



CATHOLIC DIOCESE  
of SALINA

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TO: Madam Chair Senator Erickson and members of the Senate Education Committee

FROM: Geoff Andrews, Superintendent of Schools, Salina Diocese

DATE: February 6, 2025

Dear Madam Chair Erickson and committee members,

My name is Geoff Andrews, and I serve as the Superintendent of Schools for the Catholic Diocese of Salina. The Salina Diocese spans 26,000 square miles across north central and northwest Kansas, from the Flint Hills to Mount Sunflower, with schools located in mostly rural communities. I am here today in strong support of Senate Bill 87, which expands student eligibility under the tax credit for low-income students scholarship program, increases the amount of the tax credit for contributions made to this program, and provides for aggregate tax credit limit increases under certain conditions.

Over the past four years, the low-income tax credit scholarship program has provided critical assistance to 152 students within our diocese. Without this program, these students would most likely not have the opportunity to attend our Catholic schools. These students come from families facing financial hardships, and this scholarship program has allowed them to receive a high-quality, faith-based education that would otherwise be out of reach. Our Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) for the Salina Diocese has been instrumental in ensuring that these students have access to the resources they need to thrive academically and personally. The positive impact this program has had on our students and their families cannot be overstated.

I support Senate Bill 87 because I believe that more families should have access to the same opportunities that have benefited our students. Expanding student eligibility and increasing the tax credit amount will enable more children from low-income households to attend schools that best meet their educational needs.

I respectfully ask the committee to support SB 87 to ensure that more students can benefit from this life-changing program. Thank you for allowing me to share my testimony and for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Geoff Andrews  
Superintendent of Schools  
Salina Diocese

February 5, 2025

Mr. Adam and Mrs. Nicole Butler  
917 W 50<sup>th</sup> St S  
Wichita, Kansas  
[abbutler76@gmail.com](mailto:abbutler76@gmail.com)

**WRITTEN PROPONENT TESTIMONY FOR SB 87**

Thank you, Senate Education Committee Assistant, Cyndie for accepting my email. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 87, the low-income tax credit student scholarship bill.

My name is Adam Butler and my son Cole and daughter Arista attends St. Cecilia Catholic school. The low income tax credit scholarship program has significantly helped our school and the other schools in our diocese. We feel this is a topic at hand that our state must expand. Offering young people an education opportunity in our schools has been so highly valued. The changes to this program will be even more appealing. At the end of the day, it is the child that benefits the most.

In conclusion, please support SB 87. With your support, the children in the Wichita Catholic Diocese and other private schools have the opportunity for an education that best suits their needs.

Thank you.

Mr. Adam and Mrs. Nicole Butler  
Wichita, Kansas

1.31.25

Senate Education Committee  
Sb 87, Proponent, Written testimony only

Chairwoman Erickson and Committee Members,

I am a proponent on Sb 87. Moving this program to the State Treasurer Office is needed.  
Excepting schools with other accreditation's and not needing to be KESHA accredited is a needed.  
This is a clean up bill for the tax credit for Low Income Students Scholarship Program.

Please pass out of committee favorably Sb 87.

Thank you,  
Debbie Detmer  
kcjewel56@gmail.com

February 5, 2025

Jenni English  
2024 W. Douglas  
Wichita, KS  
jenglish@stjosephwichita.com

**WRITTEN PROPONENT TESTIMONY FOR SB 87**

Thank you, Senate Education Committee Assistant, Cyndie for accepting my email. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 87, the low-income tax credit student scholarship bill.

My name is Jenni English and my granddaughters, Sarah and Giannah Marshall attends St. Joseph Catholic school. The low income tax credit scholarship program has significantly helped our school and the other schools in our diocese. We feel this is a topic at hand that our state must expand. Offering young people an education opportunity in our schools has been so highly valued. The changes to this program will be even more appealing. At the end of the day, it is the child that benefits the most.

In conclusion, please support SB 87. With your support, the children in the Wichita Catholic Diocese and other private schools have the opportunity for an education that best suits their needs.

Thank you.

Jenni English  
316-655-6309

## **Proponent Testimony for SB87**

**Scott Feild**

**February 6, 2025**

**Student, Maranatha Christian Academy**

Chair Erikson and members of the committee I thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate bill 87 on behalf of Maranatha Christian Academy.

Hello, my name is Scott Feild and I am an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at Maranatha Christian Academy. Last year, me and my family noticed that public school was quickly growing away from our vision of how my education could expand. We started making connections that my problems academically, sprouted from carelessness and our views not matching with the schools. Then, I found that public school was not my only option. God blessed my parents with the necessary funds needed to afford going to Maranatha, but some and most families are not that fortunate. Once I began attending Maranatha, I noticed that this school fitted my needs like a glove. Though it can never be perfect, my education path drastically changed once I found a school that provided what I needed. I'm here today to say that I'm worried for the future generations of children that possibly can't find a school because their family isn't fortunate. However, I'm also here today to say that I have hope that one day, all Kansans can go to any school that they deem fit for them.

For example, why would someone with less-than-adequate grades aim for a school like Harvard? Or why would an engineer, someone whose skills are deeply rooted in logic and practicality, go to an art school? On the surface, it might seem like a mismatch, even contradictory. But that's the beauty of the idea that education isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. Schools, in their traditional sense, are often constructed around rigid standards and a set of expectations that don't always cater to the unique abilities and learning styles of every student.

The truth is schools are a crucial part of shaping every child's life. They provide structure, community, and opportunities, but if the school doesn't fit the child, if it doesn't align with their learning style, their passions, or their potential, then it becomes a struggle—not just for the child, but for the entire family. The misalignment between a child's needs and the school's offerings can lead to frustration, underachievement, and even a lack of self-belief. And yet, this mismatch happens every day.

So, why would anyone try to fit into a mold that doesn't work for them? That's where the dream of an ideal educational system comes in—a system where any Kansan, no matter their background or financial situation, has the freedom to attend the school that best suits their child's needs. A system where parents can look at their options and make decisions based on what will truly benefit their child, not based on the financial barriers that stand in the way.

I hope one day, we'll live in a world where education is not about squeezing every child into the same mold but about embracing their differences, nurturing their diverse talents, and opening doors to opportunities based on what they need, not what they can afford. Every child should have the chance to reach their fullest potential, and they should have the ability to pursue an education that's tailor-made for who they are.

Parents, not the government or the number on your bank statements are the ones who should decide where their child goes to school and invests so much time in. With the much-needed scholarship money for these families, every Kansas child can attend where they see as the best fit for them.



Brittany Jones Testimony in Support of S.B. 87

Senate Education

February 6, 2025

Chairwoman Erickson and members of the committee, my name is Brittany Jones. I am an attorney and the Director of Policy and Engagement for Kansas Family Voice. Kansas Family Voice believes that Kansas should be a place where life is cherished, religious freedom, & families thrive. We believe families thrive when they have freedom to choose how and where they educate their children. It is for these reasons that we urge your support of S.B. 87.

The low-income tax credit scholarship provides more educational flexibility for Kansas families. In an ever- changing educational environment, parents need every tool available to place their children in a learning environment that fits their child's individual needs. This program is a simple way to empower parents to choose. It has already helped hundreds of Kansas children receive an education that better suits their needs.

Educational freedom is based on one simple idea that parents should have the ability to send their kids to any school that will help their children thrive. It is a child and family centric model. It is not about pitting one type of schooling against another but simply empowering families to make the best choice for them.

More than a dozen other states have similar programs. As this program sees more and more use, it only makes sense to expand eligibility. This program is a great way to utilize the free market by incentivizing investment in our children's education, paired with giving families options who would not normally have educational options.

Parents are best positioned to know and raise their children. Educational institutions can be an asset to this relationship. Recognizing and protecting the fundamental relationship between a parent and their child is vital to ensuring the stability of our society. For these reasons, I ask that you vote S.B. 87 out favorably.

Thank you!

Proponent for Senate Bill #87: Low-Income Tax Credit Amendment  
For the Senate Education Committee  
Hearing Date: February 6, 2025  
Fr. Rick Kotrba  
Pastor, St. Cecilia's Catholic Parish and School, Haysville, KS

To whom it may concern:

My name is Fr. Rick Kotrba, I'm the pastor of St. Cecilia's Catholic Church in Haysville, KS where we have a Catholic school of just over 100 students in grades Pre-K- 8. I first want to express my gratitude for the assistance we've received from Support For Catholic Schools, one of the state's Scholarship Granting Organizations, to help us provide education to our families and children qualifying for free and reduced lunches.

Because of the scholarships we have received, this has assisted our families within our parish as well as other families who were looking for a different education option than the school they were attending. I'd like to share the story of one of our students who has been here for three years now and came to our school in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. His mom inquired about our school and met with the principal and myself about her desire for a different education for her son. In his previous school, he was involved and blamed for being disruptive in his classroom and was falling behind academically. I asked both his mom and the young man if he would accept discipline and cooperate with both his teacher and his students if he was to come here, and they both agreed he would. Thankfully, he has had no problems since being here and his academic performance has improved drastically.

This would not have been possible if this single mother was expected to pay full tuition for her son's education here at our school as she could not afford it. She came on her own desiring a different possibility and hope for her son, and the scholarship he qualified for made it possible for us to help with his education.

This is one great success story of many. In my 4 years here, it has been very encouraging as our school receives new families and students, and to hear from them how excited they are and grateful they're now at our small school. We are very blessed to be able to provide this opportunity for those who do not have the financial means to pursue this for themselves.

I also recognize that the number of children qualifying for these scholarships is increasing each year as more grades become eligible for the scholarship. Because of the growing number of scholarships granted, I'd ask that the state legislation would consider increasing the total amount available for tax credit by changing from 75% to 100% tax credit and increasing the total available for tax credit.

Thanks for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Fr. Rick Kotrba", written in a cursive style.

Father Rick Kotrba





**Proponent of SB 87  
For the Senate Education Committee  
February 6, 2025  
AJ Kuhle  
ACE Scholarships**

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 87 on behalf of ACE Scholarships.

My name is AJ Kuhle, and I am the President of ACE Scholarships Kansas & Missouri. Since 2016, ACE has been providing K-12 private school scholarships to low-income Kansas students, transforming lives through educational freedom.

We are dedicated to ensuring that every child—regardless of their financial circumstances—has access to a quality education that best fits their unique needs. We believe families deserve the freedom to choose the school that works best for their children, whether that be public, private, charter, or homeschool.

This year, ACE awarded more than 14,000 scholarships to students attending approximately 1,100 partner schools across 12 states, including 351 scholarships through the tax credit program here in Kansas, where we partner with 85 schools.

ACE strongly supports SB 87, which aims to expand student eligibility under the tax credit for low-income students scholarship program and increase the tax credit for contributions made to such programs.

Increasing the tax credit to 100 percent of contributions will strengthen our ability to raise funds for the program while making Kansas more competitive with neighboring states' programs. This improvement will enable more Kansas donors to contribute to scholarships, helping additional students access quality education.

The inclusion of an automatic escalator to allow the program to grow with demand as we approach the \$10 million tax credit cap will also allow for natural scaling and an increased ability to get scholarships to more Kansas students statewide in the years to come. Our applications have nearly tripled in just three years.

Finally, technical changes to when notifications of student eligibility are made by KSDE will speed up application times, allow for smoother award processes, and help families and schools make informed enrollment decisions earlier than has been possible in recent years.

But beyond the numbers, this is about transforming lives. You will hear from ACE families on how they have benefited from a scholarship. This program is a lifeline for Kansas students and families who need educational opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach. We respectfully thank this committee for your commitment to supporting students, families, and schools across our state.

Thank you.

Martha Moreno

Representing Self

[Marthamoreno6267@gmail.com](mailto:Marthamoreno6267@gmail.com)

(913) 938-9142

2008 North 6 Street, Kansas City, Kansas 66101

SB 87 - 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.

Proponent

February 6, 2025

Submitted in Spanish:

Chairwoman Erickson y miembros del comité,

Con mucho placer, les dirijo esta carta para informar que la beca ACE Scholarship ha hecho un gran impacto en la educación de mis hijos. Les pedimos, por favor, que mantengan esta gran oportunidad de ayuda para el beneficio estudiantil de niños de bajos recursos y les agradecemos por tomarse el tiempo y la dedicación para seguir adelante con este proyecto.

La educación es la base para obtener un mejor futuro, y por eso les pido de la manera más atenta que continúen con esta ayuda que ha marcado la diferencia en nuestro hogar. Nuestra dirección está en la ciudad de Kansas City, Kansas (2008 North 6 Street, Kansas City, Kansas 66101), y la escuela a la que asisten mis hijos está ubicada en Maurer Road, de nombre Midland Adventist Academy School.

Estoy escribiendo para pedirle a la legislatura que apoye el proyecto de ley **SB 87**, que permitirá que más familias como la mía continúen beneficiándose de esta ayuda educativa tan importante.

Dios los bendiga y los guíe para seguir con el mismo ímpetu y energía, para que los niños, el futuro del mañana, mantengan este gran apoyo que ha sido de enorme beneficio en su educación. Muchísimas gracias a todo el gran equipo y al personal que hace posible esta causa. Que la bendición de nuestro Padre Celestial los acompañe a ustedes y a sus familias.

Les enviamos un abrazo caluroso y un saludo con todo respeto.

**Atentamente,**

Martha Moreno Enriquez

Madre de familia agradecida

English Translation:

Chairwoman Erickson and members of the committee,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter to inform you that the ACE Scholarship has had a significant impact on my children's education. We kindly ask that you continue this incredible opportunity for students from low-income families, and we sincerely appreciate the time and dedication you put into carrying this project forward.

Education is the foundation for a better future, which is why I respectfully ask you to continue this support that has made a difference in our home. Our address is in Kansas City, Kansas (2008 North 6 Street, Kansas City, Kansas 66101), and my children attend Midland Adventist Academy School, located on Maurer Road.

I am writing to urge the legislature to support **SB 87**, which will allow more families like mine to continue benefiting from this crucial educational assistance.

May God bless and guide you to continue with the same enthusiasm and energy so that children—the future of tomorrow—can maintain access to this great support, which has been incredibly beneficial to their education. Many thanks to the entire team and staff who make this cause possible. May our Heavenly Father's blessings be with you and your families.

We send you a warm embrace and our deepest respect.

**Sincerely,**  
Martha Moreno Enriquez  
A grateful mother

**Cyndie Rexer**

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**From:** Jennifer Riddel <jriddel@stjosephwichita.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 5, 2025 8:41 AM  
**To:** Senate Education  
**Subject:** SB87

February 5, 2025  
Jennifer Riddel  
621 S Glenn St  
Wichita, KS 67213  
[jen\\_riddel@catholicexchange.com](mailto:jen_riddel@catholicexchange.com)

### **WRITTEN PROPONENT TESTIMONY FOR SB 87**

Thank you, Senate Education Committee Assistant, Cyndie for accepting my email. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 87, the low-income tax credit student scholarship bill.

My name is Jennifer Riddel and my children attend St. Joseph Catholic school. The low income tax credit scholarship program has significantly helped our school and the other schools in our diocese. We feel this is a topic at hand that our state must expand. Offering young people an education opportunity in our schools has been so highly valued. The changes to this program will be even more appealing. At the end of the day, it is the child that benefits the most.

In conclusion, please support SB 87. With your support, the children in the Wichita Catholic Diocese and other private schools have the opportunity for an education that best suits their needs.

Thank you.

Jennifer Riddel

Jennifer Riddel  
St. Joseph Catholic School

*"Educating all pupils in the Catholic faith tradition as responsible stewards, respectfully serving all humanity."*

Stephanie Sanderson  
Representing Self  
Stephsanderson23@gmail.com  
Salina, KS

SB 87 - 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.

Proponent  
February 6, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and a members of the committee,

My name is Stephanie Sanderson and I am asking you to support SB 87. We have four children, ages 6-16. Because of the help we receive from ACE Scholarships, our children have been blessed to attend an excellent private school in our town. Our children have thrived under the education that we have been able to provide for them. Our school wants to be affordable for every student no matter what their income, and ACE Scholarships is a huge part of making that possible. We would love to see more families attend our school, and I know that an expanded tax credit program would greatly impact many families' ability to do so. I know of many people who do not even consider private school because of the cost. Many of these children would greatly benefit from the opportunity to attend a private school. Please expand the tax credit so that more and more families have the opportunity to provide the best education for their children. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Stephanie Sanderson

February 5, 2025

Kandace Skolaut  
12407 W. Ridgepoint Ct.  
Wichita, KS 67235  
[kandaceskolaut@yahoo.com](mailto:kandaceskolaut@yahoo.com)

**WRITTEN PROPONENT TESTIMONY FOR SB 87**

Thank you, Senate Education Committee Assistant, Cyndie for accepting my email. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 87, the low-income tax credit student scholarship bill.

My name is Kandace Skolaut and my children Mary, Lucia, and Paul attend Bishop Carroll and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic schools. The low income tax credit scholarship program has significantly helped our school and the other schools in our diocese. We feel this is a topic at hand that our state must expand. Offering young people an education opportunity in our schools has been so highly valued. The changes to this program will be even more appealing. At the end of the day, it is the child that benefits the most.

In conclusion, please support SB 87. With your support, the children in the Wichita Catholic Diocese and other private schools have the opportunity for an education that best suits their needs.

Thank you.

Kandace Skolaut  
Wichita, Kansas



Hello, Chairwoman Erickson and members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Jordan Zakery. I am speaking on behalf of ExcelinEd in Action, a national, bipartisan education policy think tank founded by Governor Jeb Bush. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on behalf of SB 87

Currently, Kansas offers the Tax Credit for Low Income Students Scholarship Program, an educational choice program, that serves more than 1300 students statewide.

This program has allowed students, regardless of their means, to access an educational environment of their choice.

SB 87 offers the following key improvements to the program:

- Removes the programs prior public enrollment provision, allowing more students to timely exercise choice and attend a school that best meets their needs.
- An increase in the credit value from 70 percent to 100 percent over multiple to encourage donations and support the neediest students.
- Eligibility is extended to foster kids, military kids, and children of first responders.

Together these improvements equate to more students from at-need populations gaining additional access to a school of their choice. These improvements mean strengthening a program that supports students and parents.

In fact, a late 2022 survey released by the Kansas Policy Institute and EdChoice, found that nearly 4 in 5 parents with students participating in the program were satisfied with their student's experience in the program.

Additionally, in the same report, only 7 percent of participants responded they would be able to have their child attend their current private school if not for the program. It is clear this program has empowered many families with the needed resources and financial means to put their children in a school that works best for their individual needs.

SB 87 is a keep-doing-what-you're-doing bill. It supports a program that empowers students and families with educational options. It tells a parent that the legislature supports them in finding a school that works best for their kid.

This legislation takes a sensible approach to supporting the responsible growth of a program that serves the neediest Kansas students. For these reasons, ExcelinEd in Action urges your support of SB 87.

Best,  
Jordan Zakery  
Legislative Director-Midwest  
ExcelinEd in Action





**ExcelinEd**  
*in Action*

Hello, Chairwoman Erickson and members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Jordan Zakery. I am speaking on behalf of ExcelinEd in Action, a national, bipartisan education policy think tank founded by Governor Jeb Bush. Thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on behalf of SB 87

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Best,  
Jordan Zakery  
Legislative Director-Midwest  
ExcelinEd in Action