

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

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BILL NUMBER: Bill HB 2136

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY:written

DATE OF HEARING: February 5, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number HB 2136. Public schools serve every child who walks through the door and that is the power of the United States of America. To take money away from that K12 system is to dilute the power of that system. We also know that the existing Scholarship program is underutilized, so there is no reason to expand it until it is at max capacity. Why fix a problem that doesn't exist?

Expanding a Tax Credit program like this only weakens the public education system that has served our state so well for decades, and I know this firsthand as a middle school math teacher with over 20+ years of in the classroom experience. Our public schools have a long-standing tradition of success, and it's something we should all be proud of.

Private schools get to pick and choose who they serve. Public schools, on the other hand, serve every student that comes, regardless of their abilities or background. This inclusivity is vital to our society , as it ensures that every child has the opportunity to learn and grow.

At risk students are never considered in these bills even though it seems to be its focus. Why? Because it takes specialized education and lots of experience to work with them, which private schools don't possess. That is the power of the K12 systems, whether we are talking about learning disabilities, a child who doesn't speak English as their first language, or someone who has a physical disability. Do you realize what public school delivers? For example, I've had students in my classroom who had feeding tubes, for example. I couldn't do this without the help of the school nurse. In a private school, this child wouldn't be fully integrated in a classroom of peers. Or students who were adopted from Russian orphanages and still working to overcome the trauma of that upbringing. In a private school, this child would have been segregated until they were verbal. Instead, the public school was able to allow them to sit through their "silent period" with the support of a social worker coaching me as the math teacher. They were with their peers which helped them not only learn math, but come out of their shell. Imagine teaching pre-algebra to those students. It took a whole team to help deliver math instruction to them....we did it and they flourish over time.

I am deeply concerned that private schools may not have the necessary resources and staff to adequately meet the needs of the at-risk students the Scholarship program is designed to serve. We have a responsibility to these students, and we cannot afford to let them fall through the cracks.

This bill threatens that kind of help and specialized teaching impossible if you take away resources from the public schools and give it to private schools.

Vote no on bill HB 2136. The only responsible thing to do is to fight to keep the integrity of the public school system strong and viable.

Marsha Ratzel

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