



## **HB 2068**

### **Amending the tax credit for low income students scholarship program act to expand student eligibility.**

Good afternoon. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for allowing me to speak to you today. I have come to testify concerning House Bill 2068, and I am speaking today for OPEN, Olathe Public Education Network, a volunteer community advocacy group supporting Olathe public schools. We accept no tax dollars and are an independent voice for local public education.

House Bill 2068 expands eligibility for funds in a scholarship program which appears on the surface to provide Kansas taxpayers with the opportunity to choose educational opportunities for their children, along with the chance to save some money. But nothing could be further from the truth. House Bill 2068 fails children and fails all Kansans. It fails children academically. It fails Kansans economically.

The schools benefiting from this bill do not as a rule accept any special education students, and this bill ignores the statutory right of these 70,000 plus Kansas students to an education, to the detriment of the whole state. These schools have no way to meet the needs of students with disabilities, who are entitled to an education by federal statute, and it has been abundantly clear that children who are not appropriately educated are unable to contribute to the life and prosperity of their community. They lack the skills necessary to be functioning, contributing citizens.

These scholarships also limit the quality of educational options available to low - income families, providing poor quality curricula that fail to equip students for jobs or higher education and that does not stand up to standard, critical evaluation. This shortcoming particularly impacts children of color. And studies indicate that students in these programs score consistently lower on standardized tests, especially in math, an especially poor preparation for entry into the information

economy, which is based on strong technology skills. This is a misuse of taxpayer funds that violates the “Prudent Man” rule advocated by every good financial advisor.

Finally, these programs are woefully lacking in public accountability and are consistently vulnerable to financial fraud. This imprudent investment of taxpayer dollars leaves millions of dollars at stake here, as Milwaukee, Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina and other states have documented. The result: an appalling and profligate waste of taxpayer funds

Please note: You do not want to let yourselves be deceived by the specious claims of “student choice” associated with this bill. Although your constituents may be telling you that they want this bill, the best interests of Kansas students, families and the Kansas economy are not represented in this proposed legislation. A strong, well supported public education is a vigorous economic engine.

For example, good support and improvement of public schools in the United States will result in a \$76 trillion boost to the national economy! This is not a project small private schools can make any contribution to, but it is a point to bear in mind. We need strong public education, and we need for you to support our public schools. Local and state economies thrive when public education is supported legislatively at all levels.

Thank you for your work on Kansas education. Your service on this committee is much appreciated, and thank you for taking the time to read (listen) to this testimony.

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#### Notes

<https://nces.ed.gov/>. Number of special education students, KS

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/> Statutory basis for special education.

<https://www.damagetopublicschools> Low test results for students in poorly monitored private schools funded by tax-supported scholarships.

. <https://tnedreport.com/2019/02/voucher-fraud/>

<http://www.ncpolicywatch.com/>

Taxpayer funded scholarships and fraud

<http://hanushek.stanford.edu/publications/economic-impact-good-schools>) Strong public schools contribute to the economy