

My name is Chris Bloomer, I am the principal of Kapaun Mt. Carmel Catholic High School, and I am an opponent to House Bill 2003 which authorizes KSHSAA to establish a new classification system based on attendance and other factors. There is a belief and contention by some that all private schools recruit thereby giving it an athletic advantage and that simply is not true. At Kapaun Mt. Carmel, and in fact, all four high schools in the Diocese of Wichita, we operate off a stewardship program that supports our students in attending our schools. 99% of our students graduate from one of our many feeder schools, 99% of them are Catholic and 99% of them have been with us their entire educational career. The only recruitment that actively occurs are of families who are entering kindergarten.

Admittedly within that 1% there are a few transfer students, but we have significantly fewer students than the average public school. The argument is made that we have a larger boundary to draw from which unfairly increases our pool. But many public schools, including most of the ones that win regularly, have open enrollment. They can draw from the entire metro area surrounding them. We all know that this is occurring in every metropolitan area in Kansas. It is simply untrue that private schools are the only schools drawing from a large pool. That is not even considering, all the transfers that occur within a large district that KSHSAA does not regulate. Movement within school districts produces countless transfers that are never reported or counted by KSHSAA. We can all cite examples of this occurring with different programs and districts from around the state.

I am not here to say that recruiting and transfers are not an issue. In fact, I agree that they are. However, it is a much larger issue than public vs private. As is public knowledge, in May of last year, Governor Kelly signed House Bill 2567 that allows all districts to accept any student that has the means and the transportation to attend their school. This bill has essentially given every school in the state open enrollment beginning in the 2024-2025 school year. Couple that with the financial resources of the state, private schools have no advantage over their public counter parts and are in fact, at a disadvantage.

Regardless of that new law, I think we can all agree we need to make some changes to the transfer rules and private schools want to be part of the comprehensive solution. If the recent changes in NCAA transfer rules show us anything, it is that young people today want and expect to be able to move schools as often as they want for whatever reason they want. That is not what high school sports is about. Open enrollment, inter-district transfers, what constitutes a bonafide move, blatant recruiting tactics, and parents demanding that sports are a legitimate reason to transfer are all issues that have to be addressed. But changing the classification system and adding a success modifier to only private schools stands not only to punish private schools for these issues, it ignores that these are issues in the public schools as well. I ask you to vote against this proposal and let's get to work on comprehensively addressing the issues where we can all be part of the solution.

Respectfully,

Chris Bloomer
Principal of Kapaun Mt. Carmel Catholic High School