

Testimony before the  
House Education Committee  
On  
HB 2136  
Expanding student eligibility under the tax credit low-income students  
Scholarship program  
by  
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Chair Estes and members of the House Education committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present opposition testimony on HB 2136. USA Kansas appears in opposition on this legislation.

- Public funds should fund public schools, which serve over 90% of students, rather than being diverted to private schools. We cannot afford to subsidize a second, but private system of education when Special Education in Kansas public schools are underfunded nearly \$440 million.
- Public schools have the only secondary programs that prepare students for the technical, in-demand jobs of the future. Our career and technical education programs are critical to ensuring students gain access to high-wage employment opportunities that meet industry needs. We are the only institutions that have solid partnerships with post-secondary institutions that can ensure alignment for these technical programs. Funding private schools offers no benefits to manufacturing and industry leaders and sectors; they rely on public schools to meet their growing workforce demands.
- The scholarship program was first started to assist low-income, academically struggling elementary students to help them achieve academic success by transferring to a private school. This has been changed to focus on middle and upper middle-class students who may want to attend a private school for reasons other than academic. The addition to high school students is bothersome because it is likely be used to further recruiting athletes, which is occurring in some private schools today.
- “Qualified Schools”, even if they are accredited under the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) program, they do not have to follow the same rules as Kansas public schools. Some examples include public schools must provide a free education to all students, regardless of family income or background. Public school must provide special education services to students with disabilities. Public schools must provide meals to students who are eligible for free and reduced lunches. Public schools must provide English Language Learners services for students who need support to learn the language.
- Tax credit and voucher programs in other states are ripe with waste, fraud and abuse. In Florida and Arizona, which have broad flexibilities for expenditures, parents have used

the funds to purchase skis, pianos, paddleboards, foosball tables, golf equipment, Amazon gift cards and tickets to Disney World and Sea World.

- The State of Kansas cannot afford to underwrite multiple different school systems, and we cannot afford to undermine the public schools that will continue to educate the vast majority of our children.
- This bill isn't school choice. It's *the school's choice*. The private schools funded by this bill could be allowed to reject students with disabilities—or any other students those private schools wish to avoid, including: their academic ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

For these reasons United School Administrators of Kansas respectfully request that you not pass HB 2136 out of committee.