

Testimony in Opposition to Bill HB 2136
House Committee on Education
Date of Hearing: February 5, 2025

John Monaghan

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Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill HB 2136. I am a parent of children who attend public schools. I strongly oppose the school voucher bill and urge you to vote against it.

As someone who has experienced firsthand the value of public education, I can confidently say that our public schools are the foundation of our communities. They accept and educate every child, regardless of ability, background, or financial circumstances. Public schools do not pick and choose; they are a public service that uplifts society as a whole.

Public education is a public good. Our tax dollars should be invested in the schools that serve every child and are accountable to taxpayers. This bill diverts critical funding away from public schools and directs it to private schools that are not obligated to serve all children or to meet the same accountability standards.

One of the most troubling aspects of this bill is that private schools are not required to accept all children. Families with children who have special needs, disabilities, or who are learning English will find limited, if any, options in private schools. These students, along with countless others, will continue to rely on public schools for their education, but with fewer resources if this bill passes.

This is not true choice. It's a false promise that leaves many children behind.

This bill primarily benefits wealthier families, who already have the means to send their children to private schools. By providing tax credits, the state essentially helps wealthy families reduce their tax burden at the expense of our public schools and other critical public services. Rural taxpayers, in particular, will be subsidizing private school tuition for families in metro areas, even though rural communities often have no private school options.

Public education is not about individual benefit—it's about collective good. Just as we all contribute to public libraries, roads, and parks regardless of how often we use them, public schools are a shared investment in our state's future.

Public schools operate under rigorous oversight to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used responsibly and effectively. Private schools, on the other hand, are not held to the same standards. There are no guarantees that public funds directed to private schools or homeschools through vouchers will be spent on quality education—or any education at all.

Kansans deserve transparency and accountability when it comes to how our tax dollars are spent. This bill undermines that principle.

I am deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill will have on rural communities. Public schools are often the heart of rural areas, providing not just education but also jobs, extracurricular opportunities, and a sense of community. Draining resources from these schools to fund private education in urban areas will harm rural students and communities that already face significant challenges.

I ask this committee to consider the long-term consequences of this bill. It diverts resources from our public schools, weakens the educational foundation of our state, and creates inequities that hurt our most vulnerable children. Instead of supporting voucher programs, let's work together to fully fund public education, including special education, and ensure that every child in Kansas has access to a high-quality education.

Please vote No on bill HB 2136

Thank you

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