

**Testimony on SB 1/HB 2001**  
**School Finance Equity Funding**  
**by Dr. Todd White, USD 229 Blue Valley Schools**  
**June 23, 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about a school finance equity plan that aims to keep our school doors open to the students we serve. I come here today balancing the financial issues facing our state, a Court decision on equity and, most importantly, the needs of our students.

As an educational leader, I continually remind myself that students are our number one priority and, as such, all other decisions must be made with their best interests in mind. It is for that reason I am here today to support SB 1/HB 2001.

Above all else, we are committed to ensuring our schools remain in operation and our students, staff, parents and communities are assured our schoolhouse doors will remain open. It is also important to remember the following:

- This as a one-year solution to a constitutional crisis that threatens to close our schools in a matter of days, at a time when State revenues will not support budget increases;
- This plan restores the equalization formula for LOB at the 81.2 percentile, as set by the Court;
- This plan retains the Extraordinary Needs Fund to assist those districts that are faced with extraordinary drops in property valuation and equalization aid;
- Similar to the funding calculation for the Extraordinary Needs Fund, this plan “assesses” .5% to school districts’ general operating budgets for the purpose of complying with the Court’s decision. It spreads the funding solution equitably across all districts.

Last week, our local chambers of commerce and Johnson County school districts held a press conference asking that the legislature provide enough funding to hold all school districts harmless. Several people expressed their legal view that to us that the Court had spoken very clearly on the issue of “hold harmless” and would very likely strike such a provision if presented to them.

In agreeing to this plan, USD 229 Blue Valley Schools has agreed to forego \$2.4 million in hold harmless funding, as well as \$545,000 from the .5% “assessment” to all school districts. We have carefully weighed and discussed the issues and options before us, and believe this plan - given the late hour and dire circumstances - is a plan that can work for the 2016-2017 school year.

Most importantly, it holds student interests above all others and provides the needed assurance that our school doors are open for students on July 1. The students entering

Senate Ways and Means Committee  
Date: 6/23/2016  
Attachment #: 15

kindergarten this Fall will be the 2030 graduates. We want to make sure that our decisions today do not impede their opportunities for tomorrow and beyond. We hope to work with legislators in coming months to craft an adequate and equitable school finance plan that provides all of our students the opportunity to thrive beyond our doors and into adulthood.