



## Testimony to House Education Committee

### HB 2400 – Tax Credit Scholarships

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James Franko, Vice President / Policy Director

Chairwoman Kelley and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 2400. There is no silver bullet in K-12 education reform, but many states across the country are enacting tax credit scholarship programs to help make an effective education accessible to more students.

This bill sends a strong message that Kansas' education system will place individuals over institutions. Certainly, many kids receive a quality education in Kansas, but the facts also make clear that many do not. Unfortunately, one of the student groups lagging behind their peers are children of low income. There are many reasons why these children underperform their more economically-secure peers, but it should be noted that it *is not because they cannot learn*. It is simply that too often they have not been given the opportunity.

4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading (NAEP)					
	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011
<b>All Students</b>					
% Below Basic	34	34	28	28	29
% Proficient	33	32	36	35	36
<b>Low Income Students</b>					
% Below Basic	49	47	43	40	42
% Proficient	18	20	21	22	23

4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math (NAEP)					
	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011
<b>All Students</b>					
% Below Basic	15	12	11	11	10
% Proficient	41	47	51	46	48
<b>Low Income Students</b>					
% Below Basic	25	20	19	18	15
% Proficient	24	30	34	32	33

The National Assessment of Educational Progress demonstrates the difference in achievement for low income children compared to higher income students.

This is data from a national exam and looks at all students from a statistically valid and representative sample of Kansas pupils.

It is also worth noting that student achievement on state exams illustrates the same point. Data for selected Kansas school districts is provided in the chart below.

**Percentage of low income and non-low income students performing at “meets standard” and above on the Kansas State Assessment:**

District Name	Student Demographic Group	Year					
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Wichita	Low Income	57.8%	60.2%	63.9%	64.8%	66.4%	71.3%
Wichita	Non Low Income	81.4%	78.5%	83.1%	83.9%	85.9%	88.8%
Wichita	Difference	23.6%	18.3%	19.2%	19.1%	19.5%	17.5%
Winfield	Low Income	61.1%	64.5%	72.4%	74.5%	85.4%	84.4%
Winfield	Non Low Income	76.5%	77.9%	84.6%	88.5%	91.4%	92.6%
Winfield	Difference	15.4%	13.4%	12.2%	14.0%	6.0%	8.2%
Ft Larned	Low Income	82.6%	80.7%	88.3%	86.0%	85.5%	76.5%
Ft Larned	Non Low Income	87.6%	90.0%	93.0%	93.9%	94.5%	91.8%
Ft Larned	Difference	5.0%	9.3%	4.7%	7.9%	9.0%	15.3%
Kansas City	Low Income	48.5%	51.0%	56.0%	60.9%	65.2%	67.8%
Kansas City	Non Low Income	63.5%	55.0%	70.2%	72.8%	80.8%	83.8%
Kansas City	Difference	15.0%	3.9%	14.2%	11.9%	15.6%	16.0%
Shawnee Mission	Low Income	65.6%	67.1%	72.8%	76.5%	80.4%	81.5%
Shawnee Mission	Non Low Income	88.7%	88.2%	92.1%	93.6%	94.6%	94.1%
Shawnee Mission	Difference	23.1%	21.1%	19.3%	17.1%	14.2%	12.6%

Again, many or even most students across Kansas get a quality education. However, even the lawyers representing Schools for Fair Funding in the recent *Gannon v. State of Kansas* lawsuit testified that too many children are being left behind. Some are forced to attend underperforming public schools while others struggle to find the right fit to suit individual needs. This is not to say that teachers and school administrators are not amongst our most dedicated citizens. It is simply a recognition of fact and experience.

HB 2400 aims to rectify that statement and the numbers outlined above. For some, moving to a different school district simply is not an option as money or career prevent their moving. They send their kids to school based on a zip code and hope for the best. For many, the zip code-directed district is sufficient but the numbers suggest that it does not work for everyone.

Kansas Policy Institute is a strong supporter of Kansas public schools and wants them to be the best in country. Our public schools, our teachers, and our administrators spend their lives helping young people learn. Those schools will always be the place where the vast majority of Kansas families send their children to learn.

However, the goal is not to have good public schools in and of themselves. The goal is give every Kansas child the opportunity to succeed. That will mean attending a high-performing public school for most children, but it should also include a different avenue for children where the local public school does not seem to be the right fit.

A tax credit scholarship program for low income and special needs students is but one of the many ways this is being accomplished around the country and should be implemented in Kansas as well.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present today. I urge the committee to support HB 2400 and will stand for questions at an appropriate time.