

February 2nd, 2025

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in strong opposition to HB 2135. This bill seeks to significantly expand the Tax Credit Scholarship voucher program in Kansas, further diverting public tax dollars away from our public schools and into private institutions that lack the same level of accountability and oversight.

The original intent of the Tax Credit Scholarship program was to provide low-income, at-risk students with an opportunity to attend private schools. However, the continual expansion of this program by legislative leadership undermines that initial goal and exacerbates inequities in our education system. This latest expansion proposed in HB 2135 is especially concerning for several reasons:

1. **Redirecting Public Funds to Private Schools Without Oversight** Private schools that benefit from these diverted funds are not held to the same standards as public schools. They can deny admission based on various criteria, including disability status, academic history, or other subjective factors, which effectively limits access for many students who could benefit from additional educational opportunities.
2. **Diverting Funds from Public Schools to Students Who Have Never Attended Them** HB 2135 would allow students already in private schools—who have never attended a public school—to receive funding under the program. This shifts resources away from public schools that are constitutionally required to serve all children and redirects them to families who have already chosen private education, further straining public school budgets and limiting opportunities for those truly in need.
3. **Providing a Full 100% Tax Credit to Donors** Increasing the tax credit from 75% to 100% essentially turns this program into a state-funded subsidy for private schools. Donors would receive a dollar-for-dollar return on their contributions, creating an unfair financial incentive that depletes state tax revenue while benefitting a select group of private institutions. This approach removes necessary taxpayer accountability and transparency.
4. **Doubling the Program's Funding Cap** Raising the cap from \$10 million to \$20 million further accelerates the diversion of public dollars from our already underfunded public schools. At a time when public schools across Kansas are struggling with teacher shortages, classroom resources, and the need for infrastructure improvements, we should be focusing on strengthening our public

education system—not expanding a voucher program that primarily benefits private interests.

Kansas has a constitutional responsibility to provide a quality public education for all students, and expanding the Tax Credit Scholarship voucher program moves us in the wrong direction. Public dollars should remain in public schools, where they serve all children equitably, not be funneled into a system that lacks accountability and excludes students based on arbitrary criteria.

I urge you to reject HB 2135 and instead prioritize policies that strengthen and support our public education system, ensuring that every Kansas child has access to a high-quality education regardless of their background or financial situation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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