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Unified School District No. 333

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Testimony before the

**Senate Education Committee**

on

**SB 31**

by

**Quentin Breese, Superintendent, USD 333 Concordia Public Schools**

**February 24, 2021**

Madame Chair, and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to share with the committee.

I stand before you as a proponent of Senate Bill 31.

Concordia is a rural Northwest Kansas community of approximately 5000 people. Concordia is the county seat of Cloud County as well as the home of Cloud County Community College. USD 333 approaches the 55% ratio free and reduced lunch students as a district with a median home value of \$73,000 based on Cloud County. USD 333 hosts the Learning Cooperative of North Central Kansas, a special education cooperative of 5 school districts. USD 333 employees nearly 300 employees and is the largest employer in Cloud County. Capital Improvement state aid plays an integral role in USD 333's challenge in providing great education to our 1200 students over the 336 square miles of our district.

The Concordia Community and USD 333 staff and administration have been working tirelessly over the past 4 years to facilitate a capital improvement strategy to meet the needs of our students for the next 50-100 years. The district continues to foster involvement from our stakeholders and gain traction on a number of great solutions to our aging facility needs with efficiency and modern classrooms, however, we continue to hit road blocks when costs for these solutions are revealed. We are facing the challenge of renovating a 1929 High School that has 19 different elevation changes, asbestos and a number of electrical, and roofing needs. Our board of education and community stakeholders are torn, as they have toured our High School, experienced the deficiencies, yet feel the only thing our community can afford is a minimal project. A number of affordable solutions with a few strategic renovations to our science labs, and restrooms were presented over the years and well received however, these renovations wouldn't address the other complex extensive needs of electrical, HVAC, and ADA compliance facing the 1929 structure.

Capital Improvement State Aid has decreased by more than 36% in Concordia since 2015. The constraints placed on districts with the Capital Improvement State Aid have been revealed over the past

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4 years and continue to exaggerate the inequities, as Ft. Leavenworth continues to become “poorer” in the calculation. This change has a significant impact on facility planning. For Example, a \$30 million bond issue in Concordia will impact the local taxpayer by more than 21 mills compared to 14 mills if the state aid equalization percentage would return back to the 42% with the elimination of Ft. Leavenworth from the calculation. The 7-mill difference equates to about \$100 per \$100,000 in market value. A \$200,000 home will cost approximately \$192 per year more due to Ft. Leavenworth being included in the calculation and will continue to rise under the current law.

USD 333 is cognizant of our local tax base and realizes the current 208 local mills assessed from the school, extension agency, the college, the county, and city on our taxpayers is a significant property tax levy. The proposed modification of removing USD 207 from the calculation appropriately realigns the law with its original intent of managing ongoing budget expense to the state without creating inequity among school districts. We will continue to have a contentious argument within our community regarding the need for updated facilities, but this will provide a small equitable foundation to stand on for the future of Concordia and our education facility needs.

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