

January 28, 2016

Dear Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Jared Long. I am a junior at Beloit High School. I am writing you today in relation to HB 2504, the School District Realignment Act and to explain why it is harmful to rural Kansas.

As a high school student, I am very concerned about how this bill would affect the school and district I love so much if implemented as law. According to the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB), this bill would cut the number of school districts from 286 to 132. Only 50 school districts in the state would be unaffected. My school district, USD 273, is a district that will be affected.

The KASB predicts that the new USD 273 would encompass both the current USD 273 and USD 272. I am worried that one school district in this part of the state may not be able to keep every school open. I worry that if this bill is implemented, it will force all current USD 272 schools to close, and students from those schools will be forced to travel lengthy distances for something as basic as education every single day. That is unfair. K-12 education should be available to every single Kansan.

Additionally, if schools close due to financial troubles from the lack of funding by the State of Kansas, the schools that remain open will be unable to fit the influx of students from the closed schools. My high school does not have enough desks for so many new students at once or even the space in classrooms to put those desks. Also, rural Kansas would suddenly be faced with an unemployment crisis. If schools close, obviously many people will lose their jobs.

Finally, I worry that if schools close and families are forced to commute long distances for something as basic as K-12 education, those families will move to the town with the school and the smaller communities will simply dwindle away. Also, in rural Kansas towns, so many of the community activities revolve around the school. A school is one of the few things rural Kansas community members have to rally behind. We don't have professional sports teams. We don't have the entertainment districts to bring visitors. We don't have major political movements to unite behind. We just have a high school.

In conclusion, I implore you to not support HB 2504 because I am worried this bill will lead to the shutdown of many schools, overcrowding of rural schools, an unemployment crisis in rural Kansas, and literal destruction of communities. This bill is truly an attack on rural Kansas. It cannot become law.

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Sincerely,

Jared Long