



MainStream Coalition
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Testimony to House Committee on Education
Chair, Rep. Clay Aurand
Hearing: Thursday, March 22, 2017, 3:30 pm, Room 546-S

Position – OPPOSE HB 2374

Chairman Aurand, and Members of the Committee,

The MainStream Coalition opposes passage of HB 2374, making further changes to the tax credit for low income students scholarship program. Proposed changes to this act, which we found problematic when it was initially passed, make this program even less compatible than it already was with Kansas' Constitutional promise of an excellent public education for all.

This bill opens the scholarship program up to students from *any* public school in Kansas, not just students from Title I schools. This will change the program from an opportunity for at risk students not being served by their public schools, to a lifestyle choice for parents who simply prefer a private or parochial school.

The bill would also allow donations from individuals, returning 90% of their donation as a tax credit. Combined with the existing corporate tax credit—equivalent to 70% of their donation—this is tantamount to making Kansas taxpayers pay 70-90% of a private school education. Public schools, already underfunded as per the *Gannon* decision, would lose additional funds to what the existing law defines as “any nonpublic school,” with no other requirements stated. The state should not be in the business of funding private education with no regard for religious instruction, institution accreditation, or student outcomes.

The MainStream Coalition espouses the separation of church and state as one of our founding principles, and regrets that the proponents of this bill feel Kansas taxpayers should pay for private, religious schools. This bill will further that. As such, we oppose its passage.

Thank you for your attention,

Brandi Fisher,
Executive Director, MainStream Coalition

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About MainStream

Founded in 1993, the MainStream Coalition is an advocacy group for moderate political views regardless of party. Our members do more than vote.