

February 9, 2023

Testimony to the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee

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TITLE: Kansas Citizen

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BILL NUMBER: SB 128, Opportunity Tax Credit

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Oral

Dear Chair & Members of the Committee:

I am voicing my opposition to Senate Bill SB 128. I am a proud graduate of the Kansas public schools, and my professional success is a testament to the high-quality education I received. I have returned to the state after 15 years with the intent to support the community that invested so much in my education and future.

I request that you please vote no on Senate Bill 128 as it prioritizes tax avoiders over Kansas children, 90% of whom benefit from our public education system. It's short-sighted to amplify the loud voices of the few focused on lowering their tax bill today over the chorus of our state's future.

SB 128 essentially pays families (via a tax credit) to send their kids to private schools. Just taking into consideration the students already attending private schools, this bill will reduce the state general funds by over \$130 million (26,000 students x \$5,100 base aid per pupil). We cannot afford to reduce the state general funds when the state is currently underfunding special education by \$160 million. Public tax dollars are for the public good. The state should fully fund special education, not private schools. Reimbursing families for their tuition paid to private schools via a reduction in their taxes owed drains the public schools of needed resources for successful student learning. Will Kansas still be an attractive place for employers and their employees when our public schools are highlighted in the press for falling output as a result of losing funding from this bill?

Furthermore, SB 128 lacks a way to assess if taxpayer dollars diverted to private or home schools are being used properly or measured. Taxpayer dollars should require the same oversight and transparency as our public schools. Continued research in other states demonstrates that students using public tax dollars to attend private schools (aka vouchers) are not achieving better outcomes.

I respectfully request that you vote no on Senate Bill SB 128. This bill will negatively impact not only students, but all Kansans.

Sincerely,

Hilary Junk

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