

Chairman Highland and Members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing you this letter to formally voice my opposition to the proposed HB 2504.

This bill forces the consolidation of over 50% of the school districts in the state of Kansas, and doesn't provide any means on how local school districts would be represented.

I ran for, and was elected to, a position on our local school board to have a voice for the vision of both my own children, and others' children in our community. If the proposed HB 2504 was to pass, who would be making the critical decisions that directly affect both my family, and the others in our community?

I am neither for consolidation nor against it. I feel strongly that it should be up to the local school board to decide. Although I have not had a long tenure as a local board member, I see where we have entertained and entered into certain arrangements that directly benefit our school and that of others. We have formed a cooperative agreement with a nearby district for JH and HS football, we participate in the Greenbush Cooperative Purchasing Program, and we belong to a Special Education Interlocal comprised of five districts. Again, these are decisions that need to be made by the local school board, not guided by a haphazard attempt at fixing a state budget.

Our local school board has been very "budget" aware of our decisions to local taxpayers and property owners. We have been very frugal and responsible with our funds while others may have opted to impose large mill levy increases with local bond issues. It is my understanding that these costs would then be distributed among the entire proposed district. How would/could that ever be construed as fair?

I know this bill doesn't propose any school closings, but it doesn't take too much to read between the lines and see that this would definitely be the fast track way to accomplishing this. How do you expect rural Kansas communities to thrive and experience any growth with the constant, irrational, threat of state mandated consolidation always being at the forefront of proposed budget cuts?

This constant barrage is discouraging people from moving to smaller communities to enjoy the many benefits that are associated with smaller schools for fear that a small community might lose its school, and said people would see their homes/property diminish in value.

I can show you what happens when a small community loses its school, and it's not pretty.

Respectfully submitted,

Shane Morrison
School Board USD 359