



**House Education Committee
Written Testimony on HB 2485**

Prepared by John Hutchison, Chief Financial & Operations Officer
Wednesday, February 14, 2018

Chairman Aurand and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to HB 2485, related to the transportation of students.

First and foremost, Olathe Public Schools is committed to the safety of our students and to providing transportation opportunities for any student that needs them. As a large and growing district in a heavily traveled metropolitan area, we regularly assess our transportation routes – both bussing and walking – for students within our district boundaries.

Not unlike other densely populated areas, most of our students live within 2.5 miles of their attendance center. Our total headcount for 2017-2018 is 30,054 students and of that number, 25,790 (85%) of those students live less than 2.5 miles from their school.

Olathe provides transportation services for 9,345 students living within the district. Approximately 4,300 of these students live within the 2.5-mile radius and are considered pay-riders. That is, they pay for transportation services according to the following fee schedule:

First child	\$290.00/year*
Second child	\$261.00/year
Third child	\$232.00/year

Olathe also has nearly 2,000 students who qualify for free transportation services within the 2.5-mile radius because of their free and reduced lunch status. These students and their families are exempt from paying the fees above.

Within this population of students being transported, approximately 250 students utilize bus services and live within what Olathe has designated as “safety variation areas.” Those are designated areas

*The second child in a family receives a 10% discount. The third child in a family receives a 20% discount. All other riders from a family receive free transportation. Students with approved free or reduced-cost federal lunch program applications are eligible for free or reduced-cost transportation on a first-come, first-serve, space-available basis if there is an existing route in the area. The district does offer a 25% discount for those families that pay between May 1 and July 1.

around our elementary and middle schools identified as being potentially unsafe for students due to traffic volume and configuration. There may not be crosswalks, stop signs, sidewalks, or other pedestrian-friendly features. While some parents within these areas transport their own children, others opt for school-provided transportation and pay the annual fee.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the district collected a total \$545,119 in fees for the pay-for-ride service. This does not cover the total cost of transportation for these students, rather it helps defray a small portion of the expense the district incurs.

HB 2485 would have a significant impact on Olathe's overall transportation budget. The state does not fully reimburse transportation costs and for every additional student we add, there are numerous considerations – how it affects the bus routes, how many additional seats (or buses) are needed, whether buses are running efficiently and at capacity.

Olathe is committed to putting student safety first and is always willing to engage in conversations about how best to do that. However, given the fiscal implications of this proposal, we respectfully suggest that the most appropriate place to discuss this topic would be in the broader context of the school transportation funding formula and not as separate policy matter.

If you have any questions, please contact John Allison at (913) 780-8022 or John Hutchison at (913) 780-8034.