

**Testimony on SB 224**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**March 12, 2013**

**Chuck Schmidt, Superintendent**  
**Independence USD 446**  
*620/332-1800*  
*cschmidt@indyschools.com*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to this bill. My name is Chuck Schmidt and I am the superintendent of Independence USD 446. I will get right to the point.

The thing that most concerns me about this bill is the change in At-Risk weighting. At-Risk weighting is calculated by the number of students qualifying for free lunch. Students living in poverty are more likely to be behind when they enter school, causing them to struggle academically and increasing the likelihood they will drop out of school.

We can always find exceptions to this, but studies have repeatedly shown that this is an accurate predictor. We also know that the best way to counter this effect on the student is with individual attention. Please understand that the students who receive At-Risk services are not just the low-income students. Every student who needs extra help is provided these services regardless of income level. It is just the funding mechanism that correlates with the low-income students.

Most schools in Kansas are now using the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to help At-Risk students. This technique provides smaller groupings of students who do not master the material the first time. This process requires additional personnel. The student who cannot master the material in a class of 25 students is then put in smaller groupings to receive more individual attention. In our district we use principals, teacher aides, counselors, secretaries, volunteers and everyone we can get, to work with these students. I know many superintendents, including myself, who work directly with At-Risk students. Smaller groupings require greater funding because you need more people.

When our district received the additional At-Risk funding back in 2007 the first thing we did is hire more teachers, teacher aides and a social worker. The social worker has dealt with such issues as helping families get the water turned back on in their home, connect the family with agencies that can help pay utility bills, provide clothing for children and work with families to get these children to school on time. These efforts are necessary to help these children succeed in school.

This bill would have the effect of redistributing At-Risk funding by giving more to districts with low At-Risk numbers at the expense of districts with high At-Risk numbers. This makes no sense at all. There is a huge disparity of At-Risk populations in Kansas. We range from a district with a low of 6.1% free and reduced lunch to a district with a high of 89% free and

Senate Education Committee  
Date 3-12-13  
Attachment 8

reduced lunch. Six of the members of this committee come from home districts that have in excess of 50% free and reduced lunch populations.

USD 470 Arkansas City – 69%  
USD 291 Grinnell – 31%  
USD 500 Kansas City – 89%  
USD 267 Renwick – 17%  
USD 305 Salina – 60%

USD229 Blue Valley – 8%  
USD 415 Hiawatha – 53%  
USD 362 Prairie View – 56%  
USD 501 Topeka – 76%  
USD 512 Shawnee Mission – 36%

This bill would take \$30 million dollars away from the Wichita school district and give an additional \$14 million dollars to the Blue Valley district. It would take \$1.2 million away from the Arkansas City district and give \$1 million to the Renwick district. It would take almost \$700,000 from the Salina district and give \$8 million to Shawnee Mission. This is redistribution of wealth in its worst possible form - taking from the poor and giving to the rich.

The effort to eliminate weightings was attempted last year. As the issue was being debated people realized there were disparities in transportation so that weighting was restored. They realized there were disparities in high and low enrollments so that weighting was restored. They realized there were disparities in At-Risk populations so that weighting was restored. They realized there were disparities in English Language Learner students so that weighting was restored. Finally, someone said “if all of these weightings are needed to alleviate additional costs, why are we eliminating them and then adding them back.”

There is a legitimate reason we have weightings. Weightings are in place because they provide for additional costs.

I ask you not to abandon the children who need these services the most in order to give more funding to the districts that have more advantaged children.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.