



**Senate Selection Committee on School Finance  
Testimony on School Finance  
Presented by Dr. Patricia All | Superintendent  
May 17, 2017**

Chairman Denning and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments for your consideration as the committee works to assemble a new school finance plan.

The Olathe Public School district is the second largest district in the state with nearly 30,000 students. We have experienced continuous enrollment growth for over 50 years, accompanied by increases in English Language Learners and students in poverty. While we have pockets of affluence throughout the district, nearly 28% of our families receive free or reduced priced lunches, with the percentages across our schools ranging from 2% to 84%. Our English Language Learner (ELL) population has increased from 170 students in 2002 to 3,365 with a net gain of 200 students this school year. That is an 800% increase over the past 14 years.

Olathe Public Schools are not about adequacy, we are about excellence. Our community expects excellence. Our businesses expect excellence. We all believe that investing in students has positive impacts for our community and the state's economy.

We have an opportunity to not only comply with the *Gannon III* ruling, but also to reinvest in our schools. This bill reflects the House and Senate committees' efforts to craft a school finance policy bill that addresses many of the policy priorities adopted by the Olathe School Board. **These priorities reflect not only the needs of our students, but support our overall vision for educational excellence.**

Our district appreciates the committee's support for a framework that allows the formula to be responsive to the changing demographics of our community over time. This is especially true for our ELL and at-risk programs – including all-day kindergarten and 4-year old at-risk. We do encourage the committee to restore the at-risk weighting to .484, as recommended in the Legislative Post Audit study. While this difference may seem relatively insignificant, the need is great.

And, while we agree that additional efforts must be made to address under-performing and at-risk students, **our mission is to foster academic growth and excellence for all students.** To that end, **we do not believe that the recommended funding level is sufficient to accomplish college and workforce** readiness goals the state has established for students.

On June 8, the Olathe school board will hold its first budget workshop for FY 2018, with the goal of planning and prioritizing spending for the upcoming year. As we begin the budget process, it is estimated that an additional \$16.5 million will be necessary to fund increased staffing needs, benefits and overhead costs. Our hope is that some of the new funding provided by the legislature can be used to restore student learning and support services that were scaled back or eliminated in recent years.

Olathe Public Schools continues to face increasing capital outlay demands such as scheduled maintenance and investing in new infrastructure (e.g., technology) and our community has been supportive of these ongoing efforts. Currently, these demands are exceeding the revenue generated by the statutory maximum 8 mill levy. Increasing the statutory maximum capital outlay mill levy from 8 to 10 mills *and* expanding the criteria for what can be included will provide additional flexibility and authority that will allow us to address our aging infrastructures, the technological needs of our classrooms and free up resources for other programs and services.

As you continue deliberating, the Olathe Board of Education urges you to fund education at a level that allows us to restore programs and services, sustain current programs, *and* create new opportunities for our students.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to offer feedback. We appreciate your work and know that you have difficult decisions ahead of you. Please feel free to contact me at [pall@olatheschools.org](mailto:pall@olatheschools.org) or 913-780-8022, if you have any additional questions.