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Testimony to the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee

NAME: Laura Katherine Hayden

EMAIL ADDRESS: laurakate45@yahoo.com

BILL NUMBER: SB 128, Opportunity Tax Credit

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Oral

Dear Chair & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 128.

Our public tax dollars should remain with our public schools who educate all kids, regardless of need. Providing a tax credit to families who send their kids to private schools reduces the state general funds, putting public school funding at risk.

All three of my children receive Special Education services. The services they receive cover a wide spectrum and utilize many different resources and professionals. As Kansas schools currently operate under a budget shortfall, Special Education services are underfunded as well. Less money for public schools means less funding for the services and providers that my boys and so many others need to be successful in school.

As a former foster parent and current foster parent educator, I am concerned that some of our most at-risk youth could fall through the cracks if they are placed in un-regulated, un-supervised schools. Tax credits provided to parents incentivizing them to remove their children from public schools removes another safety net that keeps many of our children fed and connected to peers and the oversight of caring, trained adults.

Most private schools do not have the support for children who need more than regular classroom instruction provides. This leads to private schools filled with students who cost less to educate and public schools with a greater percentage of students needing additional resources, which requires proper funding.

Public schools are a public good and public goods work because all taxpayers contribute. Without everyone contributing, our public schools will lack the resources to provide an excellent education to all Kansas kids, especially those with greater needs. That will hurt kids attending public and private schools, as many private school students utilize those additional services that our public schools provide.

I urge you to vote no on bill SB 128.

Laura K. Hayden
Olathe