



**Oral opponent testimony on**

**SB 509**

**By**

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**In**

**Senate Tax Committee**

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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee, KASB appears today in opposition to SB 509.

As always, our testimony is directed by our member-affirmed legislative policy, which states:

**Section 3 – Public funding for public education**

*To ensure all students have the opportunity to succeed, all schools supported by public funds must serve all children on the same basis as public schools. We oppose programs including but not limited to vouchers, education savings accounts and tuition tax credits because such programs divert public funding from public education to schools which are not required to serve all students, including those who are disadvantaged, disabled, or those with the greatest needs.*

SB 509 would appropriate an unknown amount of income tax revenue from the State General Fund and funnel it to income-tax vouchers for undefined and unregulated spending and away from the public schools that serve nearly 500,000 Kansas children.

SB 509 does not require the non-accredited schools that would utilize the income-tax voucher to demonstrate their students are making any kind of academic progress. SB 509 doesn't require background checks for the staff of the non-accredited schools that would profit from the voucher. SB 509 doesn't require that non-accredited voucher schools report student abuse or neglect. In short, the accountability required of Kansas' public schools is woefully lacking in SB 509.

In Florida, Arizona, and Iowa, vouchers are used to subsidize tuition at private schools that serve wealthy students but exclude children with the greatest needs. Additionally, multiple reports show vouchers in those states are primarily supporting **existing private school enrollment**. We doubt that

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Kansans find that fair or acceptable, but SB 509 doesn't prohibit a similar scenario from taking place here.

KASB believes in the power of public schools to prepare every student for a bright future when public resources are invested in their success.

In 2023, a record-high 90 percent of Kansas seniors graduated from high school. In 2022-23, Kansas high school students earned 5,590 professional credentials, a 128% increase since 2009. And Kansas public-school students often perform as well or better than their private-school peers on state assessments.

Kansas public schools are the lifeblood of our smallest towns and our largest cities. Unfortunately, SB 509 puts those schools, students, and towns at risk by diverting tax revenue to unaccountable schools that aren't required to serve all children. Please join us in supporting Kansas public schools and rejecting SB 509.

***KASB is a non-profit service organization built on an abiding belief in Kansas public schools. We have put the needs of students and K-12 leaders first since 1917.***