

Unified School District 232

De Soto – Shawnee – Lenexa – Olathe

www.usd232.org

Frank Harwood
Superintendent of Schools

Testimony before the

House K-12 Budget Committee

On

HB 2561 and HB 2697

Frank Harwood, Superintendent, USD 232 – De Soto

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Chairman Patton:

Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee.

USD 232 – De Soto supports both HB 2561 and HB 2697.

As with all parts of the school funding formula, transportation funding is very important. Although the transportation formula does have some statistical complexity, it is philosophically fairly simple. Districts will have expenses directly related to providing transportation to students that live 2.5 miles or more from school as required by state statute. Due to the immense variability among school districts, these expenses will not be consistent. As reflected in the current and proposed transportation formula, it is obvious that the density of students within the district will have an impact on the cost of transporting students. Students that live closer together are less expensive to transport on a per-pupil basis. However, there will always be a cost to provide transportation and the efficiency gained by increased student density has its limits.

Much of the confusion surrounding transportation funding can be attributed to the vague nature of the current statute. From a statistical standpoint, "curve of best fit" does not give enough information to determine which line of best fit is intended. There are multiple ways to calculate the line of best fit ranging from simple linear regression to more complex models like moving averages. It appears that the Legislative Post Audit on transportation costs uses a logarithmic curve of best fit. Because of the formulas used to calculate the curve, the expected cost will decrease quickly at first and then level out. However, expected costs will continue to trend downward until they approach zero. This model appears to fit the data for most districts but will always return lower and lower expected expenses for districts like USD 232 that have relatively high student density. Assuming that it was not the legislature's intent to deliberately

harm districts with high student density, a different line of best fit model would need to be used.

From a practical stand point, the economy associated with student density in regards to transportation costs would level out establishing a minimum funding rate. In fact, using a Moving Average to establish a horizontal trend line representing the minimum funding rate would be a line of best fit. Maintaining the current formula using the LPA's interpretation of line of best fit would not only be unfair, it would be inherently disequalizing.

It is clear that the transportation formula needs to be updated to clarify the current confusion. The legislature should be very clear in its intention in defining the statistical model to be used. HB 2561 makes the appropriate clarifications to the formula. By specifying a mechanism for a Moving Average trend line, HB 2561 recognizes the limitations of the cost savings associated with increased student density.

As was reported in the LPA report, the current formula does not cover transportation costs for many school districts especially those with high student density. HB 2697 seeks to remedy this inequity by increasing the student multiplier to better represent the expenses incurred with providing required transportation for students. For USD 232, State Transportation Aid covers about 60% of General Education transportation costs and 80% of our Special Education Transportation costs. This means that USD 232 is required to use nearly a million dollars of general fund or supplemental general fund resources for transportation. These resources are then not available to meet other educational needs.

In closing, I would like to again thank you for the opportunity to provide input. I would urge you to approve HB 2561 and HB 2697 to make the transportation funding formula more reflective of actual transportation expenses and recognizing the real limitations of the economy associated with student density.

Frank Harwood
Superintendent
USD 232 – De Soto