

Chairman Highland and Members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing in regard to House Bill 2504. There are numerous reasons myself and my family oppose this bill.

I live on a family farm that has been in the Tracy family since 1879 and my children are the third generation to go through the Argonia School district. We do not want to lose our school - it will be detrimental to us personally in many ways.

My husband and I will always live here and hope our children will come home to their roots when they settle down – but why would they if there isn't a school to educate their children? A good school system is essential to a family. A small, rural school allows us to maintain a bit of local control in how our students are educated. We know the teachers, administrators and school board that ultimately make the decisions for our children.

Many of our rural schools have already consolidated – and the towns that lost their schools are mere shadows of what they once were when they had a school. Please don't contribute to the death of another small town!

I know our district is very fiscally conservative and has already made many cuts - bus routes, equipment, not replacing personnel that leaves or retires. We are doing our part-there is little or no waste in our budget!

Bussing and time spent on the bus is always an issue. If we lose our school – the nearest school is 15 miles away – how long will our kids be on the bus then?? It is already a long bus ride for many of our kids – longer bus time for them is not an option. Parents taking the kids to school isn't an option for many – they work out of town and must leave too early to take their children to school.

Our school is probably the largest employer in the Argonia area – myself included. Consolidation it seems is just a precursor to closing - more unemployment in Rural America. If there is no school and no employment, people move away. Who will want to buy our homes in a dying town with no school? I am also a small business owner- Who will support my business if the Argonia area dies? I realize a town shouldn't be dependent on a school to survive but few will choose a town that doesn't have a school or one in which their children will have to ride a bus for prolonged periods of time.

Please keep our small school independent and open. Many of us have chosen to come to the “country” because of the small town schools and values. Our children generally do not “fall through the cracks”. Our teachers won't let a student fail if the student puts forth the effort. That is not as common in a large school district.

For these and many, many other reasons, please do not adopt house bill 2504. The small town way of life is worth fighting for.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinion.
Elizabeth R. Tracy