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Testimony to the Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee

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BILL NUMBER: SB 128, Opportunity Tax Credit

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written

Dear Distinguished Chair & members of the committee,

I am writing to voice my opposition to bill SB 128. There is strong evidence to support the idea that everyone benefits from a strong public education system, regardless of whether all families choose to use it or not. **It is the duty of the Kansas State Legislature to support the future of the state for all people. If you underfund public education you will hurt the entire state economy, hurt home/property values, you could drive up crime rates and dependency on state assistance, and deplete the knowledge base needed to create a workforce that can help and serve everyone in the state despite their age or circumstance.** All Kansans benefit from a strong public education system, even those who choose not to use it. Here are some key points that can support this argument:

1. Public education benefits the entire community: A well-funded and effective public education system benefits everyone in the community, regardless of whether they have children in the public schools. It prepares future workers, citizens, and leaders, and helps to create a well-educated and productive workforce.
2. Public education benefits the economy: Studies have shown that public education is a key driver of economic growth, as it provides the skilled workers and entrepreneurs needed to fuel economic development.
3. Public education benefits property values: Property values are often higher in communities with strong public schools, which can benefit all homeowners, including those who don't have children in the public schools.
4. Public education provides social benefits: A well-funded public education system can help to reduce income inequality, increase social mobility, and promote social cohesion, which benefits everyone in society.

Underfunding public education can have serious consequences for both students and society as a whole. Here are some of the consequences, supported by academic studies:

1. Higher crime rates: Research has found that students in underfunded schools are more likely to become involved in criminal activity, such as gang activity and drug use. This is likely due to a lack of educational and economic opportunities, as well as a lack of positive role models and support systems.
2. Increased need for welfare: Studies have shown that students who attend underfunded schools are less likely to complete their education and more likely to require public assistance, such as food stamps and unemployment benefits. This can increase the burden on the welfare system and contribute to intergenerational poverty.

3. Lower student achievement: Studies have shown that underfunded schools often have fewer resources, such as qualified teachers, instructional materials, and technology, which can lead to lower student achievement.
4. Disadvantaged students are disproportionately affected: Research has found that underfunding often affects low-income and minority students the most, perpetuating existing disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes.
5. Negative long-term effects: Research has shown that underfunding public education can have long-lasting negative effects on students, such as lower lifetime earnings and increased rates of poverty.

Overall, underfunding public education can have serious consequences for students and society, which is why it is important to ensure that public schools have the resources they need to provide a quality education for all students. These studies highlight the important role that public education plays in promoting social stability and reducing crime and poverty. By providing students with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed, public schools can help to create a more secure and prosperous society for everyone.

In conclusion, there is strong evidence to support the idea that everyone benefits from a strong public education system, regardless of whether all families choose to use it or not. By paying taxes to support public education, private school parents are investing in their community, the economy, and the future of the country as a whole. By paying taxes to support public education, individuals are investing in the future of their communities and in the country as a whole. This investment ensures that all children, regardless of their family's income or background, have access to quality education, which is essential for upward mobility and a thriving democracy.

In conclusion, public education is a critical public good that benefits society in many ways, and therefore, it is reasonable and just for all people to contribute to its support through their taxes.

Please oppose **Senate Bill 128**, thank you for your consideration.

Erica Benson
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