

Leo Estrada Pineda
Testimony and support of Tax Credit Scholarship

IN PERSON PROPONENT testimony in favor of HB 2136

TO: Madam Chair Rep. Estes and members of the House Education Committee

FROM: Leo Estrada Pineda, Bishop Ward student

DATE: February 5, 2025

Dear Chair Estes and committee members,

First, let me thank you for your services to the people of Kansas. Thank you for listening to people like me for our views on this important matter. The tax credit scholarship enabled me to learn and grow in an environment that educates the whole person. Let me share how this affects me.

I am able to attend Bishop Ward High School in Kansas City, KS, thanks to a tax credit scholarship that I have received since my freshman year.

My defining moment that still influences me every single day is when God came into my life, because even now he is still working in my life every single day. Ever since I was younger, I have always known about God and how he can help me in so many ways, yet I didn't know him as much as I do now.

God has always helped me and my family, even when I didn't see it. There were times when my family didn't have much to afford the necessities, times when family members were very ill. I remember when I was younger I was often sick, and when my grandma would pray for me and have hope and faith, I would get better. This just really showed me how strong God is and what he can truly do for us, and this showed me the power of faith and hope and all the possibilities for what is to come in my life.

The moment I truly opened my heart to God in my life and soul is when I started looking at everything differently. My surroundings, how I acted towards people and myself, I figured out how I should be and how I should live my life. This impacted me in such a positive way because I looked at every day and realized I had to work hard because I had been granted a chance to redeem myself. This made me more joyful and excited to get the day going, to go to school and talk to people, which made me want to help others and motivate them to keep working hard.

I am a junior at Bishop Ward High School in Kansas City. Bishop Ward definitely helped me with this moment in my life, and it opened my eyes to more about what I can be in my life and how I can impact others. I go to school every day excited to learn, and to talk to my teachers and friends because it's another chance to spread a smile and my love to everyone. Truly, I've seen myself grow so much over these past few years. I'm a good person and I learned to keep focused on God and to always help others in need.

Dreams stay on pillows if you don't work hard to achieve them. I also keep learning every day that it's okay to fail at times, it's okay to not be okay, but either way you have to look for the

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good in any situation. God has shown me so much, and yet I still am learning each day, especially how I should live my life. I've learned to keep being optimistic, ambitious, to walk humbly, to be compassionate and empathetic. And I plan to keep doing my best with the gift I received from God by becoming what Jesus needs me to be.

Thank you for creating this opportunity for the tax credit scholarship, I urge you to expand this program so more people can benefit as my family and I have.