

DATE: January 31, 2022

To: Sen. Baumgardner and Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Aaric Davis, Superintendent, USD 337 Royal Valley School District

Re: Proponent to Senate Bill #341

Madame Chairwoman and members of the Senate Committee on Education. My name is Aaric Davis, Superintendent at USD #337 Royal Valley, and I would like to communicate briefly about Senate Bill 341. Impact Aid funds are intended to support districts that lose local tax dollars due to federal or tribally owned lands not being on the local tax roll. The federal government developed the impact aid program because it identified that school districts without the same tax leverage would be at a disadvantage to other school districts. In addition to a loss in tax revenue, impact aid districts have unique characteristics that require additional supports to help students find their success.

Here are some facts about the Royal Valley School District:

- USD 337 is responsible for educating approximately 850 students each year.
- Of those 850 students 34% of them are Native American
- USD 337 covers 169 square miles, and the Prairie Band Potawatomi Reservation covers 121 square miles, most of which is inside our district boundaries.
- Each year, USD 337 transfers nearly \$500,000 of its general operating funds to Capital Outlay in order to keep up with facilities and improvements.
- Last year, USD 337 was entitled to \$550,895 of impact aid funds after deductions and the State of Kansas reduced our state aid by \$385,626 leaving our district with \$165,269 in unrestricted impact aid funds.

With the successful passage of Senate Bill 341, that additional \$385,626 could be used in many ways to benefit the education of all 850 students in our district. For starters, the \$500,000 transfer we make to capital outlay each year (due to the difficulty in passing a bond issue in an impact aid school district) could be reduced by \$385,626 and allow us to use our general funds

for student learning rather than building improvements, maintenance, and renovations. With the additional \$385,626 we could put in programming focused on the graduation rate of all students, including Native American students that graduate from high school at a lower rate than any other race in the United States. The Native American community within our district has many different beliefs that impact the education of our students. Many families within the tribal community believe that their children should be introduced to the Potawatomi language at an early age and hold off on introduction of the English language. The development of language in early years is critical and this poses challenges for young students as they enter school. This is one example of the uniqueness that an impact aid school district faces that impact aid funds would be used to help close the achievement gap between students of different ethnicities.

I support Senate Bill #341 because it will benefit all students in the Royal Valley school district and help level the playing field for impact aid districts that cannot levy taxes on every house in their district. Impact Aid school districts face unique challenges that often require additional funds to support the district. Capital Improvement funds are not equal for impact aid school districts that cannot pass a bond issue. Why is the state of Kansas the only state in the U.S. withholding funds for these districts? I urge you to consider helping a small district with unique challenges to have the funds necessary to provide the high-quality education we strive to give to all students.

Very Respectfully Submitted,

Aaric Davis,
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