

**Testimony before House Education Committee**

**Proponent: HB 2374**

**Taylor Schettler, Director of Government Affairs, Kansas Chamber of Commerce**

Chairman Aurand and members of the Committee,

The Kansas Chamber appreciates the opportunity to provide written remarks in support of House Bill 2374, which amends our current tax credit scholarship program. As you know, we have appeared in support of this program since before its passage and applaud the Kansas Legislature's assistance in providing educational options for disadvantaged students. Prior to enactment of this program, school choice existed in Kansas but it existed only for those with families who could afford it. Arguably, the greatest need for school choice is on behalf of those students who are, for whatever reason, at-risk of not being able to realize the promise of a meaningful and productive education in their public school.

Our Kansas Chamber Legislative Agenda for 2017 once again contains an Education section, and with regard to this issue our agenda states:

**"Support efforts to offer parents and students a variety of educational choices regardless of their socio-economic status, and support efforts to create innovative school environments designed to maximize the educational experience of children who don't thrive in traditional educational settings."**

Members of our organization thrive on competition. It's what makes them better. Public schools should embrace rather than eschew competition. Our members, the ultimate consumers of the educational product in the state, care not whether their workforce is educated in the private or public school systems as long as prospective workers have received an education that prepares them for employment. That means prospects who come with employability skills learned during the educational experience. According to the Kansas Department of Education and the Department of Revenue, since the beginning of the program 297 student scholarships have been awarded. We don't know who those students are, but we suspect this opportunity for them has been transformational.

In summary, the Chamber fully supports the tax credit scholarship program. Too many students are being left behind due to a lack of educational opportunities and HB 2374 is a step in the right direction to try and address this issue.



*"...to continually strive to improve the economic climate for the benefit of every business and citizen and to safeguard our system of free, competitive enterprise".*