

February 9, 2023

Testimony to the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee

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BILL NUMBER: SB 128, Opportunity Tax Credit

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: *REVISED* Written Only Testimony

Dear Chair & members of the committee,

Thank you for giving citizens the opportunity to provide written testimony on SB128. This testimony is on behalf of my three young children and other Kansas kids who currently or will one day attend our much sought after public schools. I am writing to respectfully request that you *not* pass SB128 out of committee based on my experience as both a parent as well as a former public and private high school teacher.

This revised testimony is a replacement to that which I submitted on Sunday, February 5th. As a private citizen simply trying to keep up, I misspoke and inadvertently conflated a few related (and damaging bills). However, my request that you *not* pass SB128 out of committee holds firm.

There are many pieces of the bill that trouble me; however, here are my main concerns: it diverts public tax dollars away from public schools at a time when legislators should be focused on the \$160 million shortfall in special education funding (considering there are approximately 26,000 students currently enrolled in accredited private schools, for those students alone, this program will cost Kansans \$132 million); there are no income limitations for those who could participate in such a program (which was one of the original justifications for vouchers in Kansas); and to qualify as a school under the non-accredited category, it appears the “school” just needs to be registered with the Kansas State Department of Education, which is an alarming lack of oversight and accountability — those attending non-accredited “schools” would put the cost of this program at well over \$132 million.

As far as the aforementioned issues I have with SB128, the one most troubling to me is the diversion of public tax dollars, tax dollars that should be spent making up for the \$160 million special education funding gap. When special education isn’t funded to the state’s full obligation, the re-allocation of resources within each individual district to meet that obligation impacts *ALL* of our kids. Our family understands this balance acutely as our 8-year-old son lives with autism spectrum disorder; his ASD diagnosis has impacted our lives in many ways, but the resources available to us through our public school district have made a life-changing difference for him and our family as a whole. Our 6-year-old daughter and 2-year-old son are typical in their development and are equally deserving of having all of their educational needs met.

All Kansas kids should have the opportunities that well-funded public education can afford them and access to resources they may not otherwise receive.

The tax credits proposed in SB128 jeopardize that opportunity and access.

It is with the utmost respect and appreciation for what our great state has provided our family thus far that I appeal to you now. Doing right by our children is humanity’s most sacred covenant; I trust you will proceed with their very best interest in mind and *oppose* SB128.

Thank you for your careful consideration.

Claire M. Reagan
Olathe, KS