

Testimony before the

Senate Select Committee on School Finance

on

SB 44

by

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Solomon USD 393

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Madam Chair Baumgartner and Members of the Committee:

Thank-you for this opportunity to address the committee.

USD 393 stands as a Proponent to Senate bill 44

Good afternoon. It is an honor to represent USD 393 Solomon Schools BOE, staff, community members and most importantly the students. Solomon is a rural school with a student headcount 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 SB 44. This plan allows us to have a vision for our future and a financial plan to achieve that vision.

So what did we do with the additional dollars this past year? With the new dollars last year we gave a 5.6% raise to our employees both certified and classified. Over the past 5 years at Solomon we have seen our headcount drop to as low at 299 with a high of 357, as of this Monday! We live in transient world that comes with at risk needs. The new money this past year allowed us to put more money in at risk and early childhood providing opportunities to students in dire need of this support. Thank you for your support in making this happen.

We are not a school district with a large amount of contingency reserve money because we have spent down those balances to protect programs and the needs in our district over the

past few years. How does SB 44 help in restoring the vision of USD 393 and all public schools? It provides us with dedicated dollars to increasing the base and supporting the future of Kansas. By having a plan in place we can begin to discuss more possibilities at Solomon. The Kansas Can Vision is allowing us to think, create, dream of leading the world in the success of each student. Without SB 44, we are unable to plan beyond a year at a time. We can now look to making improvements for schools that will last more than one year because funding will be committed moving forward. We are looking to adding back an additional staff member at the Junior High level and exploring a 3 year old program or expansion of our 4 year old program. This might not seem like a big deal, but a staff member and possible improvements to our early childhood program is vital to the success of Solomon as a school, but more importantly to our community. As we discuss the rural revitalization this session let us start with a State backed school finance plan. The best revitalization in rural Kansas starts with our school systems. SB 44 does what is needed for students in Solomon, Weskan, Garden City, Wichita, Topeka, and Kansas City. Our State Board of Education along with Dr. Watson's leadership have a great vision in place.

We are excited in Solomon about the future of education and the future of Kansas as a State. SB 44 will provide Solomon an opportunity to develop a plan to address students' needs thank in part to a stable funding mechanism. I thank you for your time today and will stand for questions at this time or anytime in the future.