

Oral, in-person PROPONENT testimony for HB 2468- Federal Opt In & Tax Credit Scholarship Expansion

FROM: Dr. Jamie Finkeldei

DATE: January 21, 2026

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

My name is Jamie Finkeldei and I am the Associate Superintendent of the Catholic Diocese of Wichita. Thank you for the opportunity to speak as a PROPONENT to bill HB 2468.

The Diocese of Wichita serves almost 8,891 K-12 students spread across 34 elementary and 4 high schools. This makes us the 9th largest school district in Kansas. 2,418, or 27%, of those almost 9,000 students are on free and reduced lunch. Almost half of those free and reduced lunch students, 1,220 to be exact, are supported by our SGO called Support for Catholic Schools.

In 2025, Support for Catholic Schools distributed \$3.4 million and was responsible for 34% of all tax credits used. Next school year, we anticipate serving almost 1,300 students so our need continues to grow. However, collectively all the SGO's in Kansas hit the maximum of \$10 million on December 22. We estimate that we had around \$600,000 more we could have collected in the last days of December if the maximum was higher. There has been slow but steady growth of the number of low-income students being served by private and Catholic schools across the state. We are just asking to be able to continue that growth.

This is not without precedent. Some of the other tax credits in the state have escalator clauses. Most of the other school choice legislation introduced over the last several years include escalator clauses. All successful programs deserve to be able to grow. We believe that Support for Catholic Schools and the Diocese of Wichita Catholic schools have demonstrated successful utilization of this program to successfully serve low-income students. You will hear other testimony today from principals and parents who have directly benefited from this legislation. We simply ask for the ability to continue to serve a growing population.

In addition, Kansas adopting into the ECCA federal tax scholarship would help address some of the concerns of my public-school counterparts. The federal tax credit can be used by public and private schools alike. This provides a great opportunity to improve the academics of all students in Kansas. As the success of the state program indicates, if we do not opt-in, Kansans will send their money out of state and I think we can all agree that we need to keep all Kansas money in Kansas

Thank you. And I stand for questions.

Dr. Jamie Finkeldei
Associate Superintendent
Catholic Diocese of Wichita
finkeldej@catholicdioceseofwichita.org