



**KANSAS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

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Oral Testimony as Neutral before the

House Education Committee

on

**HB 2723: Permitting residents to petition and vote for a transfer of school district territory;
concerning requirements and procedure**

by

By Leah Fliter, KASB Advocacy and Outreach Specialist

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today as neutral on [HB 2723](#). As we understand the bill, it would allow areas of a school district where a majority of students are attending another district to initiate transfer of territory to the other district.

KASB's member-adopted policy states that changes in school district structure or boundaries should be determined by local communities through the local political process and opposes legislation that would directly or indirectly result in state-mandated consolidation of school districts. We appreciate that HB 2723 does not **mandate** the transfer of territory between districts, but rather leaves the decision up to local citizens and school boards.

The voluntary transfer of territory between school districts could result in a number of positive outcomes. Students could benefit from having access to educational options they want or need in their reconfigured now-home district, precluding the need for inter-district transfers. Those transfers often depend on available space; as a result, some students who wish to transfer in to a district to take advantage of specific opportunities may be turned away. Allowing patrons to initiate the successful transfer of school district territory could also result in stronger political and other support for the district of attendance that now better addresses student needs or wants.

The transfer of territory could also have negative effects on school districts, however. If the area that wishes to transfer to another school district has significant residential or business property, the "losing" district could see a substantial decrease in its assessed valuation, which determines the tax base on which school districts build their budgets. The "losing" district would also see a change in its valuation per pupil, which would further penalize the district financially.

The transfer envisioned in HB 2723 could also be quite divisive for the communities involved. If 51 percent of the area residents wish to become part of the neighboring district but 49 percent do not, the

resulting hard feelings could result in lack of support for the schools or school district and to civic discord. The divisiveness could also make future school closings or district consolidation, even if dictated by population or finances, more difficult.

We also note the bill doesn't address a situation in which the "accepting" district does not want to acquire the territory in question.

Because of the varied impacts of this bill on our member school districts across Kansas, we remain neutral on HB 2723. If the committee believes more study is warranted, we would be pleased to participate in formal or informal discussions and ask our members to develop a specific position on this proposal.

I'm happy to take questions at the appropriate time.