



Kansas PTA
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Opponent. [HB 2468 Expansion of Tax Credit Scholarship Voucher Program](#)

Remote Testimony. House Education Committee
Hearing. Wednesday, January 21, 1:30 pm, Room 144-S
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Honorable Chair Estes and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide remote testimony regarding HB 2468 – Expansion of the tax credit scholarship program cap. The Kansas PTA is opposed to this bill and the use of public funds to subsidize the private school system ([KS PTA Legislative Platform](#)).

Kansas PTA has the same concerns noted in our previous testimony dating back to 2014 when the tax credit scholarship program was first established. Our opposition to vouchers and voucher-type programs stems from multiple concerns and mounting evidence of negative impact on vulnerable youth.

No Need for Expansion. School choice is not parent choice and eligibility under the [Kansas Tax Credit Scholarship \(TCS\)](#) Program has not equaled access. This program has left millions of dollars in scholarship funds unallocated to low-income students, eligible for free lunch, over the past decade. Only when eligibility was expanded beyond students participating in the free/reduced price lunch program in 2023, to those living at 250% of the poverty level, did program participation jump from 1,100 to 2,300. While the TCS program is not required to report on the student demographics of recipients, participation doubled following this eligibility expansion beyond the K-12 public school trigger for at-risk funding. Essentially, the TCS now allows the private, non-profit school systems to skip over at-risk public school students who may not be ready for kindergarten, to skip over the students with severe learning and behavioral challenges, to skip over the students whose current skills and knowledge are at Level 1 on the Kansas Assessments, and/or to dismiss those who struggle academically or behaviorally.

Private School Entitlement Program. The proposed increase to the funding cap from \$10 million to \$30 million annually for students who exceed the requirements for the free lunch program runs contrary to the original rationale used by those who advocated to establish the program in the first place – to provide an option for at-risk students enrolled in the public schools, particularly families living in communities with high rates of poverty. What was said to be about the students, is changing into a program to subsidize the private school systems.

Programs Expansions since 2014

- All students who received a scholarship, but who have not yet graduated.
- Students less than 7 years old can go straight to private schools and skip public education.
 - Originally: All students must have attended public schools.
- All students up to 250% of poverty threshold (well above eligibility for state aid to public schools for at-risk students)
 - Previously: All low-income students to 185% of poverty threshold (reduced price lunch criteria for federal aid)
 - Never was: All low-income students to 130% of poverty threshold (same eligibility for state aid to public schools)
 - Originally: 100 elementary schools with largest percentage of low-income students.
- Tax credit on 75% of the amount contributed.
 - Previously: Tax credit on 70% of the amount contributed.

Ne, the Kansas legislature has yet to provide public schools with weighted funding for 37,000 students eligible for reduced price lunch (185% of poverty), let alone up to 250% of the poverty level as is done for private school students. If new taxpayer dollars are going to be allocated, we encourage legislators to remain focused on adequate and equitably resources for the public neighborhood schools in which these students live and attend.

Tax Avoidance vs Tax Deduction. The proposed increase to the cap *on the aggregate tax credit limit* removes more public funds from the state revenue stream and shifts the financial burden of private school tuition for a select few onto the masses. While most financial acts of charity are recognized by a tax deduction, the current program and proposed expansion is legislated tax avoidance. Further, this change would expand the transfer of wealth from rural communities to high population centers, where the private school systems reside.

Cost Prohibitive, with No Oversight. Several of the Kansas parents and students who have testified over the years in support of the Tax Credit Scholarship Program have uniformly praised their private school experience most notably for the small class sizes. Ten to 12 students per class is simply NOT an option for the public school system that serves nearly 500,000 Kansas kids. Our public schools would require significantly more state aid and building space if the Kansas legislature were to mirror private school class sizes for all Kansas students. Further, private schools can pick and choose which students to admit and retain, with no academic or financial oversight from the public.

No Kansas Evidence to Warrant Expansion. After 10 years of implementation, no student impact data has been reported, and no legislative audit has been conducted on the educational progress and outcomes of the students who applied for or received scholarships. We looked for evidence that would warrant expansion, but instead found annual reports, lacking in meaningful oversight ([annual reports](#)). The private school tax credit scholarship program reporting requirements:

- do not tell us about the Kansas Assessment scores of the scholarship recipients, particularly in comparison to similar students who did not receive scholarships,
- do not report on Kansas Assessment scores of the private schools who received public taxpayer funds, particularly in comparison to public schools serving similar populations,
- do not tell us about scholarship student retention rates, graduation rates, college enrollment rates, college persistence rates,
- do not tell us how many scholarship students the private schools *transitioned* back [[streaming link](#)] to public schools for their failure to help these at-risk youth.

“There is always going to be a time, as they [students] mature up to high school. And if they don’t start passing some classes, they are not going to graduate from our schools. Because we have a higher academic standard. So, we have to transition kids to a different school, just because they are not going to meet the educational requirements. But that is their own choice, because of how they worked in the schools”

(<https://youtu.be/cGFuVI5qLiU?t=3355>, Director of Development Catholic Diocese of Wichita, KS House K12 Budget Committee, Jan 2021, 56:00 min mark)

Our public schools are the heart of Kansas communities, serving 90% of school age youth. Our teachers and administrators are committed to preparing all kids to thrive in work and in life. Creating opportunities for every child to engage and be successful serves to strengthen the viability of a thriving Kansas future.

Thank you for your consideration. I urge committee members, on behalf of the Kansas PTA, to vote No on the proposed expansions to the Tax Credit Scholarship program in HB 2468.

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Cc: Vikki Mullins, Kansas PTA President
Angie Gunion, VP of Advocacy
Devin Wilson, Legislative Liaison

THE PTA POSITION

Kansas PTA is a nonpartisan association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. The PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities. [PTA mission and purpose](#) have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago, focused on facilitating every child’s potential and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.