

Brett Fairchild-State Representative-113th District

Proponent Testimony on HB 2489

Thank you, Madam chair, for the opportunity to testify in front of your committee today. Last year, the Superintendent of St. John High School, Josh Meyer, contacted me about a problem they were having. He told me they were unable to sell a shed that the school district owns, because a provision in last year's budget gives the legislature the right of first refusal, which means that the legislature has to be given the first opportunity to buy the building. The school district then must notify the legislature of their intent to sell the building. The legislature then has 45 days to act on the right of first refusal to purchase the property. The 45-day clock starts when the legislature convenes in January.

This provision in the education funding bill was originally placed in the bill, because there were several attendance centers in eastern Kansas that had been closed, including in the Wilson School District. About 25-51% of the bond money that goes to those buildings comes from the state SGF fund. Therefore, the legislature has a financial interest in what happens to those buildings that are closed. I've been told that the legislature won't generally choose to exercise that option and purchase a school building. However, the legislature just wants to have that option in case the building remains vacant.

It's clear that the original intent of this provision was simply meant to apply to attendance centers, not to all buildings. The legislature doesn't have any stake in a school district closing or selling a shed. Therefore, this bill is simply correcting an error in this provision of last year's education funding bill. This bill defines "building" as "any building that was used in any prior school year as an attendance center."

Ultimately, this is just a technical bill that fixes an error in last year's education funding bill, and it's something that should be non-controversial and should pass easily.