



Catholic Education Foundation
TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

May 19, 2017

Chairman Denning and members of the Senate Select Committee on Education Finance:

Thank you for allowing me to testify on the portion of SB 251 dealing with the tax credit scholarship program. We take no position on the rest of the bill.

The Catholic Education Foundation (CEF) is a registered Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) for the *Kansas Tax Credit for Low-Income Students Scholarship Program*. Over the past two years, we have provided Tax Credit scholarships to 188 students. This represents 14 different Archdiocesan Catholic schools. We also have a waitlist of *new* students and families that are eagerly awaiting this School Choice opportunity.

All Kansas families should have access to a high-quality education, including those who desire a private education for their child. The *Kansas Tax Credit Program* is empowering parents to exercise their right to make the decision that's in the best interest of their child's educational needs, regardless of their zip code or limited financial resources. Northeast Kansas Catholic schools provide a vital resource and service to students and families within our communities. Our schools also provide a financial benefit to Kansas due to the thousands of students that the state does not have to fund.

As an active participant in the program, we are concerned about the potential impact of the proposed Legislative changes and the barriers it could create for current and future SGO's and, most importantly, the families and students who are seeking opportunities for education choice. This program is still in the initial stages of development and any changes to the Legislation should be constructed in a way that continues to ensure efficient and productive program outcomes. Further, any changes need to be calculated such that more families are given a School Choice opportunity.

I've spoken with families who share their humble gratitude and joy for this scholarship. They describe how their son or daughter is flourishing and growing in the environment that's best for their child. Our students speak of their dream and aspirations, not only for their own future but also their families and their communities. For many, this scholarship has made an educational dream a reality. This educational dream can assist in forming contributing citizens who are truly the future of today's society.

On behalf of our students and families, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Adrienne M. Runnebaum
Director of Tax Credits, Catholic Education Foundation (CEF)