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Testimony to House K-12 Education Budget Committee on HB 2068
Honorable Chair, Representative Kristey Williams
Roger Ruvalcaba, Committee Assistant
785-296-3971 roger.ruvalcaba@house.ks.gov
Room 286-N, State Capitol Building

Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools Opposes House Bill 2068 –

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

Hearing: Tuesday, January 26, 2021, 3:30 PM Room 546-S

Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools is a parent and patron advocacy group in the Blue Valley School District. We advocate for legislation that supports Blue Valley Schools and work to help our community understand the importance of their votes to our schools.

Representative Williams and members of the Committee:

Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools has had the opportunity to review HB 2068 and we would like to submit testimony in **opposition** to this bill.

As we have testified before, **we oppose any diversion of tax money to private schools.** We oppose any expansion of the Tax Credit Scholarship Program.

When the Tax Credit Scholarship Program was initially created in 2014, over the objections of public school supporters, its scope was limited to at-risk students in underperforming elementary schools. Now, proponents of diversion of tax money to private schools want to remove the at-risk categorization and allow students to come from any school, not just “underperforming” schools.

Blue Valley taxpayers understand that our taxes go to support our excellent public schools, which provide a quality education to over 22,000 students, support over 3000 jobs in our area, and turn out graduates who return to enhance our community. Our Blue Valley Schools are the backbone of our local economy and result in high home values as businesses and people move here for the schools. We disagree with the premise that some taxpayers would be allowed to get a credit on their taxes (thereby lowering the amount of taxes they are paying) in order to use their money to fund private schools. We disagree with the premise that private schools should be given tax money.

If philanthropically-minded taxpayers wish to fund scholarships for low income students to attend private religious schools, by all means they should do that. They should NOT, however, be allowed to deduct 70% of that sum from the tax they owe to the state of Kansas. If private schools wish to provide scholarships for students they choose to admit, by all means they should do that, using the many mechanisms available to them and already in use - but they should not be allowed to use tax money to do so.

We fully support the right of parents to determine whether public school, private school, or home schooling is best for each child in their family. We also know that private schools are not required to accept any student. We are aware of Blue Valley families whose special needs students were not able to attend BV-area private schools due to their needs not being met there. Expansion of eligibility for students to use these Tax Credit Scholarships to attend private school expands the ability of private schools to benefit from accepting/choosing students who are easier to educate and leaving a disproportionate number of students with learning disabilities, physical differences, and behavioral issues for public schools to educate.

Private schools often include religious curriculum. While we fully support the right of parents to send their students to any religious school they choose, we don't believe our tax dollars should be paying for religious education.

Stand Up Blue Valley remains opposed to the original Tax Credit Scholarship Program and we oppose any and all attempts to expand the diversion of state tax revenue to private schools.

Sincerely,

Patty Logan, M.D.

Chair - Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools