



Fort Larned Unified School District

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## Senate Education Committee

February 19, 2021

### Senate Bill 144

Proponent Testimony by  
**Bryce Wachs, Superintendent**  
Fort Larned USD 495, a member of  
Schools for Quality Education

Chair Baumgardner and members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony today on behalf of Fort Larned USD 495, a member of Schools for Quality Education. Fort Larned is a rural school district with a student headcount enrollment of 876 PK-12 as of September 20, 2020. We are located in south central Kansas and are comprised mainly of Pawnee County and the western section of Barton County. We have been experiencing declining enrollment over the last five years, resulting in 94.5 fewer FTE students over that period of time.

At Fort Larned, we are in support of **Senate Bill 144** that removes the sunset of the high density at-risk weighting on July 1, 2021. Our free lunch percentage for this fiscal year is 35.05% computing to a high density at-risk weighting of 13.0. If USD 495 did not receive our high density at-risk funds for the 2021-2022 school year, it would be an estimated loss of \$61,178 for our district.

Last year USD 495 was awarded a Commissioner's Award through the Kansas Can Star Recognition Program. This award recognized our district for outperforming our predicted postsecondary effectiveness rate. KSDE predicted USD 495's postsecondary effectiveness rate between 40.1%-42.6% based on such factors as cumulative poverty, student mobility and chronic absenteeism. Our five-year average for 2013-2017 was 48%. The additional funds for at-risk, including high density at-risk funds has allowed us to create the systems of support for our students to outperform our predicted rate. KSDE has released our five-year average for 2014-2018, which increased to 50%. USD 495 is not satisfied with this postsecondary effectiveness rate, our goal is for our students to reach the state board goal of 70-75%.

The elimination of the high density at-risk funds for our district would make it much more difficult for our district to reach the Kansas Can outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **Senate Bill 144** and for your service to the State of Kansas.

Respectfully,

Bryce Wachs, Superintendent  
Fort Larned USD 495