

ORAL PROPONENT TESTIMONY FOR SB 87

House Education Committee Hearing

PROPONENT TESTIMONY FOR SB 87 – 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.

NAME: Geoff Andrews

DATE: March 10, 2025

TO: Chairwoman Representative Estes and members of the House Education Committee

Madam Chair Estes and committee members,

Thank you for allowing me to provide oral testimony in support of SB 87—expanding the current low-income tax credit scholarship program.

My name is Geoff Andrews, and I serve as the Superintendent of Schools for the Catholic Diocese of Salina, which spans 26,000 square miles across north-central and northwest Kansas. Our diocese operates schools that welcome families and students of all faiths, providing an education that meets the needs of students where they are. This is about ensuring that families, particularly those in rural areas, have access to the best fit—the right fit—for their child’s education.

For the last four years, schools in the Salina Diocese have been able to utilize this program to help low-income students attend a school that best meets their educational needs. However, this program has been in place for over a decade, and despite its success, the cap has never increased. With the income threshold set at 250% of the federal poverty level—the same standard used for Affordable Care Act eligibility—this program provides critical support for families in need.

For the 2024-2025 school year, the SGO for the Salina Diocese awarded approximately \$138,000 in scholarships to 102 students, or \$1,351.74 per student. Since we began awarding funds from our SGO in the 2021-2022 school year, we have provided a total of \$504,911 in scholarships to help cover the cost of education in our rural Catholic schools. This program is making a tangible difference in the lives of families who otherwise might not have access to the right educational opportunities for their children.

It is important to clarify that this program does not use public dollars for private education. Instead, it allows taxpayers to receive a credit for contributing to scholarship-granting organizations (SGOs) that operate under strict regulations regarding student eligibility, reporting, and expenditures. The Catholic Church remains committed to fully funded public schools, but we also recognize that for some families, a different educational setting is essential for their child’s success.

By expanding eligibility and increasing the available tax credits, SB 87 will allow more students—especially in rural Kansas—to access an education that truly fits their needs. I urge you to support this bill so that more families have the opportunity to choose the best education for their children.

Thank you for your time and for considering my testimony in support of SB 87.