

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Melinda Parks

TITLE: Kansas Citizen, Parent of Kansas Educator

EMAIL ADDRESS: melindaparks85@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only Testimony

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

I am a lifelong Kansan, having graduated from a rural Kansas high school and the University of Kansas. We raised our daughter in the Shawnee Mission School District, and she now teaches in the Turner School District.

I believe one of the best traits of our state historically has been our focus on quality public education. This was universally true across the state. Public education was important to my grandparents, to my parents who were educators, to my husband and I and to our children, who are all educators. Strong public schools are critical to the ongoing maintenance of high-quality communities where people want to live and work.

I am vehemently opposed to SB 87 and voucher programs in general. First and foremost, public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers. Education Tax Credits divert funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education to subsidize the private choices of some parents thus having the same negative impact as a voucher program. This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a private choice to receive a religious or other non-public education, many who can easily afford that choice. Instead of providing tax credits to Kansans who choose not to send their kids to public school, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to **fully fund special education** that is currently underfunded by \$173 million. Tax credits for private education are another way for wealthy families to reduce their tax burden and avoid paying their fair share.

Second, private schools are not required to accept all students. Public dollars should provide funding to schools who will accept any child, not those that can pick and choose which families they want to serve. Families with children with special needs, disabilities, or those for whom English is not their first language will not benefit from these tax credits as few private schools can accommodate their needs. Further, this voucher program would serve to take resources

from the rural portions of our state, where there are little to no private schools, and reroute those dollars to urban areas. This is bad for our rural economies.

Finally, public schools are critical to the development of healthy communities in our state. Public schools are a public service and paid for by everyone, regardless of whether they use them or not. Just as we would not give a tax rebate to people who buy books instead of using a public library or who own private vacation homes instead of camping in national parks, the government should not refund private school tuition to parents who choose not to send their children to public schools. A strong public education system provides benefits to the entire society, not just the individual students. The potential consequences of diverting public tax dollars to those who choose to homeschool or send their kids to private school undermines the state's ability to fund our public schools. In addition, there is a significant risk that some children may not receive adequate education if parents or guardians seek to receive the tax credit and yet provide little or no education in exchange. The lack of accountability for education provided for private or home schools makes this a real risk to Kansas students.

Again, I ask that you vote NO on SB87 for the sake of maintaining strong Kansas public schools, fully funded, accountable and available to all children.

Sincerely,

Melinda Parks, Lenexa, KS

Testimony to the House Committee on Education**NAME:** Michael Penny**TITLE:** Parent of Special Education Student**EMAIL ADDRESS:** michael.penny.work@gmail.com**BILL NUMBER:** Bill SB 87**PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL:** Opponent**ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY:** Written Only**DATE OF HEARING:** March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

I am concerned that this bill would divert public tax dollars away from public schools, into private schools that lack oversight and can deny admission for any number of reasons. This issue is of concern to me because my child is autistic with specific special education needs. Those needs have been met admirably by the public school system. They are legally required to accept and find appropriate placement for my child, but I know that appropriate funding is a struggle for them. SB 87 would place further burden on public school funding.

It seems that SB 87 would allow donors to private schools to avoid paying Kansas taxes, effectively taking funds away from public schools. Instead of diverting money to private schools, we should be fully funding special education (and all public education). I worry that if private schools gain more prominence than public schools, kids like my special education student may struggle to find a path to education. And I live in an urban area - I imagine finding a private school in a rural area could be even more difficult, especially for special education students.

For these reasons, I am requesting that you vote No on bill SB 87.

Michael Penny

Lenexa, KS

NAME: Cara Luptak-Peterson

TITLE: Kansas Citizen, Parent, LSCSW

EMAIL ADDRESS: caraelizabeth1@yahoo.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

I am a parent to three children in the public school system, and I understand the value of our public schools to an educated society and to the vitality of our communities.

Expanding the Tax Credit Scholarship program will divert even more funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education. Public tax dollars belong with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that provide oversight for our tax dollars. We should not be expanding this program that already funnels taxpayer dollars to private schools that lack oversight and are allowed to discriminate in admissions. Instead of providing tax credits to fund private schools, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education.

Rural students and communities will especially be harmed as public school resources are drained, and students in rural areas have little to no private school options.

In closing, please consider the serious repercussions that SB 87 will have on our Kansas communities and vote no on SB 87.

Cara Luptak-Peterson
Overland Park, Kansas

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education**NAME:** Janet Podoll**TITLE:** parent**EMAIL ADDRESS:** janetpodoll@gmail.com**BILL NUMBER:** Bill SB 87**PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL:** Opponent**ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY:** written**DATE OF HEARING:** February 6, 2025

Chair Erickson & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

As a parent of 2 children who were educated in public schools, I am very concerned about the Continuing effort to blur the distinction between Church and State education. Good public schools are essential to educating all children to be productive citizens. It is a public good, even People who send kids to private schools benefit from the contributions of educated people from public schools!!

Please vote no on bill SB 87

Janet Podoll

Lenexa, KS

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Travis Porter

TITLE: Kansas resident, father of 2 children in public school and your constituent

EMAIL ADDRESS: tArvis.kansascity@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only Testimony

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my fervent opposition to bill number SB 87.

When my wife and I decided to start a family we moved to Kansas for the public school system. And now unfortunately being a parent in Kansas requires advocating for those public schools and fully funding special education on a regular basis.

It is frustrating to see my Kansas legislature not learn from the cautionary tale of voucher programs in states that have passed them. Time and time again vouchers have proven not to expand choice or benefit students in need. The voucher programs benefit the wealthiest and put a strain on public school funding for the rest of us. For example in Arizona vouchers have cost hundreds of millions of dollars more than predicted, straining the budget and funding for public schools.

I don't want my property tax dollars going to private schools and adding to the benefit of the wealthy. I want them going to public schools and funding special education. That is what makes the Kansas public schools great and more attractive to families than school systems in other states. We have a good public system and we should build upon it.

I understand this bill is meant to expand the tax credit scholarship voucher that already exist. I'm sure the intent is to help more students in need. However, in other states expansion has proven not to help those in need. In other states you see voucher programs funnel money away from public schools and into private schools which are not accountable to the public. The students and families who get the most benefit are the ones already enrolled in and able to afford private schools. Not those students in need. Private schools can cherry-pick their students. Accepting top performers and denying others for any reason or no reason. Which does not help those students in need. Private schools can raise tuition as much as they want whenever they want.

And they often do when voucher programs provide new or additional government funds. Private schools don't have to provide transportation for students who don't have access. So once again students in need don't benefit. By NOT expanding voucher programs Kansas can avoid the problems other states have created when they expanded their programs.

Finally, we love our Kansas public school. Our school is a source of pride for the kids, the teachers and our neighborhood. It hosts events like the Cub Scout pancake breakfast and public sports. And we benefit from special education. One of my children is in the process of testing for SEEK (students exploring and extending knowledge). I like that our special education dollars are not only put to use helping students in need but also students who are excelling. It is a great benefit to everyone in Kansas that our school system both raises the floor and the ceiling for our students' education. Our public schools and special education programs work for the greater good of all kids in Kansas.

I would like to thank this body for its commitment to public service and for considering my written testimony today in **opposition** to bill SB 87.

Travis Porter

Kansas resident, father of 2 children in public school and your constituent

Overland Park, KS

SB 87 Opposition Testimony (Written Only)
House Education Committee
March 10, 2025
Angie Powers

Chair Estes and members of the committee,

Thank you for your work representing Kansas voters in Topeka. I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 87, based on my experiences as a mother of two Kansas public school graduates and as a public school educator for 25 years.

I have seen firsthand how Kansas public schools transform lives. My oldest daughter found the hands-on learning she needed to prepare for her career at Lawrence Free State High; my youngest discovered their passion for Japanese culture at Olathe Northwest. Each of my children had different learning needs, and their public school educators provided them with the support and challenge they needed to succeed. This is what public schools do: they serve all students, regardless of background, ability, or circumstance.

SB 87 threatens to weaken the public schools that educate more than 90% of Kansas students by indirectly diverting public tax dollars away from public schools to private institutions that are not held to the same standards, oversight, or accountability. Public schools must accept and educate all students, while private schools are free to select their students based on their own criteria—leaving behind those with disabilities, those who need extra support, and those from under-resourced communities. Expanding this program provides an even larger pool of students for private schools to pick from, making it less likely that the low-income, at-risk students this program was originally intended to help will actually benefit.

Moreover, this bill allows for tax avoidance that benefits the wealthy at the expense of Kansas students. Instead of reducing tax revenue in order to fund private institutions that lack oversight, we should be fully funding special education. The state's ongoing failure to meet its constitutional obligation to provide adequate special education funding already places a financial burden on local districts, forcing them to pull resources from general education budgets. In just the Olathe district alone, over 30 million dollars is transferred from the general fund to cover excess SPED costs in recent years. Expanding tax credits for private school tuition while refusing to fully fund special education sends a clear message: tax breaks for wealthy donors matter more than ensuring all Kansas students receive the support they need.

This bill is especially harmful to rural communities, where private schools are often nonexistent or limited to online options. In fact, nearly 60% of all private schools in Kansas are located in Sedgwick, Johnson, Wyandotte, Douglas and Shawnee counties. Public schools are the backbone of communities, especially in rural areas, and reallocating funds to private schools in urban and suburban regions will leave rural schools with even fewer resources to serve their students.

Public funds belong in public schools. If SB 87 passes, it will weaken our neighborhood schools and siphon away resources that should be used to strengthen the institutions that serve all children. I urge you to oppose this bill and instead focus on policies that truly support Kansas students, like fully funding special education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Angie Powers

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Martha Presser

TITLE: Kansas citizen and parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: martha.presser@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: written only

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

March 7, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

I am a lifelong Kansan and the product of Kansas public schools. After receiving a top-notch education in the Shawnee Mission School District, I went onto college and law school and now have a successful corporate career. I am certain that absent my public-school education, I would not have been successful in college and certainly not in law school. I am the mother of a 6th grader in the Blue Valley School District. I have **no interest whatsoever** in sending my child to private schools. Not only do I strongly believe in the value of public education, the caliber of private schools in Kansas is mediocre, at best, and there are very few secular options.

Expanding the Tax Credit Scholarship program will only harm Kansans. I strongly oppose subsidizing the private choices of some parents and allow donors to avoid paying taxes in Kansas. Special education must be fully funded.

This program allows for tax avoidance, especially for wealthy donors. The Tax Credit Scholarship program, like most voucher programs, is welfare for the wealthy. **Instead of providing tax credits to fund private schools, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education.**

Please vote NO on bill SB 87.

Thank you,

Martha Presser
Leawood, Kansas

NAME: Anastasia Reed

TITLE: Parent and Kansas citizen

EMAIL ADDRESS: acbruggeman3@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

I am the mom of a current kindergartner in the local public school. This school is basically the only option we have for structured education in our area; there are no private secular schools within a twenty-minute drive. There is one private, Christian school in our city but we are not religious and believe that sending our child to a diverse public school is incredibly important. Public school creates well-rounded members of society, as this country is made up of so many wonderful and different kinds of people (which is not what some leaders would have you believe). The proposition of this bill makes me question so much. Public school is a direct reflection of the community we live in, so why is it continuously having to navigate funding issues? Why is public education so low on the list of priorities, when it should be at the top of the list? Are we so ashamed of our public school system that we are now diverting even more money to private schools? Is the future going to be filled with statements like, "You're entitled to a great education, but only if you can afford it."? It appears that this Tax Credit Scholarship program allows for tax avoidance for the wealthy donors. We talk about welfare being an epidemic and that too many people rely on it, but isn't that what we're doing for those that make money in a certain tax bracket? Giving them hand-outs for having plenty of money already?

Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools. These kids deserve a country that cares about their wellbeing, regardless of whether the country cares about the adult that brought them into the world. Kids have no choice in their family background or income level. We need funding to go to schools that accept and educate all children. The above-mentioned program should not be expanding. I do not want my tax dollars going to a wealthy school with people who already have the means to choose whatever education they want and have the most flexibility with their time. I want my tax dollars to go to the kids

that don't have options like those. That don't have parents who can shuffle them to whatever school that's the "best" because they "can." I want my money going to kids that deserve as good of an education as anyone else but don't have the means to go to the "best" schools. This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a personal choice to receive a religious or other non-public education. Private schools are not available or welcome to all and just because a low-income kid does get into a private school, that doesn't mean their educational problems are solved. Who's finding a way for them to get to school when their parents are probably already at work? Who's funding any educational material fees, sports fees and activity fees that are associated with that school? Or are they not allowed to participate in those because they're already getting a good education? I digress... Expanding this program provides an even larger pool of students for private schools to choose from, making it even less likely that said low income, at-risk kids this program was intended for will be chosen.

We're already using our public school system to its extreme, as we have hardly any other options for structured schooling in our community. What is being done to help them? The Tax Credit Scholarship program primarily benefits those in much more urban areas of our state. Taxpayers like me, in Gardner, will end up subsidizing private school tuition for families in more urban areas of Johnson County, Wichita, or Topeka. That seems ridiculous when I could be directly benefiting from the school down the road.

Out of pure logic and hope, I am asking you to please vote no on bill SB 87.

Anastasia Reed

Gardner, KS

DATE: March 6, 2025

TO: Kansas House Education Committee

FROM: Terry Reiling, USD #342 (McLouth) Board Member

SUBJECT: Opposition for SB 87 – Tuition Tax Credit Scholarship

Thank you in advance for allowing me the opportunity to voice concern regarding SB 87. 92% of Kansas students attend public schools. Public schools remain the “life blood” for Kansas communities. USD #342 (McLouth) enjoys an active school with engaging staff and determined students.

SB 87 allows a tax credit (voucher) for middle and upper income families to receive this 75% tax credit. This form of voucher payment will severely impact Kansas public schools. It’s nothing more than generating an avenue for tax break for families to send their children to a private school.

Proponents boast that public schools will not be impacted by SB 87. However, easy math calculations would indicate otherwise. Once revenue for public education is reduced for the tax break (vouchers), public education is drastically impacted due to loss of that funding.

I am an elected board member for USD #342. My comments are those reflected by myself and not action taken by the board. I encourage you to reject SB 87 and refrain from damaging public education in Kansas.

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

Name: Amanda Richmond

Title: Kansas Parent

Email Address: arichmo8@gmail.com

Bill Number: Bill SB 87

Proponent, Opponent, or Neutral: Opponent

Oral or Written only Testimony: Written Only

Date of Hearing: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

SB 87 will have a negative impact on all children attending public schools in Kansas. My son currently attends school in the Shawnee Mission School District and is on an Individual Education Program (IEP). I am extremely grateful for the level of support that Shawnee Mission provides special education students. They were only able to do this with the increase in funding from the era of cuts from Governor Brownback.

Private schools can choose to admit only the best and brightest students, leaving others behind. Public schools have strict guidelines for special education teachers as written in the Federal law Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and in each state's education laws. Private schools do not have to adhere to IDEA, Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), IEP, or evaluations.

Kansas currently not in compliance with Kan. Stat. Ann. § 72-3422 with 92% reimbursement requirements. Expanding the Tax Credit Scholarship program will divert even more funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education, to subsidize the private choices of some parents and allow donors to avoid paying their fair share of taxes in Kansas. In addition, this program as currently written does not indicate where funds are coming from if donations are not received. With the current Federal administration's view on education, if this program backfires on Kansas taxpayers- we will be the ones footing the bill.

In closing, I am asking you to vote no on bill SB 87.



Amanda Richmond,

Parent in Roeland Park, KS

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Stefanie Ritter

TITLE: Kansas parent and public school educator

EMAIL ADDRESS: 704 N 2nd St. Lansing, KS 66043

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: written

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

I am a parent of children who attend public schools in Kansas. I am also a kindergarten teacher in the public schools in Kansas. Public schools are already underfunded and more money should not be siphoned away from them. What other profession do you have to buy your own supplies in order to make it function well? Teachers are constantly buying things, with their pathetic salary amount, to make improvements in the classroom so our students can thrive. We buy paper, supplementary materials, books, office supplies, playground equipment, snacks for hungry students, supplies when students don't have them, etc.

The legislation shouldn't be diverting public dollars to fund private schools when special education is underfunded. Private schools reject children on whatever basis they like, that includes students with special needs.

Public school takes all children because we believe that all children have a fundamental right to education. Our job to educate only becomes harder when you take our funding and hand it to private schools. We still get the same amount of children. We just have to teach them with less funding to provide materials and access to quality teachers since we don't have the funding to hire more educators.

For my own children, public school has helped immensely. My son is thriving and he would not be without the teachers, public school psychologist, public school social worker, and public school counselors. Private school would never have accepted my son because, on the surface, he appears to be a difficult student. He is not, he just had different needs and without the

incredible educators in the public school system he would not have found his place or his talents in the sciences. If special education were fully funded, he would not have had to go seven years before receiving the proper placement and would have been far more successful in early elementary. He is now showing amazing growth in education in the gifted programs. Imagine what he could become if that was funded properly. If you take more money away, we may never know.

I am asking you to vote NO on SB 87

Stefanie Ritter

Kansas parent and public school educator

Lansing resident, Basehor teacher

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education

Bernadette Roche

Parent of three in USD 232; Teacher in USD 512

berniemgr@hotmail.com

Opponent

Written Testimony

March 7, 2025

Chair Estes & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 87.

I have a unique perspective on this bill. My three children attended private school for eight years. They attended public school until graduation. Two have graduated USD 232 and attend public universities. One is a current sophomore in USD 232. In addition to being a parent of students in both private and public schools, I am a proud educator who has taught in both private and public schools for almost 30 years. While our entire family benefited from private school, it was truly our public school experiences that have created the current voters and citizens that we are.

I strongly oppose this bill and voucher programs in general (tax credit, voucher, school choice, etc). Public schools are unique in that they are tasked with teaching ALL children, without picking and choosing who they educate. It has been a privilege to teach a variety of students and my own children benefited from learning alongside these differences. I have directly experienced a private school twice refusing to service one of my students due to his disability. It is fiscally irresponsible to reduce state revenues to funnel money to private schools. Instead, the state legislature should use these tax dollars to fully fund special education which is currently underfunded by \$173 million.

My opposition is strongly rooted in the lack of accountability and oversight of vouchers, tax credits, school choice, etc.. I have seen first-hand and my children experienced the lack of accountability, lack of curriculum, lack of assessment that is the norm in private schools.. In eight years, there was no way for me as a parent to identify growth in my children nor transparency on how my tuition dollars were spent. This bill in particular has no oversight for taxpayers to understand how our dollars are being spent and whether children's lives are

improved. There are no controls in place to ensure that children are receiving a quality education. Kansas taxpayers deserve more.

In closing, please vote no on bill SB 87.

Thank you,
Bernadette Roche
Shawnee, KS

Christine Sankoorikal

Kansas citizen; parent of child with IEP

Email: csankoorikal@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: written only

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87. There are many, many issues with diverting tax dollars away from public schools to private schools, but I will begin with what I believe to be the most egregious.

1. This bill will ultimately benefit only those that already attend private school.
 - a. I live in a wealthy suburb of Johnson County. I know people that attend both private and public schools. I have not met a single person that supports this, and that includes those that attend private schools. They can afford this; it was their choice. This bill is a blatant attempt to divert tax dollars to the people that need it least and have frankly said as such.
 - b. It is unrealistic to assume that those who desire to attend public school but cannot afford it will benefit in any way. Private school does not all cost the same, and even with a tax break could not afford the additional thousands it would cost to attend. There may be some private schools where the tax break would equal the tuition spent, but that doesn't matter to families that do not have that money up front to pay these schools. Also, I can assure you that the private schools in Johnson County cost far, far more than the amount being offered. Little to no new lower-income students will be attending these schools.
 - c. Private schools have zero incentive to not simply raise the cost of tuition to keep their current students and keep out those that could only afford the cost because of this bill. This is not "school choice" in any way, shape, or form.
2. This bill diverts tax dollars that could be used to support special education.
 - a. I have personal experience with having a child with an IEP, and the special education services were critical to her successes. While I could afford private therapy, the cost was over \$1000/month before she qualified through the school district. It goes without saying—though I will go ahead and say it so that you cannot pretend to misunderstand—I am fortunate. Most people I know could not afford this kind of expense added to their monthly bills. Many Kansas children will fall behind without appropriate funding. If I may speak directly to the representatives from rural districts now: These are the children of your voters. The public school system may be the only access they have to such

services. After all the publicity surrounding the attempted dismantling of the federal Department of Education, is this really your hill to die on? I would suggest that the political repercussions will be greater than you think.

- b. I have a friend with a child with Trisomy 13 (Down's Syndrome). The private school they had enrolled their older children in could not handle the therapy she required, so they moved houses in order to enroll their daughter in public school. They had the opportunity and money to do this for their child. Many Kansans do not. Private schools will not begin providing these services; they will simply continue to exclude those that do not meet their criteria.

Vote no on SB 87, if not to actually do good for your constituents, then for your own political aspirations. This will only shutter rural public schools, decimate special education access to those that need it, and enrich the Johnson County elite, who did not ask for this.

Christine Sankoorikal
Leawood, KS

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Meaghan Schaible

TITLE: Mother, life-long Kansan, graduate of Shawnee Mission East

EMAIL ADDRESS: meaghan54@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: written only testimony

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

My name is Meaghan Schaible, and I am a mother of two children who currently attend public schools in Johnson County. As a lifelong Kansan, I have a deep appreciation for our public school system. My children go to the same school that I did, and my mother before me. **For generations, our family has experienced firsthand the value that strong public schools bring to our community — not only in providing a quality education but also in serving as a cornerstone for a vibrant and equitable society.**

Just last night, I attended my children's open house at their school. I walked through the halls and saw their beautiful artwork displayed with pride, heard their sweet voices singing, and witnessed the dedication of their teachers. It was a vivid reminder of how hard these educators work to ensure that every child has what they need to succeed — and they do it with extremely limited resources. One moment in particular stood out to me: I had brought a set of educational tools to give to one of the teachers, thinking they might be helpful for the classroom. Her immediate response was to offer to pay me back, and I knew that money would come straight out of her own pocket. Our schools receive such limited resources, yet continually go above and beyond for our kids.

This is why I strongly oppose the expansion of the Tax Credit Scholarship program. **The state is already failing to fully fund public education with the essential resources needed for at-risk students and special education.** Diverting even more money away from our public schools to subsidize private institutions that lack oversight is both irresponsible and unjust. Our kids and teachers deserve better.

SB 87, in essence, serves as welfare for the wealthy. It allows donors — often those with significant means — to avoid paying their fair share of taxes, shifting the financial burden onto everyday Kansans. Public tax dollars belong in public schools that accept and educate all children, not in private institutions that can discriminate in admissions and operate without transparency. It is alarming that this bill would expand a program that already lacks accountability, leaving Kansans uninformed about whether their tax dollars are truly benefiting students. **Kansans deserve better oversight and accountability for how our tax dollars are spent.**

Our elected officials have a responsibility to Kansas to fully fund public education and ensure that every child has the resources they need to thrive. Public schools are the backbone of our communities, and they cannot continue to bear the weight of educating all children without adequate funding. **I urge you**

to reject this bill and, instead, focus on fully funding special education and strengthening our public schools, which serve every child in our state.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Meaghan Schaible
8908 W 72ns Street
Merriam, KS 66204

Name: Debra J. Schneider

Title: Kansas Citizen, taxpayer and educator

Email: debschneider49@gmail. Om

Bill Number: Bill SB 87

OPPOSE

Written Testimony

Date of Hearing: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87. To divert public tax dollars to private school vouchers is to me, a crime. Especially since public school special education continues to be underfunded by the legislature. As a taxpayer and a former KS public school family, I want my tax dollars to go to the local schools. Private school tuition should be paid in full by the families who choose to send their children to them.

Please vote NO on bill SM 87

Debra J. Schneider

Prairie Village, KS

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 87
House Education Committee
March 10, 2025
Heather Schroer
Parent in Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Estes & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 87.

I am writing to encourage you to vote no on bill SB 87. This and its associated vouchers will divert much needed funds from public education in Kansas, which serves to educate the vast majority of children in our state. Our state's legislature should not be focused on spending money toward private schooling when our public school's special education is underfunded.

If this bill were to pass, it would be another blow to public education in Kansas, particularly special education, which has not been fully funded by the state in my adulthood. As a parent and educator myself, I see firsthand how the lack of funding has required public school districts to take money from general funds which would benefit all students, to supplement the missing funds in order to provide the legally required services and supports for students with disabilities. It is irresponsible to deepen this gap while providing a blanket tax credit to families who have privately chosen to send their children to another non-public education setting.

Private schools may choose who to accept, and in doing so, many deny admission to students with disabilities, those who live in poverty, or who speak English as a second language. While this bill may have intended to provide opportunities for students who may have financial barriers in attending a private school, expanding the scholarship eligibility to include students whose families are well above the Federal Poverty Level will only harm the students this bill was intended to help. By including reimbursement and tax credit for donors, this serves as nothing but a tax break for the wealthy.

In summary, I ask you to vote no on bill SB 87. It is fiscally irresponsible, intentionally vague, and will only further harm our public education system in Kansas, including special education. Thank you for this opportunity.

Heather Schroer

SB 87 Written-Only Opposition Testimony

My name is Carrie Schuenemeyer, and I am a former public school educator. I also have a second grader in the public school system who relies on an IEP and special education services—services he would not receive in a private school setting. I strongly oppose SB 87 and any expansion of the Tax Credit Scholarship program, as it diverts critical public funds away from the schools that serve all children and funnels them into private institutions that are not held to the same standards of oversight, accountability, and inclusivity.

Public tax dollars should remain with public schools, which are committed to educating every child, regardless of ability, income level, or background. Expanding this program would further deplete resources that could otherwise be used to strengthen our public schools, including fully funding special education. Rather than subsidizing private choices, Kansas lawmakers should prioritize ensuring all public school students have access to the services and support services they need to succeed.

Furthermore, this bill allows for tax avoidance, particularly benefiting wealthy donors while reducing state revenues that should be invested in education for all. The Tax Credit Scholarship program is, in effect, welfare for the wealthy, enabling them to redirect public tax dollars to private institutions with no obligation to serve all children. Unlike public schools, private schools can—and do—discriminate in admissions, choosing only the students they wish to enroll. The expansion of this program only increases the likelihood that the most vulnerable, at-risk students will be left behind.

Additionally, rural communities and students are disproportionately harmed by voucher programs like this one. While urban families may have access to private school options, rural students typically do not, meaning their public schools will face funding cuts without any viable alternatives. As a result, taxpayers in rural areas will be forced to subsidize private education for families in metro areas like Johnson County, Wichita, and Topeka while their own public schools suffer.

Kansans expect transparency and accountability when it comes to our tax dollars. This bill fails to provide either. There are no safeguards ensuring that at-risk students actually benefit from these scholarships, nor any mechanisms to hold private schools accountable for the quality of education they provide. Public money should be used to support public schools—schools that are committed to serving every student and strengthening our communities.

I urge you to oppose SB 87 and instead focus on fully funding special education, keeping our schools public, and ensuring that Kansas public schools have the resources they need to serve all children.

Respectfully,
Carrie Schuenemeyer
Leawood, KS

NAME: DeAnna Schulz

TITLE: Kansas Citizen

EMAIL ADDRESS: deannaschulz22@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill S.B 87

PROPOSER, OPPOSER, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN TESTIMONY: Written Only

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Erickson & Members of the Committee,,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number S.B 87.

As the daughter of two lifetime Kansas public school educators I was raised to understand the importance of strong public schools. This bill will take more money away from public schools, something that hurts teachers, students, and our communities overall. One of the items I found most alarming about this bill is the tax credit for donors. Incentivizing wealthy citizens or corporations is the wrong way to support our state and public school students. I was also surprised to learn that 60 of the 105 counties in Kansas don't have private school options for students. This sure looks like a bill that isn't at all applicable to over half our counties.

Our schools are already struggling to support teachers, programs and students. Taking money away from them is not the answer.

In closing I ask that you vote no on S.B 87.

DeAnna Schulz

Lenexa, KS

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Hannah Schumacher

TITLE: Kansas Parent, Former Educator

EMAIL ADDRESS: hrschumacher@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only Testimony

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

As a parent of students in eleventh, seventh and fifth grades in Topeka Public Schools I understand the importance of public schools and their vital roles in our communities and the need for them to be fully funded. Public tax dollars should stay with public schools that accept and educate all students and are accountable to taxpayers. This bill would reduce the state general fund by allowing “Donors” to avoid taxes through reimbursement of up to 75% on donations to the Tax Credit Scholarship program that already exists in Kansas. This bill aims to take public money and divert it to private and oftentimes religious schools who can choose who they admit. This essentially negates the option for choice for families. Public tax dollars shouldn’t go to private institutions or homeschools where oversight is lacking and taxpayers can’t see the effectiveness of the education those institutions are providing to a small portion of Kansas students. Instead of using tax dollars to provide reimbursement via tax credits to “Donors,” we should be using those dollars to fully fund our currently underfunded special education programs.

I urge you to vote no on HB 87 and keep public tax dollars in public schools where all Kansas students are accepted and educated.

Hannah Schumacher

Kansas Parent and former Educator

Topeka

Testimony to the House Committee on Education
Emily Meissen-Sebelius
Parent, Shawnee Mission School District
emsebelius@gmail.com
Bill SB 87
Opponent
Written Only Testimony
March 10th, 2025

Dear Chair Estes and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 87. I am a parent with three children attending Kansas public schools. I believe public schools benefit the entire community and state, they provide opportunities for ALL children, they have layers of public oversight, and are uniquely qualified to receive public support for these reasons.

As a parent, I strongly believe that public schools are the bedrock of our communities, in our rural, suburban and urban areas of the state. As a family, we chose to live in Kansas, and Johnson County, specifically because of the high-quality public schools. Strong public schools attract quality businesses and employers, as well as create a robust future workforce for our state.

Very importantly, public schools provide opportunity to ALL children, regardless of income, religion, academic needs or abilities. I believe that **public funds** should be reserved for **public schools** only, specifically because of their very unique accountability and mission to serve ALL children. Public schools cannot deny admission and diverting public funds to private schools that can set limits on whom they serve, is unfair and a poor use of our public dollars. We **should not be expanding a program like this that already provides tax payer dollars to private schools which are allowed to discriminate in admissions**. I am also concerned with using public funds for private schools that do not have the same accountability and oversight as our public schools, creating a system vulnerable to **fraud and abuse of our tax payer dollars**.

As a family, we have had **very** positive experiences with our public schools, and I think it is incredibly important to keep public funding with these institutions to continue to improve and build upon them, making them even better for all in the community who would like to and/or need to access public education. Our teachers and staff are professional, caring and incredibly competent. We should be **fully funding special education** and creating innovative opportunities to attract and retain teachers. The legislature should be doing **EVERYTHING** within its power to support our public schools, teachers and students, and in turn our state economy. Bills like SB 87 do just the opposite. I'd urge you to keep public funds tied to public schools and vote in opposition of SB 87.

Thank you for your consideration, and sincere thank you for your service to our great state.

Emily Meissen-Sebelius
Parent of a Kindergartener, 3rd grader and 7th grader in Shawnee Mission School District
Prairie Village Ks.

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Linda Seiner

TITLE: Concerned Citizen and Grandparent

EMAIL ADDRESS: lseiner@kc.rr.com

BILL NUMBER: SB Bill 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only Testimony

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

Far too long our public schools in Kansas have been starved of adequate resources to provide educational opportunities for all Kansas students, particularly special needs students.

I do not want more of my tax dollars to be diverted to private schools when public schools remain underfunded and private schools are not required to offer education to special needs children or in some instances have no oversight as to standards and outcomes.

I believe ALL children deserve a solid education to prepare them for future career opportunities and participants in our society.

I see public education dollars as an investment in our community and country. An educated citizenry should not be the privilege of the wealthiest members of our state or country.

I am opposed to expanding the Tax Credit Scholarship program that will further drain funding that could be used to improve public education to include special education. I see this mechanism as nothing more than, welfare for the wealthy. Rural taxpayers will

end up subsidizing private schools in urban areas while their children's schools are deprived of fewer funds.

My children and grandchildren benefitted by opportunities provided by public education institutions. My grandchild benefitted from special services provided by his school to help him overcome speech and reading challenges and laid the foundation for his graduation from college.

All children deserve the right for an excellent public education!

I am asking you to vote no on SB 87.

Linda Seiner
Concerned Citizen and Grandparent

Leawood

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Stacy Shaw

TITLE: Public and Catholic School Parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: sp5moreano@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

I currently have, and have had kids attending both public and private (Catholic) schools in Kansas. As a parent, former teacher and current substitute teacher, I understand the value of strong public schools which educate and build strong communities. Our strong, award winning public schools are the primary reason families move to Kansas over our neighboring states. By diverting money out of our public schools and putting them at risk, this bill does the opposite.

Please vote no on bill SB 87

Stacy Shaw

Parent of Public and Private school children

Previous Teacher

Current Substitute Teacher

Fairway, KS

NAME: Sandra Sherry
TITLE: Parent
EMAIL ADDRESS: bsherry1030@gmail.com
BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87
PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent
ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written
DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87. Here are some of the reasons why I oppose this bill:

- I believe public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers.
- Education Tax Credits that could otherwise be used to improve public education divert funds to subsidize the private choices of some parents, thus having the same negative impact as a voucher program.
- Our tax dollars should not go to private and homeschools that lack oversight, leaving the public uninformed as to whether or not our tax dollars are really being spent to improve the lives of children.
- The legislature shouldn't be diverting public dollars to private schools when special education is underfunded.

As the parent of two children who have benefited from public schools in Kansas, I feel strongly that public tax dollars should only be used for public education that is available to all children.

Please vote no on SB 87.

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Anna Custer-Singh and Abhi Singh

TITLE: Citizens, taxpayers, Blue Valley public school parents

EMAIL ADDRESS: annacustersingh@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87 / HB 2136 and HB 2156

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: written

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87/ HB 2136 as well as HB 2156 in regards to tax credits for private schools. I object to these schemes for two reasons:

- 1) We have separation of church and state in this country. These bills violate that constitutional tenet.
- 2) These bills lead to lost state revenue, while lawmakers say they can't fund their current public school special education responsibilities and more.

Folks who choose to send their children to private schools are free to do so. They should not be entitled to a state tax break if they choose to do so.

SB87 notes a potential \$15m impact to the state's general revenue for FY2025 and scaling up after that. HB 2156 will result in \$125 million less in the state coffers in FY2025 and scaling up in subsequent years.

How about not giving away additional money until we can fund our current needs?

Our public school students with special education needs are supposed to be funded at \$72.6m this year to cover excess costs of providing these services and to meet the State's legal mandate at 92% in four years.

Instead, House lawmakers are shirking their responsibility again this year. Embarrassingly, only \$30m was even offered in the initial House appropriations bill, and then the "pro public education" lawmakers sliced that pittance directly to \$10m out of committee.

We moved to this district due to the strength of our public schools. Yet every year, we have to fight for these dollars. It doesn't make sense.

I urge you to vote "no" on these dangerous bills.

Your constituent, a taxpayer who votes, a parent of a BVM student with dyslexia/dysgraphia,

Anna Custer-Singh and Abhi Singh
Overland Park, KS

Testimony to the House Education Committee

NAME: Kristen Sittig

TITLE: private citizen

EMAIL ADDRESS: Kristen.sittig@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written only testimony

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

First and foremost, public dollars should stay with public schools. Public schools have a duty to educate all students, while private schools can pick and choose who they admit. Private schools are not required to educate students with disabilities, behavior challenges, or students who underperform academically. Private schools may not even exist in rural areas of our state, meaning that this program benefits primarily those in urban areas. Private schools are not subject to oversight or accountability in how funds are spent, and may be unaccredited with uncertified teachers. Diverting public money to private schools reduces the overall quality of education that students receive in our state. A well-educated populace is crucial to maintaining our society and our democracy, and every dollar invested in public education benefits Kansas as a whole.

Rather than diverting public money to private pockets, where there is no public oversight or accountability, our state legislature should focus on fully funding special education, and on strengthening our public schools, which educate around 90% of all children in Kansas.

Please vote no on bill SB 87.

Kristen Sittig

Kansas City

As a dedicated public school teacher,
I have witnessed firsthand the
invaluable role our public schools
play in fostering an educated
Society + strengthening our communities.

I strongly oppose SB 87 because it
diverts much-needed public funds away
from the schools that serve all
children, instead subsidizing private
institutions that lack transparency
and can discriminate in admissions.

Expanding the tax credit scholarship
program allows wealthy donors to avoid
paying their fair share of taxes while
drawing resources that should be used
to fully fund special education and improve
public schools for every child.

Public tax dollars should remain in public
schools, where there is oversight, account-
ability, and a commitment to educating
all students, regardless of background or ability.

Furthermore, rural communities, where private school options are scarce or nonexistent, are particularly harmed by voucher programs that primarily benefit wealthier urban areas.

Rather than weakening our public schools, lawmakers should focus on equitable funding that ensures every Kansas student receives a quality education.

Thank You,

Claire Sizemore

Kansas City

Shawnee Mission, KS

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Adam Christopher Smith

TITLE: Partner, KPMG LLP | Kansas Citizen | Parent of 3 children

EMAIL ADDRESS: adam.smith.c@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

I am a parent of three children who attend Briarwood Elementary School in the Shawnee Mission school district. I personally attended Olathe schools throughout my entire K-12 education, and my wife attended Shawnee Mission schools throughout her entire K-12 education. My wife and I each attended Kansas State University, and transitioned from the Kansas public education system into highly successful careers which has enabled us to actively contribute to our local communities in several ways. I have been fully employed at KPMG LLP (a national public accounting firm) since January 2009 and became a partner in October 2022, while my wife began her career as an elementary school teacher at Corinth Elementary. We both serve on boards of various non-profit organizations, and actively seek philanthropic opportunities within our community and nationally. I would consider the above to be significant achievements for anyone raised in the state of Kansas (or any other state), which I believe is a testament to the quality of educational opportunities and experiences afforded to us under the Kansas public education system. As such, my wife and I understand the value of our public schools to an educated society and to the vitality of our communities.

We value public schools not only for the education provided to our children, but also for the sense of community, belonging, and togetherness. Often, our kids (starting in Kindergarten) play organized sports together, attend community events together, help others in need, and take care of each other outside of our schools – these inclusive relationships and the community that evolves from the public education system is critical to an educated society and to the vitality of our communities.

We oppose bill number SB 87, and voucher programs in general, for several reasons. These include:

- Funding inequities associated with voucher programs: Vouchers will divert public funding from public schools, which can worsen funding disparities between wealthy and underfunded districts.
- Increased Segregation: Vouchers may exacerbate racial, economic, and social segregation. Wealthier families are more likely to use vouchers to attend private schools, while low-income students may

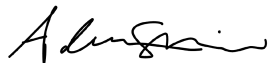
remain in underfunded public schools. This can perpetuate existing inequalities and limit access to quality education for disadvantaged groups.

- Lack of accountability: Private schools that accept vouchers often lack the same oversight and accountability as public schools. These schools may not be required to meet state standards for curriculum, teacher qualifications, or testing, leading to inconsistent educational quality and undermining the purpose of universal education standards.
- Religious Concerns: Many private schools that accept vouchers are religiously affiliated. This may violate the well-established principle of separation of church and state, as public funds could be used for religious education, potentially infringing on parents' rights to choose secular education for their children.
- Limited choice for low-income families: Vouchers are not expected to provide meaningful options for low-income families. Private schools may still be too expensive even with a voucher, or they may not be geographically accessible. Additionally, private schools may have selective admissions processes, leaving out students with special needs or those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Impact on Public Schools: Vouchers may cause the most motivated and resourceful students to leave public schools, making it harder for those left behind. This can further demoralize public school teachers and reduce the overall quality of public education.

We believe that while voucher programs are touted as “school of choice,” these types of programs merely exacerbate societal inequalities and undermine the public education system. Further, we believe these types of programs are unnecessary for high net wealth individuals who can otherwise afford a “school of choice” – by enacting such a program, it merely takes away opportunities from lower-wealth / low-income families to achieve successes such as ours via public education. This program allows for tax avoidance, especially for wealthy donors. The Tax Credit Scholarship program, like most voucher programs, is welfare for the wealthy. Instead of providing tax credits to fund private schools, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education

Rather than instituting a voucher program (which will divert even more funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education, to subsidize the private choices of some parents and allow donors to avoid paying taxes in Kansas), as noted above, we encourage you to focus on fully funding special education.

In closing, we respectfully ask you to vote no on bill SB 87.



Adam Christopher Smith

Partner, KPMG LLP | Kansas Citizen | Parent of 3 children

Prairie Village, KS

I am a parent to children in the Shawnee Mission School District and also have friends/family who work for our public schools.

Our tax dollars should be staying with our public schools and not be funneled to private schools. This is no longer about giving low income families a choice to attend private schools. Other states with voucher programs have shown that the majority of families who are using these vouchers were not even attending public school to begin with. This is literally taking money from the poor and giving it to the wealthy. This will hurt our rural communities the most as funding would be taken away from their public schools, when many rural towns do not even have a private school option.

Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and provide oversight for our tax dollars. Instead of providing tax credits to fund private schools, we should be using our tax dollars to fully fund special education.

Thank you
Erin Smith
Prairie Village, 66208

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Jamie Smith

TITLE: Educator | Kansas Citizen | Parent of 3 children

EMAIL ADDRESS: jamie3smith@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

I am a parent of three children who attend Briarwood Elementary School in the Shawnee Mission school district. I personally attended Shawnee Mission public schools throughout my entire K-12 education, and my husband attended Olathe public schools throughout his entire K-12 education. My husband and I each attended Kansas State University, and transitioned from the Kansas public education system into highly successful careers which has enabled us to actively contribute to our local communities in several ways. I have been employed by public schools my entire career, from when I started out as a teacher's assistant in high school to earning my masters and moving on to teaching elementary school. My husband and I serve on boards of various non-profit organizations, and actively seek philanthropic opportunities within our community and nationally. I would consider the above to be significant achievements for anyone raised in the state of Kansas (or any other state), which I believe is a testament to the quality of educational opportunities and experiences afforded to us under the Kansas public education system. As such, my husband and I understand the value of our public schools to an educated society and to the vitality of our communities.

I value public schools not only for the education provided to our children, but also for the sense of community, belonging, and togetherness. Often, our kids (starting in Kindergarten) play organized sports together, attend community events together, help others in need, and take care of each other outside of our schools – these inclusive relationships and the community that evolves from the public education system is critical to an educated society and to the vitality of our communities.

I oppose bill number SB 87, and voucher programs in general, for several reasons. These include:

- Funding inequities associated with voucher programs:

Vouchers will divert public funding from public schools, which can worsen funding disparities between wealthy and underfunded districts.

- Lack of accountability:

Private schools that accept vouchers often lack the same oversight and accountability as public schools. These schools may not be required to meet state standards for curriculum, teacher qualifications, or testing, leading to inconsistent educational quality and undermining the purpose of universal education standards.

- Religious Concerns:

Many private schools that accept vouchers are religiously affiliated. This may violate the well-established principle of separation of church and state, as public funds could be used for religious education, potentially infringing on parents' rights to choose secular education for their children.

- Limited choice for low-income families:

Vouchers are not expected to provide meaningful options for low-income families. Private schools may still be too expensive even with a voucher, or they may not be geographically accessible. Additionally, private schools may have selective admissions processes, leaving out students with special needs or those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- Impact on Public Schools:

As a public school educator, I have seen first hand how decreased funding negatively affects teachers and students. Decreased funding leads to larger class sizes, decreased resources, overworked educators, and buildings and materials insufficient to meet the needs of the students they are supposed to be serving. This is unacceptable for a state that values education.

I believe that while voucher programs are touted as “school of choice,” these types of programs merely exacerbate societal inequalities and undermine the public education system. Furthermore, I believe these types of programs are unnecessary for high net wealth individuals who can otherwise afford a “school of choice” – by enacting such a program, it merely takes away opportunities from lower-wealth / low-income families to achieve successes such as ours via public education. This program allows for tax avoidance, especially for wealthy donors. The Tax Credit Scholarship program, like most voucher programs, is welfare for the wealthy. Instead of providing tax credits to fund private schools, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education.

Rather than instituting a voucher program (which will divert even more funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education, to subsidize the private choices of some parents and allow donors to avoid paying taxes in Kansas), as noted above, we encourage you to focus on fully funding special education. These students’ needs can only be met in the public school setting. More often than not students who attend private school but qualify for special education are receiving resources funded by public schools. In closing, we respectfully ask you to vote no on bill SB 87.

Jamie Smith

Public Teacher, Student and Parent

Prairie Village, KS

March 7, 2025

Testimony to the House Education Committee

NAME: Joy Smith

TITLE: Parent of students in Shawnee Mission School District, PTA member

EMAIL ADDRESS: jlandgraf2@hotmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written-only

HEARING DATE: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 87.

I am a parent of two students who currently attend our local public elementary school. Our children have flourished in their school. Due to covid restrictions and the fact that I was undergoing treatment for cancer at the time, our daughter entered kindergarten in 2021 with very little preschool and we were concerned she would fall behind. Thanks to fantastic teachers and a supportive environment she has thrived both socially and academically. Our school community is so important to us and has offered great support to us over the years.

Protection of our funding for our public schools is paramount to preserve and maintain the safe and desirable communities that we want to have in Kansas. Public schools are the cornerstones of many communities, particularly those in rural areas, and tax credits of the nature of those proposed will only serve to erode our public education system and harm communities.

These tax credits ultimately divert tax dollars away from public education and result in less funding for things that have been proven to work to create strong schools, like investment in SPED. Our tax dollars should be used for public services and this bill could result in even more tax dollars being used to fund education with no oversight. Private schools may employ uncertified teachers and home schools have no curriculum requirements. I can't think of any greater disservice to our community, the state of Kansas, or our country as a whole, than passing a bill such as this which has the potential to further weaken the public school system.

There is no need for expansion of the current program as there are still hundreds of thousands of eligible students under the current guidelines. Expanding the program to students without income limits will only take spots from low income and/or at-risk students the program was intended to help.

I urge you to please vote NO on **SB 87**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Joy Smith

Overland Park, KS

NAME: Alex Sneegas

TITLE: Johnson County, Kansas Resident

EMAIL ADDRESS: asmarie1632@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: written

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Dear Members of the Committee

I am asking you to vote "No" on voucher bills SB 87. While I have no problem with private schools, public tax dollars should stay with public services. Diverting public tax dollars to private schools undercuts the state's ability to properly fund our public schools.

These programs are ripe for misuse and provide public tax dollars to private schools with no government oversight or accountability.

Furthermore, since these private schools are not required to accept students with disabilities or special needs, these vouchers are discriminatorily useless to high needs students. And since it looks like there is a proposed budget increase that insufficiently funds special education, special needs students will be slowly squeezed out of the Kansas school system. Also, not all families even have access to decent private schools or the ability to home-school. By focusing funding on vouchers and not expanding special needs, many Kansas voters will receive zero benefit from this. The only people who will see a benefit are those in large cities with multiple private schools, who can afford to pay partial tuition, and whose children do not have any special needs.

Furthermore, if a wealthy person wants to donate to a private school, that is their right. However, these are not the people that need extra tax deductions. Reducing the state's tax revenue because a wealthy person wants to donate to other wealthy people doesn't seem like a great strategy.

My child attends public school because I see the benefits of children attending schools with other community members with different viewpoints and physical/mental capabilities. Right now, our communities need less self-segmentation, and more exposure and involvement with their neighbors and communities.

Our tax dollars would be better served by fully funding public education programs which benefit ALL kids. Again, I ask that you vote NO on SB 87.

Please, keep Kansas as a great place for ALL families!

Alex Sneegas

Lenexa, KS

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Amanda Spell

TITLE: Kansas Citizen and Parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: mandaspell@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

I am a parent of two elementary-aged kids in the Wichita Public School district. I am a former substitute in this district. I am a daughter and granddaughter of WPS teachers. I know first-hand the needs of our public schools and the value they provide to our communities.

I oppose this bill and voucher programs in general. **Public funding should go to public schools.** Public schools accept and educate all children, while providing oversight for our tax dollars. This bill's original intent was to help low-income, at-risk students, yet this expansion continues to funnel money to private schools and give wealthy families, who for personal reasons opt for private schools, the benefits. While those financially stable families get to avoid taxes, low-income and rural families with little to no other options will end up subsidizing these families' private school tuitions. Additionally, private schools may choose who they accept or not, with no oversight or accountability. Private schools are not required to provide special education needs; whereas, our public schools do and in which they are not fully funded for.

I see the good our public schools do with their limited resources and support. The teachers and staff at our public schools go above and beyond, giving much of their own time and money to meet the needs of their jobs and students, often in buildings that other professionals would quite likely refuse to work in. So let's imagine together what our public schools and childrens' educations would look like if we fully funded our public schools — that's the incredible future Kansans deserve!

Not everything needs to be run as a for-profit business. Schools lift our communities. Education leads to stronger societies. That is the value of public schools, something from which everyone benefits. If our public schools were supported and fully funded, I doubt we'd have an exodus of people feeling the need to even consider private schools, which again are an option available in large to those with the financial means to afford, leaving behind so many others if this bill were to be passed.

Kansans at a bare minimum demand accountability for our tax dollars. We do not need this thinly-veiled Tax Credit Scholarship Program to provide welfare for the wealthy and to have no guarantees to see if our tax dollars are benefiting Kansas students as intended.

I close by asking you to vote **no** on bill SB 87.

Amanda Spell
Wichita

To: House Education Committee
Date: March 10, 2025
Bill number: SB 87

Dear Chair Estes and members of the committee,

I hope you understand the implications of the passage SB 87 to public education.

ALL students are guaranteed an education by the Constitution. The Supreme Court has already ruled that separate is not equal. Pulling funds from public schools to subsidize wealthy families who wish to send children to private schools violates that principle. Private schools have the right to refuse students deemed too difficult for them to manage. As a recently retired public school teacher, my career would have been much easier if I could have picked which students I wanted to teach. But as an American, I felt it was my patriotic duty to teach every student entrusted to me to the best of my ability.

As it was, I already spent much of my hard-earned money to buy supplies for my students. I fear that pulling even more funding from public schools will create an exodus of teachers who can no longer justify giving more of themselves and their own finances than is healthy or possible.

Where does that leave students with special needs who are not accepted in private school? What does this say about how Kansas treats our children from low-income families or with disabilities? How does this lack of respect to teachers encourage more people to choose a career in education when we're already facing a large shortage of teachers?

Please reject this bill in order to preserve and improve our excellent schools in Kansas.

Thank you.

Megan Spohrer
Republican
Bucyrus, KS

Michelle Sims

From: Dana Spoor <dlspeer@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 7, 2025 5:04 PM
To: House Education
Subject: Please vote NO on bill SB 87.

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Dana Spoor

TITLE: Kansas citizen and parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: dlspeer@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: written

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

March 7, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

I am a lifelong Kansan and a graduate of Kansas public schools. After graduating from the Shawnee Mission School District, I went on to earn my doctorate. I am the mother of three children who also attended public school and are now successful adults. I strongly believe in the value of public education.

Expanding the Tax Credit Scholarship program will harm Kansans. I oppose subsidizing the private choices of some and allow donors to avoid paying taxes in Kansas. Special education must be fully funded.

Please vote NO on bill SB 87.

Dr Dana Spoor
Olathe, Kansas
913-909-6998

Sent from my iPhone

NAME: Cate Stein
TITLE: Former Educator, Parent, Kansas Citizen
EMAIL ADDRESS: cate.stein1@gmail.com
BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87
PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent
ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written
DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Dear Chair Estes and Members of the Committee,

Please vote NO on voucher bills SB 87. Public tax dollars are meant for public goods like our public schools. These bills reduce the state general fund by diverting public tax dollars to private schools, undermining the state's ability to adequately fund our public schools. These programs lack oversight and provide public tax dollars to private schools that are allowed to discriminate in admissions.

As a mother of two young children, one just starting his journey in the public school world, this is more important to me than ever. Teachers make magic happen every day in the classroom. Every year they get less resources, less confidence, and more trouble thrown their way, but they still do it. They still love those kids and teach them to the best of their ability. This bill will fundamentally change Kansas public schools and not for the better. I encourage you to see for yourself by stepping into public school classrooms all over the state to see what they have going on. They are miracle workers.

As an educator in Kansas for over ten years, I noticed a tremendous amount of need for specialized programs as it is. If we take that funding away from public education, we are only making the problem worse. By making this divide between private/public education bigger—NO ONE WINS. Do what is right. If a family can afford private education, that is their own choice. If those private school students need extra supports for learning, you know where they go—the public school system. The public school system takes care of **ALL** students in Kansas. Too many kids will get more lost in the already fragile system of public education, our kids and their future do not deserve this. Public educators do everything in their power to help all students, but sometimes it just isn't enough. Don't make this problem even worse!! Please please please make the right choice.

Sincerely,
Cate Stein
Parent, Former Educator
Overland Park, Kansas

SB 87 Opposition Testimony
House Education Committee
March 7, 2025
Courtney Stemler courtney.stemler@gmail.com
Parent in USD 501, Topeka Public Schools

Chair Estes & members of the committee,

Thank you for your time. I am writing in regards to my opposition to bill SB 87, that provides school vouchers to those who send their children to non-public schools.

As a former public school teacher and parent of a child who attends a public school, I wholeheartedly believe in, have witnessed, and participated in the power of a quality public education. Every student is able to attend a public school to learn, be cared for, and learn from others, regardless of socio-economic status, background, parent education, special education needs, and location. Quality education is in part made possible by adequate funding, educated professionals, and a partnership between parents and teachers to help children succeed.

By funding non-public schools through the use of vouchers, that only makes some people able to participate in the program, thereby making this form of education only accessible to a few people. Not only would parents have to be able to pay for a private school themselves to begin with, in order to later receive the tax credit, but they would have to live in an area that has non-public school options or have parents that are able to stay home to educate their students. Rural areas often do not have private school options, especially secular private school options. This does not increase options for parents and students. It presents the same options to those that would already participate in non-public education, but they're being financially rewarded for sending their students to a private school.

I would ask that you vote against SB 87 in order to keep public funding in public schools that are accessible to all residents of Kansas.

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Leigh Stites

TITLE: Kansas citizen and parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: lstites@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 87.

First, let me present my credentials. Our three children attended public schools in Overland Park, Kansas. They were accepted into the colleges they selected and were able to pursue their chosen careers because of the excellent public education they received. They have become well-informed, involved citizens who are committed to their communities and have a deep appreciation for the opportunities they received through the public school system.

My oldest daughter was a volunteer at Blue Valley Northwest High School in the special education class, which inspired her higher education and career choices. She pointed out that instead of diverting more money to enrich private schools, the legislature should fully fund special education. I agree with her wholeheartedly. One of our neighbors who sends her children to private schools said she transferred her son to a public school so he could receive the special education services he badly needs, which are not available through private schools.

Public tax dollars should remain with public schools that accept and educate all children, uphold requirements for education, and operate under oversight for how tax dollars are spent. We should not be expanding a voucher program that already funnels too many tax payer dollars to private schools that are not held to the same standards, and can discriminate in admissions and enrollment. Let me give you an example: The child of a family friend was expelled from her private school when administrators learned she was "gay." She hadn't done anything to disrupt or create problems. She was a straight-A student. This is the kind of thing that would happen across our communities, particularly in religious schools funded by vouchers from tax payer dollars (taxes paid by gay people as well as straight people, I might add). It is blatantly un-American.

Expanding a voucher program is not going to help poor parents or rural families. In any private school admissions process, low income, at-risk kids lose out to higher income students. Rural areas in particular will be hard hit as public school resources are drained and are not replaced with qualified private options. Instead, rural taxpayers will end up subsidizing private school tuition for families in metro areas--especially in wealthier areas such as where I live, in Johnson

County. This would be a reversal of the more equitable process of distributing state funds for education.

Former Governor Brownback's disastrous tax breaks for the wealthy drained critical funding for our public schools. Expanding the Tax Credit Scholarship program to subsidize exclusive private schools while giving wealthy donors a tax break is another one of those thinly veiled efforts to enrich the rich at the expense of other taxpayers. All under the guise of choice, when in the end, Kansas communities will find fewer choices and more inequity.

Thank you for taking my input under consideration. I urge you to do what is in the best interests of our state and all our citizens. Fully fund public education, including special education. Do not support SB 87.

Leigh Stites
Blue Valley School District parent
Overland Park

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Katherine Stramel

TITLE: Kansas citizen and parent of four children

EMAIL ADDRESS: katherine.stramel@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

As a parent of four young children just now beginning their educational career in a public school, I am deeply concerned about how this money will be unfairly used against its original intent. Low-income students are already using this program and it is working effectively. If you expand the income brackets, fewer of those students who ACTUALLY need it will be able to receive the money. Every child deserves a chance for an education, regardless of income, and schools who would use this money would not have to allow them admittance if they didn't want to. Public education is the core to creating a better world full of bright and hard working citizens and taking money away from this area will only hurt our future. In addition, the committee should prioritize using funds to FULLY fund special education instead.

Please, for all of our Kansas children, vote no on bill SB 87.

Katherine Stramel
Overland Park

Testimony to the House Committee on Education**NAME:** Jennifer Strickland**TITLE:** DNP, Kansan, parent**EMAIL ADDRESS:** jennifer.a.strickland@gmail.com**BILL NUMBER:** Bill SB 87**PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL:** Opponent**ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY:** Written**DATE OF HEARING:** March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

As a Kansan, a parent and a primary care provider who cares for children, I oppose this bill. Shifting public education dollars to private schools deprives Kansas children of needed funding at public schools. Not only are private schools not required to meet the same standards as public schools and can refuse admission, if a child in a private school needs certain supports (speech therapy, special education, etc) they will often be referred back to the public school because the private school does not provide those services. I know this because it happened to my child. Parents who want their children to attend private schools should be free to choose, but they should not be able to pass the bill to the rest of us.

Public money from our taxes belongs to all of us, all of our children and should not be diverted to schools that only serve a select few. Free public education is the foundation of our society and school vouchers undermine it.

I appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to seeing you vote against SB 87.

Dr Jennifer Strickland, DNP

Lawrence KS

Testimony to the House Committee on Education
NAME: Katherine Swenson
TITLE: Retired Teacher
EMAIL ADDRESS: katherine.swenson.home@gmail.com
BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87
PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent
ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only
DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,
I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87.

This bill does not advance education in Kansas. In fact, it will harm it! Children come into public schools after a few years of unaccountable homeschooling. It takes so much effort and funds to catch them up!

Private and religious schools are for the rich. Vouchers have rarely helped low-income students. This bill is not a kind one – it is based on the rich wanting to get richer. It allows schools to discriminate. It allows them to select their students. I have seen applications for these schools, and they clearly claim the right to select their students.

We know that the original push for income tax credits, which are vouchers – came from the effort to keep segregated schools, as is the current push. Expanding eligibility to higher and higher levels of income clearly demonstrates the desire to discriminate.

Please vote no on bill SB 87.

Katherine Swenson
Retired Teacher
Manhattan, Kansas

Ronald Szymankowski
Kansas Citizen
ronaldszymankowski@gmail.com
Bill SB 87
Opponent
Written Testimony Only
March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87. Our tax dollars should not go to private schools that lack oversight, leaving the public uninformed as to whether or not our tax dollars are really being spent to improve the lives of children.

The Tax Credit Scholarship program primarily benefits financially those in urban areas of our state. Rural taxpayers will end up subsidizing private school tuition for families in metro areas such as Johnson County, Wichita, and Topeka.

Please vote NO on SB 87.

Ronald Szymankowski

Overland Park, Kansas

