

House K-12 Budget Committee

Written testimony in support of HB 2465: Amending the tax credit for low income student scholarship program act to expand student eligibility.

January 26, 2021

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Madam Chair and members of the House K-12 Budget Committee:

My name is Lynee Habiger. I am the principal at Sacred Heart Cathedral Catholic School in Dodge City, Kansas. I would like to take a moment to explain the positive impact that the tax credit program has made upon my school.

Prior to the availability of the tax credit scholarship program, our low income families were forced to send their children to our local public schools. Even with a tuition adjustment based on income, many of our families still could not afford even our lowest rate at Sacred Heart. However, ever since the scholarships have been an option, low income families are now an important part of our school family.

Our children who enrolled because of the tax credit scholarships have truly flourished. We believe that it is because both their faith and education have finally intersected. Many of our students who qualified and then enrolled needed additional assistance with language and general delays. Over the past few years we have seen significant increases in their English/Language Arts skills, Math competency, and their English as a Second Language proficiency with these children. It is obvious that they are now “at home” at Sacred Heart. Additionally, as a steward of these funds, I focused on the needs of our scholarship children. Part of their scholarship funding allowed me to hire needed support staff and early intervention materials.

Finally, I have seen an extended sense of community with our larger parish. Our scholarship families volunteer for projects and are becoming active parents on councils and committees. Catholic education should be inclusive and the tax credit program has allowed Sacred Heart to do so. I am thrilled that our families now have options that allow them to send their children to the school of their choice.