

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



FROM BLUE VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 229

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 294

Blue Valley USD 229 appreciates the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 294 (SB 294). SB 294 creates a pilot school finance formula for the six school districts who are part of the Coalition of Innovative Districts.

There are several aspects of the bill that USD 229 feels are very positive. One, this bill attempts to make the connection between school district funding levels and student outcomes, and financially incents school districts to increase student outcome measures. Two, the bill includes allowances for school district poverty in its formula, and recognizes the important role that poverty plays in academic achievement. Three, USD 229 likes the idea of a pilot year for this bill, with the understanding that feedback from participating districts will be used for future changes to the bill to make it more workable for school districts. Four, USD 229 appreciates that the intent of SB 294 is to hold all participating school districts harmless when it comes to general school finance aid. Five, and very important to USD 229, the bill gives additional measures of local school finance control to school districts.

However, there are several concerns about SB 294 that USD 229 has which requires the district to remain neutral at this time. One, SB 294 does not allow a coalition district to opt out of the pilot year of the bill and utilize the existing school finance formula, if it so chooses. USD 229 would like to see an amendment to SB 294 that allows this flexibility. Two, SB 294 does not allow access to the extraordinary needs fund in case of an unanticipated extraordinary need. USD 229 would like to see the use of this fund be allowed. Three, the method for calculating wealth appears to create an imbalanced and unacceptable burden on “wealthy” districts who desire to levy additional local taxes for the purpose of educating district students. Four, the method for determining the success aid portion of the formula will be difficult for school districts to track and maintain. USD 229 urges another look at this method as well as data availability to support it. Additionally, any method used should be researched based and needs to account for the different “ceiling” amounts created by the current formula. Five, even though this issue does not directly affect USD 229, the requirement for school districts to adopt General Accounting and Auditing Procedures (GAAP) requirements should be dropped from SB 294.

USD 229 is committed to working with the committee to refine SB 294 so that it is beneficial for all students in Kansas, and workable for all school districts.

Due to the concerns USD 229 has about SB 294, however, USD 229 will remain neutral at this time.

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