

TESTIMONY FOR HB 2468

House Education Committee Hearing

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ORAL PROPONENT testimony for HB 2468- Expanding student eligibility under the tax credit for low income students scholarship program, increasing the amount of the tax credit for contributions made pursuant to such program and providing for aggregate tax credit limit increases under certain conditions.

DATE: January 21, 2026

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

Madam Chair Estes and committee members,

Thank you, Madam Chair Estes and Committee, for allowing me to testify in favor of House Bill 2468. My name is Andrea Hillebert and it has been my honor to serve as a teacher and administrator in Catholic Schools in Kansas for 33 years.

I know that you, like me, understand that differing viewpoints, healthy conflict, and a process that includes listening with an open mind will ensure that we make the very best decisions for our kids.

School choice breaks the arbitrary limitations between a student's housing and the school that he or she can attend. It cannot be acceptable to us that zip code remains a significant indicator of student success. When the State of Kansas allowed tax credits for low income children, you made it possible for families to make the choice they believe is best for their children. You demonstrated your commitment to all Kansas children. And Kansans have shown their support for the program by using it. And now, we have grown to a place where we need to expand it. Do we really want to tell families that they will not have options that other families have had?

I support this bill because I believe the time has come to increase the cap for tax credits for low income students and I believe Kansas should opt into the Federal Tax Credit Program. Doing this will provide more opportunities for Kansas students - regardless of where they attend school - and it will keep Kansas money helping Kansas families.

In my school, our spirit of leadership and service and our socioeconomic and ethnic diversity are our biggest strengths, helping our students learn to work together, to appreciate different

viewpoints, and to recognize the dignity in every person. 64% of our current tax credit students are minority students; 100% qualify for free or reduced lunches; and in almost every case, their parents would have been required to make a different choice without this option. How different and less vibrant our school would be without their voices.

Our current tax credit legislation benefits our families who qualify for financial assistance. This is a group that can feel marginalized, unheard, excluded. In my experience with our tax credit families, offering these parents a choice in the education of their children increases their involvement in and satisfaction with school. It also helps them to understand the significance of education as it relates to the choices their children will have in the future. It is not a referendum on their public school - or any public school, - but a reflection of the empowerment they feel when they are given a choice.

At Mater Dei, we tell our students that it is our mission to get them to 18 with lots of choices. And we think that is a lofty goal because we only have our students until they are 14. But we have seen first hand the impact this legislation has had, allowing our students to pursue their dreams, to be masters of their own destinies, to choose career pathways and opportunities for service that will ultimately benefit our whole community. Over the course of this session, you will hear from students and parents who have benefitted from the tax credit program. But their stories are just the pebble in the water. What we cannot fully comprehend is the ripple effect, the cascade of change, that this legislation will bring for all children and families. There is such a satisfaction, a hope, in seeing the payoff of our investment in our children. And it is my belief that increasing the investment will increase the payoff.

All educators - public or private - feel a deep sense of accountability to their students and parents, their colleagues, and their community. We know that people count on us to reach each child, not just academically, but socially, emotionally, and in our case, spiritually. Offering a choice to families benefits schools because it holds us accountable to the people who have chosen our school. And it holds parents accountable to act with intentionality when they select the school who will partner with them in the formation of their children.

Every year, there are new and different questions about the best way to implement school choice legislation, and those will fall to this group to answer, but there cannot be a question that this is truly what is best for Kansas families. I urge you to support HB2468 and I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today.

I will stand for questions.

Thank you,

Andrea Hillebert