

May 18, 2017

Written Testimony on: Sub for HB 2410

Before: Senate Select Committee on Education Finance

By: Steve Splichal, Superintendent of Schools, Eudora, KS

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the students, staff and families of the Eudora School District, I would like to extend a sincere thanks for the opportunity to offer feedback on Substitute for HB 2410. We appreciate the committee's commitment to transparent work to create a good funding mechanism for Kansas students.

Although there are parts of this bill that I support, there are too many concerning flaws to testify in support. Instead, I offer written testimony today as neutral to opposed. I recognize that our district, largely due to growing enrollment, stands to gain revenue. However, the bill in its current state simply does not reflect the level of state funding that our schools in Eudora need to prepare students for a thriving future.

In 2008, the base state aid per pupil was \$4,400; based on the best estimates, this plan would put that number at \$4,317 -- five years from now. After so many years of funding cuts, there must be a minimum of three to four years of substantial base increases before CPI can be an effective tool for increases and adjustments. Three funding areas have me most concerned.

First, as a growing district, we must have the resources to plan and carry out the staffing changes needed to meet the needs of increasing enrollments and changes in student demographics. Our employees also need support, having had virtually no increase in pay over the past several years, while absorbing increasing health care and cost of living expenses.

Next, the proposed funding level in this bill will not help us meet our facility and capital needs, which continue to grow after too many years of budget cuts and deferred maintenance. As

our bus fleets reach their legal limits, we also have critical roof and HVAC repairs that cannot be ignored.

Finally, I cannot provide testimony without sharing concern about the ongoing shortfall in special education funding. In terms of academic performance, our special education students are most often in need of support, which frequently is intensive and demands substantial resources. This past year our school district sent our special education cooperative nearly \$1 million to help cover the excess costs. If this bill were amended to reflect the complete funding for 92% of excess costs, our local district's share drops to about \$80,000. Funding special education at or near 92% would have a positive and equalized impact on every school district in Kansas.

In closing, I want to express our pleasure with the legislature's work to support early childhood programs and all-day kindergarten. These are key to helping reach at-risk students and have been shown in countless studies to deliver a meaningful value in communities and a multiplied return on investment. I'm also pleased with the career and technical education funding in this bill. In Eudora, more than 80% of our high school students participate in a vocational program, and more than 20% of our seniors graduate each year with industry-recognized certifications, in addition to their high school diploma.

Chairman Denning and members of the committee, thank you again for considering my testimony and seeking ways to create the best possible solution for all Kansas students. I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Splichal", written in a cursive style.

Steve Splichal, Superintendent
Eudora Public Schools