

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Vicki Kohl

TITLE: Kansas Citizen

EMAIL ADDRESS: vmkohl54@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill HB 2136

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written

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Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

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

This program has the same pitfalls as any other voucher scheme as it diverts **public** tax dollars to private schools that lack oversight and are allowed to discriminate in admissions. The state government should not allow such lack of oversight and discrimination in any school which accepts public tax dollars, whether directly from taxes or, in this case, from a diversion of public tax dollars.

Additionally, it is a lucrative tax avoidance scheme that is especially beneficial to corporations and wealthy donors. Allowing the such entities to reduce their taxes to benefit private schools should not be allowed.

The expansion proposed by HB 2136, the Tax Credit Scholarship program, is clearly not needed.

Plenty of students under the current guidelines are still eligible for the Tax Credit Scholarship program. There is no need to expand. In fact, expanding the program to private school students will just take limited spots from at-risk students who supposedly were the ones in need.

In 2023, only 1,340 students were participating despite 230,000 public school students being eligible. There were not significant changes to these numbers in 2024.

Because there is no data or accountability within the Tax Credit Scholarship program, we don't know if eligible students:

- applied to a private school and were denied admission because of their religion
- applied to private school but couldn't pass academic admission criteria
- live in one of the 60+ counties in Kansas where there are no private school options
- have special needs that private schools aren't required to accommodate
- are happy with their public schools and thus there is no real need for this voucher program

These voucher programs aren't available to all. **Most importantly**, public dollars belong to our public schools that accept and educate all children. Diverting our state general funds to private schools undermines public education funding.

Please vote no on bill HB 2136.

Vicki Kohl
Kansas Citizen
Olathe