

## 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: Joel Arnold

DATE: March 10, 2025

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

I am the Principal of St. Patrick Catholic School. Our school has a free/reduced rate of 50%. We serve some of the neediest families in our community thanks to the Tax Scholarship program in the state of Kansas.

Our lowest income student who have enrolled in our school are doing so very well. Often times it is our job to catch them up on their learning, no matter what year they join our school. Our test scores prove that we are succeeding with the enrollment of these children.

I would like to tell you about a young girl in our school. She has been a student here at our school for several years. Coming from a Spanish speaking home, she struggled with Math and Language Arts. But over the years we have seen a gradual improvement, till she has now been able to go onto consult for her Individualized Education Plan. A member of our staff volunteered to tutor her and she has worked so hard. This year, she told us she would love to share her culture with her classmates. Her mother made tamales and churros for the students to celebrate the important day for Our Lady of Guadalupe. The entire student body enjoyed the food as well as pinatas and playing Loteria.

Please understand that our school is not an “elite” school that comes to mind when people hear the word “private school”. It is absolutely far from that. Our scores, the students overall development and their well-being prove that the Tax Scholarship program in the State of Kansas is working and working very well.

Thank you kindly! May God bless all of your work.

Sincerely,  
Joel Arnold

House Education Committee

Proponent of SB 87 with Amendments

By Michael L. Burgess, Kansas Resident & Analyst of Education Trends since 1991

Thank you, Madam Chair Estes and Education Committee members, for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 87. Unlike some, who also support this timely bill, I don't have a College degree, or Organizational title. I'm a father, whose children were subject to some very peculiar classroom exercises, that ended with their teacher instructing them, that, "what was shared in the circle, is not to be discussed outside the classroom." That was in 1991, and was the start of an unexpected journey that ultimately took my wife and I to Washington, DC, where we had the honor of meeting with Eagle Forum founder, Phyllis Schlafly, and former U.S. Sec. of Education William Bennett. That journey resulted in befriending Dr. William Coulson, who had the dubious honor of editing much of Carl Rogers and Abe Maslows works, including, but not limited to "A Plan for Self Directed Change." We hired Bill to speak to a group, we had assembled, including former California Congressman William Dannemeyer.

I was elected to the Contra Costa County Republican Central Committee, and ran an unsuccessful bid for our local School Board. I'm retired now, but I've remained very much involved in studying trends in Education. It turns out that many of the new trends are little more than retreads, dug up from old experiments...that failed. SEL's, "The Sharing Circle," is but one of those "retreads". I believe, that is largely responsible for the historically low proficiency scores, that have plagued schools across the state. Ever since the KBOE's April 2012 mandate, that, Social, Emotional, Learning be used in all state accredited schools. Within 18 months of the KBOE mandate, proficiency scores plummeted. Proficiency scores, once in the 70 percentile, plummeted in 2014, and flatlined in 2015, where they have remained ever since. Ten years of experiments is not working. Parents...all parents want change.

Today, the academic community would have us believe that there's a connection between outcomes and Grades, when in todays reality, there is absolutely no connection between the two. Were that the case, how could one Wichita School, graduate 75% of the students when only 6% are proficient in math, 10% are proficient in Reading, and 8% are proficient in Science? Another is only 2% proficient in math, and 8% proficient in both Reading and Science, and has an inexplicable graduation rate of 78%. With a student population of 1,370, it costs taxpayers, \$21 million per year, for what amounts to little more than daycare. The diploma they are handed is little more than a participation award for their 13 years of occupation.

SB 87 appears to be a great step in the direction toward finally achieving academic excellence, however, I would appeal to the full Committee that they give serious consideration to amending SB 87, to include all families, not just certain groups.

Sincerely,  
Michael Burgess.

## St. Margaret Mary Catholic School

*"Through the Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Margaret Mary Catholic School forms the minds and hearts of young disciples."*



Principal: Mr. Kylan Collins  
2635 S. Pattie St.  
Wichita, KS 67216  
Phone (316)267-4911  
[kcollins@smmwichita.com](mailto:kcollins@smmwichita.com)

Pastor: Rev. Ned Blick  
2701 S. Pattie St.  
Wichita, KS 67216  
Phone (316)262-1821  
[church@smmwichita.com](mailto:church@smmwichita.com)

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### **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: Kylan Collins

DATE: March 10, 2025

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

I am the Principal of St. Margaret Mary Catholic School. Our school has a free/reduced rate of 87%. We serve some of the neediest families in our community thanks to the Tax Scholarship program in the state of Kansas.

Our lowest income students who have enrolled in our school are doing so very well. Oftentimes it is our job to catch them up on their learning, no matter what year they join our school. Our test scores prove that we are succeeding with the enrollment of these children.

I would like to tell you about a family in our school. This family has raised many children throughout the years. They currently send four students and a grandchild to our school that they hope to adopt soon. The parents and the children are at the school at every opportunity they can to volunteer in PreSchool, the lunchroom, events in the evening, and are present at weekend Masses. There is not a single time that I can remember when they said no to helping out.

The oldest child who came to us 5 years ago went from being retained in a primary grade due to a lack of education that was received from a prior school. She has since exceeded our expectations. She is a nurturer at heart and helps out her siblings and cousin to be just as responsible and caring as she is.

This family, as much as they try, would never be able to afford a Catholic Education without Support for Catholic Schools. This is one of many stories that can be told.

Please understand that our school is not an “elite” school that comes to mind when people hear the word “private school”. It is absolutely far from that. Our scores, the students overall development, and their well-being prove that the Tax Scholarship program in the State of Kansas is working and working very well.

Thank you kindly! May God bless all of your work.

Kylan Collins

Principal: St. Margaret Mary Catholic School

2.26.25

House Education Committee  
Sb 87, Proponent, Written only

Madam Chair Estes and Committee,

I am a proponent for Sb 87 . This bill amends the 2014 Tax Credit for Low Income Students Scholarship Program Act.

These are some highlights

- 1) Funding from charitable contributions will prevent this from being a tax burden
- 2) It serves more families by not discriminating and takes away the stigma of the “low-income”
- 3) Administration from the State Treasurers office, increases the awareness to families

Our families and our children are counting on this committee.

Please pass out favorably Sb 87.

Thank you,  
Debbie Detmer  
[kcjewel56@gmail.com](mailto:kcjewel56@gmail.com)

Mary Durand  
St. Patrick Catholic School  
409 S. Malcolm  
Chanute, KS 66720  
620-431-4020

March 10, 2025

WRITTEN 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.

Chairwomen Representative Estes and members of the House Education Committee;

I am the Principal of St. Patrick Catholic School. Our school has a free/reduced rate of 38%. We serve some of the neediest families in our community thanks to the Low-Income Tax Credit Scholarship program in the state of Kansas.

Our lowest income students who have enrolled in our school are doing so very well. Often times it is our job to catch them up on their learning, no matter what year they join our school. Our test scores prove that we are succeeding with the enrollment of these children.

I would like to tell you about a young boy in our school. I'll call him Tony. Tony arrived at our school not knowing how to communicate in English and was very timid. With dedicated faculty, Tony soon began to understand and speak in English. This progressed to reading and writing. But not only did academics begin to flourish, but so did Tony's personality. Tony's confidence has grown immensely. He is on grade level in all his studies. He gets so excited with his accomplishments. Not only does he get excited for himself, but Tony loves to celebrate others. He is the classroom cheerleader. Tony's family has also gotten very involved in the school, attending extracurricular events and activities. So the effects of Tony's education go beyond him into the family as a whole.

Please understand that our school is not an "elite" school that comes to mind when people hear the word "private school". It is absolutely far from that. Our scores, the students overall development and their well-being prove that the Low-Income Tax Credit Scholarship program in the State of Kansas is working and working very well.

Thank you kindly! May God bless all of your work.

Mary Durand  
Principal (St. Patrick Catholic School)

NAME: Maria Ehmke

DATE: March 10, 2025

TO: Chairwomen Representative Estes and Members of the House of Education Committee

Madam Chair Estes and committee members,

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony for SB 87 – expanding the current low-income tax credit scholarship program. I am Maria Ehmke. I am a product of Catholic School education, as is my daughter, Makayla Ehmke. I am a kindergarten teacher in the Catholic school system. As a child, I had the privilege of attending Catholic school. This education put me ahead of my peers in the public school system and set me up for success in college.

As a parent, I wanted to prepare my daughter for the same success I had experienced. I sent her to Catholic schools for her entire educational career. The lack of God in our education system is a huge hole that needs to be addressed. Catholic schools are the answer to this hole. The Catholic schools reinforced the virtues and behavior we taught her at home. She has a stronger faith life, thanks to her Catholic education. I do not believe my daughter would be as well rounded an adult without the help of the Catholic schools. She is a successful nurse and a productive member of society.

I want you to continue supporting SB 87 – expanding the current low-income tax credit scholarship program to allow more families like mine to experience Catholic schools. Thank you for allowing me to share my story and support SB 87.

Sincerely,

Maria Ehmke

RE: SB 87

Thank you for considering SB 87.

The most important assumption in this bill is that we, as private citizens and as advocates for SB 87, are trying to take care of ourselves. To the extent that we can add to the already existing allowances granted by the legislature in years passed, everyone will be heartened that we are trying to take responsibility for educational options in Kansas. It is a big job. You need us. Vote for SB 87.

Becky Elder



Proponent of SB 87  
For the State Education Committee  
February 7, 2025  
Malinda Evans: LSIE, MA Ed.  
Special Education Coordinator, Maranatha Christian Academy

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 87 on behalf of Maranatha Christian Academy. My name is Malinda Evans. I hold a Specialist Certificate in *Leadership in Special and Inclusive Education* from the University of Kansas, and a *Master of Arts* in Education. I have taught in Public and Private schools and I pay property taxes in Kansas.

At Maranatha Christian Academy, we have 620 students Kindergarten through twelfth grade. 12.6% of those students receive services to support their exceptionalities. We employ Special Education Teachers and Second Language Learner endorsed teachers. We partner with Speech, Physical, and Occupational therapists. DeSoto, according to a KS stats report from last year, supported 11.8% of their students with special services. We are shoulder to shoulder, doing the work and making incredible progress in our school.

As a taxpayer, I do not at all dispute my hard earned money funding public schools. I would like for the Senate to recognize that private schools are also doing incredible work and that parents deserve a choice of where to send their children. This bill is essential for helping parents who want a different environment and diverse opportunities for their children. Please consider how having a choice positively models what many who founded this country were pursuing – freedom.

Sincerely,

Malinda Evans  
Special Education (ACCESS) Coordinator  
Maranatha Christian Academy

**Michelle Sims**

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**From:** Rev. Daniel Grams <daniel@kslcms.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 7, 2025 1:13 PM  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** Testimony in Support of SB 87

My apologies for submitting this late.

I encourage the favorable consideration of SB 87 in full.

In particular, I want to highlight two aspects of the bill that are particularly important from my perspective as the Superintendent of Lutheran Schools of Kansas.

First, lifting the budget cap on the tax credit scholarship for low income students is important. As more Scholarship Granting Organizations are coming into existence (including the Kansas Lutheran Schools Scholarship Foundation), more students are benefiting from the Tax Credit program. Last year, \$9m of the \$10m was allocated. Raising the limit to \$20m with a trigger for an automatic increase makes a lot of sense.

Second, I endorse moving the administration and advertising aspect of the tax credit scholarships program to the Treasurer's Office. The KSDE website for the Tax Credit Scholarship program is not easy to navigate. The application link for families to apply for scholarships is difficult to find and not prominently featured on the KSDE website. The State Treasurers Office has done an excellent job of promoting other legislature approved tax savings programs, including the Learning Quest 529, KS Scholarship, and KIDS Matching grants, to name a few. The legislature should want this program promoted by an agency that is generally supportive of the program, as well.

Thank you for your consideration!

Rev. Daniel Grams. Superintendent  
Lutheran Schools of Kansas  
Topeka, Kansas

WRITTEN 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: Kellie Hull

DATE: March 10, 2025

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

I am the Principal of Sacred Heart Catholic School, Arkansas City. Our school has a free/reduced rate of 44% . We serve some of the neediest families in our community thanks to the Tax Scholarship program in the state of Kansas.

Our lowest income students, who have enrolled in our school, are doing so very well. Often times it is our job to catch them up on their learning, no matter what year they join our school. Our test scores prove that we are succeeding with the enrollment of these children.

I would like to tell you about a young family in our school. This family has three children enrolled in our school currently. They have benefitted in so many ways. This scholarship supports their 4<sup>th</sup> grader having access to computer education, character formation, and individualized instruction. This scholarship allows his 1<sup>st</sup> grade sister to have a para in her classroom to help her learn English and become a reader, an empowering tool. This program allows their little brother to attend Pre-K where he is learning social, language, and numeracy skills that will prepare him for Kindergarten. This family can send their children to a school where they feel safe, nourished body, mind, and soul by educators who care about them, because of the Tax Scholarship program.

Please understand that our school is not an “elite” school that comes to mind when people hear the word “private school”. It is absolutely far from that. Our scores, the student’s overall development and their well-being prove that the Tax Scholarship program in the State of Kansas is working and working very well.

Thank you kindly! May God bless all of your work.

Kellie Hull



Brittany Jones Testimony in Support of S.B. 87

House Education

March 10, 2025

Chairwoman Estes and members of the committee, my name is Brittany Jones. I am an attorney and the Director of Policy and Engagement for Kansas Family Voice. Kansas Family Voice believes that Kansas should be a place where life is cherished, religious freedom, & families thrive. We believe families thrive when they have freedom to choose how and where they educate their children. It is for these reasons that we urge your support of S.B. 87.

The low-income tax credit scholarship provides more educational flexibility for Kansas families. In an ever- changing educational environment, parents need every tool available to place their children in a learning environment that fits their child's individual needs. This program is a simple way to empower parents to choose. It has already helped hundreds of Kansas children receive an education that better suits their needs.

Educational freedom is based on one simple idea that parents should have the ability to send their kids to any school that will help their children thrive. It is a child and family centric model. It is not about pitting one type of schooling against another but simply empowering families to make the best choice for them.

More than a dozen other states have similar programs. As this program sees more and more use, it only makes sense to expand eligibility. This program is a great way to utilize the free market by incentivizing investment in our children's education, paired with giving families options who would not normally have educational options.

Parents are best positioned to know and raise their children. Educational institutions can be an asset to this relationship. Recognizing and protecting the fundamental relationship between a parent and their child is vital to ensuring the stability of our society. For these reasons, I ask that you vote S.B. 87 out favorably.

Thank you!

## WRITTEN PROPONENT TESTIMONY SB 87

DATE: March 10, 2025

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

Dear Chairwoman, Representative Estes and Members of the House Education Committee,

I am the Principal of St Anne Catholic School, where we proudly serve a diverse community of students, many of whom come from families in great need. Our school has a free/reduced lunch rate of 83%, and thanks to the **Low-Income Tax Credit Scholarship Program in the state of Kansas**, we can provide these children with a high-quality education in a supportive, faith-filled environment.

The students who enroll in our school through this scholarship program, particularly those from our lowest-income families, are thriving. Many of them come to us with academic gaps, and it is our mission to help them catch up and excel—regardless of the grade level in which they join us. Our test scores consistently demonstrate the success of our efforts, proving that when given the opportunity, these children can flourish.

We have so many success stories. Stories of students who came to us with limited English or home support. These students have been able to grow academically and behaviorally, and we know they will one day be our future leaders. I want to share the story of a remarkable young lady at our school, when she first arrived, she struggled academically, socially, and behaviorally. As a sixth-grade student, she would rarely look at or talk to anyone else. Although she exhibited many talents in art skills, academics provided a challenge. Through the dedication of our teachers, a structured learning environment, and the support made possible through the Tax Scholarship Program, this student has made incredible progress. Today, she serves on our student council, excels in every subject, and is a role model and leader for other students.

We could also discuss a little kindergartener who started school with severe phobia of being in school, and separation anxiety from her parents. For the first month of school, it was a challenge requiring multiple staff members to get her to cross the threshold of the school doors. There was kicking, screaming, crying, running, fighting and some very violent acting out. Through the kind, loving and patient work of the school faculty, this child now comes running through the doors of the school every morning with a huge smile on her face. She cannot wait to come to school, get to read and soak up the love and learning waiting for her. It does not seem possible that this could be the same child, and she now excels in both behavior and academics.

We have several staff members who sent their children to Catholic staff, and they share remarkable stories about how their own children struggled at times in school, but with the care and guidance are now seeing success. Our Food Service Director has two students who are products of the Catholic Schools. One has earned multiple degrees, and is now working in Cybersecurity, the other in college to become an Interior Designer. Most of our teachers attended Catholic Schools, and they are now teaching, touching the future with every student they serve. Many share how important their education was in leading them to their chosen professions.

It is important to understand that our school is not the kind of "elite" institution that some may picture when they hear the words "private school." We are a mission-driven school that welcomes families who seek a values-based education for their children, regardless of financial means. The success of our students—academically, socially, and emotionally—proves that this scholarship program is not only working but changing lives.

Thank you for your dedication to education and for supporting initiatives that provide families with choice and opportunity. May God bless all your work, and I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Janet Jump  
Principal, St. Anne Catholic School  
1121 W. Regal St.  
Wichita, KS 67217

As a single mom to two wonderful children, I have faced every major parenting decision on my own. My youngest was only eight weeks old when I became a widow, and from that moment on, every choice about my children's future rested solely on my shoulders.

Even though I work as a school nurse in a public elementary school and have deep respect for public school educators and administrators, I knew in my heart that the educational environment my children needed was different from what our public school could offer. Every child is unique, and as their mother, I recognized that a one-size-fits-all approach wouldn't serve them best. But as a single mom, I felt helpless—knowing what my kids needed yet also knowing that I could never afford the educational experience that would allow them to thrive.

That's why school choice matters. Educational tax credits and scholarship opportunities would change the lives of families like mine. **No parent should have to choose between what they know is best for their child and what they can afford.** Every child deserves an education that helps them grow, flourish, and reach their fullest potential—regardless of their family's financial situation.

Expanding school choice isn't just about policy; it's about empowering parents and giving children the opportunities they deserve. I urge lawmakers to support school choice initiatives that make high-quality education accessible to all families.

Thank you,  
Erica Keesling

## Michelle Sims

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**From:** Jeff Kocen <jkocen@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 7, 2025 4:08 PM  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** Written Support of Bill SB 87

**Date:** March 7, 2025

**NAME:** Jeffery Kocen

**TITLE:** Citizen of Kansas and Overland Park

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** Jkocen@hotmail.com

**BILL NUMBER:** Bill SB 87

**PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL:** Proponent

**ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY:** Written

**DATE OF HEARING:** March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my support for bill number SB 87. I noticed the City of Overland in their letter dated March 10, 2025 (the incorrect date used by the city) indicates their opposition to this bill. As a citizen of Overland Park, they do not speak on my behalf nor many others I know. Increasing the available tax credits to \$15 million will have a negligible impact on the State budget and State school funding. However, it will have a very positive impact on families looking to find the best school to enhance the educational opportunities of their child or children.

Please vote yes on bill SB 87.

Regards,

Jeffery Kocen

Overland Park, KS



Name: Tabatha Lake

Date: March 10, 2025

To: Chairwomen Representative Estes and members of the House Education Committee

Madam Chair Estes and committee members,

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony for SB 87- expanding the current low-income tax credit scholarship program. My name is Tabatha Lake. My husband, Mark, and I are parents of two children, Dirk and Alexandria. We were fortunate to be able to give our children a Catholic education at Sacred Heart Catholic School in Arkansas City, Kansas. As you will hear, Catholic schools can have a lasting impact on families in many ways.

For many families like us, Catholic schools provide a strong academic foundation combined with a faith-based approach to learning. The values taught in these schools—such as service, compassion, and community—often shape students into responsible, thoughtful individuals. For parents, the peace of mind that their children are receiving both excellent education and moral guidance can be incredibly reassuring. For some families, Catholic schools also foster a sense of community. Parents often form close bonds with each other through school events, volunteer work, and activities. It's not just about education; it's about creating a support system where everyone looks out for each other.

Moreover, many parents like us feel that their children benefit from the smaller class sizes, which allow for more personalized attention. This can help students feel seen, supported, and encouraged to succeed, both academically and socially.

For my children, Sacred Heart has provided more than just an education, it's given them a deep sense of purpose. I've seen them grow not only in their academics but also in their faith and character. The school's emphasis on kindness, respect, and compassion has helped shape them into empathetic individuals who care about others. And as parents, we've been able to participate in their spiritual and academic journey, making it even more meaningful.

Also, Catholic schools have brought my family closer together. The shared experience of attending Mass, volunteering at school events, and being part of a tight-knit school community has strengthened our family bonds. It's not just about academics; it's about creating lasting memories and forming a sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves. The faith-based environment has provided us all with a steady moral foundation.

Thank you to the committee for allowing me the opportunity to share my support for SB 87. As someone who has experienced the positive impact of Catholic schools on my own life, my family, and my children, I believe this bill is crucial in continuing to support and strengthen these educational institutions. Catholic schools have not only provided my children with a strong academic foundation but have also instilled values of faith, compassion, and service that will guide them throughout their lives. I appreciate the committee's consideration of this important issue and the opportunity to advocate for policies that support families like mine."

Linda Lies

March 7, 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 a written testimony for SB 87- expanding the current low-income tax credit scholarship program. I am Linda Lies (Joe Lies deceased) and my three children Melissa, William, and Nathan. This important to me because Catholic Education is an invaluable resource for growing strong Faith in God.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Wichita have provided my children with excellent opportunities and Faith based education through all subjects and beyond.

My three children who attended Catholic schools received not only an excellent education but also a strong foundation in their faith, shaping them into the individuals they are today. Through rigorous academics, moral guidance, and a deep connection to their Catholic beliefs, they developed values of compassion, integrity, and service. Now as adults, they continue to live out their faith in their daily lives—one as a dedicated architect designer, another as a compassionate mathematical engineer, and the third as a material scientist. Their Catholic education not only prepared them for success but also instilled in them a lifelong commitment to faith and service.

I would like to see this program expanded to allow more families to experience Catholic schools

education. Thank you for allowing me to share my support.

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: Emily Perez

DATE: March 10, 2025

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

Madam Chair Estes and committee members,

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony for SB 87- expanding the current low-income tax credit scholarship program. I am Emily Perez, my husband, Trinidad, grew up in Catholic school and our 3 children, Remington, Felix, and Cruz, will as well. Remington is in 4th grade, Felix in kindergarten, and Cruz will be the first class of our parish's pre-kindergarten program that we are starting up next year.

Our Catholic School plays an enormous role in our family. We are a part of a small but mighty community. I serve on several committees and councils, including one that has worked to bring a pre-k program to our community. My husband's experience with Catholic Schools has allowed him to fervently grow in faith, build lifelong friendships and skills. My children are so fortunate to attend a Catholic School because they are able to receive a strong education while growing in faith and living sacramental lives along with their friends. The joy on their faces when they see their friends at Mass on Sunday is unmatched.

I would like to see this program expanded to allow more families to experience Catholic Schools because I did not believe that this education was something I could provide for my children until I learned of this program that makes it accessible to all. I'm so grateful for the community we are a part of, where we can find friends, knowledge, and Jesus all in one place. I feel that everyone should experience this kind of community and support. Thank you for allowing me to share my support for SB 87.

Cora Ricke

Date: March 10, 2025

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

Madam Chair Estes and committee members,

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony for SB 87- expanding the current low-income tax credit scholarship program. I am Cora Ricke the soon to be Kindergarten teacher at St. Anne Catholic School. I went to Catholic school from K-12 and it shaped me to be the person I am today.

The close-knit nature of Catholic schools helped me feel a deep connection to others. I formed lifelong friendships with people who share similar values, making me value community and connection both in my personal and professional lives. Attending a Catholic school fosters a strong work ethic and sense of responsibility. The academic challenges paired with the emphasis on discipline and structure contributes to the individual's success in later education or their career, as I was taught to be focused and goal-oriented. Catholic schools often encourage parent involvement through activities, fundraisers, and volunteer opportunities. This could lead to stronger relationships between parents and teachers, as well as a heightened sense of community within the school. Families feel more involved in their children's education and feel proud of their child's academic and spiritual growth.

Let the committee know you would like to see this program expanded to allow more families to experience Catholic schools. Thank you for allowing me to share my support for SB

87.

Hello,

I am writing to voice my support for SB 87.

Tuition tax credits and other vouchers are Wrong for Kansas.

Kansas Tax Dollars **MUST** be used to fund public education. Providing tax dollars for tuition tax credits and other vouchers toward private school damages our public schools, does a disservice to our children and undermines the resources needed to provide quality education to ALL Kansas students.

I have three children in SMSD and one that has graduated. Filtering additional funding away from our public schools is undermining my children's education. Based on current votes to fund SPED and other educational resources, it is crystal clear that public education is not a priority for many casting votes at the capital, however; it is very important as a Kansas resident.

Funding our future is a priority for Kansans and should be for all legislators.

Please vote to support our public education, expanded vouchers are not what we need.

Thank you,

Jodie Vickers

6311 W 94th Terrace

Overland Park, KS 66212

NAME: Eric White

DATE: March 10, 2025

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

Madam Chair Estes and committee members,

My name is Eric White, and I serve as the principal of Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic School in Topeka. I write to you today in strong support of SB 87, which seeks to expand the low-income tax credit scholarship program.

Currently, seven of our students benefit directly from this program. However, the impact of these scholarships reaches far beyond those individual students. Their presence enhances the richness of our school community, contributing diverse talents, perspectives, and friendships that strengthen the educational experience for all.

Our school serves a diverse population of students and families. Approximately 21% of our students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, 12% have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to support specific disabilities, and more than 25% have a CARE plan with tailored modifications to help them achieve their full potential. On a personal level, I know firsthand the difference a supportive educational environment can make—my youngest son is blind and has thrived in his Catholic elementary and high schools. Every child deserves access to an education that meets their unique needs, regardless of financial circumstances.

As advocates for social justice, we work tirelessly to make Catholic education accessible by subsidizing nearly all of our families' tuition based on need—some significantly more than others. However, despite our best efforts, we cannot meet the full financial need of every deserving family while maintaining a sustainable school program. Expanding the tax credit scholarship program would empower more families to choose the education that best serves their children.

Our schools are fully accredited by KSDE, and our teachers are highly qualified professionals who willingly earn 15-25% less than their public school counterparts because they believe in our mission. Catholic schools like ours provide an invaluable service to our community, offering families a high-quality educational choice that aligns with their values and aspirations.

I respectfully urge this committee to support SB 87. Thank you for your time, for considering this critical issue, and for your dedication to the educational needs of Kansas families.

Sincerely,

Eric White

Principal, Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic School





Dear House Education Committee and Chairwoman Estes,

My name is Jordan Zakery. I am speaking on behalf of ExcelinEd in Action, a national, bipartisan education policy think tank founded by Governor Jeb Bush. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on behalf of SB 87.

Currently, Kansas offers the Tax Credit for Low Income Students Scholarship Program, an educational choice program, that serves more than 1300 students statewide.

This program has allowed students, regardless of their means, to access an educational environment of their choice.

SB 87 offers the following key improvements to the program:

- Removes the programs prior public enrollment provision, allowing more students to timely exercise choice and attend a school that best meets their needs.
- An increase in the credit value from 70 percent to 100 percent over multiple to encourage donations and support the neediest students.
- Eligibility is extended to foster kids, military kids, and children of first responders.

Together these improvements equate to more students from at-need populations gaining additional access to a school of their choice. These improvements mean strengthening a program that supports students and parents.

In fact, a late 2022 survey released by the Kansas Policy Institute and EdChoice, found that nearly 4 in 5 parents with students participating in the program were satisfied with their student's experience in the program.

Additionally, in the same report, only 7 percent of participants responded they would be able to have their child attend their current private school if not for the program. It is clear this program has empowered many families with the needed resources and financial means to put their children in a school that works best for their individual needs.

SB 87 is a keep-doing-what-you're-doing bill. It supports a program that empowers students and families with educational options. It tells a parent that the legislature supports them in finding a school that works best for their kid.

This legislation takes a sensible approach to supporting the responsible growth of a program that serves the neediest Kansas students. For these reasons, ExcelinEd in Action urges your support of SB 87.

Best,  
Jordan Zakery  
Legislative Director-Midwest