

## **Testimony to the House Committee on Education**

**NAME:** Lesa Childers

**TITLE:** Kansas citizen and parent of two children attending public schools

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**BILL NUMBER:** Bill HB 2136

**PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL:** Opponent

**ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY:** written only

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Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number HB 2136.

Thank you in advance for reading my testimony. I am a parent of a child with an IEP enrolled in the Shawnee Mission School District. This bill would divert tax money to private schools that have no requirement to serve students with disabilities. In fact, the vast majority of private schools are not at all equipped to serve students with significant support needs, and they **will** refuse admission to those students. I am a parent of a student with significant support needs. Even if I wanted to take advantage of this program, I would NOT be able to, because there is no school in the state of Kansas that would accept my child. How do I know this? I know this because I am a former private school teacher, and I witnessed how heartbreaking it was to see families have one child accepted to the school, and the other sibling rejected on the basis of disability.

Even if she were allowed, most of those schools are religious schools, specifically Catholic, and I would be a fool to enroll my child, who is already extremely vulnerable to sexual abuse, in any institution that is frankly dangerous for children. A 2023 report released by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation identified 188 clergy in the state “suspected of committing various criminal acts,” including aggravated criminal sodomy, rape, aggravated indecent liberties with a child and aggravated sexual battery. This is during a period going all the way up to 2022. These were crimes that were covered up by the dioceses – a pattern we have seen all over the United states. My child cannot reliably report sexual abuse. I would never, ever put her in this situation.

Our tax dollars should absolutely not be funneled into any religious institution, but especially those that have been proven to be criminally negligent in the protection of children.

We should not be reducing state revenues by providing tax credits that funnel money to private schools that can pick and choose which children they want to serve.

Private schools can choose to admit only the best and brightest students, leaving other children behind.

Our tax dollars should not go to private schools that lack oversight, leaving the public uninformed as to whether or not our tax dollars are really being spent to improve the lives of children.

There are no controls in place to ensure eligible at-risk students who apply for a scholarship are granted one, as private schools are allowed to set their own admission standards. And there are no controls in place to ensure those who do receive scholarships receive a quality education. Kansans expect accountability for our tax dollars.

Please show you care for your most vulnerable constituents by voting no on bill HB 2136.

Lesa Childers

Merriam, KS