

Date: March 5, 2024

To: Senator Caryn Tyson, Chair, Kansas Senate and Taxation Committee

From: Delia Shropshire, PhD, President, Holy Savior Catholic Academy, Wichita, KS

RE: **ORAL (WebX) PROPONENT testimony for SB 509 — Establishing the education opportunity tax credit to provide an income tax credit for taxpayers with eligible dependent children not enrolled in public school.**

Madam Chair Tyson and members of the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 509.

My name is Dr. Delia Shropshire, and I serve as President of Holy Savior Catholic Academy, located in Wichita, Kansas. I'd like to tell you about our school, our students, and our families, because it will help explain why we support educational choice measures like SB 509.

Holy Savior Catholic Academy serves children in grades kindergarten through 8th grade. We are in an urban neighborhood of Wichita and approximately 80% of our students come from households that are free or reduced lunch eligible. It is also noteworthy that 75% of our students are *not* Catholic.

Why do parents make the decision to enroll their children at Holy Savior?

Holy Savior parents share our conviction that every child deserves an opportunity to experience a learning environment where they can become the very best version of themselves. Sometimes, that environment is in a conventional public school with their dedicated staff. We support that choice, and we believe Kansas needs strong public schools.

But for one reason or another, Holy Savior parents have decided that their assigned public school wasn't the right fit for their child. They hear about Holy Savior from friends and family, they seek us out, and very often they decide to enroll their child with us. It is their choice.

Educational choice may not be a silver bullet, but Holy Savior Catholic Academy in urban Wichita provides just this sort of alternative opportunity. We're investing in the kids and the community around our parish. An educational opportunity tax credit program like the one offered here in SB 509 would allow more parents more choices to address the unique educational needs of their child.

In the Adverse Childhood Experience Study (ACEs), it has been identified that children who live in poverty experience more stress and trauma than children who do not. Childhood trauma and stress adversely impact the brain and it can be difficult to recover until certain social emotional conditions are met. No single school system should be expected to make this happen for all children and be successful. The work is too big and too important for all school models not to work collectively for the good of all students.

We need more educational choice in Kansas for families to match a learning environment with their child's needs. Every child that becomes a successful contributing member of society saves the state millions of dollars and, more importantly, can be a thriving mentor to another generation.

It is no longer enough to hope that my friends and colleagues in Kansas' public school can educate each child equally well, despite their years of dedication. Today's children will come of age in a diverse and dynamic era. They deserve an equally diverse and dynamic educational setting now to give them the best chance of success. High-performing public schools will always be the goal, but trusting families to find the right place for their child is just as important.

The citizenship, academic, social, and cultural opportunities provided at schools like Holy Savior Catholic Academy are vital to shaping Kansas into the community we want to be. Please support SB 509 and help make that happen.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Delia Shropshire, PhD

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