

Testimony before the
House Committee on Education
On
HB 2504

By
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February 2, 2016

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:
Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I am speaking today in opposition to HB 2504. I am concerned about the direct negative impact this bill could have on communities and the unintended consequences that would arise if it were approved.

Local school boards serve as the elected representatives of their community to govern the educational process of their most precious asset, their children. School boards provide an opportunity for local voice and local control to be exercised. This bill does not specify if local boards would stay in place with one superintendent or if the county superintendent would work with one board serving all of the county schools. Either of these scenarios is a detriment to the communication process vital to school success.

If this bill was introduced solely to ignite a dialog regarding possible restructuring of Kansas school districts due to changes in state demographics, it has accomplished that goal. It has become one of the most talked about bills that I can remember in recent history and has angered many people as they perceive it as a way for the Legislature to take over control of our schools.

I believe the important question to ask regarding this bill is why. Why is this bill important and why was it drafted? Was it designed to help “Kansas Lead the World in the Success of Each Child”?* As educators, we have important work to do in educating the young people of our state. Does this bill advance and support that vital effort?

Was this bill drafted exclusively to save money? If that was the case, we must continue to ask the question why. Is it to cover the reduction of revenue coming into the state coffers? Again, we must ask why. Many Kansans believe that question is answered by looking back to actions taken in 2012.

I offer to you, the committee, charged with education as your reason for existence, three questions you must ask yourself regarding this bill:

1. Does this bill support the success of each child in the state of Kansas?

2. Does this bill advance the prospects of local control for the citizens of Kansas?
3. Does this bill ensure communities of all size retain their voice when it comes to the local process of educating the young people of their community?

I ask that you do not support this bill. It does not advance the important work we have before us as we strive to make the vision of the Kansas Department of Education a reality. We need all hands on deck to work together for the future of our children; we can't afford distractions or detractors.

Thank you for your time and attention to this vitally important topic.

* Vision statement created by the Kansas Department of Education