

HB2136 Opposition Testimony
Written Only
House Education Committee
February 5, 2025
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Private Citizen in Blue Valley School District 229

Chair Estes and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your service in support of all Kansans. I write today to ask you all to vote “no” on the advancement of Bill HB2136. I am opposed to the contemplated expansion of tax credits to 100% for contributions to private schools and the use of public funds to support private schools.

My education and much of my success stems from an excellent public school system. I believe the provision of vouchers or tax credits to parents who choose to utilize private schools undermines the long-term success of our public school system. I feel private schools are often faith based and narrow in their academic focus whereas a public education encourages critical thinking and a diversity of experience that forges a well-informed citizenry aware of wider societal options and challenges.

Public tax dollars belong with public schools:

- Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers.
- Education Tax Credits divert funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education to subsidize the private choices of some parents thus having the same negative impact as a voucher program.
- This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a private choice to receive a religious or other non-public education, many who can easily afford that choice.
- Instead of providing tax credits to Kansans choosing not to send their kids to public school, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education that is currently underfunded by \$173 million.

Private schools are not available to all, private schools get to choose who to accept

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

- Families with children with special needs, disabilities, or those for whom English is not their first language will not benefit from these tax credits as few private schools can accommodate their needs.
- Private schools can choose to admit only the best and brightest students, leaving other children behind. Vouchers like this tax credit program do not provide real choice.

Vouchers are welfare for the wealthy

- Families who can already afford the choice to send their kids to private school will benefit greatly, while funding for public schools and other state services pay the price.
- Tax credits for private education are another way for wealthy families to reduce their tax burden and avoid paying their fair share.

Public schools are a public good:

- For many benefiting from these tax credits, especially those with multiple kids, they will receive annual refunds and will contribute nothing towards the public goods in our state that all Kansans benefit from.
- **Public schools are a public service and paid for by everyone, regardless of whether they use them or not. Just as we would not give a tax rebate to people who buy books instead of using a public library or who own private vacation homes instead of camping in national parks, the government should not refund private school tuition to parents who choose not to send their children to public schools.**
- A strong public education system provides benefits to the entire society, not just the individual students. The potential consequences of diverting public tax dollars to those who choose to homeschool or send their kids to private school undermines the state's ability to fund our public schools, potentially leaving an underfunded public school system.

No oversight or accountability:

- Our tax dollars should not go to private and homeschools 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 those receiving these tax credits are providing the children with a quality education or any education at all. Kansans expect accountability for how our tax dollars are being used.

Impact on rural areas:

- Rural students (and communities) are harmed as public school resources are drained and students in rural areas lack little to no private options.
- These tax credits will primarily benefit those in urban areas of our state. Rural taxpayers will end up subsidizing private school tuition for families in metro areas such as Johnson County, Wichita, and Topeka.

So, respectfully, I ask you all to vote “no” on Bill HB2136. Public funds should NOT be used to support families that CHOOSE to abandon public education.

Thank you,

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