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Testimony to the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee

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BILL NUMBER: SB 128, Opportunity Tax Credit

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written

Dear Chair & members of the committee,

As a product of public schooling and spouse and son of teachers, I must submit this testimony opposing bill SB 128. This bill would negatively impact public schools by diverting public dollars to private schools. While allowing choice to families in KS sounds like a great idea, choice only works when all students can be accepted to all private schools. Voucher systems disadvantage our public schools and their students, especially those with special needs as they may not be accepted to a private school. This is even more worrisome when one considers that special education in KS is already underfunded.

I have concerns regarding the financial aspects of this bill. Expanding the current voucher system, as this bill proposes to do, will put the burden of funding ANY student seeking private schooling on the public. It also provides a 100% tax credit that unfairly incentivizes contributions toward private schooling over public. This bill expands the voucher program beyond its original intent to help at-risk students, allowing for potential abuse of the system. In addition to a lack of fiscal accountability, there seems to be a lack of academic accountability. Unaccredited schools should not be privy to the same funds as public schools who must meet the standards of the KS Board of Education, including curriculum requirements. It seems ironic that KS would want to fund schools that do not need to follow the same strict regulations that our BOE dictates.

In closing, I ask that you oppose bill SB 128. Thank you for your time and consideration.

James A. Butterworth
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