



**Testimony on SB 31, capital improvement state aid  
Senate Education Committee**

John Hutchison, Deputy Superintendent for Business and Operations  
February 24, 2021

Chair Bamgardner and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of SB 31, a bill excluding USD 207, Fort Leavenworth, and virtual school students from the capital improvement state aid determination.

Olathe Public Schools is the second largest school district in the state with approximately 30,000 students. The district currently has 58 attendance centers, including 36 elementary schools, ten middle schools, five high schools, and seven specialty/early childhood centers. This growth did not happen overnight; rather, **the district experienced 55 consecutive years of growth beginning in 1965.**

The process of building new schools and facilities does not occur over a short time. Our board carefully studies the demographics in the community and surrounding areas. They work to anticipate changes in enrollment that may result from new home construction or workforce changes in the surrounding area. The Olathe Board of Education began planning for our next possible bond election more than a year ago – even though that election may not be for another 12-18 months. We work closely with our bond consultants during the planning period and actively solicit input from stakeholders and community members.

The Olathe Board of Education, in partnership with the community, has always strived to ensure that our learning environments are safe, accessible for those with special needs, and designed to support students' academic, emotional and social success in school. While a growing school district, we are also an aging school district with facility needs that require bond financing to replace failing systems with more efficient solutions (ex. HVAC system upgrades). We can often realize long-term savings and extend the life of buildings by transitioning to technologies that are more efficient and/or reconfiguring building use.

The change proposed in this bill would positively impact our students and our community. Because Fort Leavenworth operates within a federal military installation, they have little assessed valuation on which to levy taxes, effectively lowering the starting point for the capital improvement state aid calculation. This adjustment in the calculation would result in an estimated 17 percent increase in capital improvement state aid for Olathe Public Schools, support high-quality learning environments for students, and return it to previous funding levels.

Moving forward, we believe the net cost to the state should be minimal as old debt is retired and new debt is approved.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your work on behalf of Kansas public schools. Please feel free to contact John Hutchison, Deputy Superintendent for Business and Operations, at (913) 780-8022 if you have any questions.