



**House K-12 Education Budget Committee**  
Written Testimony on HB 2150  
Submitted by: John Allison, Superintendent

February 14, 2019

Chair Williams and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony **opposing HB 2150**, a bill establishing the Kansas Hope Scholarship Act. Comprehensive discussions about bullying are complicated, so before getting into the specific provisions of the bill, I want to reaffirm Olathe Public Schools commitment to treating students with respect and integrity and to maintaining a rigorous and safe learning environment.

The Olathe Board of Education adopted its bullying plan in 2007 – long before being required by state law – and we regularly review the plan to determine its efficacy. We know that setting clear and consistent expectations about acceptable behaviors – as well as taking swift and immediate action when bullying occurs - is crucial to creating a culture of trust and respect between students, parents, and staff.

We also recognize that bullying is no longer limited to just physical contact with other students but extends to the improper and inappropriate use of technology. Olathe Public Schools launched the CO3 initiative to address cyber safety, cyber bullying and cyber integrity. This initiative is led by the library media coordinator and director of athletics and activities; together, they work with students and parents – including our PTOs and site councils.

As a district, we are always willing to engage in difficult discussions and improve existing systems. Unfortunately, HB 2150 offers the false promise that transferring a child to a private school will solve the bullying problem. There is little evidence to suggest this is true.

Even with a zero-tolerance policy and all of the resources we have in place, we know that there will be instances where bullying occurs. Why? Because we cannot control all of the variables that impact our students' lives. What we can do, however, is work with those students and parents who are victims of bullying, along with those who act aggressively and inappropriately toward others.

The tuition scholarships created in HB 2150 would divert resources from existing programs and services that support students and, instead, cover the cost of tuition for

students who choose to enroll in private schools. The Olathe Board of Education has long-standing policies that oppose tuition voucher and advocate that any school receiving public funding should accept all students on an equal, non-selective basis.

The programs and resources currently available are working for the vast majority of the 31,000 students enrolled in Olathe Public Schools. We urge you to oppose HB 2150 and work with us to address any concerns you may have. If you have any questions or would like to discuss how our school is working to address bullying, please contact me at (913) 780-8022.