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BILL NUMBER: Bill HB 2136
PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent
ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written only
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Chair Estes & Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill number HB 2136. I am the mother to three children in the Blue Valley Public School District of Kansas. My husband and I rely heavily on the great education our children receive in the public school system. Not only general education, but the special education two of our three children have needed have allowed them to be successful and thriving students today. This will only help them to be intelligent and good contributing members of our community, state and country in the future. When my husband and I moved to Kansas City 11 years ago, we sought out the best public schools, not only for our children's education, but also knowing that strong public school systems create strong educated and economical communities. Public funds **DO NOT** belong in private schools. This is why I **STRONGLY oppose HB 2136** that would divert public funds into private schools.

For starters, the Tax Credit Scholarship program already exists in Kansas. There are still hundreds of thousands of students still eligible under the current guidelines who are not utilizing scholarships, thus there is no need for expansion.

Second, expanding the program to private school students will only take opportunities from the very students the Tax Credit Scholarship program was intended to help. Instead of expanding, accountability should be added to the current program to understand why these at-risk students aren't receiving scholarships. Additionally, private schools can choose to admit only the best and brightest students, leaving other children behind. Expanding the program to private school students, leaves fewer spots for the at-risk students the program was again intended to help.

Expanding the Tax Credit Scholarship program will also divert even more funds that could otherwise be used to improve public education, to subsidize the private choices of some parents

and allow donors to avoid paying taxes in Kansas. This program already allows for tax avoidance, especially for wealthy donors. Expanding the tax credit to 100% is even more egregious. The Tax Credit Scholarship program, like most voucher programs, is welfare for the wealthy.

Public tax dollars should remain with our public schools that accept and educate all children and that provide oversight for our tax dollars. We should not be expanding this program that already funnels tax payer dollars to private schools that lack oversight and are allowed to discriminate in admissions. This bill takes money that could be used to strengthen our public schools that serve all kids and gives it to families who have made a personal choice to receive a religious or other non-public education. Instead of providing tax credits to fund private schools, the legislature should be using those tax dollars to fully fund special education.

Furthermore, Our tax dollars should not go to private schools that lack oversight, leaving the public uninformed as to whether or not our tax dollars are really being spent to improve the lives of children. There are no controls in place to ensure eligible at-risk students who apply for a scholarship are granted one, as private schools are allowed to set their own admission standards. And there are no controls in place to ensure those who do receive scholarships receive a quality education. Kansans expect accountability for our tax dollars.

Lastly, rural students (and communities) are harmed as public school resources are drained and students in rural areas lack little to no private options. The Tax Credit Scholarship program primarily benefits those in suburban areas of our state. Rural taxpayers will end up subsidizing private school tuition for families in metro areas such as Johnson County, Wichita, and Topeka.

For all of these reasons, I ask you to **please vote NO on Bill HB2136.**

Thank you for your time, attention and consideration,

Eileen Knoblauch

Leawood, KS