

House K-12 Budget Committee

Written testimony in support of HB 2465: Amending the tax credit for low income student scholarship program act to expand student eligibility.

January 26, 2021

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Madam Chair and members of the House K-12 Budget Committee:

I am Dr. Delia Shropshire, President of Holy Savior Catholic Academy in the Diocese of Wichita. I am both humbled and honored to speak on behalf of school choice and what it has meant to our inner core Catholic school. First and foremost, the impact on families has been tremendous in that families who would not normally have the opportunity to enroll their children in a Catholic school now have that choice. We know that it is not about public vs. private, it is about our children being successful. We also know that every child develops, learns, and flourishes in different environments. With this opportunity, we can ensure that every child has the chance to learn, grow and develop in an academic environment that meets their needs academically, culturally, socially, emotionally and spiritually. This year our number of tax credit students increased in our school by 50% while many other schools' enrollment declined due to COVID-19.

In the Adverse Childhood Experience Study (ACES) it has been identified that children who live in poverty experience more stress and trauma than children who do not. Childhood trauma and stress adversely impact the brain and the brain cannot recover until certain social emotional conditions are met according to brain scans and medical studies. Children in at-risk, in trauma and/or under stress (not will not, or refuse to learn) but cannot learn until they are in an environment where they feel accepted. School choice is necessary for families to match a learning environment with their child's need so they can learn and be successful.

Every child that becomes a successful contributing member of society saves the state millions of dollars. We have a student who has entered our school through this wonderful opportunity of School Choice in Kindergarten from a low income family. He is an African American male who has academic and social – emotional challenges. The stressors of the family were not only difficult for him but also he did not have the tools to positively express himself. Initially it appeared to be a behavior or deficiency issue. However, in our classroom with a 12:1 ratio and with many adults positively rallying around him, especially our School Resource Teacher who we have been able to add to our team due to tax credit funding, he now receives the support and help he needs. The family also receives support from our Social Worker.

Imagine how many more students we can help if the law is expanded to families who qualify for reduced lunches. There are many reduced lunch eligible families each year who inquired to enroll but could not afford tuition. These families would be the beneficiaries of this bill. Imagine how much more successful schools can be when we share the enormous tasks of educating today's youth.