



Testimony: SB 455 (written only)

Senate Education Committee

March 8, 2022

Submitted by: Dr. Tonya Merrigan, USD 229 Blue Valley Schools

Chairwoman Baumgardner and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony **opposing** SB 455. As noted in the "Quick Facts" at the end of this testimony, USD 229 Blue Valley Schools currently educate 22,241 P-12 students, housed across 35 school buildings.

As we reviewed SB 455, it presented us with numerous questions and five significant areas of particular concern:

- The nature of the strong business climate in Johnson County, with many businesses reporting the quality of schools as a primary determinant in locating there, leads to our districts having a number of new residents enrolling throughout the year. *We, therefore, do not know in August whether we have sufficient openings for non-resident students.*
- Another concern is that this bill has the potential to increase student transience as parents try to select the district they prefer for their child. Because parents can enroll students anytime throughout the year, a district may not receive the financial resources to ensure appropriate programs and resources are available to support learning outcomes.
- Another big area of concern is that we are certain to get a rush of *special education students*, as we already get inquiries almost daily from non-resident parents trying to enroll as both of our districts have a reputation of offering superior special education services. It's worth noting that the district only receives about 65% of our total costs for these students. Trying to cover those outside our district would be certain to outspend our resources.
- What we believe our local districts' taxpayers would find particularly egregious is that their *taxes would be paying for non-resident students*, meaning the local resources for our own resident students would be spread even further. While we would receive state BASE aid for these students, the same is not true for capital outlay, bond and interest, and other weightings based on property valuations. No matter how you look at it, this legislation would be a grave injustice to our local taxpayers.



Finally, it would take a dedicated staff member in each of our districts to manage this process across 35 attendance centers in the Blue Valley district and 51 attendance centers in the Olathe district.

We can certainly empathize with parents in lower-performing schools and support targeted strategies that most directly raise the bar for students in these districts. However, Blue Valley is among the highest-performing districts in Kansas—indeed competing nationally—and, as such, would find our districts overwhelmed with requests from non-residents. Without intending to sound elitist, it is nonetheless true that housing costs in our districts often provide a check on resident student growth now.

USD 229 Blue Valley continues to stand ready to work with the committee to either provide needed remedies in SB 455 or to seek other solutions to the challenges facing students and their parents across the state.

USD 229 Blue Valley Schools: Quick Facts

K-12 Enrollment	21,846	ACT district composite average*	24.3
Early childhood – 12 Enrollment	22,241	ACT state average	19.3
Average Daily Attendance	96.4%	SAT district average	1332
Graduation Rate	97.2%	SAT state average	1243
Teachers with a master's degree or higher	75%	*with 96% of students taking the ACT test	