

Oral, in-person PROPONENT testimony for SB 87- 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.

FROM: Dr. Jamie Finkeldei

DATE: March 10, 2025

TO: Chairwomen Representative Estes and members of the House Education Committee

My name is Jamie Finkeldei and I am the Associate Superintendent of the Catholic Diocese of Wichita. Thank you for the opportunity to speak as a PROPONENT to bill SB 87.

The Diocese of Wichita is the 9th largest school district in the state of Kansas serving 8,845 K-12 students spread across 34 elementary and 4 high schools. This makes us the 9th largest school district in Kansas. 2,390, or 27%, of those almost 9,000 students are on free and reduced lunch. Almost half of those free and reduced lunch students, 1,052 to be exact, are supported by our SGO called Support for Catholic Schools.

In 2024, Support for Catholic Schools distributed \$3.2 million and was responsible for 34% of all tax credits used. Next school year, we anticipate serving almost 1,300 students so our need continues to grow. However, collectively all the SGO's in Kansas used 82% of the available credits. If we, and all the other SGOs, are going to continue to grow and serve more low income students we need the cap to rise.

Given the current trajectory of use of the tax credits, and the increase in the number of state verified SGO's in the state, it is quite likely that the \$10 million cap will be reached in 2025. That is why we need SB 87. There has been slow but steady growth of the number of low income students being served by private and Catholic schools across the state. We are just asking to be able to continue that growth.

This is not without precedent. Some of the other tax credits in the state have escalator clauses. Most of the other school choice legislation introduced over the last several years include escalator clauses. All successful programs deserve to be able to grow. We believe that Support for Catholic Schools and the Diocese of Wichita Catholic schools have demonstrated successful utilization of this program to successfully serve low-income students. You will hear other testimony today from principals and parents who have directly benefited from this legislation. We simply ask for the ability to continue to serve a growing population.

Thank you. And I stand for questions.

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