

# PRESIDENT & PRINCIPAL VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

February 19, 2021



SMAC PTA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



# 2021 Legislation Impacting Public Schools

These three things will have the biggest impact:

- Voucher Bills
- Education Budget
- Tax Policy



# Numerous Voucher Bills Introduced

- Voucher type vehicles divert public tax dollars to private schools; put public school funding at risk
- The state legislature shifted after the November election; less supportive of public schools
- More voucher bills introduced in 2021; similar to what we saw during the Brownback years



# Voucher – Tax Credit Scholarship Program

## Bills **HB2068** & **SB61** Tax Credit Scholarship expansion

- Allows an individual or entity to contribute up to \$500,000 and to receive a dollar for dollar 70% reduction in their taxes owed to the state
- Reduces state general revenue used to fund public schools, while in turn funding private schools
- Annual cap of \$10 million allowed in program



# Voucher – Tax Credit Scholarship Program

Original intent – scholarships for at-risk students

- Qualify for free lunch (at-risk criteria in funding formula)
- Attend 100 lowest performing elementary schools

HB2068 & SB61 expand the program to students qualifying for reduced lunch and students attending any public school.

No requirement to show student is actually at risk or that school or student are underperforming.



# Voucher – Tax Credit Scholarship Program

Problems with these bills using public tax dollars to fund private schools:

- Private schools not held to same accountability standards
- No review process to evaluate if program is successful
- Schools not required to be accredited by state of Kansas
- Private schools can discriminate in admissions – ability, admissions exams, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

**Public tax dollars should remain with public schools that educate ALL children**



# Voucher – Education Savings Accounts

**HB2119** establishes Education Savings Accounts; base aid amount transferred from public funds to an individual student's account to be used at a private or on-line school.

Many of the same problems as the other bills plus more:

- One at-risk criteria – student remote/hybrid in prior year
  - Includes majority of Kansas students
  - Using unprecedented pandemic as justification
  - Students qualify even if school is back to in-person
- **Estimated to divert \$100-\$300 million in public tax dollars to private schools; no cap on this bill**



# HB2119 - Education Savings Accounts

Graphic created by [Game on for Kansas Schools](#)

## Proponents

- × Kansas Policy Institute (Koch-funded free market anti-public education organization)
- × Americans for Prosperity (Koch-funded free market anti-public education organization)
- × Heritage Foundation (Koch-funded free market anti-public education organization)
- × Berean Academy (non-accredited Christian private school)
- × Frontier Peace Advisors (libertarian organization)
- × ExcelEdInAction (Florida based education "reform" company)
- × EdChoice (national education "reform" company)
- × Joy Eakins (former Wichita school board member)
- × Wade Moore (dean of a 75-student Wichita private school already participating in tax credit scholarship program)
- × Heidy Rodriguez (Dodge City parent whose children have been enrolled in Catholic school for 15 years)

## Opponents

- ✓ Game On for Kansas Schools
- ✓ Kansas PTA
- ✓ Kansas Association of School Boards
- ✓ Becky Plate (Eudora school board member)
- ✓ Charles Steffes (USD 252 Southern Lyon County board member and parent)
- ✓ Kim Brown (Piper board member and parent)
- ✓ Meghan Hemenway (parent and co-president Rising Star Elementary PTA)
- ✓ Stephanie Noyes (former private school teacher and private and public school parent of children with special needs)
- ✓ Americans United for Separation of Church and State
- ✓ National Coalition for Public Education
- ✓ Shawnee Mission School District
- ✓ Five Shawnee County Public School Districts
- ✓ Mainstream Coalition
- ✓ Blue Valley School District
- ✓ Education First Shawnee Mission (parent advocacy group)

## Opponents

- ✓ OPEN (Olathe Public Education Network parent led advocacy organization)
- ✓ KNEA
- ✓ Spring Hill School District
- ✓ Kate Doerksen (Maize USD 266 Board of Education President)
- ✓ Goddard School District
- ✓ Steve Nordby (Principal Garden City High School)
- ✓ James Schmidt (Vice President Geary County Schools USD 475)
- ✓ Kansas Association of Retired School Personnel
- ✓ Olathe School District
- ✓ Megan Langford (parent and public school advocate in SMSD)
- ✓ Topeka School District USD 501
- ✓ Holly Coleman (parent in SMSD)
- ✓ Karl McNorton (Seaman School District board member)
- ✓ Kansas Association of Special Education Administrators
- ✓ Kansas State Board of Education
- ✓ Greg Tice (USD 267 Renwick school board member).





## Problem with Voucher Bills – Expansion

- Currently, one voucher vehicle in Kansas (Tax Credit Scholarship)
- Every year attempts to raise the cap or expand eligibility
- This year, attempts to pass much larger voucher bills
- Voucher programs have created major cuts to public education budgets in other states

**Keep vouchers out of Kansas; need engaged citizens.**



# K-12 Education Budget Proposal

- Governor Kelly's K-12 budget fully funds the school finance plan previously passed by the legislature & approved by the Kansas Supreme Court
- Court maintained jurisdiction; still 2.5 years to phase in adequate funding
- Budget is being discussed in Senate & House committees
- Kansas PTA recommends passing the K-12 budget proposal
- Ensure legislature continues to adequately fund schools



# Tax Policy

**Large tax cuts → less revenue → cuts to education funding**

Pay attention to tax policy

- Who are the tax breaks for?
- How much revenue will be lost?
- Education budget is often the first to be cut.
- Where are we willing to make cuts in our schools – extra curriculars, counselors, special education services?



## Tax Policy

The Senate just passed bill SB22

- Large tax cuts estimated to cost \$500 million the first year and \$1 billion over three years
- Harkens back to the days of the Brownback tax cuts which negatively impacted our schools for almost a decade

**Keep your eye on this bill and negotiations by the House & Senate – hopefully will result in something more reasonable.**



# What can/should you do right now?

Bill SB61 passed the Senate. The House version (HB2068), and bill HB2119 could come up for a vote any day.

**Call/email your state representative!!**

[Openstates.org](http://Openstates.org) to find your representative

Simply tell them to vote NO on bills HB2068 & HB2119.

**Our public tax dollars should stay with our public schools.**





# What can/should you do going forward?

- Be informed
  - [SMAC PTA Legislative Updates](#)
  - [SMAC PTA Facebook](#)
- Follow public ed advocacy groups on Facebook & websites
  - [KSPTA](#), [KASB](#), [KNEA](#), [Game On for Kansas Schools](#)
- Contact your legislators when needed; let them know their constituents are paying attention



# What can/should you do going forward?

- Take note of how your legislators are voting. Are they supporting our public schools?
- Be an informed voter & vote in state legislative races.
- **VOTE IN AUGUST PRIMARIES!!** We lost pro-public education legislators due to low voter turnout – often less than 30%.
- **SHARE WITH OTHERS.** Make sure your school community and your friends are informed and contacting legislators.