



# SMAC PTA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

January 31, 2022

Last week saw a flurry of education bills introduced in both house and senate education committees. This legislative update will focus on the voucher bill that could have a detrimental impact on public education funding, as vouchers divert our public tax dollars to non-public schools. Take note of the two-minute **ACTION ITEM** at the end of the update.

## HB 2550 Creation of Education Savings Accounts

Education Savings Accounts allow for an amount equal to the BASE student aid to be transferred from public funds to an individual student's account. Those funds can then be used to pay for tuition and other education expenses at a non-public school. In its current form, the program is limited to students eligible for free and reduced lunch or identified as receiving at-risk services.

Kansas PTA<sup>1</sup> and the Shawnee Mission School District<sup>2</sup> oppose the use of public funds for non-public schools. Below are some of the reasons for this opposition:

- Diverting public tax dollars to private schools puts public school funding at risk at a time when public schools are still underfunded.
  - The phased in increase in state funding required by the Gannon court case, which puts schools at 2009 funding levels adjusted for inflation, won't be complete for another year and a half.
  - The state has never met its required level of special education funding. SMSD currently has \$8 million in excess unfunded special education expenses.
- Private schools can choose which students they accept, whereas public schools educate ALL Kansas students regardless of academic ability, physical ability, religion, sexual orientation, and so on.
- Private schools are not held to the same accountability standards.
- There is no review process in place to evaluate if the program is successful.
- Participating schools aren't required to be accredited by the state of Kansas.
- Continued research demonstrates that private [school vouchers don't improve student achievement](#).

A hearing for bill HB 2550 will be held in House K-12 Education Budget committee on Tuesday, February 1. Parents are encouraged to read the [testimony submitted by Kansas PTA](#) and to take action (see below).

## **ACTION ITEM (2 minutes)**

Contact members of the House K-12 Education Budget Committee and urge them to vote no on Education Savings Accounts. Copy Senate President Ron Ryckman and your representative on the email. Enter your **full** address at [openstates.org](https://openstates.org) to find your representative.

## **Information for Email (much of this can be copied & pasted)**

**TO:** Kristey.Williams@house.ks.gov, Kyle.Hoffman@house.ks.gov, Valdenia.Winn@house.ks.gov, Stephanie.Byers@house.ks.gov, Susan.Estes@house.ks.gov, JoElla.Hoye@house.gov, Steve.Huebert@house.ks.gov, Timothy.Johnson@house.ks.gov, Brenda.Landwehr@house.ks.gov, Jarrod.Ousley@house.ks.gov, Patrick.Penn@house.ks.gov, Sean.Tarwater@house.ks.gov, Adam.Thomas@house.ks.gov

**CC:** ron.ryckman@house.ks.gov, [your rep's email address]

**SUBJECT:** Vote No on Bill HB 2550

## **Example Message:**

Dear K-12 Education Budget Committee members,

As a parent in the Shawnee Mission School District, I urge you to vote no on bill HB 2550. Our public tax dollars should stay with our public schools that serve all children, regardless of need. Kansas schools are in the midst of a pandemic after being underfunded for more than a decade. The legislature should stay focused on learning recovery, the final phase in of state funding per the Gannon court case, and meeting the special education funding requirement. Implementing Education Savings Accounts that divert our tax dollars to private schools will jeopardize these three priorities.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[City]

Thank you for staying engaged and supporting our public schools. Watch for future legislative updates, as this is shaping up to be a consequential legislative session.

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### <sup>1</sup> **[Kansas PTA Legislative Priority 11](#) – Public Dollars for Public Education**

Kansas PTA opposes the use of vouchers for the tuition of non-public schools, also known as tax credit scholarships, choice, education freedom. Non-public schools are not required accept all students, can discriminate in admissions, mandate religious instruction, operate under different rules of transparency and accountability, waive access to special education services and such.

<sup>2</sup> **[SMSD's Legislative Platform](#)** rejects policies that would divert public resources to non-public entities, specifically mentioning vouchers and Education Savings Accounts.