



## Testimony to House Education Committee HB 2374 – Expanding Tax Credit Scholarships March 23, 2017 David Dorsey, Senior Education Policy Analyst

Chairman Araund and Members of the Committee:

Do you believe one’s ZIP code should determine the quality of education one receives? Of course you don’t, but that is an unfortunate reality in today’s education system. Found in the data and supported in study after study, students – particularly students in low-income families – find themselves stuck in low performing schools and unable to escape them simply because of their address.

Kansas began a modest effort to address that issue by allowing some of those low-income students in underachieving schools the means to a better education: the tax credit scholarship program. Kansas is one of many states across the nation that have enacted such a law. HB 2374 would expand that program to serve more low-income students. That is certainly a step in the right direction in allowing more school choice to families in Kansas.

<b>4th Grade Reading (NAEP)</b>							
<b>Not Low Income</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2015</b>
% At Or Above Proficient	42	42	46	47	50	54	54
<b>Low Income Students</b>							
% At Or Above Proficient	18	20	21	22	23	22	20
<b>4th Grade Math (NAEP)</b>							
<b>Not Low Income</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2013</b>	
% At Or Above Proficient	53	59	63	60	63	63	58
<b>Low Income</b>							
% At Or Above Proficient	24	30	34	32	33	33	27

By now you are all aware of the glaring, unacceptable achievement gaps between the economic haves and have-nots. Despite monumental increases in at-risk funding over the past decade – money that was supposed to be specifically targeted toward reducing those gaps – those gaps are not only stagnant, but in some metrics, such as results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), have actually increased. It is also worth noting that student achievement on state exams illustrates the same point.

The tax credit scholarship program aims to address this problem. HB 2374 is a move in the right direction by allowing all low-income students an opportunity to a better educational setting that more closely fits their needs. A universal system would be better, but at least HB 2374 represents a stronger commitment to school choice.

Kansas Policy Institute is a strong supporter of Kansas public schools and wants them to be the best in the country. Our public schools, our teachers, and our administrators spend their lives helping young people learn. I am proud to say that I spent 17 years in Kansas doing just that. Those schools will always be the place where the vast majority of Kansas families send their children.

However, the goal is not to have good public schools in and of themselves.

The goal is give every Kansas child the opportunity to succeed. That will mean attending a high-performing public school for most children, but it should also include a different avenue for children where the local public school does not seem to be the right fit.

Thank you for the opportunity to present today. I urge the committee to support the bill and will stand for questions at an appropriate time.

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