



Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center
703 W. 2nd Ave
Oakley, KS 67748
(785) 672-3125 (785) 672-3175 (fax)

Written Testimony in opposition of HB 2504

2/3/15

Respectfully submitted by,
Katherine Kersenbrock-Ostmeyer
Director Special Education
Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center

Honorable Chair Highland and Committee Members,
Thank you for the opportunity to address this bill and thank you in advance for your considerations of my concerns.

The Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center was form over 40 years ago as an entity that provided collaboration among multiple counties and school districts. This local effort has served our area well in reducing education costs through shared responsibility in supporting children, youth and their families. HB 2504 could dismantle this cooperative arrangement. To keep the testimony concise I have provided a list of concerns:

Would cooperative agreements be abandoned out of this restructuring proposal?

If cooperative agreements survive the law--how will they survive constant local restructuring every few years as they relate to funding agreements among member districts that come and go?

Would hard to find staff want to work for an agency where its viability is uncertain every decade?

Would cost savings addressed and proven through Interlocals and cooperatives be abandon due to restructuring complications?

Would loss of local control among rural communities lead to school closures?

If school closures occur---special education complications will develop and how will schools cope with these added costs?

Who will be left to manage staff? Is the bill proposing to reduce just Superintendents, or Principals and other central office staff?

Has the cost calculations shared as part of this bill factored all of the shared responsibilities already occurring in rural schools. For example many Superintendents are also Principals, Transportation Administrators, Curriculum Directors, etc. and these roles will need staff to cover responsibilities.

And finally, **How does this bill help students?**

Entities such as interlocals, cooperatives, and service centers have been established through locally controlled efforts to best meet the needs of local communities. Agencies such as ours would not have lasted over 40 years if they weren't cost effective and beneficial to the students and families served by member districts. What may look like an easy way to reduce costs for the State through consolidation may in fact create significant costs elsewhere.