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Written Opponent Testimony

SB 499 – An Act concerning an increase in virtual school state aid; providing for additional state aid for certain students who transfer to virtual schools; requiring a second count date of students included in the full-time equivalent enrollment of a virtual school

Presented to the Senate Education Committee
Monday, February 21, 2022

By

Deena Horst and Ben Jones, Legislative Liaisons
Kansas State Board of Education

Chairwoman Baumgardner, Vice-Chairwoman Erickson, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and members of the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for allowing our input on SB 499.

Allowing virtual schools to have multiple count dates is likely to create unintended consequences. School districts located near military bases are the only districts that utilize a second count date as soldiers and their families could be reassigned there at any time in the year. There are only a few districts that receive military students, but there are over 100 districts that have virtual students. Because the Kansas State Department of Education begins auditing the student count in November, and all audits must be completed by May in order to calculate final state aid payments, a second count date can be problematic. If more students enroll in a virtual school after the fall count date, a second audit will need to be completed. Adding a potential of 100 or more districts to the list of audits after March 6, would create a backlog when auditors are attempting to complete the first audit for other districts.

Another Subsection requires the State Board of Education to determine the number of students enrolled in each virtual school who transferred to a virtual school operated by a different district in the preceding year. They must have been enrolled in grade 9 through 12 of the nonvirtual school and not have sufficient credits to graduate with the student's cohort when first enrolled in ninth grade; have failed two or more courses; **OR** scored below grade level on any state assessment. Funds for such students are to be subtracted from the nonvirtual school district and transferred to the district

hosting the virtual school to which the student transfers. Our concern is that districts are not being treated equally. Nonvirtual school districts that receive students from another nonvirtual school district and that meet the same qualifications receive no additional funding. In addition, virtual school students who transfer to another virtual school in another district and who meet the same qualifications are not afforded the same funding. We believe that districts receiving like students should receive the same opportunity for additional funding.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify regarding SB 499.