

Mary Coffman
Private. Citizen
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HB 2136 Opposition Testimony
Opponent
House Committee on Education
February 3, 2025, 2025

Chair Estes & Members of the committee,

Date: January 27, 2025

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2136. I write to express my strong opposition to this proposed legislation, which I believe would severely undermine the public education system in Kansas.

As a retired executive who doesn't have children, I've always been proud to support public schools. I firmly believe that tax dollars should be used to fund public education.

HB 2136 would divert critical public tax dollars away from public schools and allocate them to private institutions that lack oversight, accountability, and equitable admissions practices. These tax credits disproportionately benefit wealthier families who already have the means to afford private education while draining essential resources from public schools that serve the majority of Kansas students, including those most in need.

Key Concerns:

1. Harm to Public Education:

Kansas public schools rely on consistent funding to provide quality education, hire and retain excellent teachers, and maintain infrastructure. Diverting funds to private schools through vouchers would weaken our public schools, leaving vulnerable students with fewer opportunities.

2. Tax Inequity:

The proposed \$8,000 tax credit would create a significant tax windfall for families opting out of public schools. A family with three children could claim \$24,000 in credits far exceeding typical private school tuition costs. This unfairly uses public dollars to subsidize private education for a small percentage of families, creating an unnecessary financial burden on all taxpayers.

3. Lack of Oversight and Discrimination:

Private schools receiving voucher funds are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools. They are free to deny admission based on factors such as religion, academic performance, or behavior. Public dollars should not support institutions that do not uphold inclusive and equitable access for all students.

4. Long-Term Community Impact:

Redirecting resources to private institutions erodes the collective investment in public education, a cornerstone of our democracy. Strong public schools benefit all Kansans, creating an educated workforce and vibrant communities. Public dollars belong in public schools, not in unregulated private institutions.

HB 2136 is not a solution to the challenges facing Kansas education. Instead, it would exacerbate inequities, harm public schools, and misuse taxpayer dollars. I urge you to reject this bill and focus on strengthening public education, which serves every child, regardless of background or income level.

I strongly encourage you to vote No on HB 2136.

Thank you for your consideration. I respectfully request that my testimony be added to the record in opposition to HB 2136.

Sincerely,

Mary Coffman

Overland Park