

To Senator Baumgardner and the Education committee:

I am writing concerning enacting the "Back to School Act". It is my understanding it wants all school districts to provide a full-time in person attendance option for all students beginning 3-26-21 and each school year thereafter.

I am against this requirement. Although I do not have children in school now, I have visited with my daughter about their families opinion. The parents are against this requirement as is my 14 year old grandson. They live in Topeka and he currently has a hybrid schedule with 2 days a week in school and the remainder on-line at home. My granddaughter currently attends elementary in school 5 days a week which is fine since they are able to have correct spacing in the classroom as well as masks. They asked me to include their thoughts in this.

My grandson does not see how it can be safe with COVID in the upper grades when you may have 2000 students, where there would be large crowds moving between classes and larger areas such as the cafeteria. Some classrooms may not be able to have proper spacing either. Their belief is hybrid does qualify as in school attendance, it's just not full time.

This is not a decision that should be up to the legislature. My opinion and my family's is that it should be left to the school district and parents with input from students, also with some guidance from the state school board. This is not something that should be mandated in all future years either. We all agree many parts of our lives have been affected this past year with COVID and we don't know how long it will continue; however, it is extreme to make this bill long term. Does the legislature have proof school districts in past years haven't been having full time in-school attendance?

I am surprised the legislature would consider a blanket law for school districts that range from very small to very large. When Governor Kelly was making decisions for the entire state as to masks, closing businesses, etc. early during the COVID19 pandemic the legislature intervened with the thought that some areas of the state, such as rural areas, did not need the same mandates. Of course, once the legislature eliminated her mandate, COVID cases have surged. The same may happen with this mandate. Not all school staff may choose to be vaccinated, and even if they are, there is still a possibility of transmission. Maybe the state school board will open up extra learning in the summer for those that need it.

I urge your committee to vote against this bill. This should not be your decision.

Sincerely,

Ardith Holmes  
Emporia