

Date: March 5, 2024

To: Senator Caryn Tyson, Chair, Kansas Senate and Taxation Committee

From: Chuck Weber, Executive Director, Kansas Catholic Conference

RE: **WRITTEN ONLY PROPONENT testimony for SB 509 — Establishing the education opportunity tax credit to provide an income tax credit for taxpayers with eligible dependent children not enrolled in public school.**

Madam Chair Tyson and members of the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 509.

My name is Chuck Weber, and I serve as Executive Director of the Kansas Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the Catholic Bishops of Kansas. We support educational choice measures like SB 509.

The Catholic Church teaches that parents are the first and best educators of their children. This does not mean parents must personally educate their child, but it does mean they should be afforded as many options and pathways as possible toward that end. SB 509 is an educational choice policy that allows parents to be “the first and best educators” of their child, since it gives them additional choices.

Please let me be clear—the Catholic Church in Kansas supports strong public schools, including sufficient funding for public schools. We do not bring an “us vs. them” mentality to this discussion. But if our collective mission is the best educational environment possible for every child, we must face the reality that it is no longer enough to hope that our friends and colleagues in Kansas’ public school can educate each child equally well, despite their years of dedication.

Today’s children will come of age in a diverse and dynamic era. They deserve an equally diverse and dynamic educational setting now to give them the best chance of success. High-performing public schools will always be the goal, but trusting families to find the right place for their child is just as important.

The citizenship, academic, social, and cultural opportunities provided at Catholic schools are vital to shaping Kansas into the community we want to be. Please support SB 509 and help make that happen.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

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