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HB 2136 - Expanding student eligibility under the tax credit for low income students scholarship program, increasing the amount of the tax credit for contributions made pursuant to such program and providing for aggregate tax credit limit increases under certain conditions.

Proponent

February 5, 2025

Madam Chair and Members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is AJ Kuhle, and I am the President of ACE Scholarships Kansas & Missouri. Since 2016, ACE has been providing K-12 private school scholarships to low-income Kansas students, transforming lives through educational freedom.

We are dedicated to ensuring that every child—regardless of their financial circumstances—has access to a quality education that best fits their unique needs. We believe families deserve the freedom to choose the school that works best for their children, whether that be public, private, charter, or homeschool.

This year, ACE awarded more than 14,000 scholarships to students attending approximately 1,100 partner schools across 12 states, including 351 scholarships through the tax credit program here in Kansas, where we partner with 85 schools.

ACE strongly supports HB 2136, which aims to expand student eligibility under the tax credit for low-income students scholarship program and increase the tax credit for contributions made to such programs.

Increasing the tax credit to 100 percent of contributions will strengthen our ability to raise funds for the program while making Kansas more competitive with neighboring states' programs. This improvement will enable more Kansas donors to contribute to scholarships, helping additional students access quality education.

The inclusion of an automatic escalator to allow the program to grow with demand as we approach the \$10 million tax credit cap will also allow for natural scaling and an increased ability to get scholarships to more Kansas students statewide in the years to come. Our applications have nearly tripled in just three years.

Finally, technical changes to when notifications of student eligibility are made by KSDE will speed up application times, allow for smoother award processes, and help families and schools make informed enrollment decisions earlier than has been possible in recent years.

But beyond the numbers, this is about transforming lives. You will hear from ACE families on how they have benefited from a scholarship. This program is a lifeline for Kansas students and families who need educational opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach. We respectfully thank this committee for your commitment to supporting students, families, and schools across our state.

Thank you.