attends a
 2 postsecondary educational institution until the scholarship amount has
 3 been fully expended.
 4 (e) (1) The amount of the scholarship shall be equal to 95% of the
 5 amount of state aid per student.
 6 (2) The school district from which the student graduated shall receive
 7 an amount equal to 5% of the state aid per student.
 8 (3) The state board may retain up to 2% of the amount of
 9 scholarships for the cost of administering the student opportunity
 10 scholarship program.
 11 (f) The state board shall adopt rules and regulations to carry out the
 12 provisions of this section by July 1, 2018.
 13 (g) As used in this section:
 14 (1) "Postsecondary educational institution" means any state
 15 educational institution, municipal university, community college, technical
 16 college and institute of technology located in Kansas.
 17 (2) "School district" means any public school district organized and
 18 operating under the laws of this state.
 19 (3) "State board" means the state board of education.
 20 (4) "State aid per student" means the general operating expenses
 21 received in the current school year by the school district from which the
 22 student graduated divided by the enrollment of such school district for the
 23 immediately preceding school year.
 24 Sec. 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its
 25 publication in the statute book.

or any private postsecondary educational institution that operates on a not-for-profit basis, has a physical presence within the state of Kansas, is regionally accredited by the higher learning commission and is exempt from the provisions of K.S.A. 74-32, 162, et seq, and amendments thereto