

February 9, 2023

Testimony to the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee

NAME: Anne Melia

TITLE: Kansas Resident, Parent of two Shawnee Mission Graduates, and Graduate of Wichita Public Schools

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BILL NUMBER: SB 128, Opportunity Tax Credit

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Testimony Only

Dear Chair & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 128. Public schools are the life blood of our communities. I am a life-long Kansan, a product of Kansas Public Education, as are my husband and our two children. My husband retired from the Blue Valley School District after the 2020-2021 school year after 33 years teaching middle school science. After college, we stayed in Kansas because of its strong commitment to public education. It has been demoralizing to see this commitment decline to the point that we have to fight every legislative session to maintain funding. There are a myriad of reasons why bill SB 128 is bad for our public schools and bad for Kansas:

- Public tax dollars should not be diverted to private schools at a time when legislators should be focused on the \$160 million shortfall in special education funding. The state should fully fund special education, not private/home schools.
- Public schools are economic drivers. We stayed in Kansas after graduating college for the schools, and we know many, many people who moved to Kansas because of the schools, despite having jobs across the state line in Missouri.
- Using public dollars for private schools drains the public schools of needed resources for successful student learning.
- This bill provides tax credits for both accredited and non-accredited private schools. There is little oversight of who can register with the Kansas State Department of Education as a school, and no mechanism to evaluate the progress and achievement of students receiving these tax credits.
- In Kansas, there are currently 26,000 students enrolled in private schools. Tax credits for these students would cost Kansas \$132 Million.
- Estimates based on census data indicate that there are another 30,000 school aged children in Kansas who are not currently attending either a public school or an accredited private school. Tax credits for these students would cost an additional \$153 million.

Our tax dollars should be used to educate all Kansas students, and therefore I am asking you to please vote NO on Bill SB 128.

Thank you for your consideration.

Anne Melia
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