

**Testimony before Senate Assessment & Taxation Committee
SB 270 – Tax Credit Scholarship Program amendments
Presented by Mike O’Neal, Kansas Chamber CEO
Written only**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee

On behalf of The Kansas Chamber, I am pleased to submit testimony in support of SB 270, amending provisions of our recent law creating scholarship opportunities for eligible “at-risk” children through a tax credit program.

We appeared in support of this law when it was proposed and passed last year and support the proposed amendments contained in this bill, which broadens the program to benefit more at risk students. Our Kansas Chamber Legislative Agenda for 2015 contains a number of Education items, including a call to:

“Support efforts to offer parents and students a variety of educational choices regardless of their socio-economic status, and support efforts to create innovative school environments designed to maximize the educational experience of children who don’t thrive in traditional educational settings.”

The father of school choice is, of course, Milton Friedman. Friedman taught us that, while government may have a legitimate state interest in intervening in education for a variety of reasons, none of the reasons, including ensuring a certain level of education for the population or enabling the children of the poor or disadvantaged to attend schools, requires government to actually operate the schools. (Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice www.edchoice.org) Public schools that truly fulfill the education mission have nothing to fear from providing children and their families with educational choice. **The promise of education is a promise to the child, not a promise to a particular institution.**

Contributions by the private sector toward K-12 and higher education often go unnoticed, though billions of dollars have been donated through philanthropic endeavors of companies themselves and the businessmen and women who work for and run them. Those who question business’s contributions to education need look no further than the names inscribed on the hundreds of education buildings that dot our landscape. Many are our members. We applaud this law and look forward to partnering with the legislature to help provide students with a wider array of educational opportunities. They and their families will benefit and, in the process, Kansas and the Kansas workforce will benefit.



“...to continually strive to improve the economic climate for the benefit of every business and citizen and to safeguard our system of free, competitive enterprise”.