

February 2, 2016

To: Chairman Highland and House Education Committee

Re: HB2457

Good afternoon. Thank you Chairman Highland and committee members. My name is Dr. Bart Goering and I have recently retired from being the superintendent of schools for the Spring Hill School District. Currently, I have started my own real estate business with my son Alex and Better Homes and Gardens Kansas City Homes. All of these experiences have helped me understand what is going to be required of Kansas' students to be successful in work and college.

In 2008 while I was with the Spring Hill School District I lead the staff, community and school board through the process of creating a charter school designed to increase course offerings and to expand educational opportunities to all Kansas students and families. Insight School of Kansas and the Kansas Virtual Academy are still going strong offering over 1000 students school choice in the 2015-2016 school year. I have been passionate about school choice for many years including creating two earlier charter schools for elementary and high school aged students.

With that as my background, I became intrigued with a new organization called Success for Kansas Students. I have been asked by the Board of Directors to accept a leadership role in the organization.

School choice comes in many forms and varieties. That is what makes it a choice. Our organization is dedicated to expanding educational opportunities for Kansas students. It sounds simple. Offer a number of both public and private school choice opportunities and let the students and parents decide what is going to meet their needs. The reasons to choose another school other than the one assigned to their address are countless. In fact, there are as many different reasons as there are students.

Giving students a choice can mean more success academically, socially and for some students, as shared during graduation ceremonies I have attended, a life out of poverty and even suicide. Choosing another school does not mean where they were attending was bad. It just means another school met their needs better. Students change schools because of a need for special academic programs, bullying, illness, accidents, and a chance at earning scholarships.

One change to the current law I would propose would be to add neighboring school districts to the qualifying schools criteria. That would allow students options to attend exemplary schools and participate in successful schools both public and private in Kansas with the tax credit scholarship program.