



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 729		DATE: 2/2/2021	
COMMITTEE: Elementary and Secondary Education			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CARMEN WARD		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: DR. JERRY HOBBS		PHONE NUMBER: 573-418-0988	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI EDUCATION REFORM COUNCIL		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 548 SUNSET VIEW			
CITY: CAPE GIRARDEAU		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63701
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: DR. JERRY HOBBS		PHONE NUMBER: 573-418-0988	
REPRESENTING: STRIDE, INCORPORATED		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 612 EAST CAPITOL AVENUE			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JERRY LINDSAY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JOEL LINDSAY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JOHNNIE CALLOWAY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JULIA LINDSAY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: Kara Corches		PHONE NUMBER: 5736343511
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY		TITLE: Director of Legislative Affairs
ADDRESS: 428 E. Capitol Street		
CITY: Jefferson City		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: kcorches@mochamber.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/1/2021 2:03 PM

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The Missouri Chamber supports efforts to provide every child in our state with access to a high quality education. We believe Missouri wins when families have more educational options, which is one reason we support HB 729. We believe that well-educated, competent, and capable students are the key to Missouri's long-term economic health and competitiveness. If parents/students are not satisfied with educational outcomes in district, we should ensure they have options that can better suit their needs. This bill is about students and about finding the best way for them to get the education they need that ultimately prepares them for Missouri's workforce. Therefore, we are pleased to support HB 729.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KIMBERLY TOWNSEND		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KRYSTAL BARNETT		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: LINDA WILHFORD		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MAY LINDSAY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: Mike Franco		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: rmfranco76@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM
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To Whom It May Concern:Hi, my name is Mike Franco. I am in support of HB 729 and am the father of Isabella Franco who is now in second grade and in her third year at The Classical Academy de Lafayette (CAL) in Wentzville. My wife and I have two other children who went through public school and afterwards I hate to say it but I don't think they got a whole lot, if anything, out of it. The opportunity for CAL and CAL's location really suits us and is provides the attention for our daughter that I think she really needs to succeed.CAL is a classical academy, which is an approach to education which provides a rigorous education in the liberal arts and sciences, with instruction in the principles of moral character and civic virtue. Their focus on American history and exposure to important cultural literature in the Western classical tradition matches the values we share as a family.Each school day starts with the students reciting memorized poems or other important historical readings. Believe it or not, Isabella could recite Abraham Lincoln's full Gettysburg Address from memory at age six*. I like that they teach and work with paper and pencil rather than electronic devices. Technology is a tool for human use, not vice-versa.CAL has been having in-person classes throughout this school year and has been able to implement their own COVID mitigation plan without the interference of local administrators, unlike our fellow parents in the district-run schools. This independence is what all parents and educators alike deserve.When Isabella came of school-age, my wife and I made a conscious and deliberate decision to invest in her education at a private school, at the expense of many personal amenities that we would otherwise afford. It is an opportunity that I wish more families could take advantage of.If HB 729 were to pass, I am sure CAL would investigate becoming a charter school to relieve the financial burden on families and allow more families to attend who cannot otherwise afford the tuition. An Empowerment Scholarship Account would also greatly benefit families like mine and open schools like ours to many new families across the state looking for educational options.Please vote YES on HB 729 and other educational choice bills this session. Thank you.Mike FrancoSt. Peters, MO*see video at: <https://www.ksdk.com/video/news/st-louis-kids-recite-lincolns-famous-gettysburg-address/63-8326623>



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: Rebecca Uccello		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: piximama2010@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/1/2021 2:03 PM

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My name is Becki Uccello, and I have been a public school teacher for 24 years. Our son John attends a public high school. Our daughter Izabella attends a private school. Our family believes in school choice, and we support House Bill 729. Izzi attended the early intervention program at our local public elementary school for three years. We moved into that particular neighborhood because we knew that the elementary school was highly rated as far as attendance rates and standardized test scores. Those three years were great; we saw Izzi grow as a student, and we were excited for her to start kindergarten. At our first parent/teacher conference, Izzi's kindergarten teacher immediately told me that Izzi was an "academic failure." She recommended that Izzi be pulled out from class more than the 20% of time upon which we had already agreed. When Izzi was pulled from her class, she received instruction and assistance from the paraprofessional. Her teacher became less of her instructor. Because of Izzi's physical condition, she qualified for adaptive P.E. We understood that class would be modified for her. Instead, she was separated from her peers to have P.E. with an instructor, by herself. Because of the standard cafeteria tables, Izzi could not sit with her classmates; she was placed at the head of the long table, in the aisle, where she was frequently bumped. Her teacher continued to recommend and push for Izzi to be pulled out of class for speech, OT, PT, and study skills. Izzi was spending less than 70% of her classtime outside of her homeroom and without her classmates. In addition, the playground was not wheelchair accessible. Her teacher recommended that she play with bean bag games on the grass while her classmates played on the playground. Izzi loves playing basketball, but she could not access the court due to the steps. Izzi is a highly social child. She loves people. She loves chatting. She benefits from learning with and from her peers. Continually being separated from her peers was taking its toll. Towards the end of Izzi's kindergarten year, we had a meeting with her teachers, administrators, and district level officials. We presented our concerns and suggestions. Everyone was friendly and accomodating. We did ask that Izzi be retained because she had not mastered all of the kindergarten skills. We were told that due to her IEP, she could not be retained. We were assured that she would get caught up during first grade. Two weeks before the beginning of Izzi's first grade year, the playground had not been touched, although we had been told that modifications would be made. That same week, the principal of Izzi's current school called to let us know that there was an opening for her. Izzi could start kindergarten too. Tired of dealing with her elementary school and its non inclusive climate, we enrolled her in private school. It was the best decision we made. Izzi is now in fourth grade. She continues to thrive in her class. She is with her classmates 100% of the day. The tables in the dining room are round, so she can sit wherever she wants. The playground area is accessible. She plays with her peers. Her P.E. teacher adapts games so that Izzi can play with her classmates. I am not anti public school. As stated, I have been teaching in a public school for 24 years. Our son attends public high school and is a member of its JROTC's nationally ranked rifle team. He would not have this opportunity in a private school. That being said,

our local public school system failed our daughter. Fortunately, the private school system includes her and encourages her success. In addition to teaching full time, I have two part time jobs to ease the financial challenge that private school brings. We would not consider terminating Izzi's private school education for financial reasons. Being able to access some sort of scholarship account would be a game changer by lightning the financial burden. Until public schools intentionally practice inclusion, we continue to support school choice.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: SCOTT JENSEN		PHONE NUMBER: 414-588-7050	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: AMERICAN FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN		TITLE: SENIOR ADVISOR	
ADDRESS: 1020 19TH STREET NW, SUITE 675			
CITY: WASHINGTON		STATE: DC	ZIP: 20036
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: Shannon Robinson		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: shannonmrobinson@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM
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My son who is mildly on the spectrum, needed in school education. He is hands on, doesn't understand how to use electronics to do school, can't learn on line and gets easily frustrated with it. When we found out our district was starting the school year on line he begged me for a different option. We are in the public school system, we have 5 children and own our own businesses. We couldn't afford private school, especially right now with the way small businesses are being treated. My husband suggested our son Max go to live with his brother in Idaho. I was against this at first. He is my child after all and this wasn't part of our plan. NOT having a choice for school here made me choose Idaho. My son left 4 short days later to live with family he hardly knew. He spent his 16th birthday away from us. He left his family, his home, his friend, his cats, his mountain bike (which he loves) and all his comforts just to get a normal education. I was sick with grief for two days. I couldn't get out of bed. I didn't know how I was going to get through without having Max around. Again, this wasn't part of any of our plans. This experience was traumatic and not necessary. Had we had a choice in Missouri, I wouldn't have had to make a choice to send my child thousands of miles away to get the education he had a right to. Please consider putting the child first, not the systems. Thank you.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SHANON LINDSAY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: DALE HERL		PHONE NUMBER:
REPRESENTING: INDEPENDENCE SCHOOL DISTRICT		TITLE:
ADDRESS: 201 NORTH FOREST		
CITY: INDEPENDENCE		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 64050
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: DR. DANIEL N. CLEMENS		PHONE NUMBER: 816-321-5000	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: SUPERINTENDENT		TITLE: NORTH KANSAS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	
ADDRESS: 2000 NORTHEAST 46TH STREET			
CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64116
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: JASON HOFFMAN		PHONE NUMBER: 573-659-3000	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: JEFFERSON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT		TITLE: CHIEF OF OPERATIONS/CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER	
ADDRESS: 315 EAST DUNKLIN STREET			
CITY: JEFFESON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: Otto Fajen		PHONE NUMBER: 573-634-3202
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI NEA		TITLE: Legislative Director
ADDRESS: 1810 East Elm Street		
CITY: Jefferson City	STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: otto.fajen@mnea.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM

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Missouri NEA Testimony on HB 729 to the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee February 2, 2021

Otto Fajen, MNEA Legislative Director

The Association appreciates the opportunity to present written testimony regarding HB 729 filed by Rep. O'Donnell. The bill would create state tax expenditures to fund costs for students to attend private schools and public schools other than the district of residence. The bill also expands sponsorship of charter schools by outside entities (other than the local school board) to many areas around the state. Thirdly, the bill changes the virtual school law. The Association opposes the tax credit expenditure, charter school expansion and virtual school portions of HB 729. The legislature has a primary duty to establish and maintain free public schools. Each of the portion of HB 729 makes a significant change that appears to adversely affect the public interest as it relates to this duty. The Association opposes mechanisms that divert public funds to schools that are not subject to the same standards of accountability, transparency, and respect for the rights of students, staff and parents as apply to public schools. HB 729 would authorize up to \$50 million in tax expenditures with no clear goal for the use of those funds nor a clear way to determine if that goal is met. Funds could be directed to private schools that operate largely outside of public accountability. Contrast this with the state budgeting process, where there are specified goals and metrics for each appropriation. The bill hands over these decisions to a private bureaucracy composed of unspecified donors and unspecified funding organizations that meet the definitions in the law. The legislature will not have any control over who makes donations, which organizations receive donations (and which organizations won't receive donations) or which students those organizations might choose to provide funds to (and which students won't receive funds). HB 729 also would expand sponsorship of charter schools by outside entities in many regions around the state. Missouri NEA opposes this provision and believes that charter schools should be sponsored by and accountable to the local school board. Charter schools should be authorized or expanded only after a district has assessed the impact of the proposed charter school on local public school resources, programs, and services. Further, charter schools should also be subject to the same standards of transparency and accountability as are applicable to district public schools. HB 729 would also revise the law regarding virtual schools as last enacted in SB 603 in 2018. The Association supported SB 603. SB 603 envisioned that students enrolling in MOCAP virtual instruction would maintain a connection with the local school district by enrolling in that district. Access to virtual courses should be offered through a process that is substantially like the process used for in-person classes in the district. School personnel should follow student engagement and success for virtual courses as they would for in-person classes and make necessary adjustments if a student is struggling. The Association believes that this vision is the appropriate policy for MOCAP. To the extent that the law has not been implemented according to this vision, the Association believes that schools, school personnel, virtual

content providers, DESE, students and parents should work together to make sure that the process is improved and fully aligned with the process envisioned in SB 603. HB 729 would change the MOCAP law in significant ways, and the Association has several concerns about these changes. The bill removes school personnel from involvement in virtual course decisions. This conflicts with the vision that virtual and in-person courses would be offered under substantially similar standards and process as in-person courses. The Association believes that students benefit from an integrated process where all options are available in a convenient and unified system and where the helpful guidance and support of school personnel is available regarding all the student's instruction. The bill also amends the financing of full-time virtual courses. SB 603 envisioned that virtual instruction would be available and funded from basic school funding but clarifies that the instruction should be funded at no more than necessary market costs. This ensures efficient use of public funds. Rather than arbitrarily increasing the payments for full-time virtual schools, the Association urges that the expectation of paying only necessary market costs should be extended to full-time virtual schools. Once this sensible change is made, the state can expect that issues of finance will not cloud the virtual enrollment process in the way those issues sometimes have in the last few years. Finally, the bill would separate full-time virtual companies and full-time students from any connection to the local public schools. This sets the virtual provider companies in the role of a separate public educational entity without a clear public accountability structure. The Association is concerned that such a change would lead to the same issues of academic and financial concern that have plagued other states with similar, separate full-time virtual companies that are not connected to school districts or the state education agency. In conclusion, Missouri NEA has significant concerns regarding the various provisions of HB 729 and opposes the bill. On behalf of the Association, I thank you for the opportunity to offer our testimony on HB 729. Otto Fajen
MNEA Legislative Director



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: RON BERRY		PHONE NUMBER: 660-537-2239	
REPRESENTING: AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS MISSOURI		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 722			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65102
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: SCOTT KIMBLE		PHONE NUMBER: 573-638-2692
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS		TITLE:
ADDRESS: 3550 AMAZONES DRIVE		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65109
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM

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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 729		DATE: 2/2/2021	
COMMITTEE: Elementary and Secondary Education			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: Sheryl Schmidt		PHONE NUMBER: 417-859-7908	
REPRESENTING: FAMILIES FOR HOME EDUCATION, INC.		TITLE: FHE Lobbyist	
ADDRESS: 239 Rock Court Dr.			
CITY: Marshfield		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65706
EMAIL: pansymom4fhe@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM	

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House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee Hearing, February 2, 2021 Testimony Regarding Missouri HB 729, sponsored by Rep. Michael O'Donnell Alternative Educational Options Sheryl Schmidt, Families for Home Education (FHE) Registered Lobbyist RE: Oppose HB 729 Chairman Basye and Committee Members, I am Sheryl Schmidt, the registered lobbyist for Families for Home Education (FHE), a state-wide homeschool organization founded in 1983. FHE appreciates the concept of HB 729 and the inclusion of the home school option for qualified students. However, since FHE has concerns about this bill, I am speaking in opposition to HB 729 today. The 3 concerns are as follows:

1. FHE appreciates your commitment to school choice, but we do have a concern about unintended future possible consequences of including the requirement for "annual standardized testing" in this bill. I am referring to HB 729, page 3, lines 28-31:28 (8) Annually administer either the state achievement tests or nationally norm-referenced tests that measure learning gains in math and English language arts, and provide for value-added assessment, to all participating students in grades that require testing under the statewide assessment system set forth in section 160.518; A homeschool in Missouri is already required to keep a record of evaluations for the child's academic progress. RSMo 167.031.2: (2) As evidence that a child is receiving regular instruction, the parent shall, except as otherwise provided in this subsection: (a) Maintain the following records: a. A plan book, diary, or other written record indicating subjects taught and activities engaged in; and b. A portfolio of samples of the child's academic work; and c. A record of evaluations of the child's academic progress; or d. Other written, or credible evidence equivalent to subparagraphs a., b. and c.; and (b) Offer at least one thousand hours of instruction, at least six hundred hours of which will be in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies and science or academic courses that are related to the aforementioned subject areas and consonant with the pupil's age and ability. At least four hundred of the six hundred hours shall occur at the regular home school location. There should not be any added requirements of a homeschool, especially since there is no empirical evidence that standardized testing provides any benefit. In fact, several states have abolished testing requirements or allow parents to exempt their child from testing (1995, Arizona; 2013, Iowa; 2015, Arkansas; 2016, South Dakota; and 2017, North Dakota). No state during this period has added new testing requirements to homeschool statutes. Educational freedom is what makes the homeschool option work so well for families and students. Parents have the freedom to tailor their curriculum to each child. The parent has the choice to decide what evaluations to use to best assess their child's progress. FHE would respectfully request that the annually testing provision be removed from HB 729.2.

FHE is also concerned about the reference to "nationally recognized standards" of graduation. It is stated on page 4, lines 40-42:40 (13) Provide rates of high school graduation, college attendance, and college graduation for participating students to the state

treasurer in a manner consistent with 42 nationally recognized standards; As FHE understands the "national standards for graduation" is undefined and undefinable. Therefore, depending on who makes this policy, it could lead to federal control over Missouri high school graduation. We do not want the treasury department or a judge making this decision for a homeschool or the local school boards. Therefore, FHE would also respectfully request the removal of graduation rate using "national standards".³ If your intention for HB 729 is to include a "home school" as a "qualified school", there is a correction that needs to be made. On page 30, lines 11-17, the bill states, "(5) "Qualified school" (a) any of the following entities that is incorporated in Missouri..." and then lists "b. A homeschool as defined in section 167.031;" The definition of a homeschool in RSMo 167.031.2.(1) reads, "As used in sections 167.031 to 167.071, a "home school" is a school, whether incorporated or unincorporated, that:..." The statute does not require a home school to be incorporated, therefore, most home schools are not incorporated. In fact, FHE is not aware of any incorporated home schools in Missouri. Would it be possible to change the "incorporated in Missouri" to "located in Missouri"? FHE just wants you to understand that if this change is not made it will virtually exclude a home school option for those seeking the Missouri Empowerment Scholarship. Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. Sheryl Schmidt Families for Home Education 417-859-7908 pansymom4fhe@gmail.com www.fhe-mo.org



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: Sujith Cherukumilli		PHONE NUMBER: 7705004537	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: SOUTHERN EDUCATION FOUNDATION		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY: Atlanta		STATE: GA	ZIP: 30303
EMAIL: scherukumilli@southerneducation.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM	
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The Southern Education Foundation (SEF), a 154-year-old education advocacy and civil rights organization, appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony related to HB729, Alternative Educational Options. Based in Atlanta, SEF advocates for high-quality educational opportunities for students in all 17 southern states, including Missouri, by engaging legislators, advocates and other organizations in our advocacy, research, and leadership development work. SEF opposes all attempts to divert public funds away from public schools and toward private schools for the following reasons: voucher programs have no proven record of academic improvement for participating students, private schools receiving public funds through voucher programs do not follow the same accountability and reporting requirements as public schools, and students with disabilities participating in voucher programs forfeit their federally-guaranteed protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). A comprehensive review of school voucher programs concluded that no clear advantage exists for students attending private schools with vouchers. In fact, in some states, participation in voucher programs had negative effects on student achievement, with students enrolled in the Louisiana Scholarship Program increasing their chances of failing math by 50 percent and students in Indiana using vouchers to attend private schools consistently scoring lower on reading and math tests than their public school peers. A study of the Opportunity Scholarship Program, Washington, D.C.'s school voucher policy, found negative impacts on student academic achievement after one year of participating in the program. In their short lifespans to date, private school voucher programs have failed to produce results and, in many cases, widened long-standing opportunity and achievement gaps between different groups of students. For students with disabilities in Missouri's public schools, federally-guaranteed protections such as the right to a free and appropriate public education and the right to due process are critical to ensure that these students are able to access a high-quality education. For a student with disabilities who chooses to receive a scholarship through the Missouri Empowerment Scholarship, the rights granted to them by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) would virtually evaporate, subjecting that student to an educational program with no guarantee or track record of successfully educating students with disabilities. In many cases, parents are unaware that their child will be losing these protections upon acceptance of a scholarship. As you consider passing a bill that would drain more money from the public education system in Missouri, SEF urges you to think of the students and school districts that would be impacted the most by a depletion of state funds - those that are already underfunded. As you know, the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic have reached far and wide in Missouri and exacerbated these funding and resource inequities. Students in rural and urban communities alike continue to lack reliable access to high-speed internet and devices. Missouri's public schools need additional support, but the passage of HB729 would do the opposite. Empowerment Scholarships would cost the state more in the long term

by defunding public schools, limiting educational opportunities for public school students, and creating an alternative education system for a small percentage of students in the process. We urge members of the committee to vote against HB729 and protect public education in Missouri. Thank you.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: SUSAN GOLDAMMER		PHONE NUMBER: 573-445-9920	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION		TITLE: ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 2100 I-70 DRIVE SOUTHWEST			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65203
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: WAYNE LEE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2021 12:00 AM	
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