

January 17, 2023

Honorable Kansas House Members

RE: HB2003 in regards to KSHSAA Multiplier

Dear Kansas House Members,

I really want to express my concerns with the KSHSAA amendment for classification of private schools. I believe that HB2003 is a punitive measure that singles out a few private schools for success in sports and academic state championships. There are many public schools with the equal or greater success, and these schools are exempted from this proposed change. I will address some of this below.

I am not sure that you are familiar with Sacred Heart in Salina and the size of our school. Over the past 114 years this school has created a rich tradition in both academics and in athletics and has accumulated approximately 46 state championships (including Debate and Scholars bowl in these totals). Sacred Heart has been successful in past 5 years in Golf (5 state championships), Girls Tennis and basketball (our first since 1981). Obviously these are all small team sports utilizing only about 3-5 participants per sport with the exception of Basketball. We have been very blessed to have some great coaches and athletes to help these teams achieve their ultimate goal. With this however, all of these success stories at our school come from our community. I have 4 children ranging from 10 years old to 17 years old and in all sports they play in, 95+% of the kids have played together since they started grade school. There is no "recruiting" being done in these small schools that give a competitive advantage, just a lot of hard work from athletes and parents sacrificing time and talent.

The part that bothers me most about this amendment is that it is a blanket approach. For example our football team at Sacred heart will typically consist of around 25 players total (9-12th grade) and in this proposal it would put our team in a somewhat dangerous situation with schools that will have 40-70 kids out for football, and over the course of the games/season without being able to substitute players like the larger schools there is potential for injury to the players. What in turn this could do is begin the process of eliminating football from the activities at these smaller schools should they have success in more individual team sports like Tennis, Golf, Scholars Bowl, and debate. Also similar is basketball. Last year we had a total of 16 kids (there was only 3 seniors on the team and 0 juniors) out for basketball which is not enough to properly field a freshman, JV and Varsity team. This proposal will move us up to a 3A level against programs that will have a total of 40-50 kids out for basketball. Will this lead to some of these programs going away? Or potentially lead to the demise of a great school?

I know the argument is that smaller schools like Sacred Heart play larger schools all the time in football and other sports. Yes that is true, but the reality of this is that our administration looks very closely when scheduling to try to pair us to the smaller 2A/3A schools to ensure we are not in a complete position of failure. Also being in the location we are in, you have to look at how much travel is involved in playing in a league with like sized schools. Look at football for Sacred Heart, we do play some of the smaller 2A schools and over the past 5 years this is how football compares to 2A schools – SHHS Wins 2 (total points- 66)/2A School wins 8 (total points-351). Overall record during this time is 10-36 being outscored 309 to 1430. The reason that I state this is that only 10 games out of 46 were against larger classification schools, and these public schools that have many advantages over the private schools in regards to; coaches pay, facilities, equipment. The smaller private schools are at a severe disadvantage to the comparable public schools at this level in regards to facilities and equipment. The players for private schools have to fundraise for everything up to and including newer model helmets with better impact ratings to keep themselves safe. Small schools like ours have incredibly small budgets for athletics so if you need new equipment, many times the teams must raise the money because otherwise the funds just aren't available even for the necessities.

In reality this proposal should be called the Bishop Miege, St James, Thomas Aquinas proposal. This is really the target as stated repeatedly in the board meetings by proponents. By in large if you remove the 3 big KC Metro private schools there would be no issue with any private schools and the competitive imbalance they spoke about. I know the board put this together to look fair but the motives by those writing the proposal were clear..... they want these schools out of the 4A classification, and the smaller schools just have to deal with the debris left behind. This was stated by the principal from the Frontier League who help author this proposal during the KSHSAA meeting when the proposal was voted on. That in itself seems to be a conflict of interest if you are putting an impartial plan in place.

There are alternatives solutions available, such as the willingness of the big 3 (this proposal was created for) private schools to petition to move up a classification. With Bishop Miege, St. James and St. Thomas Aquinas all are agreeing to move up a classification to satisfy the groups that feel that the current system is not fair. I would also think that if the modifier should move forward, it should be sport specific and include all public schools not a blanket approach. Let's be honest, winning a debate, golf, scholars bowl and Girls tennis title in 1/2A should not impact other programs as these programs can have success at different levels over say a Baseball, Football, Basketball team.

I appreciate you taking the time to read my email and I would ask for a NO vote from you when this is called to a vote on the floor.

Sincerely,

Tyler Bogart

Salina, KS