

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 17-039--a bill seeking to establish a private school and home-based education tuition income tax credit.

My husband and I have been blessed to be citizens of Jefferson County where we have raised five children over the last 22 years. Our children now range in age from 6-21 years of age. Along the way, we have accessed multiple forms of education: Public, private, and home-based. Our journey with home-based education began when our oldest child was due to enter 1st grade. He had spent his pre-school and kindergarten years at a private school. As the school did not continue past kindergarten, we began to tour local public and private elementary schools. At the time, our son had tested as borderline ADD. The small class size at his private school allowed him great success; however, as we began to observe and shadow public school classes, we became increasingly aware of the difficulty his ADD would bring to his assimilation into a 20+ student class size. We quickly realized that this type of situation would be detrimental to both him and other students. While private schools were generally smaller in size and more conducive to his academic success, they were quite cost prohibitive for our family. The end result was a parental choice to provide home-based education.

A home-based education allowed our son to thrive and learn at a more rapid pace. This kept his ADD tendencies in-check because he never had to be "bored" or "distracted" in a traditional setting. We were able to work with his more kinesthetic learning style and tailor a curriculum that included all the mandatory requirements, while leaving great room for his love and exploration of electronics, science, and mathematics. I am happy to report that today our son is a junior at the University of Colorado Springs majoring in electrical and computer engineering. Additionally, in order to put himself through school and pay his living expenses, he works full-time as the head of the computer department at a Best Buy.

Our other four children have all been home educated as well; not because of ADD, but because we saw a benefit to our children and family to do so. As our children enter high school years, we are able to design a program geared to their individual gifts and interests. For example, our daughter was able to pursue an equine training and management program while still in our home-based high school. She is 19 now and nearly finished with her program. She has already started her own equine training and care business serving multiple clients throughout the Denver Metro area. Our third child will graduate in a few weeks from his home-based high school program. During his high school career, he garnered over 30 college credits and received a full tuition scholarship to Colorado Mesa University where he has enrolled for the fall of 2017 as a biology major. While in high school, he was able to explore his love of biology and research through various internships including the Denver Zoo and local animal hospitals. Today his goal is to pursue biological research and obtain his PhD. We currently have a kindergartener and 8th grader still at home. Our plan is to continue to nurture their skills, talents, and interests thorough out their respective schooling.

My husband and I recognize we have chosen a more un-traditional route for educating our children. We are grateful that the great state of Colorado allows us the parental choice and freedom to educate our children how we see best for the individual child. Sometimes our educational choices involve a public or private school enrichment program. Sometimes we partner (or co-op) with other homeschool families for various coursework and social

activities. Most often, however, we are purchasing curriculum for our homeschool. All our choices have come at a cost; however, we realize this is *our* choice and do not expect everyone to make the same financial sacrifices. We gladly pay our property taxes and are happy to contribute tax money to local schools; however, we receive NO rebates or tax credits for any purchases or education costs we self-fund. As a family, we are working hard to teach our children values and educate them to become productive members of society. However, sometimes lack of family funds make an educational opportunity cost-prohibitive. We have learned to prioritize and be selective. Our choices and expenses in the homeschool years do not leave much for the college years. Our children know they will need to get scholarships or work to pay for their post-high school education and training. We have invested in their formative years, but we are financially unable to help beyond that.

Again, I want to emphasize that we recognize this is our choice. However, it is a choice we are making in the best interest of our children. Offering families a tax-credit or voucher would allow for greater opportunities for all. With such benefits, some students will continue to thrive in traditional, public schools; while, others who are less successful in such an environment would have greater opportunity for success in a private or home-based setting. At the very least, let's make it an even playing field for all. Let students and parents succeed in the environment that is best for the individual by giving them a choice that is less hindered by economics and more focused on developing good citizenship, effective leadership, and quality education. Our state and nation will reap the benefits.

Thank you for your time and service.  
Appreciatively,

Mrs. Kirsten Kernc  
Littleton, CO  
303-972-0889  
[kirstenkernc@yahoo.com](mailto:kirstenkernc@yahoo.com)