

## Oral Proponent Testimony for SB 87

**TO:** Madam Chair Representative Estes

**FROM:**

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**RE:** Oral Testimony for SB 87:

*Expansion for the Tax Credit for Low Income Students Scholarship Program*

**DATE:** March 10, 2025

Thank you, Madam Chair Estes and members of the House Education Committee, for allowing me to testify in favor of SB 87, the bill addressing changes to the low-income tax credit scholarship program.

My name is Vincent Anch. I am the Executive Director for the Catholic Education Foundation based in Kansas City, KS. On behalf CEF, a Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO), and the 42 schools we serve in Northeast Kansas, I am expressing my support of SB 87.

Let me say that there isn't anyone in this room, or anyone supporting this program, that doesn't want the strongest, most successful public schools in our state. A good education is vital for the success of our youth and our state.

The tax credit scholarship program provides opportunities for low-income families to choose a school that best fits their children's needs. In many cases that includes Catholic, or private schools. However, the cost of attending a private school is virtually impossible for low income families. This program addresses this. All of the students are low-income; 83% are ethnic minorities and many live in high crime areas. Without tax credit scholarships they have no options for educating their children. They are stuck.

I have toured most of the schools that receive Tax Credit scholarship students in KC and NE KS. I have also met with many teachers, principals and parents of tax credit students. I can tell you from personal experience that these scholarships make a powerful impact in these families' lives.

**Every year the Catholic Education Foundation hosts a dinner for parents of Tax Credit students.** Each parent shares their personal story of how these scholarships have affected their lives. Most get very emotional and are extremely grateful for the gift of a scholarship. Many talk about how their children faced bullying, witnessed violent behavior of other students, and inappropriate discussions that their children have learned from other students at public schools. Some of the issues are about grade school students talking about sex, use of foul language and even anti-religious sentiments. Some of these children need safer environments to thrive and schools that develop them academically, emotionally and spiritually.

That is what our schools do. They give families a choice that best fits all of the needs of their children. Our results are significant.

- Once again, 100% of our students graduated last year (all grades).
- Approximately 90% of our students attend college or pursue advanced career training.
- 100% of **tax credit scholarship families pay all their state and local taxes. This is not a voucher program.**

We strongly support the expansion of this important state program to give even more low-income families and children opportunities that better fit their needs.

As for accountability, every SGO must submit regular progress reports on every student to ensure they are currently enrolled, meeting academic standards and on the path to graduate to the next grade level. SGOs are also audited and have to account for every dollar raised and every scholarship dollar awarded. The state determines which students qualify for scholarships, not the SGOs, and the state approves every donor wishing to give to SGOs.

**The best measure of accountability is that if our schools don't do well the families can leave. Very few ever do.**

Through the life of this program we have never received any cost of living increase or adjustment for inflation.

**This program injected over \$10 million in private funding last year to support the education of our low-income children in the state.**

We are hoping you will support our efforts to help even more children in need.