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Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation
Sen, Caryn Tyson, Chair

Opponent Testimony, Written

SB509 – Establishing the education opportunity tax credit

Chair Tyson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on SB509.

Mainstream OPPOSES SB509. This proposal is an attempt to divert funds from public schools to benefit families who choose to enroll their children in private, often religious, schools. **This diversion of public funds is nothing more than another state-sponsored attempt to undermine public schools and favor private, religious ones – a clear violation of religious freedom as guaranteed by the First Amendment.**

SB509 reduces state revenues which should be going towards our public schools – especially at a time when we've learned that the state is falling short of its financial obligation to fund special education to the amount of \$423 million. Public schools are a public good which are accessible to and held accountable by all Kansans. Proposals like SB509, and other tax credit and voucher programs, benefit those families who choose to enroll their students in private or home schools. These institutions often have limited or no accountability, can discriminate against potential students during the enrollment process, and center religious teachings – and do so at the expense of our general fund and public school funding.

For these reasons, Mainstream opposes SB509. We urge you to reject this proposal that would violate the separation of religion and government – a core tenet of our democracy and cornerstone of religious freedom.

Thank you,

Laurel Burchfield
Mainstream