

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Alexandra Dahlgren

Parent in the Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB75. I have three kids attending public school, in the Shawnee Mission School District, and previously taught as a teacher in public schools and worked as an occupational therapist in public schools in Kansas City Kansas. At one point in their schooling, all three of my children have received a form of special education services and two still do. As a mom and former educator, I strongly believe that public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and are accountable to taxpayers. When we started our education journey, we had reached out to a private school and realized that they would not be able to provide any services needed for our children. This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a private choice to receive a religious or other non-public education, many who can easily afford that choice. I am not sure why we would even consider using tax dollars for private schools when our own public school system special education is currently underfunded by \$173 million. Will private schools then be required to provide special education services, or will they take tax dollars and continue to send those who need services to our already underfunded and overwhelmed public schools? Vouchers like this tax credit do not provide a real choice as few families with children with special needs, disabilities, or those for whom English is not their first language cannot have their needs met at a private school nor do many rural students and communities have access to private options.

I have seen firsthand the difference special education has made for my own children and for the children I served. Because of this, I urge you to vote no on bill SB 75 and support our public schools, their employees, and all families.

Thank you,

Alexandra Dahlgren

Chair Erickson and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75.

Not only did I grow up in the Kansas public school system, but I am currently sending my own children to Kansas public schools because I know how important public school is to children not only across the state, but to the entire nation. This bill will 100% continue to degrade what we can and should give our children. Not only that, but it is also an attempt to dismantle public education in order to give a reason to remove funding all together. This bill may try to look like a good thing, but we can see through it. It is shameful and if you care about our children and our future as a prosperous nation you will not let this bill pass.

Please, this bill will not make Kansas better. It will hurt the proper education for the vast majority of our children. It is not the way forward. Vote NO on the Bill SB 75.

Thank you,

Hillary Davis, RN
Resident of Overland Park, KS

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Jennifer and Brett Davis
Parents in the Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our opposition to bill SB75.

As parents in the Shawnee Mission School District, we understand and appreciate the value a fully funded public school system brings to our family and community. It is one of the top reasons we continue to live and work in this state.

We firmly believe that public tax dollars belong with public schools—institutions that are open to all children, accountable to taxpayers, and vital to the strength of our communities.

Public schools serve as the foundation of our society, providing equal educational opportunities to all children regardless of their background, abilities, or financial status. However, the proposed education tax credits threaten to undermine this foundation. By diverting public funds to subsidize private school tuition, this program has the same harmful impact as a voucher system. It drains resources from our public schools—resources that could otherwise be used to improve educational outcomes for all Kansas children.

The consequences of this bill are far-reaching:

1. **Impact on Public Schools:** This legislation would take much-needed funding away from our public schools that serve all children and instead direct it to families who have chosen private or religious education—many of whom can already afford this choice. Rather than strengthening public education, it creates financial strain, leaving our public schools underfunded and less able to meet the needs of every child.
2. **Equity and Accessibility:** Private schools are not required to accept all students. They can choose whom to admit, often excluding students with special needs and disabilities, or those for whom English is not their first language. As a result, families with children who require additional support are unlikely to benefit from these tax credits. This bill does not provide real choice for all Kansans; it privileges a select few while leaving many behind.
3. **Accountability and Oversight:** Unlike public schools, private schools and homeschools receiving these funds are not subject to the same transparency or accountability standards. Kansans deserve to know that their tax dollars are being used responsibly to improve education, yet this program lacks the necessary oversight to ensure that is the case.

4. **Rural Disparities:** This policy disproportionately benefits urban areas where private school options are more prevalent. Rural communities, where families often have no access to private schools, will see their tax dollars redirected to subsidize tuition for families in metropolitan areas like Wichita, Topeka, and Johnson County. This creates an unfair burden on rural taxpayers and exacerbates educational inequities.
5. **Special Education Funding:** At a time when Kansas is underfunding special education by \$173 million, it is unconscionable to divert public dollars to private education. These funds should be used to fully support public schools and ensure that all children, particularly those with special needs, receive the resources they deserve.

Public education is a public good that benefits all Kansans, not just the families with children in public schools. Just as we fund libraries, parks, and roads for the collective benefit of our communities, we must ensure robust support for our public schools. Providing tax credits for private education undermines this principle and disproportionately benefits wealthy families who can already afford private school tuition, allowing them to further reduce their tax burden while contributing little to the public services on which all Kansans rely.

I urge you to oppose SB75 and any measures that divert public funds from our public schools. Instead, I ask that you work to fully fund special education and strengthen our public education system to ensure that all Kansas children, regardless of their circumstances, have access to a high-quality education. Our state's future depends on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer and Brett Davis
6224 Mission Rd
Fairway, KS 66205
jenhomedaledavis@gmail.com
913-568-1654

January 27, 2025

Testimony to the Senate Education Committee

NAME: Caitlin DeFilippo

TITLE: Parent of students in Lawrence Public Schools, Lawrence Public School Teacher,
2020 Blue Valley Secondary Teacher of the Year

EMAIL ADDRESS: cr.defilippo@gmail.com

BILL NUMBER: SB 79 Education Opportunity Tax Credit

HEARING DATE: Jan. 28, 2025

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written

Dear Distinguished Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 79. I am a parent of two young students in elementary school, a long-time public school teacher. Education tax credits or vouchers only serve to subsidize the private choices of some parents thus have the same negative impact as vouchers. Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers.

As rural Republicans in states across the country understand, the issue isn't about school choice. Education tax credits, ESAs and vouchers are actually about transfers of wealth. If you ask people across Kansas if they support sending their tax dollars to private schools and homeschools with no accountability and no standards and put more money in the pocket of the wealthiest Kansans, they're going to tell you they're against that. Our state cannot afford two education systems and should not create two systems.

Over time there is no limit to how much the state general fund (used to fund our public schools, road and bridges, and so on) will be depleted via these refundable tax credits. Eventually every family in Kansas not sending their kids to public school could receive these tax credits. Rural families without private school options will essentially be subsidizing families in more populated areas of the state like Johnson County, Wichita, or Topeka.

Not only does the tax credit reduce the family's tax liability to \$0, but the state is essentially paying them \$19,000 every year out of the state general fund to not attend public school. This is tax avoidance and a tax windfall. And there is no regard for how much private education actually costs.

Every community benefits from a strong public education system, regardless of whether all families choose to use it or not. Education tax credits divert money from public education, leaving less funding for proven reforms, like smaller classes, summer school, and teacher training.

Facts to consider:

- Private schools and home schools would receive tax dollars without any public oversight. Private schools are not required to keep or release statistics on attendance, curriculum, test scores, or graduation rates, leaving the public uninformed as to whether or not their tax dollars are really being spent to improve the lives of children.
- Private schools and home schools are not subject to standardized testing, curriculum standards, or graduation requirements. Without regulation, it is possible that children are simply not learning basic academic skills or learning about the most basic democratic values of our society.
- Private schools may employ uncertified teachers. Home schools do not have to teach their children/students anything! There is abuse and neglect in many home schools. Homeschooled students are in danger of child maltreatment.
- Public services are paid for by everyone, regardless of whether they use them or not. Just as we would not give a tax rebate to people who buy books instead of using a public library or who own private vacation homes instead of camping in national parks, the government should not refund private school tuition to parents who choose not to send their children to public schools.
- Education Tax Credits will further complicate the tax code.
- Families who do not make enough money to pay taxes will be unable to claim the credits, meaning the poorest families will not be able to attend high-quality private schools or have transportation to attend any option.
- Those who will most benefit from the credits are the wealthy, who are most likely to send their children to private schools.
- Public education benefits the entire community: A well-funded and effective public education system benefits everyone in the community, regardless of whether they have children in the public schools. It prepares future workers, citizens, and leaders, and helps to create a well-educated and productive workforce.
- Public education benefits the economy: Studies have shown that public education is a key driver of economic growth, as it provides the skilled workers and entrepreneurs needed to fuel economic development.
- Public education benefits property values: Property values are often higher in communities with strong public schools, which can benefit all homeowners, including those who don't have children in the public schools.
- Public education provides social benefits: A well-funded public education system can help to reduce income inequality, increase social mobility, and promote social cohesion, which benefits everyone in society.

Please oppose **Senate Bill 79**, thank you for your consideration.

Caitlin DeFilippo
Lawrence, KS

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Michael DeMent; michaeldement@hotmail.com

Private citizen

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

As committee members, I hope you will join me in opposing SB 75 because it would:

- Direct my Kansas tax money to Missouri private schools just across the Kansas/Missouri state line;
- Reimburse parents more tax money than they actually spend on private tuition; and
- Divert tax revenue to unaccredited schools or small schools set up simply to access these funds.

Please vote no on bill SB 75.

Michael DeMent

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Tracy Dillon, jeffandtracy@mac.com
Parent in the Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 75, which would create a tax credit voucher system for private schools. As a parent of children in the public school system, I am deeply concerned about the potential impact this bill would have on the quality of education for all students, especially those in public schools.

While I understand the desire to provide more educational choices for families, I believe that SB 75 would ultimately harm our public school system, which serves the vast majority of children in our state. I respectfully urge you to oppose this bill, and here are the key reasons why:

1. Reducing Funding for Public Schools:

As a parent, I am acutely aware of the funding challenges our public schools face. Diverting public funds to private schools through tax credit vouchers would deprive my children of vital resources. Our public schools are already struggling with overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and underpaid teachers.

2. Inequity in Access to Educational Opportunities:

Vouchers primarily benefit families that can afford to cover the difference between the voucher and the actual cost of private school tuition. Wealthier families are more likely to take advantage of the program, while lower-income families—including many of the families whose children attend our public schools—will see no benefit. Instead of creating a more equitable system, SB 75 could deepen existing divides in educational access.

3. Lack of Accountability for Private Schools:

As a parent, I trust that public schools are held to strict standards of accountability and transparency. Teachers must meet certifications, schools must follow state curricula, and public funds are subject to oversight. Private schools receiving voucher funds, however, are not subject to the same level of scrutiny. This creates a dangerous precedent where tax dollars are spent without ensuring that all students are receiving a high-quality, equitable education.

4. Diverting Attention from Improving Public Schools:

Rather than taking money away from public schools, I believe we should focus on improving them. My children deserve well-funded schools with well-trained teachers, updated technology, and resources that allow them to succeed. SB 75 represents a diversion of attention and resources away from solutions that would actually benefit public schools and all students, not just a select few.

5. Evidence of Voucher Program Failures:

Research has shown that voucher programs have not delivered the promised improvements in student outcomes. Studies in other states have found that students using vouchers often perform worse than their peers in public schools.

We should be investing in strategies that have been proven to help all students succeed, not unproven programs that could leave many children behind.

As a parent, my first priority is ensuring that all children in our state – have access to a high-quality education. I am concerned that SB 75 will undermine that goal. I urge you to stand up for our public schools and vote against this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Tracy Dillon

Dear Cyndie,

I am sending this email as my written testimony that I do not support SB75. I am asking the Senators to please not vote in favor of this bill.

Respectfully,

Michelle Dombrosky

Cyndie Rexer

From: Tiffany Ellison <tellison6@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 27, 2025 11:15 AM
To: Senate Education
Cc: Renee Erickson; Adam Thomas; Doug Shane
Subject: Opposed: SB75 - Establishing the education opportunity tax credit to provide an income tax credit for taxpayers with eligible dependent children who are not enrolled in public school.

Good afternoon,

As the parent of 4 who has experience teaching in public, private, and homeschool capacity, as well as having enjoyed the freedom to choose at different times public, private, and homeschool options for my own children, I oppose this bill. This does not address the key concern which is that of public education finance and performance reform; it does not further protect the educational freedom we enjoy under the Constitution, instead it only serves to expand government intrusion. Please vote NO on SB75.

Thank you,

Tiffany Ellison
Miami County
660-238-0562

SB 75 Opposition Testimony

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Ann Fell ann.fell88@gmail.com

I am a parent, a private citizen and a Kansas taxpayer who had 4 children do well in Kansas public schools, and a grandparent raising a grandson who is now in a public high school.

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to SB 75. Offering vouchers that Kansas taxpayers will pay for so that families can choose to send their children to private schools is not in the better interests of Kansas, our children, or our future prosperity.

Our tax dollars must be allocated fairly for the benefit of ALL Kansas children, to ensure that every single child has access to a quality education. Tax dollars should never be offered for private use. Our public tax dollars need to fund public schools which are accountable to those of us who pay the taxes.

Most private options exist in higher populated areas and offering vouchers to urban dwellers would unfairly burden those of us in rural areas with very limited school choices to pay for private education of city residents while our public schools suffer.

Tax credits for private education are nothing more than another way for wealthy families who can already afford private school tuition to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

I'm counting on you to end the unfair distribution of Kansas tax dollars for school vouchers by voting no on SB 75.

Thank you.

Ann Fell

**SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee**

January 28, 2025

Crystal Fields

Superfields7@yahoo.com

Private citizen, high school administrative assistant, former private preschool owner/operator, located in USD 249 district, representing those that can't represent themselves.

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I would like to begin by thanking you for your time. Today, I reach out with concerns for the bill below, and am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 75.

I oppose the bill SB 75 and/or voucher programs in general. As someone who understands the value of our public schools, their roll in providing an avenue allowing individuals to be educated members of our society, who also contribute to the vitality of our communities, I can not support SB 75 or any voucher program.

Below are a few reasons why I oppose this bill and any voucher program:

- Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers. In addition to the fact that Education Tax Credits will be diverting funds that could otherwise be used to strengthen public schools and special education.
- Families of children with special needs, disabilities, or those for whom English is not their first language will not benefit from these tax credits as few private schools can accommodate their needs.
- Private schools can choose to admit only the best and brightest students, leaving other children behind. Vouchers like this tax credit program do not provide real choice.
- A strong public education system provides benefits to the entire society, not just the individual students.
- Rural students (and communities) are harmed as public school resources are drained and students in rural areas lack little to no private options.

I am asking you to vote no on bill SB 75. I am doing this as an advocate for all children because: Pubic tax dollars belong with public schools; private schools are not available to all,

and private schools get to choose who to accept; the impact it will have on rural areas; the absence of oversight or accountability with privatization; our public schools are a public good; and vouchers are **welfare for the wealthy**. A society that has its basic needs met(food,shelter,health,education), is a society that prospers and finds peace. Contributing to a larger inequity amongst citizens, with bills such as SB 75, will only lead to negative outcomes for all of society. I am not sure why this concept is so foreign to so many.

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Nina J. Flax

nflax@yahoo.com

29843 S. Indian Hills Rd

Osage City Ks 66523

Private Citizen

Chair Erickson and Committee Members

I am writing to provide my testimony in opposition to SB 75 as a taxpayer of Kansas. I believe my taxes should be used to provide for the needs of all Kansans not just those who CHOOSE to send their children to private schools. That is their right but if you take a path for reimbursing them through taxes you are essentially robbing public schools and not using my taxes to benefit all Kansans. I know many local children who could never go to a private school because of location and finances. Please do not advance this bill.

Thank you for your time.

Nina J. Flax

Osage City Ks

SB 75 Opposition Testimony

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Heath Freeman - heath.a.freeman@gmail.com

Parent of a Student in USD 231, but also a currently serving School Board Member

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to strongly oppose Senate Bill 75, which seeks to expand the School Vouchers Program. This proposal undermines our public education system and diverts critical resources away from the schools that serve the vast majority of Kansas students.

Public education is the cornerstone of a thriving democracy, and our tax dollars should be invested in strengthening and supporting these schools. Redirecting funds through voucher programs diminishes the resources available to public schools, already facing underfunding, and ultimately harms the quality of education for our children. It is vital that we protect public education, which serves all students, regardless of income or background.

Voucher programs disproportionately benefit wealthier families, who can afford to pay the difference in tuition at private schools. This tax subsidy for the wealthy only exacerbates educational inequality, creating a system that privileges the few while leaving the majority of students in overcrowded, under-resourced schools. Instead of draining public funds, we should focus on investing in our public schools to ensure that every student, regardless of their zip code, receives a high-quality education.

I urge you to oppose SB 75 and focus on policies that truly support the needs of our public schools and the future of Kansas' children.

Respectfully,

Heath Freeman

Gardner, KS

USD 231

Senate Education Committee

To: SEducation@senate.ks.gov

SUBJECT: SB 75-Opposition Testimony (Written-Only)

I am a 44-year veteran Kansas public educator and parent of two highly educated adults who are products of Kansas public schools. I am writing to oppose SB 75. You were elected to your position to serve all Kansans by using tax dollars to fund public education in effective, responsible ways. This bill is neither a responsible use of tax dollars nor a support for public education.

This bill takes money and funnels it to families primarily in our state's more populated areas who can afford to provide an education outside of the public school option. By doing so, the vast majority of our Kansas students get a smaller slice of the pie and less adequate educational programs. Choice is always available but the task of funding ONE choice is the only duty of elected officials and our tax dollars gathered for the common good.

There are many other negatives to this bill. In respect of your time, I have focused only on funding. Please do not support this type of effort.

Barbara Geers

Shawnee

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Cynthia Gentry, ckgentry2011@gmail.com
Parent in Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 75. I have had two children go thru the Shawnee Mission Schools from Kindergarten thru High School. These schools prepared them well for college success. Each child chose a different type of college to attend – one a large public university, the other a small private university – and both succeeded and had career positions upon college graduation.

- Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers.
- Education Tax Credits divert funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education to subsidize the private choices of some parents thus having the same negative impact as a voucher program.
- This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a private choice to receive a religious or other non-public education, many who can easily afford that choice.
- Instead of providing tax credits to Kansans choosing not to send their kids to public school, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education that is currently underfunded by \$173 million.
- Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers.
- Education Tax Credits divert funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education to subsidize the private choices of some parents thus having the same negative impact as a voucher program.
- This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a private choice to receive a religious or other non-public education, many who can easily afford that choice.
- Instead of providing tax credits to Kansans choosing not to send their kids to public school, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education that is currently underfunded by \$173 million.

I appreciate you listening and supporting public education. I urge you to vote NO on SB75.

Opponent Testimony of SB75
For The Senate Education Committee
January 28th, 2025
Danielle George
Citizen

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 75 on behalf of myself.

Public tax dollars should not fund private and religious schools because it diverts critical resources away from public education, which serves the majority of students and is essential for ensuring equitable access to quality education. Public schools are accountable to taxpayers, adhere to non-discriminatory practices, and operate under strict regulations to serve diverse communities. In contrast, private and religious schools can select students based on specific criteria, potentially excluding those with disabilities, differing beliefs, or lower incomes. Using public funds for these schools undermines the principle of separation of church and state, as taxpayer dollars could directly or indirectly support religious instruction. This weakens the public education system, increases inequality, and fails to prioritize the collective good.

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Danielle Giarla | daniellegiarla@gmail.com
Parent in Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I want to first thank you for your time and service. I am writing to you today in opposition to bill SB75.

My family has attended the SMSD for going on 3 generations. My oldest son will be starting kindergarten this fall. We chose to raise a family in Kansas based upon the quality education we received. My husband and I both taught in the district. We understand the value and importance of public schools to create an educated community so that we can all thrive. Through public schools I was given the opportunity to be the first in my family to attend college, to pursue leadership roles, and discover the value of community.

After witnessing failed voucher programs in other states (Iowa, Utah, Arkansas, & Florida), it is even more critical that we keep public tax dollars in public schools. These failed Education Tax Credits divert funds that can improve our public education to subsidize private choices of some parents. Instead of providing tax credits to Kansans choosing not to send their children to public schools, legislature should be created to use those tax dollars to fully fund special education, that is currently underfunded by \$173 million. There is no oversight once our tax dollars are given to private schools and homeschools. Public schools are a public service and paid for by everyone, regardless if they are used by them or not. Vouchers are welfare for the wealthy and these families can already afford the choice to send their children to private school.

Thank you for your time and commitment to helping hard-working Kansans raise families with our public education in mind while voting no on bill SB 75.

Sincerely,
Danielle Giarla
Lenexa Resident

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Joan T. Gilson, PhD Writerslife2012@gmail.com

Retired Teacher, Grandparent and Parent, Shawnee Mission School District 512, Private Citizen

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to ask that you not proceed with action on SB 75, a measure to further expand the tax credit scholarship to private schools. This bill drains funds from Kansas public school systems, schools which are already experiencing strained budgets as a result of unfunded special education programs.

Special education, which is only provided in limited form in Kansas private schools, is now mandated by Federal statute and will be for the foreseeable future. These programs require careful management of tax funds and strict budgeting in order to ensure these students receive appropriate education and training in order to become contributing members of society.

Private schools have neither the mission nor means to address these requirements. Diverting tax dollars into private school budgets will be a misguided legislative act at the expense of Kansas taxpayers, who are already suffering under inflation and who need strong public school systems.

The economic health of Kansas is the most compelling reason not to expand tax credits. Thriving, well supported public school systems have been shown repeatedly to support local and state-wide economic development and job growth.¹ Public schools are engines of prosperity.² However, research overwhelmingly indicates that taxpayer-funded vouchers have had a pronounced negative effect on student achievement, and student achievement is the basis of a strong local and state economy.¹

Thank you for serving on this committee. I realize that legislative work is often a time-consuming, thankless job, and we appreciate your thoughtful approach to the task of supporting Kansas and Kansans.

Sincerely,

Joan T. Gilson, PhD

13850 W. 91st Ter. Apt. 512D

Lenexa, KS 66215

¹ "Linking Education Policy to Labor Market Outcomes." (2008) Fasih, Tazeen. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank.

"Public Education Expenditures, Taxation, and Growth: Linking Data to Theory." Blankenau, William F. et al. (May 2007) American Economic Review, pp. 393-397.

² "Pennsylvania's Best Investment: The Social and Economic Benefits of Public Education." Mitra, Dana. Pennsylvania State University.

³ "7 Lessons About School Vouchers From The Privateers Greene, Peter. (Oct 31, 2024) Forbes
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/petergreene/2024/10/30/7->

SB 75 Opposition Testimony

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Bailey Goodman, baileygoodman007@gmail.com

Parent in Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 75. Thank you for your dedicated service to our community. I currently have a child attending public school in the same district and even the very same elementary school I attended as a child. As someone who deeply values public education, I understand its critical role in shaping an educated society and fostering the vitality of our communities. Our public schools are a cornerstone of opportunity and growth, and investing in them is essential for the future of our state and its citizens.

- Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that are accountable to taxpayers.
- Education Tax Credits divert funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education to subsidize the private choices of some parents thus having the same negative impact as a voucher program.
- This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a private choice to receive a religious or other non-public education, many who can easily afford that choice.
- Instead of providing tax credits to Kansans choosing not to send their kids to public school, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education that is currently underfunded by \$173 million.

I urge you to vote **NO** on SB 75. This bill threatens the very foundation of our public education system, which is vital to fostering an educated society and sustaining the strength of our communities. Please stand with those who value and depend on public schools by rejecting SB 75.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration—I trust you will make the right decision.

Bailey Goodman

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Erin Gould

erinlgould@gmail.com

Erin Gould – Citizen and parent of three public school graduates

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my **opposition to bill SB 75**.

Tax credits in exchange for enrollment in private school is a **misuse of tax funds**. These credits are funding personal choices at the cost of income the state would have otherwise received and used on services that help all Kansans and their communities.

What I find particularly galling about this proposal is the refusal to include any sort of meaningful oversight. **How will we know the children enrolled in private schools are safe and being successfully educated?**

If public funds are going to be handed out (or not collected) for the purpose of education, **the state has an obligation to guarantee that the education being purchased with those funds, at the very least, meets the Rose Standards**. Unless schools receiving tax credit funds of any amount are required to provide regular, meaningful evidence that educational benchmarks required by the Kansas Supreme Court are being met, this bill does nothing but harm Kansas. It reduces state income with no guarantee of even a child's minimum education in return.

This bill is wasteful. This bill puts no conditions on the financial and educational viability of schools that a family can spend credit funds on. If non-accredited private schools fail to educate a child successfully, the lack of testing requirements ensure we won't know. What's worse, if we did know, we have no way to claw back the credits given to the family when they fail to educate their child.

Similarly, what do we do about families which choose schools that are continually "working" towards accreditation (Line 19) but never actually get there? How many years do they get the full \$8,000 credit for enrollment in a school that doesn't even meet minimum accreditation standards? There is absolutely no mechanism in this bill that protects the state's financial interest. The bill allows the state to give a credit for nothing. It has no oversight and no consequences when the credit funds are misused.

This bill does not protect the state in any way and it risks the educational future of children. If this bill passes, Kansas will be giving up income that could serve all Kansans without any mechanism to ensure that the educations being purchased with the credits come anywhere close to meeting the standards Kansas courts have determined to be the most basic requirements. **I urge you to vote NO on this bill.**

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Krista Gordon, kristag71@gmail.com
Parent in Blue Valley School District, Certified Teacher, School District Employee

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Greetings. I would like to thank you for your time and for being a public servant on behalf of Kansans. I am also writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 75.

I oppose SB 75 for many reasons, but I am sharing my top three today:

1. **Public tax dollars belong with public schools.** I have seen that public schools work for families. I am a parent of three children, two that have graduated to attend rigorous college programs. Both that graduated were AP scholars and one was National Merit Scholar. My current Blue Valley student will also graduate well prepared and with honors. The well-funded educational programs, including special education services in Kansas public schools, helped set them and thousands more up for success. One final note- living in the Kansas City area, we know the most elite private schools are in Missouri. Sending kids across the state line **drains Kansas schools of money and talent.**
2. **Private schools are not available to all, they get to choose who to accept.** Families with children with special needs, disabilities, or those for whom English is not their first language will not benefit from these tax credits as few private schools can accommodate their needs. As a former special education teacher, I understand the importance of providing support to children and families with special needs. Special education programs are critical to success and if provided early on can mitigate costs for the state down the road by helping students maximize their potential. **Instead of providing tax credits to Kansans choosing not to send their kids to public school, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education that is currently underfunded.**
3. **My final concern is the lack of oversight.** I have reviewed some of the watered down homeschool curriculum. I have experience with subpar parochial schools (I attended one myself.) If Kansas wants well prepared and educated citizens, we must hold schools to high, measurable standards. Kansas currently ranks around the middle nationwide for education outcomes- with some districts faring better than others. Examine how our neighbors, Oklahoma and Arkansas, have done by reducing funding and focusing on the wrong public education priorities. They both sit near the bottom in the country for education outcomes, harming families. That could be Kansas one day. **A strong public education system provides benefits to the entire society, not just the individual students.**

I ask you to oppose SB75. This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve **all** people instead of a select few. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Krista Gordon

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Chris Graham
Parent, USD 412 Hoxie Community Schools

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75.

Public money should not be used to fund private education. It is also well-known that the beneficiaries of this policy would be wealthy families with students already in private schools, that most students have no access to private education based on geography alone, that rural citizens would be subsidizing urban and suburban private schools, and that Kansas (or any other state) cannot afford to pay for multiple school systems. It is also telling that the hearing notice was biased toward the few supporters of this bill. Why would the committee do that if they thought this was a popular and important issue, and not yet another way to tilt the playing field toward their preferred ideological partners?

I urge you to vote NO on bill SB 75



Kansas National
Education Association

Making public schools great for every child

KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Written Only – Opponent of SB 75
For the Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Timothy R. Graham
Director of Government Relations & Legislative Affairs

Chairperson Erickson, members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 75.

Kansas NEA is a member-driven organization that represents all 40,000 educators in the state of Kansas. We have nearly 22,000 members. The positions we advocate for have been proposed, debated, and adopted by several hundred members that were selected by their peers to attend our annual Representative Assembly.

Our members have a strong stance on vouchers that is quite clear. The first part of that resolution reads:

Kansas NEA believes that voucher plans, tuition tax credits, or funding formulas that have the effect of financing private education with public funds, undermine support for public schools. Such programs could lead to racial, economic, and social isolation of students and weaken or destroy the public school system.

SB 75 could cost the state as much as \$125 million in lost revenues in the first fiscal year alone. This type of loss of revenue would be **harmful** in the first few years. However, the aggressive growth factor that is written into the bill could lead to **devastating** losses of revenue in the years to come. Other tax policies that have either passed, or are slated to be debated this year, are increasingly shifting new financial responsibilities to the state general fund. KNEA continues to warn that, at some point, this approach will not be sustainable.

The KNEA resolution on vouchers continues to state:

KNEA acknowledges that it is the right of parents/guardians to choose to send their students to private schools...

...KNEA further believes that any private school or agency that receives public funding through voucher plans, tax credits, or other funding/financial arrangements must be subject to all accountability measures and regulations required of public schools.

SB 75 does not ensure that private schools that receive public funds are held to the same standards as public schools. As a matter of fact, SB 75 doesn't require any language regarding accountability, measurement, licensure, accreditation, assessment, or service requirements. The omission of such language is another reason that KNEA opposes this bill.

In closing, the most painful part for teachers when talking about such bills is the rhetoric seems to follow them. These proposals always appear to be predicated upon the assumption that public schools and, in turn, public school teachers are not thriving to meet the needs of Kansas children. This is not the case.

We ask the committee to oppose SB 75.

SB 75 OPPOSITION TESTIMONY

Senate Education Committee

January 28, 2025

Mary Granatino at mmgranatino@gmail.com

Private citizen in Johnson County, KS Retired Educator

Chair Erickson and members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to SB 75. As a career educator, now retired, I worked in both public and private schools. They each have their advantages. And a big advantage of public schools is they must serve every type of student therefore they have developed a broad range of teaching strategies. Private schools can be exclusionary and therefore will exclude students with learning difficulties and thus limit the resources for these students. If funds for education are allotted to private schools, it is against the ideal of providing quality education to every student.

My four children attended public schools primarily and they were well prepared for college and beyond. I would wish that for every student in Kansas. And if parents have the resources and choose to send their students to a private school, that is a sacrifice they must be willing to make, but not at the expense of those not as economically well off.

For the good of all the students in Kansas, I urge you to not undermine our public schools. Vote no on SB75.

Sincerely,

Mary Granatino

SB 75 Opposition Testimony
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Laura Gray, lmdgimportant@gmail.com
Taxpayer and Private Citizen

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I want to express my opposition to bill SB 75. Thank you for valuing the views and positions of the people who support Kansas public schools.

My sister-in-law was a teacher in the Olathe schools for 37 years and my son and grandchildren were or are being educated in these schools.

I oppose SB 75 for the following reasons.

1. I strongly believe in personal responsibility. If parents choose to home school or send their child to a private school, it is both their right **and** responsibility to pay for that choice.
2. Funding should be used for public schools. Strong public schools attract businesses to the state.
3. Education tax credits and vouchers divert funding that can be used to strengthen our public schools and lessen the personal financial burden on teachers.

I am asking you to vote no on SB 75 to ensure that public schools in Kansas receive the full benefit of taxpayer dollars.

Sincerely,

Laura Gray

Testimony in Opposition to Bill SB 75
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025
Stacy Gramza
Parent in USD 265 Goddard School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition to bill SB 75.

I was born and raised in Wichita, Kansas and attended USD 259 Wichita Public Schools Kindergarten through 12th grade. My mother, sister, and most of my closest friends all have worked for years for Wichita Public Schools. As a parent now, I am grateful for the great public school districts available to us. My children currently attend public schools in Goddard, Kansas and I am a proud supporter of public education in the state of Kansas.

My husband and I cannot afford private school for our children and we both work outside the home so we are unable to homeschool. Even if we could, we honestly would still opt to send our children to public schools. I believe that our public schools need our support and our parental involvement. Our public schools are where children with the greatest need receive life-changing opportunities. Our public schools are where everyone is welcome and a diverse, unique opportunity for learning about the worldview through the perspectives of others unfold.

The biggest reason why we won't send our children to private schools or choose to homeschool is because I want my children to be exposed to all types of people from all walks of life. Look at the statistics of private schools. These are primarily all affluent families that have enough money to willingly send their children to private schools. The private schools (who can choose who to accept or reject any student at any time, who do not have to offer special services, and can easily be manipulated and bullied by the parents) will not suddenly open their doors to all children simply because they can pay the bill. They will likely continue to exclude families based on several factors that are typically considered protected classes, all in the name of pushing their own agenda in education.

This money should be used to improve our public schools. It should be used to update facilities, improve technological offerings, and increase teacher and faculty pay so that we can attract and retain the best of the best teachers. It should be used to help support special education and mental health and the various needs of those students and families. This is an opportunity for Kansas. Instead of creating a larger gap between private school resources and public-school resources, Kansas has the opportunity and obligation to its citizens to take this money and pour it back into the public school system. Kansas can give all the children an opportunity to be successful, self-sufficient, responsible adults driving innovation and efficiency for years to come. If Kansas diverts this funding to parents who only value private schools and homeschooling, how many children will be left behind? How many first-generation college students will never be? How many children will be stuck in the cycle of generational poverty because they weren't afforded a high-quality education because their state gave more money to the wealthiest families, and their family got left behind? Kansas should fully fund public schools to make them the best in the nation.

Even without this tax rebate, more and more people have been pulling their students out of public schools and moving to homeschooling and private schools. They don't need an incentive to do it – they're already doing it. Save the money and reinvest it in improving access to high quality education for the entire state of Kansas. Not just the major metro areas, but the rural areas that so desperately need this funding.

Make Kansas the state that stands behind its public education system – that sees the value in equal opportunities for all people. Kansas can control the public education system, and therefore, that system should get more money and more resources to make it the best of the best. Make our public education system so great that it is an attractive competitor to private schools or homeschool options. Our public schools do and can continue to make a very real difference in people's lives. But to opt to give our hard-earned tax dollars to the wealthiest in the state could have devastating generational impacts.

Please do not move forward with bill SB 75.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Stacy Gramza

SB 75 Opposition Testimony

Senate Education Committee

January 27, 2025

Becky Gunn

Private Citizen and past parent in Shawnee Mission School District

Chair Erickson & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my **opposition to bill SB 75**.

I pay my taxes to go to a general fund that helps ALL Kansans whether that is to build strong roads or schools across our wide state. I oppose any portion of my taxes going to support a small group of families who make a choice to send their children to a privately owned school. We have a public school system for a reason in this country and state and as citizens we should demand our tax dollars go to bettering that system and not abandoning it by using its funds to support tax credits to the minority of families who have made a choice to exit that system.

My children our graduates of the Shawnee Mission School district and got a great education due to the funds provided by we the tax payers. Please vote NO on bill SB75 and keep Kansas Public Education strong.

Sincerely,

Becky Gunn