

March 13, 2019

Testimony before the
House K-12 Budget Committee
on
House Bill 2395

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee,

Upon learning of a number of components of House Bill 2395, I felt it imperative to share my opinion and the opinion of those I represent, namely, the Board of Education for Unified School District 456 - Marais des Cygnes Valley. In short, the measures contained within the bill appropriate substandard funding levels necessary for the operations of our school district, place undue restrictions on the financial operability of our district, erode the local control of our school board, and establishes thinly veiled steps to begin the process of diverting future public dollars into private education. Specifically:

- Response to Gannon: the funding measures stated in the bill do not meet the directive set by the Supreme Court, championed by the state board of education, and supported by USD 456 - Marais des Cygnes Valley. Any measure that falls short of this directive places our district in a difficult financial position, places our operations at a significant disadvantage and affects the opportunities and outcomes available to our students.
- Cash Balance Limits: this measure would effectively eliminate any financial flexibility we have to operate our district. Requiring that our district expend cash relative to years previous eliminates local control and the oversight capabilities of its board members, not to mention the impact related to the demonstrated variability naturally contained within a school district's yearly budget operations.
- Required Student Transfers: currently, our school board holds voting approval for any out-of-district student. The bill at hand would eliminate that in supposed cases of bullying. We are not in favor of any measure taking decision making control from our board of education.
- Funding to Private Schools: being that we are in the financial position where every dollar counts, we are not in favor of any measure where public funds are funneled through a process and placed in the hands of a private entity. Funds levied by the state should be dispensed to state entities and in this case, monies intended for public schools need to be appropriated fully to public schools.

In summary, the measures contained within House Bill 2395 are of significant concern and pose an enormous step back in the workings of the Kansas State Supreme Court, the Kansas State Board of Education, and the school districts that support them. These measures represent a failing on the part of the Kansas Legislature to appropriately fund public education, reducing the opportunity for success of Kansas students and ultimately hurting the future of our great state. I, along with the Unified School District 456 Board of Education, implore you to disregard this bill and focus on funding measures that reflect the positive steps that have already been taken.

Sincerely,

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