



House Committee on K-12 Education Budget
Chair, Rep. Kristey Williams
Hearing: February 23, 2021

Position – OPPOSE SB 61

Chair Williams, and Members of the Committee,

The Mainstream Coalition opposes making further changes to expand the Tax Credit for Low Income Students Scholarship Program.

Mainstream affirms the right of every Kansan to an affordable, equitable, and excellent public education, from early childhood to post graduate opportunity, adequately funded by the state, that respects the professions that care for our children.

We stood in opposition to the original Tax Credit for Low Income Students Scholarship Program because public tax money should not be spent on private, often parochial schools, that do not face the same scrutiny, requirements, or oversight as public schools. The proposed changes make this program even less compatible than it already was with Kansas' Constitutional promise of an excellent public education for all.

The proposed measure would expand the pool of students eligible for the program from at risk students in low performing elementary schools to low income students in any public school. This will move the program towards a lifestyle choice for many parents who simply prefer a private or parochial school.

In addition, while Kansas public schools are held to strict scrutiny of student achievement and outcomes, private schools receiving these tax funds are not. State accreditation is not required of these schools. In fact, although it was begun in 2014, there is no data available, or required, to assess the success of the scholarship program in providing better outcomes for the students affected. There is no guarantee that students moved to these schools are, in fact, doing better than they were in their public school setting.

Our objections to the original program remain. The Mainstream Coalition espouses the separation of church and state as one of our founding principles, and regrets that the proponents of this bill feel Kansas taxpayers should pay for private, religious schools with no regard for student outcomes.

Founded in 1993, the Mainstream Coalition is a nonpartisan nonprofit that advocates for common sense public policy in Kansas. Our members do more than vote.

We ask you to please oppose passage of SB 61.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Poppa', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Poppa
Executive Director of the Mainstream Coalition