

# Kansas Families for Education

Demanding Excellent Public Education for All Children

Testimony in opposition of House Bill 2374, House Education Committee, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to this committee, for considering these comments. Kansas Families for Education stands opposed to this legislation on grounds that it is unfunded, inequitable, and potentially unconstitutional. It is the policy position of Kansas Families for Education to oppose the expansion of tax credit scholarships now, the same as we have opposed them in the past.

Just last year a virtually identical bill had a hearing in the House Education Committee – HB 2457. To that, Kansas Families for Education testified: “Private schools run by religious institutions have no obligation to provide accredited education to students; to operate under any sort of oversight; to accept students with special needs, disabilities, or behavioral problems; or to retain them if they prove more expensive to educate than their tuition payment purchases – unlike public schools. This is the crux of private education. It is easier to educate intelligent and motivated students who are well supported by college educated parents at home, making them more desirable for private schools. High needs students, those who arrive without the benefit of prior rigorous education, students from low income households, and students with less educated parents, typically require more intensive efforts by educators to make up for these deficits. A low income family benefiting from this scholarship would have no means of recourse if they were jilted midyear – at private schools, no students or their families do. There is no school board to appeal to and the school isn't obligated to educate everyone in the way that public schools are. But that's not the end. Students dropped midyear return to their public school, which won't receive full state funding for that student, thereby exacerbating the problem of underfunded public schools.”

All of these problems with the concept of tax credit scholarships, are still problems. The bottom line is that tax credit scholarships take money from highly regulated public schools with high standards, and launder money through scholarship granting organizations in an attempt to minimize litigation regarding First Amendment Establishment Clause violations, and in order to give said money to schools which operate without any oversight or even the same state standards which public schools are held to. The proponents of this bill would have us believe that this transfer will somehow improve student performance despite evidence to the contrary. And finally, all public schools in Kansas are accredited; the same cannot be said of the private schools our public tax dollars would be diverted to under this plan.

On behalf of public school students and their parents all across this state, I urge this committee not to expand on the current tax credit, and to repeal it as it currently exists.

Thank you to the chair and the committee for your time and consideration.

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