

House K-12 Education Budget Committee

March 19th, 2019

Senate Bill 142

Proponent Testimony By

Justin Coup, Superintendent

Solomon USD 393

Chair Williams and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on behalf of Solomon USD 393, a member of Schools for Quality Education. It is an honor to represent our Board of Education, staff, community members and most importantly, our students. Solomon is a rural school with a student count of 357 PK-12 as of February 4, 2019. We are located on I-70 in Central Kansas. Although we are a very rural school, we are also a bedroom community for larger cities and towns. At Solomon we are very encouraged and supportive of Senate Bill 142. Its passage will allow us to have a vision for our future and a financial plan to achieve that vision.

The Solomon district is very appreciative of the additional funding the legislature provided last year. You may ask how we spent those dollars? We were able to provide a 5.6% raise to our employees both licensed and classified. Over the past five years at Solomon we have seen our headcount drop to as low as 299 with our recent high of 357. We live in a very transient world with high risk needs. The additional funds we received allowed us to put more money into at-risk and early childhood programs to provide opportunities for students who are in dire need of this support. Again, thank you for helping to make this happen.

The Solomon school district carries only a small amount of contingency reserve funds because we have had to spend down those balances to protect important programs to meet the needs of our community. How does Senate Bill 142 help to restore the vision of Solomon USD 393 and our other public schools? It provides us with predictable dedicated dollars to increase the BASE and support the future of Kansas. By having a plan in place we can more actively discuss the creation of more possibilities for our students. The Kansas Can Vision allows us to think, create and dream of leading the world in the success of each student. Without Senate Bill 142 we are unable to plan beyond a year at a time. We can now look to make improvements in our schools that last for more than one year because of your forward looking funding

commitment. We can now be in a position to better address our local needs, such as adding an additional staff person at the Junior High and exploring the addition of a three (3) year program or the expansion of our four (4) year old program to help address our at-risk problem. This may not seem like a big deal to some, but one more staff member and potential improvements to our early childhood program is vital not only to the success of Solomon as a school, but more importantly to our community. This legislature's new initiative on rural revitalization starts with a sound school finance plan. The best revitalization for rural Kansas begins with our schools which in most rural communities provide the single largest payroll that helps sustain our main street business community. Senate Bill 142 does what is needed for students in Solomon, Weskan, Garden City, Wichita, Topeka and Kansas City.

We are excited in Solomon about the future of education and the future of Kansas. Senate Bill 142 will help provide the Solomon district with the opportunity to develop a local plan that addresses our student's individual needs based upon its stable funding. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 142.

Respectfully Submitted,

Justin Coup, Superintendent
Solomon USD 393