

## Testimony to the House Committee on Education

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**TITLE:** Kansas Citizen for 40+ years and parent

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**BILL NUMBER:** Bill HB 2136

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

**ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY:** Written only testimony

**DATE OF HEARING:** February 5, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

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

First, I want to thank you for your service and dedication to Kansas and your diligence in considering what is best for our GREAT STATE.

I am writing to voice my opposition to HB2136. In considering this Bill, I want to express my dissatisfaction because I have a daughter who grew up in KS schools and now serves at a Professor at the University of Texas in the School of Social Work. My daughter and SO MANY THOUSANDS of other young adults have had so much success in life BASED ON their experience in the PUBLIC School System in KS. When I moved to Kansas City from Texas in 1983, I specifically chose to live on the Kansas side of the state line BECAUSE of the schools. My daughter received, I believe, a BETTER, more well-rounded education because she went to PUBLIC SCHOOL.

In KS, we do not have mountains, oceans or year-round warm weather to draw people to our state. What we do have is EXCELLENT PUBLIC EDUCATION. PLEASE do not pass Bill HB2136. It will put our state in jeopardy in more than one way in the future!

### **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 who choose 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 reduce 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:**

- **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.
- **Will we eventually just CLOSE our rural schools AND COMMUNITIES???**

For so MANY reasons...we must maintain our AMAZING KANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS! If not for our present-day children, for the future of our GREAT STATE! PLEASE, I implore you to consider all this information before casting a vote for HB2136. And VOTE NO.

Lynn Graves Hardy

Kansas Citizen for 40+ years

Resident of Leawood Kansas