

Testimony before the House Committee on Education
in opposition to
House Bill 2504 – School District Realignment
by
Judith Deedy, Executive Director of **Game On for Kansas Schools**
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Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the school district realignment bill.

[Game on for Kansas Schools](#) is a nonpartisan grassroots effort among Kansans who share a belief in high-quality public education as a right of all Kansas students. We advocate for Kansas public schools to ensure our teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members have the resources necessary to deliver quality education to all Kansas students. We inform communities across the state about issues and legislation affecting their students. The Game On leadership team currently includes over 15 members, representing the spectrum of education stakeholders (parents, educators, and other community advocates), and our membership extends statewide.

We have several concerns about this bill. Although we recognize the need for efficiency in the operation of our Kansas school districts, especially in light of ongoing revenue shortfalls, efficiency is not the only value that matters. Kansas derives benefit from our rural citizens, and we believe their voices matter when it comes to managing their local schools. Although this bill does not in itself consolidate schools, we can see that there will be an issue of how multiple school boards merge and whether there will be representation problems for smaller communities.

We share the concerns of many rural community school patrons who suspect that this bill is merely the first step in a new round of school closures. Will new larger school districts face budget cuts in the future that force them to make the difficult decision to close school buildings? We are also concerned about the possibility of children on long bus rides to and from school on rural roads and the impacts on small towns if their schools close.

We also question the expected cost savings in the bill. We understand that many rural superintendents wear multiple hats, for example, superintendent and elementary school principal. If the superintendent position is eliminated, the elementary school principal position will still need to be filled. There also may need to be an assistant superintendent if the new superintendent position oversees a large geographic area and/or a larger number of formerly-existing districts.

Finally, this bill seems to run counter to the Kansas value of local control. Local communities are not county-wide, and Kansas state government should listen to what Kansas local voices say is best for their communities.