

January 16, 2023

Honorable Rep. Adam Thomas
Kansas House Committee (Education Committee)
HB2003 KSHSAA Modifications

Honorable Representative Thomas:

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak in person on behalf of the proponent side of HB2003 during the Education Committee Hearing on Thursday, January 19, 2023. Previously, I have addressed the KSHSAA Board of Directors last spring and the Kansas State Board of Education this fall. This would be my third time to appear on behalf of the proponent side.

This is currently my 28th year in public school education, with all of those years being at McPherson High School. I am also in my 28th year of coaching McPherson Girls Basketball, with the last 18 years being in the head coaching role. McPherson High School has been impacted by the private school issue as much or more than any program in the state. This is true across all activities. While the topic of public vs. private schools has been a constant throughout my entire career, I previously had chosen to remain silent. After years of frustration with this issue, it was the right time for me to lend my very experienced perspective to the cause. There is strong momentum for the classification multiplier proposal and an opportunity to finally address the competitive balance issue. The primary focus, and most glaring issue, is the wide gap between metro private and true community public schools, specifically in Class 4A.

Over the last 27 years, our girls basketball program has dealt with the public vs. private issue as much as anyone in the state in the postseason. We have played Bishop Miege 10 times, St. Thomas Aquinas 4 times, Bishop Carroll 5 times, and Wichita Kapaun Mt. Carmel once. That is 20 postseason matchups in 27 seasons. Of those 20 postseason matchups, 18 occurred at either the Class 5A or 4A State Tournament; 2 occurred in Sub-State play. Due to these consistent and common matchups, I had simply accepted that this was just part of the deal as the McPherson coach. In the 2022 Class 4A State Tournament, McPherson girls lost in the first round. This provided me an opportunity to see how the public vs. private issue impacted other teams, schools, and communities. Over the course of those three days, it was crystal clear to me that something must be done to level the playing field and for changes to be made to impact the classification placements of private schools.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill, and for allowing both proponents and opponents to address the committee on Thursday. It is an honor to be a part of this very important process. If you need to reach me, please feel free to call at 620-755-9577. My email is christopher.strathman@mcpherson.com.

Sincerely,

Chris Strathman
Proponent for HB2003