



**Opponent Testimony on SB 75
In the Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Judith Deedy on behalf of Game On for Kansas Schools**

Chair Erickson, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 75 on behalf of Game On for Kansas Schools, a grassroots public education advocacy organization. We oppose SB 75 because it ignores the function of public education funding and essentially pays people to put their children in private schools or home school without regard to ability to pay, amount paid in taxes, or education expenditures.

People may choose not to send their children to public schools but they are not entitled to cash from the state for doing so. Our state and local governments provide multiple facilities and services, but we don't give money to those not using them. We have parks, but people don't get a tax credit if they belong to country clubs instead. We have libraries, but people don't get a tax credit if they opt to buy books at a bookstore. We have police and fire services, but people don't get a tax credit if they don't ever need those services. Our state taxes fund our public schools which are available to any child in the state. If parents choose to do something else for their children's education, they may do so, but they are not relieved from sharing in the responsibility of funding public education, and they are not entitled to what amounts to a cash payment for opting out.

This bill shouldn't even be called a tax credit because a taxpayer can receive much more in tax credit than they pay in taxes, and they receive the additional funds in a payment from the state. A family sending 3 children to a private school could receive \$8,000 per child for a total of \$24,000. That same family likely paid substantially less than that in state taxes. It is completely inappropriate for other taxpayers to gift a single family \$20,000 to reward them for not sending their children to the community schools that educate the majority of Kansas children, or entice them to do so. It is also important to understand the taxes a family pays are not just for their children but for all children.

Families utilizing this credit would also be avoiding their responsibility to pay for the public education of their fellow community members.

Public education is a public commitment and a civic responsibility that is shared by the entire population of the state. Following the rationale of this bill, we should also give anyone who doesn't have a child in the public schools a tax credit. People who have never had children, people whose children are not yet in school and parents of children who have graduated all continue to pay taxes and do not get a tax credit. As a state, we need the contributions of all of our citizens to fund a public education system that accepts all children.

This bill would cost \$125 million in the first year and rise from there. Our state can barely afford to fund our public schools, and is significantly underfunding special education, yet this bill would lead to the state subsidizing private and home schools. It would decrease the State General Fund and would constitute a new expenditure because it is not limited to students currently in public school. The state would be subsidizing students who have never been funded before, while still funding public education. The bill includes a limit of \$125 million the first year with an automatic increase in the cap as long as 90% of the current cap is met. This bill would likely be used by every current private and home school student, which although much smaller than the number of students attending public school, would still result in a huge new expenditure for the state. (Note that we don't even know how many homeschool students there are in the state because there is no reporting about homeschools other than the address where one or more students are homeschooling.) This is especially troubling at a time when the state is generally looking at budget cuts.

This bill is welfare for the wealthy. There is no income limit in SB 75, so people who are perfectly capable of paying for their children's private education would get a handout from the state. This is an improper diversion of state funding.

There is no link between this bill and actual expenditures on education expenses and no oversight to ensure that money is being spent on legitimate education expenses. When parents spend their own money, the state has less of an interest in ensuring they make good choices. While this bill does not give parents money in the way that a tax credit scholarship or ESA program would, the end result is the same. Money that would be in the State General Fund would instead be spent by individual families. As we have seen in Arizona, Florida and other states with voucher programs, allowing parents to

spend these funds without sufficient rules and oversight results in wasteful and fraudulent expenditures. As Kansans we object to our fellow citizens using state tax dollars on scams, or luxury items unrelated to education.

We urge the committee members to oppose the passage of SB 75.