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HB 2136

Expanding student eligibility under the tax credit for low income students scholarship program, increasing the amount of the tax credit for contributions made pursuant to such program and providing for aggregate tax credit limit increases under certain conditions.

Opponent testimony

Wednesday, Feb. 5, 2025

Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools is a parent and patron advocacy group in the Blue Valley School District. We advocate for legislation that supports Blue Valley Schools and work to help our community understand the importance of their votes to our schools.

We oppose any diversion of tax money to private schools. We oppose any expansion of the Tax Credit Scholarship Program, and we oppose the addition of any other program to divert tax money away from public schools to private schools.

Stand Up Blue Valley opposes the provision in HB 2136 that would increase the tax credit from 70% tax credit to 100%. This would allow a donor to pay into a private school tuition fund and credit **every penny** of that payment toward their Kansas taxes. This type of tax credit is not available to any taxpayer for any other donation, no matter how philanthropic. **Assigning this very special designation to the funding of private schools is not in the best interest of any Kansas student, any Kansas school district, or any Kansas citizen - other than the few who will use this to their financial benefit as they fund private schools of their own choosing.**

HB 2136 would **add eligibility** for students whose parents meet certain arbitrary employment or vocation specifications and students who are *or ever were* in foster care. These designations serve only to increase the number of students eligible for this unproven program. **There is no evidence to support the notion that private school education would benefit the added categories of students, like the students originally designated for program inclusion.**

Private schools often include religious curriculum. **While we fully support the right of parents to send their students to any religious school they choose, we don't believe our tax dollars should be paying for religious education.**

Private schools are not required to accept or retain any student. We are aware of Blue Valley families whose special needs students were not able to attend BV-area private schools due to their needs not being met there. Expansion of eligibility for students to use Tax Credit Scholarships to attend private school expands the ability of private schools to benefit from accepting/choosing students who are easier to educate and leaving a disproportionate number of students with learning disabilities, physical differences, and behavioral issues for public schools to educate.

Blue Valley taxpayers understand that our taxes go to support our excellent public schools, which provide a quality education to over 22,000 students, support over 3000 jobs in our area, and turn out graduates who return to enhance our community. Our Blue Valley Schools are the backbone of our local economy and result in high home values as businesses and people move here for the schools. We disagree with the premise that some taxpayers would be allowed to get a credit on their taxes (thereby lowering the amount of taxes they are paying) in order to use their money to fund private schools. We disagree with the premise that private schools should be given tax money.

If philanthropically-minded individuals wish to fund scholarships for low income students to attend private schools, by all means they should do that. They should NOT, however, be allowed to deduct 100% of that sum from the tax they owe to the state of Kansas. If private schools wish to provide scholarships for students they choose to admit, by all means they should do that, using the many mechanisms available to them and already in use - but they should not be allowed to use tax money to do so.

We fully support the right of parents to determine whether public school, private school, or home schooling is best for each child in their family. We do not believe the taxpayers of Kansas should pay for that choice.

Stand Up Blue Valley remains opposed to the original Tax Credit Scholarship Program and we oppose any and all attempts to expand the diversion of state tax revenue to private schools. **We urge you to vote no on HB 2136.**