

STERLING JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL

HOME OF THE BLACK BEARS
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #376



28 January 2022

To the Honorable Members of the Kansas House Committee of K-12 Education Budget:

I am writing to you to ask you to consider the potential impact that Section 1 of House Bill 2511 may have on Kansas Schools and, more importantly, Kansas students. Like many of you, I'm a graduate of a Kansas public school district. Activities were a strong pull in many ways during my teen years and have been for countless others, most likely many of you who are reading or hearing this. And while I agree that activities are a great part of school for students and we'd like to include as many as possible, these activities come with strings attached for the students who are enrolled in our schools. Strings like academic work, assignment completion, and specific levels of rigor. Strings like attendance, eligibility, and personal conduct. Strings that our schools manage and can apply consistently and fairly to participants when they are enrolled in our schools. House Bill 2511, in its current form, loosens and, in some cases, may cut those strings.

You see, it is those strings that make these activities such valuable and dearly held experiences for our students and their families. They are opportunities for growth as students represent their school. For participants who are not enrolled as students in our schools, the implications of managing these strings will invariably be seen as inconsistent at best, with some decisions appearing to be unfair to one or more populations. Furthermore, even if we could manage the strings with deftness, the strings would not apply equally to all participants based on their disparate involvement in the other aspects of school. The fundamental aspect being missed by those who developed this bill is that our activities are school-based (i.e., for the students of our school); they are part of being a student in our school. Just because a school event is open to the community does not make it a community event. Similarly, the local Independence Day parade is not a school event simply because the school band marches in it.

I'm a citizen of the state of Kansas just as you are, but I hate the idea of campaigning, fundraising, and doing tons of research to write a bill. But, I'd like to write bills anyway because I've read a lot of them and think I could do well. I pay taxes, too, so does that entitle me to come to the legislature and write a bill, even though I didn't run for office, let alone get elected? Doesn't work that way, says you; "You aren't an elected member of the House." True. I made a choice to not run for office and thus, to not be a representative. Therefore there are certain parts of the process from which I'm disqualified. How is allowing people who make the choice to educate their students in a setting separate from the public school system, but ask for them to



be equal participants in the parts they find desirable any different? I believe the old English proverb of "You can't have your cake and eat it, too" applies here.

I do not hold an ounce of enmity toward those who choose another path of education separate from the public school. I believe that parents are the providers for their children's education and that there are many avenues, each with pros and cons which parents must weigh when considering how best to educate their children. Public schools are but a partner in that process. And if you'd like to be part of our school activities, the implication is that you need to be a student who attends our school, just as I'd need to run for office and get elected if I'd like to write a bill.

I wish to thank you all for your service to our state and its citizens. I also appreciate the opportunity to share with you today.

Sincerely,

Phil Bressler
Principal, Parent, and Kansan.