

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Chad and Leah Taylor
Realtors (KW KC Metro); Parents of 2 Teenagers (14 & 17); 20+ Year Residents of
Prairie Village, KS

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75. It is a bit mind boggling to me how we are even entertaining this bill in the year of 2025. North-East Johnson County and Johnson County in general have long been known for outstanding schools, both public and private sector. It is one of the major attractions to investing in home values and communities in our area. This is an issue that we can not make a poor decision on, or even “try to see what will happen”. Too many residents and children are at risk.

As a Wyandotte Co native, I attended public school in WyCo until I graduated Sumner Academy. Living in that area and knowing that Sumner Academy was my only viable option for high school was nerve racking as a middle school child. If I didn’t get accepted into Sumner, I would have to look for alternative schools in my area and outside of it as well.

However, when my husband and I purchased our first home, we knew that we wanted to invest our money in an area that had strong schools all around and had excellent property values so our investment could grow. Knowing that my kids have fantastic options in both public and private school is of the utmost importance to us as parents. As active Realtors in this area (selling more than 60 homes a year in NE JoCo and the KC Metro area) we hear daily of how important it is to parents to be in an area that they feel like has the best options for their child when it comes to schooling and school choices. To see the home appreciation in the last 5 years and overall, in the last 50 years in Johnson Co is tremendous. Without strong schools of EVERY kind, we will not see strong home values and will not be able to collect the taxes these cities need to continue to keep Johnson Co the wonderful place it is to live. Giving additional tax credits and funding to the private sector only and taking away from our public school system will tremendously hurt both of school districts and the property values of the homes we own. The parks, community events, new developments, sports, and super active residents that we have now will no longer be if we only compensate for a certain type of person who sends their children to a certain type of school. It takes ALL of us to succeed as a community.

As your constituent in Ward 1 of Prairie Village, KS, I ask you to vote NO to Bill SB 75. Thank you for taking the time to read my written opposition to this bill.

Sincerely –
Leah and Chad Taylor

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Jessica Treadway

TITLE: Parent and former SPED teacher

EMAIL ADDRESS: jessica.harck@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

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. Our tax dollars should not be funding private education. Private schools lack that regulation and oversight of public schools. Unlike public schools, private schools can decide which students they want to educate.

Right now KS public schools are underfunded, specifically special education is underfunded by millions of dollars. As a former Early Childhood Special Education Teacher. I have first-hand experience with the consequences of insufficient funding. I spent my own money to make up for the lack materials. I saw support staff come and go because they weren't making a living wage. Teachers and staff cannot be at their best when our schools are not properly funded. These deficits in public education funding will never improve if we keep funneling money into private schools.

I am now the mother of a bright, inquisitive seven year old boy who also happens to have severe ADHD. My son's success in school is dependent on special education funding. He and many other students cannot be met by private schools.

Private schools are a choice. Parents that choose private over public are foregoing the option for a free education. The majority of Kansans choose public education and do not want their hard earned tax dollars funding private schools. In closing, I implore you to vote no on Bill SB 87. I thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,

Jessica Treadway

Former Special Education Teacher

Overland Park

Testimony to the House Committee on Education
March 7, 2025

Deborah Turner
Retired Elementary educator from Shawnee Mission School District

debtturner.ks@gmail.com

Bill SB 87

Written only Testimony, Opponent of SB 87

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

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

My family moved to Kansas in 1989 and both of my children experienced outstanding educational experiences in Kansas schools. I taught for 23 years in the Shawnee Mission School District.

As a retired Kansas, I recognize that even though I no longer have family members being educated here, there is value in having educated citizens. Therefore I oppose SB 87 which would expand the Tax Credit Scholarship. I respect the decision of families who choose to educate their children in private schools or homeschooling. However they should not receive money from the state revenue in order to achieve that. Perhaps those proposed funds could best be applied to the underfunded (since 2011) Special Education services. Private schools and homeschooled students can receive special education services-paid by Kansas tax dollars.

The Kansas Tax Credit Scholarship was originally to help at-risk (low income) students. There are still students under the current guidelines who qualify for the Tax Credit Scholarship program. SB 87 could actually divert funds from those students. The tax credit takes tax dollars away from the Kansas revenue and sends that money to private schools.

Public schools are responsible for the education of all students. Unlike private schools, they do not get to select their students. What accountability would be in place to ensure that Kansas educational standards are met at the private schools or in homeschooling situations.

Please confirm via email that this testimony has been received and added to the relevant conferee list.

Thank you for your work toward education in Kansas. Please vote no on SB 87.

Deborah Turner

Lenexa

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

Lisa Veglahn

Kansas voter and parent of two Kansas public school graduates

lveglahn@hotmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

Opponent

WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: [choose one]

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 graduate of KS public schools and so are my two children. We chose to raise our kids and buy a home here in large part because of the access to an excellent public school education.

Public tax dollars belong in public schools. Schools that welcome and accept and educate EVERY Kansan. We do not need to expand a program that already takes critical money away from public schools and gives them to private schools, who can choose which students they want to accept and which students they want to reject, many of whom will be students with special needs or learning disabilities.

PLEASE do the right thing for ALL Kansas children and families and VOTE NO on SB 87.

Thank you.

Lisa Veglahn

Prairie Village

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Joseph Vilain

TITLE: parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: joseph.vilain@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 grew up going to private school and I understand that this is a choice that some parents make. For whatever reason they choose to send their children to private school it is just that, a choice. I have 2 children in the public school system. I did not choose to send my children to private school for many reasons, but mostly because I believe in public school education and the opportunities that can be provided by a school system that is intended to work for every child.

It seems to me that by expanding the voucher program as proposed by this bill, it would be yet another way of removing funding from our already underfunded public school system, while at the same time creating tax loopholes for the wealthy and for corporations. This bill would remove tax revenue from the state and the education system, and undermine the purpose of the program, which is to fund education for the neediest students. This bill would divert necessary funding for special needs kids in public schools to private schools, where there is no oversight.

It should be abundantly clear that not everyone can afford private school or even have access to one. What we need are stronger public schools with more funding, not less, and public schools with the resources to be able to help everyone learn and grow safely. All Americans should want their children to grow up going to a school that has the resources to educate them, in a school system that supports all children. I don't believe anyone thinks that the public school system has too much money, or that teachers get paid too

much. Again, we need more funding, not less for the public school system. It should be a choice to send kids to private school, and that is a choice people should have, but not at the expense of public schools. We should not be hurting a system that provides for all, for one that provides for few. Private schools are discretionary and can choose to accept or reject students, which is their right as private institutions. This kind of situation could lead to all sorts of issues. Public schools provide for everyone and should continue to do so. If you are lucky enough to be able to afford private school, that's great, but it shouldn't be at the expense of public school and their funding.

Please vote no on bill SB 87. This money is meant for public school children, and the proposals for expanding it to private schools would be taking from disadvantaged and special needs children to give to some of the most privileged, while also creating a hefty cut in tax revenue and as it is written, to line the pockets of the wealthy.

Sincerely,

Joseph Vilain

Overland Park

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Katherine Vilain

TITLE: parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: krobertus@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.

Expanding the voucher program as proposed by this bill is just another way of creating tax loopholes for the wealthy and for corporations. This bill undermines the purpose of the program, which is to fund education for the neediest students. It diverts funding that is still inadequate for special needs kids in public schools to private schools, where there is no oversight.

Not everyone can afford private school. We need our public schools to be able to help everyone learn and grow safely. It's what Americans want. Please, no more handouts to the rich at the expense of the tax-paying public and at the expense of the children we as a society have agreed to support as members of our community and nation who will one day contribute to our society and economy. We want them to thrive.

Please vote no on bill SB 87. This money is meant for public school children, and the proposals for expanding it to private schools and for funding it are crafted to line the pockets of the wealthy.

Sincerely,

Kate Vilain

Overland Park, KS

Testimony to the House Committee on Education**NAME:** Michaela Votta**TITLE:** Parent of two boys with special needs**EMAIL ADDRESS:** Michaela_alonge@yahoo.com**BILL NUMBER:** Bill SB 87**PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL:** Opponent**DATE OF HEARING:** March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

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

Please help those that need help. When students leave public school for private institutions, (institutions that can pick and choose who can attend their schools, institutions that are not trained to support special needs children), it exacerbates existing issues in underfunded schools and leads to a cycle of decline. It hurts those that need the help and helps those that are already privileged.

School vouchers give children who are already blessed with perfect health, family support, and wealth another unneeded boost in life and leaves the most vulnerable children forgotten and abandoned – again.

Please help those that need the help. Please vote no on bill SB 87.

Kind Regards,



Michaela Votta

Mother and Shawnee, KS resident

February 27, 2025

Dear Members of the House Committee on Education,

I am writing to express my strong concerns about SB 87 and the impact it will have on public education in Kansas, particularly for students with special needs. As a nurse with nearly 20 years of experience in pediatric care and a parent of a child with special education needs, I see firsthand the critical role that public schools play in ensuring that **all students, regardless of ability, receive a quality education.**

My teenage son, Miles, has special learning needs and depends on the **special education services, trained staff, and structured support** provided by his public school. These programs ensure he has access to **individualized education plans (IEPs), therapy services, and the accommodations necessary for his success.** While I understand the desire for educational choice, SB 87 does not provide a fair or effective solution—it instead **diverts essential public school funding to private schools that are not required to provide special education services.**

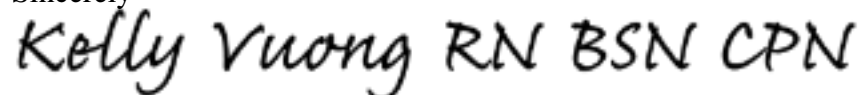
Unlike public schools, private schools accepting taxpayer-funded vouchers can **deny admission to students with disabilities, lack trained special education staff, and do not have the same accountability standards.** This leaves students like my son with fewer educational options while shifting critical resources away from the public schools that serve the majority of Kansas children.

Additionally, the increased tax credits for private scholarship donations further reduce the funding available for **public school improvements, teacher salaries, classroom resources, and special education programs.** Rather than expanding a voucher system that primarily benefits families who already have access to private education, Kansas should be investing in **stronger public schools, increased teacher retention, and more resources for students with learning challenges.**

I urge you to **oppose SB 87** and instead focus on policies that strengthen public schools for all students, especially those with unique learning needs. Please ensure that taxpayer dollars remain dedicated to the schools that **serve every child, regardless of income, background, or ability.**

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss this further and hear your position on this issue. Thank you for your time and dedication to Kansas education. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Vuong RN BSN CPN". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly Vuong RN BSN CPN
12819 Perry St.
Overland Park KS 66213

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Katherine Waechter

TITLE: Kansas Citizen, Johnson County Public School Parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: katherineclare84@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.

Diverting public dollars to private schools, when considering special and public education is already underfunded, is both shameful and a disservice to our youth.

Please, for the sake of educational advocacy, vote no on bill SB 87.

Katherine Waechter

Prairie Village, KS

SB 87 Opposition Testimony
House Education Committee
March 10, 2025
Glenna Walker glennaw81@outlook.com
Private Tax Paying Citizen, Dodge City KS

Chair Estes & members of the committee,

I am voicing my strong opposition to SB 87. Thank you for taking time to read this testimony.

I have no children in the educational system but strongly support public education and have never protested having my tax dollars used for public education. Every person benefits from an educated population and we will not have doctors, engineers, first responders or any people prepared to provide services or become self-supporting tax paying citizens in the future if we do not provide our children with a quality education. SB 87 diverts tax dollars from public education, and other general fund supported services, to reward parents for not sending their children to public schools. Parents would have the options, as they currently do, to send their children to private schools which lack oversight and are free to discriminate in admissions or to homeschool. Homeschooling in Kansas does not mandate any standardized testing, reporting of progress or minimum requirements for graduation. There is no oversight of homeschooling what so ever after initial private school registration. As I mentioned, these options are already available but if SB 87 passes, the state will now be paying parents to choose these options and using tax dollars to provide this financial incentive.

SB 87 authorizes a refundable tax credit of \$8,000.00 for an accredited private school and \$4,000.00 for a non-accredited or homeschool. This credit does not consider what tuition or expenses the parent is actually paying. There is only one accredited private school in my area, which is Sacred Heart Cathedral School, a Catholic school. I checked their tuition rates and it is currently \$2,535.75 per year for the first child of a parishioner and \$4,347.00 per year for the first child of a non-parishioner. Rates are less for additional children. Thus parents would receive more in nonrefundable tax credits than they spent. While other more populated areas may have more choices in private schools, this system obviously provides a benefit in our area that is only available to members of one religious group. Statewide, rural areas which lack private school opportunities would be subsidizing more urban areas. Also, Special Education in Kansas has been underfunded since 2011. Private schools are under no obligation to accept students with special needs so these students who need the most assistance will again receive the least.

Furthermore, although we would like to believe parents will act in the best interest of their children, I have years of experience in law enforcement and working with children in the foster care system which has proven to me this is often not the case. Providing a financial incentive for people to not send their children to school with no requirement that the children actually receive an adequate education will only increase the number of future adults unable to succeed in the workforce.

This is a poorly thought out bill which is financially irresponsible, discriminatory and does not benefit our children.

NAME: Pamela Walters

EMAIL ADDRESS: Pam.duermeier@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. Currently have an Eleven year-old enrolled in public school in Overland Park, Kansas and I also have many friends and family who are teachers in Kansas. Our public tax dollars need to remain with these public schools, who provide an open education to all rather than being diverted to private schools that lack oversight and do not allow open attendance. Every child deserves a chance at an education and our public taxes should be helping with that rather than assisting the wealthy with tax avoidance. I would also like to bring attention to the fact that we should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education. As someone who highly values our community and my own education, I implore you to help your community constituents gain the education they deserve by voting NO on bill SB 87.

Pamela Walters

Overland Park, Kansas

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Christine Watkins

TITLE: Parent and former instructor

EMAIL ADDRESS: watkinscv@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

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. The Legislature shouldn't divert funds for public schools. Public schools were created for everyone's education. All education tax dollars should support them and not go to schools created for only a segment of the population.

Vote NO on SB Bill 87.

Christine Watkins
13000 Pennycross Rd
Lenexa, KS 66215

1702 Yucca Lane
Emporia, KS 66801
March 7, 2025

Representative Susan Estes, Chair
Kansas House Committee on Education
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Rep. Estes:

I am writing in opposition to Senate Bill 87 which increases the Tax Credit for Low Income Students Scholarship (TCLISS) to low income students attending private prekindergarten through 12th grade by expanding TCLISS' eligibility requirements and increasing the maximum cap of the state tax credit. According to the bill's fiscal note, "The Department [of Revenue] estimates the bill will reduce State General Fund revenues by \$2.5 million in FY 2027, \$5.6 million in FY 2028, \$9.5 million in FY 2029, and \$10.0 million in FY 2030," and that amount could be as high as \$20 million.

One cause for the bill's expense is expanding the definition of "low income" to include families with annual incomes less than or equal to 250% of the federal poverty level. For a family of six in 2025, this threshold is \$107,375. Is a child of this family reasonably considered "low income?" Another cause is increasing the cap on tax credits from \$10 million to \$15 million annually, and, if certain conditions are met, the cap could increase to \$25 million annually.

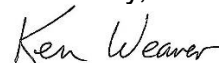
Senate Bill 87 allocates taxpayer dollars without accountability measures for ensuring that the learning of low income students at private schools who receive the TCLISS scholarship have significantly greater learning in their private school classrooms than if they had remained in a public classroom.

Private schools receiving the tax credit are **not** required to a) report student learning outcomes, b) administer and report standardized test results, c) be accredited by the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation, d) have academic achievement higher than the public school the student left, e) offer a standard curriculum, f) accept all who apply, and g) retain all they accept.

Public schools in contrast do all of these for all the children of Kansas. Public school accountability means that taxpayers know what the students are being taught, how well students are learning, and the efforts being implemented to continually improve their learning. There is no accountability in Senate Bill 87 for private schools to assure taxpayers that public funds are effectively increasing the learning of low income students receiving the TCLISS compared to the learning of low income students in the public schools.

Thank you to you and the other representatives on the House Committee on Education for your service to us Kansans.

Sincerely,



Ken Weaver

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Kelly Wells

TITLE: Kansas Citizen, University of Kansas graduate, Realtor, Parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: kellywells211@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.

My husband and I are both products of public education K-12 and have under graduate and graduate degrees from the University of Kansas. Today we are owners of three thriving businesses, two of which are brick and mortar and employ over 12 people. We are active in our school and church community and although we send our daughter to Catholic school for religious purposes we fully oppose SB 87. Similarly, I often use UPS instead of USPS and do not expect the government to reimburse me, it would be wrong to do so. Public education is a cornerstone of society and to the advancement of the state of Kansas.

Additionally, as a Real Estate professional in the Kansas City metro for over 15 years it is my testimony that a strong public

school system has major impacts on Real Estate and therefore the economy. The long established tradition of excellent schools in the state of Kansas has increased property values and the demand to live in the state.

I ask them to vote no on bill SB 87

Kelly Wells

Kansas Citizen, University of Kansas graduate, Realtor, Parent
Roeland Park, KS

**SB 87 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
Friday, March 7 2025**

Gretchen West - gretchenwest3@gmail.com

Parent to three children who have graduated from schools in
the Blue Valley school district

Dear Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

As a parent of three children who graduated from Blue Valley schools, I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 87. These BV schools were excellent and I thank the members of this committee and the Kansas Senate for the oversight and funding provided to them.

I feel that SB 87 would undermine our excellent public schools by diverting money that supports our schools to schools that parents have chosen for their children that offer no better education. These other schools may have been chosen for reasons other than quality education, ranging from violating the fundamental principle of religious freedom to claiming that school vouchers improve academic achievement which repeated studies have shown that in many cases they do not.

I encourage you again to vote no on SB 87. Public education is a system that serves 90% of American children. If people feel that these voucher schools are such an improvement over the existing program, remember that these voucher schools accept taxpayer dollars but still reject students with vouchers for a variety of reasons from disability to ability to pay. The legislature shouldn't be diverting public money to private schools when special education is underfunded.

Thank you,

Gretchen West

SB 87 Opposition Testimony

House Education Committee

February 07, 2025

Sierra Whitted, sierra.taul@gmail.com

Parent in Shawnee Mission school district, private citizen

Chair Estes & members of the committee,

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

I value public schools and the opportunities they provide all children, including my two sons. Our oldest loves his class and we have seen how well his reading, math skills, and confidence has blossomed while being part of the Shawnee Mission school district.

We should be focusing on improving our public education to provide that experience for all kids instead of using tax dollars to fund private institutions that could reject students and leave them with an underfunded public system. We could instead be using these funds to strengthen our special needs programs and appropriately compensating and attracting skilled teachers.

In addition, I feel more comfortable with my tax dollars going to public education where I know there is accountability and a standard of quality education.

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

Thank you,

Sierra Whitted

Shawnee, 66216

House Education Committee

March 10, 2025

SB 87

Dear Chair Estes and members of the committee,

I am a constituent, mother of three in Blue Valley Schools and a special education paraprofessional at Leawood Elementary. I urge you to vote no on voucher bills SB 87. Our tax dollars should be used to support our public schools that serve over 90% of Kansas kids.

The tax credit increase to 100% in SB 87 provides a lucrative tax avoidance scheme that is especially beneficial to corporations and wealthy donors with its contribution limit of \$500,000. Focus on fully funding special education versus diverting needed public tax dollars to private schools that lack oversight and are allowed to discriminate in admissions. These contributions can no longer be considered a charitable donation. Both of these programs incentivize tax avoidance which reduces state revenues available to fund our public schools.

Please vote no on these and any other voucher bills this session.

Thank you,

Allison Williams
Leawood, 66209

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education

NAME: Amanda Winch

TITLE: Parent, Lifelong Kansan

EMAIL ADDRESS: amanda.winch@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

Dear Chair Estes and members of the committee:

My name is Amanda Winch, and I am a lifelong Kansan with two children in public schools. My family chose to make our home in Johnson County because of its strong public school system, renowned for delivering high-quality education. Our oldest son depends on both an IEP and gifted services—critical support that ensures he receives the education he needs, just as it does for countless children across our state. I am writing today to strongly oppose SB 87, which would expand the Tax Credit Scholarship voucher program, diverting public tax dollars to private schools that lack oversight and can deny admission. This undermines our public schools, which are committed to providing a quality education to every child in Kansas, as is their right.

Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools—schools that accept and educate all children, including those with special needs, and are subject to oversight to ensure those funds are used appropriately. Expanding this program will only further divert taxpayer dollars to private schools that lack the same level of accountability and oversight, while being allowed to pick and choose which students they admit. At a time when special education is underfunded in our state, it is irresponsible to shift precious resources away from public schools that are already stretched thin. Our public schools, which serve every student, regardless of ability or background, are in desperate need of more funding to support children with disabilities, those who are English language learners, and other vulnerable populations. Diverting money to private institutions only exacerbates these funding gaps and harms the very students who need the most support. Please OPPOSE SB 87.

Amanda Winch
Overland Park, KS

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Julia Winegeart

TITLE: Kansas Citizen & mom

EMAIL ADDRESS: devjuliBILgmail.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.

This bill would turn the Kansas education system into a financial scheme for the wealthy and corporations at the expense of regular Kansas children. Raising the cap will funnel money away from public education, which supports rural schools and special education, so that wealthy donors can get tax credits.

A program that was intended to help students escape the poorest of schools will instead be used to make every school poor.

Every day Kansans would stand to lose a great deal. My own child, a student at wonderful public school, included.

Wealth disparity has never been like it is now. Working class Kansans are not blind. They can see they are being taken advantage of. When no one can afford their houses anymore but the rich don't have to pay the same taxes, and no one can afford medical care but the insurance CEOs are making billions. We see it.

Public education is one of the fundamental pillars of a society. It is the right of every child to be able to learn, and to receive the educational means to rise no matter the circumstances of their birth. And we see that the Kansas government has consistently failed to keep the schools fully funded. That special education, the care for our children most in need, has been neglected.

And we see you taking even more money out of our schools and giving it to the ultra wealthy and corporations.

If you are to be a government that protects and supports your citizens you must protect and support the care of ALL Kansas children. And that is the entire purpose of public education.

There is no reason to pass this bill. It does not benefit the original intended beneficiaries of the voucher program: the poorest students in the poorest schools. The proposed expansion does

not meaningfully help more students as it just expands the voucher program to students who had those options anyways.

The only one who stands to benefit from this bill are the ultra wealthy donors.

In closing I ask you to vote no on bill SB 87.

Julia Winegeart
Maize, KS 67101

Testimony to the House Education Committee
Mary Wise
carodywise@gmail.com
Bill SB87
Opponent
Written Only Testimony
March 10, 2025

Dear Chair Estes and members of the Committee:

As a Kansas citizen, I am writing to oppose SB87.

My husband and I raised two children who attended public schools in Johnson County.

Our son, Ben, has Down syndrome. His education prepared him to attend a vocational college where he attained a certificate in food science. He is now 44 and has worked part time for most of the years since he finished his program.

Sally, our daughter, works as an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse at the University of Kansas Hospital. Her years spent as a Kansas student in public school were part of a foundation that helped her attain her current position.

The Kansas legislature should not divert more of the State's general fund to private schools via vouchers, especially when special education has not been fully funded in nearly a decade and a half. As the parent of an adult son with a disability, and a Kansas resident for my entire life, I believe strongly in the right for all children of Kansas—neuro typical and neuro divergent both—to receive a quality education in Kansas' public schools.

Because SB87 would weaken the ability of Kansas to serve all students, I urge you to vote no on SB87.

Mary Wise
Kansas Resident

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Erin Woods

TITLE: private citizen

EMAIL ADDRESS: ewoods999@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: Bill SB 87

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Oral Testimony

DATE OF HEARING: March 10, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 87. My reasons are many and I hope you will take the time to consider each of them.

Focus on fully funding special education, not propping up private schools

As I've watched the House and Senate so far this session continually refuse to fully fund special education, I frankly find it hard to believe that the legislature would consider a bill that would reduce our state general fund by funneling money to private schools. Your constitutional duty is to make sure our public schools are adequately funded. Districts continue to have to move money from their operating budgets to cover the shortfall in special education. And let's not forget that our public schools are providing (and funding) special education services to private school students too. Fully funding special education helps all students.

Expansion continues to be unnecessary

The original intent of this program was to help low income (at-risk) kids attending the 100 lowest performing schools. Yet, with each expansion, more and more of the at-risk students get left behind as private schools have a bigger pool of students to choose from. The at-risk kids who would require more resources from private schools can be skipped over in favor of kids with fewer challenges.

There are more than 235,000 free and reduced lunch students eligible for the program and \$6 million in available scholarships. Please put your focus back on these students. Opening the program up to more students and allowing for an increase in the cap is not necessary.

Program lacks data and accountability

Any changes to the Tax Credit Scholarship program should include data collection and reporting requirements to increase accountability and transparency for Kansas tax dollars. Such as:

- Number of students who were eligible and applied for a scholarship vs. number of students utilizing a scholarship. We know private schools are allowed to deny admission for a host of reasons. Were some of these 235,000 at-risk students denied admission?
- Retention rates in the program by income level. Are at-risk students with more challenges returning to public school because they weren't finding success at a private school or because they were counseled out?
- Measures of success for students participating in the program by income level — standardized test scores, graduation rates, post-secondary success. Are we seeing the benefits from this

program that were promised? Are there some private schools with lower performance? Should they remain in the program?

Kansans expect their tax dollars to be used effectively. If our tax dollars are being diverted to a private entity, we should expect some oversight and transparency.

The tax credit is tax avoidance and benefits the wealthy & corporations

I understand the Senate amended the original bill to keep the tax credit at 75%, but I want to suggest that the House not attempt to change that to 100% or anything larger than 75%. This tax credit is already too lucrative. Kansans who make contributions to private schools should not receive preferential treatment over Kansans who donate to other charitable organizations. The current 75% tax credit (which was expanded from 70%) is lucrative enough. Considering the \$500,000 contribution limit (that can be carried forward to future years), the benefits to corporations and wealthy Kansans are immense and no expansion of the tax credit percentage should be considered, in fact I would request that it be lowered.

An increase would just incentivize more taxpayers to contribute to this program resulting in continued decreases to the state general fund that is used to fund our public schools and other public goods like our roads and bridges. All Kansans should be contributing to the good of our state.

Please vote no on SB 87

This bill is simply a voucher program in disguise and one that is more egregious than most. Not only does it divert public tax dollars to private schools via these lucrative tax credits, but the benefits to wealthy Kansans outweigh the benefits to the students this program was intended to support. Choosing to send your child to a private school shouldn't be subsidized by the state and choosing to donate to a private school should not be subsidized by the state in a manner that is more beneficial than other charitable donations.

Thank you,

Erin Woods
Leawood

Bill SB 87 Opposition Testimony, written Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education

February 5, 2025

From Cassandra Woolworth

306 N Pinon St, Olathe, KS 66061

CassieWoolworth@Gmail.com

Parent/Citizen in the Olathe School District 233

Chair Estes and & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number SB 87. Let me say again, I graduated from the Olathe Public School system; I had children graduate from the Olathe Public School System, and am planning on having grandkids go to the Olathe Public School System. I have seen the extensive data that shows Vouchers KILL public schools*. Public money should go to Public Schools. Period.

Public dollars spent need to be measured. All schools across Kansas should have the SAME standards – but not ‘no standards’ which are often at Voucher schools. 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.

No where can we say we ‘measure’ our spending on Vouchers – and WHY NOT? In my honest opinion, vouchers only serve to keep children OUT not include everyone. Voucher schools do not have the Special Education requirement that comes with public schools. You will do a disservice to all the IEP kids when you put public dollars towards PRIVATE schools. Private schools can choose to admit only the best and brightest students, leaving other children behind.

Should you decide to vote yes on vouchers, you will be killing western Kansas. There is no way we should put PUBLIC MONEY towards PRIVATE Schools. Public dollars should be used for Public Schools.

· Resource: <https://www.ksvt.org/updates/5-key-takeaways-from-the-states-with-vouchers#:~:text=Vouchers%20Do%20Not%20Lead%20to,results%20compared%20to%20their%20peers.>

Please confirm my testimony has been received and added to the relevant conferee list (written)

Appreciatively,

Cassie Woolworth

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Valerie Jeane Wright

TITLE: Nuclear Medicine Technologist

EMAIL ADDRESS: greycub67@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 have adult children that have grown up in the public school system and are now making their way into the world. They are doing very well and the education they have received would not have been possible without the funding that our public taxes provide. In my opinion, expanding the Tax Credit Scholarship program will divert even more funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education, just to subsidize the private choices of a small minority of parents and allow donors to avoid paying taxes in Kansas.

In addition to this, the needs of our special education students are vital to the overall well-being of our communities and this bill will prevent our special education population from being 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. Private schools are under no obligation to admit low-income students under this bill and in many cases in the rural setting private school is not an option. Rural communities are already stretched financially and taking away public funds will harm a great many families in parts of the state who depend on them. The only families to benefit are a few wealthy locations that already have the means to pay for private school and the availability of private school options.

Finally, there are no controls in place to ensure eligible at-risk students who apply for a scholarship are granted one, as private schools are allowed to set their own admission standards. There are no controls in place to ensure those who will receive scholarships receive a quality education. Our tax dollars should not go to private schools that lack oversight, leaving the public uninformed as to whether our tax dollars are really being spent to improve the lives of children. Kansans expect accountability for our tax dollars.

I again ask you to vote NO in opposition to Senate Bill 87.

Thank you,

Valerie Jeane Wright- born and raised in Topeka, raised my children in Chanute and currently residing in Lawrence, 66046

Testimony to the House Committee on Education

NAME: Julia Young

TITLE: Kansas Resident and Retired Public School Teacher

EMAIL ADDRESS: juliakyoung@msn.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,

As a retired public-school teacher, I am writing to voice my opposition to HB 2136.(SB87)

SB87 will expand the Tax Credit Scholarship voucher program which already exists in Kansas. It diverts public tax dollars to private schools that lack oversight and are allowed to deny admission to students for any number of reasons. The legislature should not be diverting general funds to private schools. The general funds should be used to fully fund special education, which has not been fully funded since 2011.

The Governor's 2025 budget is calling for an increase of \$72.6 million (part of a 5-year phase-in plan) and the Kansas Department of Education is calling for an increase of \$86.7 million (part of a 4-year phase-in plan). Yet, the House passed a budget with an increase of only \$10 million. If the money does not exist for special education services in the public schools, it does not exist for vouchers to private schools.

I remain opposed to voucher programs.

Please vote NO on SB87.

Julia Young

Kansas Resident and Retired Public School Teacher

Overland Park, Kansas

Michelle Sims

From: Erin Zehner <fergie2502@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 7, 2025 1:27 PM
To: House Education
Cc: repsharicedavids@mail.house.gov
Subject: OPPOSITION: SB 87 Education Opportunity Tax Credit

March 6, 2025

Testimony to the House Education Committee

NAME: Erin Zehner

TITLE: Citizen of Overland Park, KS

EMAIL ADDRESS: fergie2502@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: SB 87 Education Opportunity Tax Credit

HEARING DATE: Feb. 6, 2025

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written

Public tax dollars should be used to fully fund SPED, not subsidize private schools that lack oversight and can discriminate in admissions.

Flat out, the legislature should not be diverting more of our state general funds (public tax dollars) to private schools, when they refuse to fully fund special education (SPED).

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.

Additionally, the cost of private institutions, even with "choice vouchers" is still not a financially attainable option for many families across the state, making it an inequitable and discriminatory practice. It's essentially a coupon for the rich who are able to spend the money anyways.

Other reasons to oppose:

Reduced Accountability – Private schools receiving these funds are not held to the same standards of accountability, transparency, and oversight as public schools, potentially leading to disparities in educational quality and equity. While the bill aims to support low-income students, it does not guarantee that private schools will accept all students or provide the same level of support services that public schools are required to offer, such as special education programs.

Rural students (and communities) are harmed as public school resources are drained and students in rural areas lack little to no private options. The Tax Credit Scholarship program primarily benefits 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.

Expansion of the Scholarship Program – The bill broadens eligibility for the tax credit scholarship program, allowing more students, including those who were not previously enrolled in public schools, to receive funding for private school tuition. This could divert funds away from public schools.

Increased Tax Credits – The bill increases the tax credit percentage for contributions to scholarship-granting organizations, eventually reaching 100%. This incentivizes businesses and individuals to direct tax dollars away from public education, reducing the overall revenue available for public schools.

Potential for Increased Funding Drain – By raising the total allowable tax credit limit from \$15 million to potentially \$25 million, more public funds are redirected to private schools, further straining the financial resources of public schools.

Testimony to the House Committee on Education
Lynnette Krieger-Zook
Parent/Grandparent USD 259 USD 308 USD 313 USD 266
Retired Public School Special Education Teacher
kriegzook@gmail.com
SB 87 House Education Committee
OPPONENT
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.

The Tax Credit Scholarship program currently exists and was initially designed for low-income students attending one of the 100 lowest performing public school.

This Tax Credit scholarship has since:

1. Increased the income limit to 250% of Federal Poverty rate (\$80,375 for a family with two students while the median income in KS is \$69,747 which above the average teacher salary of \$56,544)
2. Increased tax treatment for donors from 70% - 75%
3. Opened it up to any student.
4. Does NOT hold the schools who receive these donor funds accountable to accept all children or meet the rigorous standards of KSDE and public schools.
5. Increases program cap from \$15 million to a max of \$25 million.

The revisions from the original intent would further erode Kansas tax revenue and place the burden on our middle- and lower-income taxpayers.

Currently in Reno County schools are diverting 6.62 million dollars from their general funds to cover mandated special education services that KS and Federal dollars are not covering. Students can attend private schools with special education services only because the local school districts are providing these services. When additional tax dollars are provided as noted in SB87, often these tax dollars are diverted from local public schools, students receiving these services are harmed. Public schools are also providing access to KSHAA approved activities for private/home school students with no additional funding.

In closing I am asking you to vote NO on bill SB 87. The current bill provides a tax credit for the many students who still qualify, including 233,000 free and reduced lunch (at-risk) students who were in low performing public schools to attend a private school. Personally, two of children attended a private school for 5 years and I assisted in starting an independent school that I have financially supported. I do believe in choices for families. I also hold firm that tax dollars need to be held accountable for the programs they finance.