

Written Testimony

Presented to the House Education Committee

On

House Bill 2504

By Amy Futhey, Caldwell, Kansas

Representative Highland, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this written testimony regarding HB 2504. I submit this testimony in opposition to this bill.

I serve on the Board of Education of Caldwell USD 360 in South Central Kansas. We serve 243 students in a 1A district which is the center of the Caldwell community. Our community has a strong business district due to an active Chamber of Commerce, City Government, Historical Society and many active community members who volunteer their efforts to support the school and local commerce.

My primary concern with this bill is that it eliminates local control of the education process in the Caldwell community and moves the decision making authority to an entity that has no vested interest in the education and success of Caldwell students. Parents and patrons currently have access to members of the Board of Education and district leadership on a daily basis. They participate in the planning and decision process by volunteering on district Site Councils. The voice of the community is quieted with HB 2504. District leadership in another community will not allow for parents and patrons to participate in the process due to the absence of the district administrator in the community. One district administrator in a centralized district office will be stretched to maintain that type of relationship with each school's community.

Although consolidation may be appropriate in some districts to maximize opportunities for students to be successful and reduce expenses, I believe this decision should be made by a local board of education whose members understand the needs of the students and the economic impacts to each community involved. School districts currently work together to meet student needs through cooperative agreements and sharing of resources. Collaboration of vested stakeholders to meet student needs and increase efficiency is what is needed to make students successful, not a uniform plan that doesn't take into consideration unique local needs and challenges.

Additional concerns revolve around the economic impact this bill may have in the future. I appreciate Representative Bradford's understanding of the effect that the school has in a rural

community. The intent of this bill may not be to close schools in rural Kansas, but when you lose local control to district leadership that does not have a vested interest in the students of the district and the educational philosophy of the district, the risk of losing schools in our community becomes high. If the school leaves our community, the Caldwell community will not survive. The last consolidation of schools in Kansas in the 1950's, resulted in the elimination of many Kansas communities. This bill has the potential to change the face of Kansas rural communities once again.

The State Board of Education has created a new vision for the future of Kansas students. This bill does not support that vision.

Thank you for reading my written testimony. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 620-845-2983. My email address is afuthey@stockxbank.com.

Amy Futhey
23 N. St Marys
Caldwell, Kansas 67022