



Written Testimony In **Support** of *HB 2315*

2-16-2020

By Nikki McDonald, Executive Director
Olathe Public Education Network (OPEN)

House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee

Attn: Dana Rooney dana.rooney@house.ks.gov

Dear Chairman Tarwarter, Vice Chair Corbet, Ranking Minority Member Frownfelter and reps Burroughs, Carpenter, Croft, Curtis, Highland, Hineman, Hoffman, Kessinger, Long, Mason, Probst, Ralph, Ruiz and Williams,

Our organization represents the parents of around 30,000 students in Kansas' second largest school district. Our advocacy efforts focus on finding ways to positively impact education policy to enhance the atmosphere of learning in our excellent Olathe Public Schools. We are very proud of our public school system & want to do what we can to ensure that students in our schools are best equipped to maximize their potential and be prepared for their futures.

We became aware of HB 2315 while visiting with a union representative from our local school bus drivers. One concern parents consistently have is the shortage of bus drivers. In particular, parents of special needs students report to us that having a consistent bus driver who knows their child & develops a relationship with them is an important factor in their child's success. The bus driver greets them at the start of their school day, is responsible for safely transporting them to/from school & is the last face they see at the end of their journey home from school. Change and inconsistency are very difficult for many children who have special needs. A disruption on the bus could mean that an entire day of learning could be derailed. Predictability and consistency are key for these students. Making sure that students feel safe and secure is a

vital first step in preparing children for learning. The relationships they have with the adults in their lives are important and school bus drivers are no exception.

One way to reduce the high turnover rate of bus drivers is to pass this bill. I was astonished to realize that school bus monitors who ride the bus along with the children and driver, attending to the needs of the students while the driver focuses on driving typically qualify for unemployment benefits in the summers. It is not equitable for bus monitors to qualify for these benefits while denying them to bus drivers. We urge you to pass this legislation, which will be a step in the right direction towards helping decrease turnover & provide more consistency in personnel. These relationships that drivers make with children and their families are important. They are valuable employees who make a difference in the lives of kids & we need to give them the economic security to remain in these positions year-round. It is good for our economy and more importantly, it is good for children.

Thank you so much for considering our testimony. We appreciate the work that you do in service to our state. Please support the passage of this important bill.