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Testimony on: HB 2410 - Creating the Kansas school equity and enhancement act

Before: House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

By: Steve Splichal, Superintendent of Schools, Eudora, KS

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the students, staff and families of the Eudora School District, I would like to extend a sincere thanks for the opportunity to come before you today to offer feedback on HB 2410. We value the committee's effort to solicit input and adhere to transparency throughout the legislative process. It is our belief that, working together, we can build a formula that not only meets the mandate of the courts, but -- more importantly -- provides every single student in Kansas with access to an outstanding public education, regardless of zip code.

I testify today in opposition to the bill. I recognize that our district, largely due to growing enrollment, stands to gain additional revenue. However, there are three substantial areas of concern for our local schools.

The first is the lack of weighted Career and Technical Education funding. Year in and year out, some 80% of the students at Eudora High School are enrolled in at least one CTE course. By the time our students graduate, half of them have earned "concentrator" or "completer" status. (A concentrator is a student who has earned multiple credits in a single CTE program area, or pathway. A completer is a student who has met the multi-level requirements of a single pathway.) 20% of our graduates each year will also earn an industry recognized certificate. We currently offer the chance for students to earn certificates in ServSafe (culinary certification), Certified Nursing Assistant and Certified Medication Aid. We have also established partnerships with the De Soto and Baldwin school districts to provide opportunities for their students to learn in our technical center.

For the 2015-16 school year, our district received about \$215,000 in revenue from our partner school districts to help offset approximately \$591,000 in expenditures (total costs during 2015-16 school year) for our program. Under the old funding formula, our district generated approximately 180,000 in revenue. The remaining balance (\$196,000) for Eudora CTE programs is paid for out of the LOB. Our board and administration remain committed to providing our students the educational, hands-on opportunities that our career and technical education programs offer.

Second among our concerns is the continued shortfall in special education funding. In terms

of academic performance, our special education students are most often in need of support, which frequently is intensive and demands substantial resources. This year our school district is sending our special education cooperative just under \$1 million to help cover the excess costs. If HB 2410 were amended to reflect the complete funding for 92% of excess costs, our local district's share drops to about \$80,000. If you are looking for something that has a positive and equalized impact on every school district in Kansas, funding special education at 92% would do just that.

The final concern I will share today is the reduction in state aid for transportation. There is no mistaking the increasing costs associated with transporting students, often outpacing revenue. However in Eudora, a substantial portion of our district transportation is in place because of a real safety threat. As Eudora has grown over the years, it has created great opportunities, but it also has resulted in a community with a heavily traveled four-lane state highway dividing our middle and high school campuses to the south and the elementary school to the north. Despite the efforts of community leaders, as well as elected officials, we have been unable to secure any safe pedestrian access across K-10. Our board and the community have determined that it is in the best interest of our students to provide shuttle access (not door to door) from various points in Eudora to the three attendance centers. Every day, close to 500 students rely on our shuttle service to cross the highway and get safely to and from school.

In closing, I want to express our pleasure with the committee's proposal to increase the State Foundation Aid to \$4,170 and provide future increases according to the Midwest Consumer Price Index. As the committee might imagine, this incremental adjustment will allow a school district to account for the factors that increase in the cost of doing business. We also are pleased to see the committee's commitment to funding all-day Kindergarten by the 2020 school year.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you again for your willingness to hear all sides and consider the possibilities. We are ready to help determine the best possible solution for all Kansas students. Thank you for your consideration.