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Testimony in writing to the House K-12 Education Budget Committee

In opposition to

HB 2395: Amending the Kansas school equity and enhancement act and other statutes related to the education of elementary and secondary students, and making appropriations to the department of education.

Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools

March 14, 2019

Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools is a parent and patron advocacy group in the Blue Valley School District. We advocate for legislation that supports Blue Valley Schools and work to help our community understand the importance of their votes to our schools.

Representative Williams and members of the Committee:

Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools has had the opportunity to review HB 2395 and we would like to submit testimony in opposition to this bill.

First of all, we object to the sudden introduction of such an important and detailed bill with little time given for citizens to read and understand the bill and create and submit testimony. You are undoubtedly aware that Blue Valley Schools, as well as many other school districts, are on Spring Break, and citizens who support funding our schools may be unable to fully focus attention on this matter. The timing of the introduction of HB 2395 is not lost on us.

We have several concerns with HB 2395, which we will detail below. We would like to restate our previous testimony and communication to the Legislature that **we support SB 142**; we support the State Board of Education's recommendation and Governor Kelly's plan to fund schools; and **we strongly oppose** starting over or attempts to attach unnecessary provisions to any school funding bill.

We are very concerned by, and oppose the removal of, the state's obligation to fund special education costs. While we recognize that the state has never fully met its obligation to do so, we remain hopeful that the legislature will consider its obligation in the context of setting a budget for public education funding. This is especially important to many Blue Valley voters, since families with special needs children move to Blue Valley specifically for the schools, and we have a larger special education population than the state average.

We oppose any diversion of tax money to private schools, under any guise or circumstance. Unlike public schools, private schools are not required to accept all students. In particular, for students who are affected by bullying, the “anti-bullying” provision may not help them at all. Private schools may close at a moment’s notice and these students would be forced back into the public school. Students who are targets of bullying may not be accepted by private schools. This provision, if anything, encourages school officials, parents, and bullies, to tolerate and get away with bullying behavior. If a student is being bullied, the “easy answer” might be to tell them to go find another school. That’s not an acceptable way to treat our children.

You have raised the concern of “accountability.” **We find that our Blue Valley Schools are in fact accountable** to the Blue Valley residents who elect our local Board of Education to set district policy and work to hire an accountable Superintendent. Additionally, state accountability measures are already in place, with school districts reporting numerous metrics to the KSDE, which publishes them on the website at <https://datacentral.ksde.org/>.

The bill’s requirement that school districts spend down their unencumbered balances monthly represents an unnecessary and intrusive assault on local control. Local Boards of Education and district administrators make decisions based on individual needs of districts, and we oppose arbitrary restrictions being placed on those by the legislature.

We appreciate the diligent efforts of the Committee to address the school funding situation and arrive at a timely solution. **We do not believe that HB 2395 is a good solution. We ask that you add the inflation adjustment required by the Court, which is already present in SB 142, and allow the remainder of the constitutionally sound funding formula passed in 2018 to stand without alteration.**

Sincerely,

Patty Logan
For Stand Up Blue Valley: Families for Our Schools