

Chairman Highland and Members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing to express my concern of HB 2504 on District Realignment and what it may mean to my school district and community. Many people who live in our community and whose children attend our schools have made the choice to live in this area and have their children attend a small school. I moved from Wichita to Argonia 21 years ago to work as an administrator for Argonia Public Schools. My son has grown up in Argonia and will be graduating from high school this year.

There are vast differences between a large and small school district and the main thing we have to lose as a result of this bill is the local control that our school boards have over the districts they serve. Customs, traditions, and values are very different between districts and each school board represents the people they serve. That all would be lost within the restructuring of county wide school districts and the attempt to combine many neighboring districts into one larger district.

The proposed savings of \$17 million dollars per year doesn't seem worth the trauma and hardship this would cause our students, staff, and community members. We frequently have students move into our district or request a transfer into our district from larger districts because they are not happy with the education they were receiving or had problems with other students. We have also lost students to larger districts who wanted other sports or programs that we do not offer, but that is the whole point. It is about letting people choose what is best for them and their family. Reorganizing districts into larger districts would completely remove these choices for everyone.

While this bill does not address the closing of school buildings or how the new school boards will be formed, it can be foreseen that with the current budget deficit, there will continue to be a school funding crisis in our state. Operating costs and other expenses will continue to increase and school districts will struggle to find ways to save money. The closing of school buildings will be a byproduct of the institution of HB 2504.

It is a genuine fear that once school buildings are closed, towns and communities will cease to exist. Eventually people will move away and gravitate toward communities with schools. There is evidence of this same scenario occurring in small towns and communities all across Kansas.

Kansas has a strong tradition of both small town values and big city opportunities and it should be left up to the people to decide how they want to live and how they want to raise their children. School board members and community members will continue to find ways to combine resources and work together to maintain high standards for their students. These choices and decisions should be left up to the local communities and school boards and should not be forced upon them by the legislature.

Please do not adopt HB 2504 and leave local choice and control up to the constituents of our districts.

Thank you for your consideration,

Julie McPherron
Superintendent/Elementary Principal
Argonia USD 359