

January 21, 2026

Testimony to the House Education Committee

NAME: Judi Barkema, Kansas Citizen

EMAIL ADDRESS: jabarkema@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: HB 2468

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only Testimony

Chair and members of the committee,

Thank for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 2468.

As a parent of two Shawnee Mission West High School graduates, I know the value public schools provide. Public schools are a key resource for success as individuals and as a state.

Public tax dollars belong with public schools

Tax dollars should be used to strengthen public schools that serve everyone instead of giving tax dollars to families making a private school choice. The legislature should not be diverting public dollars to private schools when special education is underfunded.

Private schools are not available to all, private schools get to choose who to accept

Funneling our tax dollars to private schools that pick and choose which children to serve is a poor use of funds. Private schools do not provide real choice for many families.

No oversight or accountability

Tax dollars should not go to private schools and home schools that have no oversight. With no oversight, what standard is there for a quality education?

Impact on rural areas

The proposed tax credits will drain public school resources across the state, including rural areas that have little or no private school options. This means rural areas will subsidize private school tuition for metro areas.

Public dollars belong with public schools. Please vote NO on HB 2468.

Judi Barkema

Kansas Citizen

Lenexa

Testimony to the House Elections Committee
Date of Committee Hearing: January 20, 2026
Bill HB 2468 Opponent
Ashley Barlow, Concerned Parent + Resident
ashsbarlow@gmail.com

Chair & Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to bill HB 2468.

Public education dollars should remain with Kansas public schools, which educate all children. Expanding this program reduces available state resources and undermines the legislature's ability to fund public schools adequately and equitably across Kansas.

Education funding should be prioritized toward fully funding special education, an obligation the state continues to struggle to meet. Rather than addressing this shortfall, HB 2468 would divert taxpayer dollars to private schools that are not required to serve all students and may pick and choose whom they enroll. Public funds should not subsidize systems that exclude students or lack transparency.

Additionally, this program lacks basic accountability. There are no meaningful requirements to collect data, measure student outcomes, or demonstrate that public dollars are improving educational results. Kansas taxpayers deserve assurance that education funds are being used effectively and responsibly.

Finally, with respect to opting into the federal voucher program, the Kansas Legislature has repeatedly called on the federal government to fully fund its share of special education. Opting into a program that directs federal dollars to private schools—while the federal government continues to fall short on its special education obligations—runs counter to that position and further strains public school resources.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose HB 2468.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ashley Barlow, Concerned Parent + Resident
Overland Park

January 19, 2026

Dear KS House Education Committee,

I am writing as a Kansas constituent to express my opposition to HB 2468.

Public schools are the backbone of our communities and deserve stable, fully funded support. Expanding voucher funding diverts limited public resources away from the schools that serve the vast majority of Kansas students, while reducing accountability and transparency for taxpayer dollars.

I respectfully urge you to oppose HB 2468 and instead prioritize policies that strengthen and fully fund Kansas public schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Liz Benditt

Leawood, Kansas

January 21, 2026

Testimony to the Kansas House Committee on Education

NAME: **Erica Benson**, parent of two children in K-12 schools, teacher, PTA board member

EMAIL ADDRESS: ericawbenson@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: **HB 2468**

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: **OPPONENT**

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: **WRITTEN ONLY**

Dear Chair Susan Estes and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to HB 2468, which would expand Kansas's existing Tax Credit Scholarship Program and require the state to opt into a new federal voucher program.

I oppose both provisions of this bill. The original intent of the Kansas Tax Credit Scholarship Program was to provide limited assistance to low-income, at-risk students. Even under that narrow goal, the program has failed to reach most eligible students. Fewer than one percent of eligible low-income students initially received scholarships. Instead of addressing that failure, the legislature expanded income eligibility. Only because of that expansion is the program now approaching its ten million dollar cap. Doubling the cap to twenty million dollars is not a response to unmet need. It is a redirection of public dollars away from the public schools that educate all children.

Private schools are not required to accept every student. They may deny admission based on disability status, academic history, language needs, behavioral history, or other factors. As income limits expand, private schools are able to select students who are easier and less costly to serve, while public schools continue to educate the students with the greatest needs. This structure places low-income and at-risk students at an ongoing disadvantage. Public schools educate every child who walks through their doors. Public dollars should remain with public schools.

At the same time, Kansas continues to struggle to fully fund special education and related student supports. Reducing state revenue in order to subsidize private schools that are not accountable to taxpayers weakens the state's ability to meet its constitutional obligations.

The Tax Credit Scholarship Program also lacks accountability. There are no requirements to collect student outcome data, measure academic progress, or report whether students receiving scholarships are being served effectively. Expanding a program without transparency or oversight is fiscally irresponsible. HB 2468 also requires Kansas to opt into a new federal voucher program scheduled to begin in 2027. This program raises serious concerns.

Under the federal program, donors receive a one hundred percent dollar-for-dollar tax credit, meaning their full contribution is reimbursed by the federal government. Unlike Kansas's capped program, the federal program has no limit on total cost, making the fiscal impact unpredictable. Congressional estimates suggest the program could reduce federal revenue by billions of dollars each year.

This comes at a time when the federal government has failed for decades to fully fund special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Kansas legislators have repeatedly called on Congress to meet that obligation. Opting into a federal program that directs funds to private schools while special education remains underfunded is inconsistent and harmful.

The federal voucher program also allows eligibility for families earning up to three hundred percent of area median income. In parts of Kansas, this means households earning well over three hundred thousand dollars per year would qualify. This is not a targeted program for students in need, but a subsidy for families who already have educational options.

Public education is a public good. Our tax dollars should support schools that are open to all students, accountable to the public, and transparent in how funds are used. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to reject HB 2468.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Erica Benson
Overland Park, KS

Date of Committee Hearing: January 21, 2026
Testimony to the House Education Committee

NAME: Rana Bentley, Kansas citizen, Parent

EMAIL ADDRESS: ranabently24@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: HB 2468

OPPONENT

WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY

Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to bill HB 2468.

Twenty years ago, I decided to set down roots and raise six children here. I had a career opportunity, however I had options and could have stayed a resident in Georgia or move back to Florida where I grew up. However, being the mother of young children at the time, I did my research and the excellent public schools in Johnson County sold me on the decision to move here. I'm extremely passionate about the quality of our public education and firmly believe that my public tax dollars should go to public schools.

Expanding this program reduces the state budget and undermines the state's ability to adequately fund Kansas public schools. Additionally, education funds should go towards fully funding special education, not subsidizing private schools which have no accountability for our tax dollars.

Thank you for listening to your constituents. Please vote "No" on HB 2468.

Rana Bentley

Olathe, KS

Written-Only Opponent Testimony for **HB 2468**
House Education Committee
January 20th, 2026
Kristen Blackton, Private Citizen

Chair Estes and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the chance to provide testimony. My name is Kristen Blackton, and I am the parent of a young daughter who is currently enrolled in USD 232. I am writing today to express my opposition to HB 2468. As a former educator and current parent, I am uniquely acquainted with the importance of fully-funded schools in our community. Public schools are vital to educating all students in our state, and public schools' contributions go far beyond just educating the future. They are a public good that is instrumental to a successful society. Our **public** tax dollars should be reserved for funding our **public** schools.

As I understand it, HB 2468 is another way to siphon money from our general fund into private schools through an expanded tax credit scholarship voucher program. As I'm sure you are aware, private schools, unlike public schools, have the freedom to deny enrollment for any number of reasons, including being unable to provide specialized services to students. As a result, many at-risk students and students with special needs are not able to attend these schools. This is why I passionately advocate for our public dollars to go to public schools rather than subsidizing private schools that are often not inclusive and continue to put at-risk students at a disadvantage.

Rather than opting-in to federal voucher programs or expanding these tax credits, I urge you instead to focus your efforts on fully funding special education in our state. Just last week, I attended a meeting for a proposed bond for our district. When I asked how the bond would affect special education students, I was told that the bond could not be used for special education funding, and, instead, the district was relying on the legislature to fund special education. I was told that about 50% of the district's general operational costs go toward special education, and it is still not enough. HB 2468 would only further disenfranchise our special education students by funneling more money out of our public schools.

Public tax dollars belong in public schools. I ask you to vote NO on HB 2468.

Thank you for your time,

Kristen Blackton
Shawnee, KS

Testimony to the House Education Committee

Date of Hearing: January 21, 2026

Bill Number: HB 2468 Opponent

Rick Blumhorst, taxpayer and concerned grandparent
rblumhorst@gmail.com

Chair & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my **opposition** to HB2468, Voucher Expansion

I pay my taxes into the **public** treasury to be used on **public** services.

My tax dollars are to be used to support PUBLIC schools. My tax money is to be used to provide quality education for EVERY CHILD in the state. Vouchers are a theft from our local public schools to benefit wealthy parents who are already sending their children to private and prep schools. These parents are certainly free to send their children to unaccountable private schools – but they are to use their OWN money, NOT MINE. Our public schools and our public school students deserve full funding, as the Kansas Supreme Court already made very clear to the Kansas legislature.

Please vote **NO** on HB2468.

Rick Blumhorst, Concerned grandparent

Paola, KS

★ MAINSTREAM

Laurel Burchfield
Mainstream Coalition
Laurel@mainstream.vote

HB 2468 - Electing to participate in the federal tax credit for individual contributions to scholarship granting organizations and increasing the aggregate tax credit limit on the tax credit for low income students scholarship program.

Opponent

January 20, 2026

Chair Estes and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony for House Bill 2468 on behalf of Mainstream.

Mainstream was founded over 30 years ago by faith and community leaders who warned about the intrusion of narrow, extremist religious views into our government and public institutions. In the following decades, Mainstream members have fought to protect our religious freedoms and maintain strong church-state separation because Kansans value their freedom to live as they see fit without the overreach of government or religion into their personal lives.

Mainstream OPPOSES HB2468. This proposal is an attempt to divert funds from public schools to benefit those who make the choice to enroll their children in private, often religious, schools. **This diversion of public funds is another state-sponsored attempt to undermine public schools and favor private, often religious ones.**

HB2468 is an expansion of a program beyond its original intent to serve low-income students. Already, the program has been expanded to include students with higher income levels. HB2468 would double the cap to \$20 million, and enable wealthy donors to essentially get a complete tax write-off for their contributions to a program that only a very small percentage of Kansas students participate in. **These are dollars that should be going to the state general fund which funds public goods, such as public education, and not back into the pockets of wealthy individuals.**

Further, by opting in to the federal program, an unknown and unlimited amount of federal funds would be diverted from the critical needs of public education. When our state and federal government doesn't even fulfil its obligation to fully fund special education, this bill would only increase the financial burden on our school districts.

Public schools are accessible to and held accountable by all Kansans. Proposals like HB2468, and other tax credit and voucher programs, benefit those families who choose to enroll their students in private schools. These institutions often have limited or no accountability, can discriminate against potential students during the enrollment process, and center religious teachings – and do so at the expense of our general fund and public school funding. This is bad for our schools and for our students who do not fit into specific religious world views.

Kansas residents represent a plurality of religious beliefs and practices, and under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, we are protected from our government essentially funding religious institutions. Recent court cases around vouchers continue to dissolve this fundamental principle of our country's founding, and **HB2468 is pushing even harder at this wall with the intent to fully break it down.**

HB2468 essentially mandates that Kansas residents participate in the diversion of tax dollars away from public schools and into religious institutions, making Kansans now donate or tithe to churches to which they don't belong.

It also promotes a very specific view of the world that can be based on narrow, extremist religious teachings that don't represent the beliefs of many people of faith. Three of the most popular US textbooks and curricula used by Christian schools have been shamed publicly for the way they teach things like science and history. At one point, an Accelerated Christian Education or ACE textbook, taught that the Loch Ness monster is real, and a modern day dinosaur as proof of creationism. These text books have taught that slavery was “black immigration”, that Native Americans are savages, primitives, or demon worshipers, as well as presenting negative views of the LGBTQ+ community, non-Christians, and others. Since private schools are not held to the same expectations and standards as public schools, even if students in Kansas are not being taught these things, there's no protection against it and no way to stop it.

While our public schools have been fighting to increase graduation rates, the CEO of ACE has said “graduation is important, but salvation is more important.” **That is not the purpose of education.**

For these reasons, Mainstream opposes HB2468 and we strongly urge you to reject this expansion of this program and to not opt-in to the federal program.

Thank you,

Laurel Burchfield
Mainstream Coalition



BLUE VALLEY SCHOOLS

House Committee on Education

Opponent Testimony (Written Only) HB 2468

January 21, 2026

Submitted by: Dr. Gillian Chapman, Superintendent, Blue Valley School District

Chairwoman Estes and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these written comments in opposition to **HB 2468**, Electing to participate in the federal tax credit for individual contributions to scholarship granting organizations and increasing the aggregate tax credit limit on the tax credit for low-income student scholarship program.

This legislation seeks to potentially more than double the aggregate tax limit from the current \$10 million to \$20 million, and potentially \$30 million. This has the potential to greatly affect state revenue.

Blue Valley has a student population of more than 22,700 and consistently ranks in the top tier of high performing schools, both in the state and in the nation. (See "Quick Facts" at end of testimony.)

The primary goal of the Blue Valley district is to **ensure every student attending our schools has the educational programming and opportunities, delivered by quality educators, to allow them to thrive long after they leave our doors.** We embrace every student who walks through our doors and always work to provide them with the tools to succeed.

The Blue Valley Board of Education has a long-standing priority position that states:

[Blue Valley] opposes public funding of private schools, including offering public tax credits that decrease state revenue, that do not comply with the same standards and requirements of public-school districts.

As stated in our position, our Board believes that private schools receiving public dollars, even by a decrease in state revenue, must be held to the same standards, requirements, and governance as that required of public schools.

For these reasons, we must **strongly oppose** HB 2468.

Date of Committee Hearing: January 21, 2026
Committee Name: House Education Committee

NAME: Colleen Cunningham, Kansas Parent, Former Special Education Teacher

EMAIL ADDRESS: colleen@demod.com

BILL NUMBER: HB 2468

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only

Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to HB2468.

As a parent of 3 children attending our neighborhood public schools, who has pursued special educational services, and who has taught K-12 students receiving special education services, I am once again asking you to direct public tax dollars to fund our public schools.

Several years ago, one of my children was experiencing difficulties with writing. As the process goes, we reached out to our local school to have them take a closer look, and the countdown clock began. As we neared the end of that countdown, we were contacted by the school who let us know that they did not have the staff necessary to do an evaluation as directed by law, and would we agree to an extension. We had already gone through multiple years of raising concerns about this issue, only to be assured that they would grow out of it. We'd asked for an evaluation near the beginning of the school year, and had we agreed to the extension, it would have been nearly the end of the school year before the evaluation part of the process was complete; we would have been unable to begin services to help our child. Fortunately for our student, we had the means to pay out of pocket and pursue private services with an occupational therapist, who was located in our community. Obviously, this is not the case for all Kansas students and families.

THIS is what it looks like when this committee votes to redirect taxpayer dollars away from public schools, and refuses to fully fund Special Education, instead diverting funding through these "scholarships." It looks like students in need of Special Educational services unable to access them, and the burden to access services—where they are even accessible—onto Kansas parents. Rather than pursuing another unpopular voucher program, I would once again encourage this body to fully fund special education so that ALL Kansas kids can get what they need to be successful.

I appreciate your time and attention, and am asking that you vote NO on HB2468.

Colleen Cunningham
Overland Park