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ADAM THOMAS
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Madame Chair and Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 2602. I want to first thank Dr. Wayne Burke and Principal Cassie Barton for all they do for our students and for their service to our state. Without them we would see many kids suffer from not only learning loss, but a loss of access to what may be their last chance to finish with a good, quality education. Insight virtual school out of Spring Hill sets the bar for what a rock-solid virtual program looks like.

HB 2602 came to us in part because as we examine the number of newly enrolled virtual students during the last two school years, we are noticing a trend among a solid number of students which is negatively impacting school districts like Spring Hill as a whole. Students who are credit deficient are coming to virtual schools like Insight often as a last resort and do not meet the credit requirements that would allow them to graduate. Insight takes them in, nurtures the learning path for these students, while knowing if they are behind by a year or two in their progress they will not graduate on time. This has a major impact on the Spring Hill school district as a whole regarding graduation rates.

So what should Insight or other virtual school district do? Perhaps they should say "It's no longer worth our time and the negative impact on our graduation rates?" or maybe "these kids are coming to us from other school districts why can't they take them and risk a loss in accreditation?" Instead of choosing the easy way and the extra funding, Insight takes on these students and the \$5,000 state aid (without any weighting for special ed or at-risk), brings the student in, and gets them on a path to graduation. With 18% of their students considered special needs, 55% of that 18% considered at-risk, and stagnant funding since 2015, Insight and Spring Hill School District see \$0 of those weightings and still have found the ability to operate and see success in this virtual environment. Insight does not take on only those students who look good on paper. I commend them for their efforts.

With that, we must address those that are credit deficient, and adjust how the graduation rates among these students are calculated to ensure districts like Spring Hill do not risk the loss of accreditation or the potential harm done using the current calculations. HB 2602 does just that.

HB 2602 will make it possible to create a new calculation of graduation rates that exclude those students who come from districts all over the state, (not just Spring Hill) who are credit deficient from negatively impacting the district rate and virtual school rates. This will allow schools like Insight to remain steadfast in their mission to help any and all who come to them for help, as well as give a more accurate portrayal of the combined graduation rate as a whole for Spring Hill Schools. This bill will not punish in any way our brick-and-mortar schools it will simply allow more students to have the opportunity to come to Insight and other virtual schools and be successful and earn the credits necessary to graduate.

HB 2602 does not change the law with regards to a student's graduation rate being calculated at the last education center they are enrolled in. Also, this bill does not negatively impact any public school district.

As we move forward and consider ways to impact our students and do what is best for them, bills like HB 2602 are a great avenue to show them we are thinking about them as well as their future.

I ask the committee to consider all this information and help me in passing out HB 2602 favorably.

Thank you.

Adam Thomas
Kansas State Representative District 26