



Freedom Principle MO Announces Its Opposition to SB 727 – Proposed Bill Opens Door to DESE Control of Homeschool Families

For Immediate Release

(April 8, 2024 – St. Louis, MO)

The Freedom Principle MO is announcing its opposition to SB 727, a bill to expand ESA grants, sponsored by Senator Andrew Koenig. The bill would expand eligibility and change the maximum amount of tax credits allocated in any year from \$50 million to \$75 million for the Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Accounts Program. The bill also expands Charter Schools to Boone County. “We have researched this bill and there are just too many bad parts of this bill that make it impossible for our organization to support this bill in its current form,” said Byron Keelin, President of the Freedom Principle MO. “Our members are supportive of the ESA program and the expansion of the charter schools, but this bill potentially allows the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to stick its nose into the homeschool curriculum.”

SB 727 was recently passed out of the House Special Committee on Education Reform and will soon head for a floor vote. “We were extremely disappointed the committee spent five minutes reviewing the bill in Executive Session and did not make any changes to this bill,” said Keelin. “When you look at this bill it contains twenty-two other components of this bill that have nothing to do with the expansion of the ESA program. This is a clean-out-the-fridge bill.”

The Freedom Principle MO is opposed to SB 727 for the following reasons:

- The Family Paced Education (FPE) program will require homeschool students to take a state or third-party assessment which will be shared with DESE and a board of advisors. This will open the door for DESE to expand its power in controlling the homeschool curriculum. “This is school choice with strings attached and we believe there needs to be additional barriers to protect homeschooling families,” said Keelin.

Freedom Principle MO
PO Box 15095 - St. Louis, MO 63110
freedomprinciplemo@protonmail.com

- The estimated net effect on state funds for the Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Funds could exceed \$800 million.
- Calls for increasing the minimum teacher salary without proposing any funding mechanism. This may require the school district to propose massive property tax increases to pay for the salaries.
- Creates a literacy program for elementary school students. “Isn’t this what schools are supposed to be doing teaching children to read?” said Keelin.

The Freedom Principle MO recently conducted a webinar with Senator Koenig on SB 727. We asked Senator Koenig about this clutter, and Senator Koenig said, “There is a lot of stuff that is completely unrelated to the ESA program.” Senator Koenig said he was not opposed to removing these items. The Freedom Principle MO sent e-mails to some members of the House Missouri Freedom Caucus encouraging them to make changes to the bill.

The Freedom Principle MO supports school choice with no strings attached. Still, this bill continues to give DESE the ability to “promulgate rules” to expand and drive a curriculum that is not focused on education. “SB 727 will turn private schools and homeschoolers into marionettes controlled by an already bloated and uncaring government bureaucracy, and it must be stopped,” said Keelin. “At what point do Republicans think it is worth giving up their principles of true educational parental control for school choice with strings attached?” The Freedom Principle MO encourages Missourians to contact their State Representative and urges them to oppose SB 727.

The Freedom Principle MO is a pro-citizen, pro-Missouri First organization. We are a membership-based 501(c)4 organization, acting locally and state-wide, to protect our families and our constitutionally protected liberties. We are fighting for America. We are fighting for Missouri. We are fighting for you. For more information about the Freedom Principle MO visit our website at www.freedomprinciplemo.org.

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Contact Information

Byron Keelin

President, Freedom Principle MO

e-Mail: freedomprinciplestl@protonmail.com