

House K-12 Education Budget Committee

on

House Bill 2143

submitted by

**Jeff Travis, Superintendent of USD 273 - Beloit,
a member of Schools for Quality Education**

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Chairman Campbell and members of the House K-12 Education Budget Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to express our opposition to **House Bill 2143** that would mandate every school district in Kansas purchase all of their information equipment, services and software; food; and fuel through the Kansas Department of Administration. This mandate flies in the face of the concept of "local control" that the citizens of Kansas established in the education article of their state constitution where it provided that local public schools under the general supervision of the state board of education "shall be maintained, developed and operated by locally elected boards."

Each school district in Kansas is unique in the way that its locally elected board strives to fulfill its mission to service the educational needs of their community. This one-size fits all approach fails to take into account the important variables that exist between districts. The information technology that we use is customized to meet our needs, as it is for every other district. This includes emergency alerts, communications with parents, crisis plans, countless reports, etc. We would have concerns about a one-size fits all system that would not accommodate our needs and that also would have unintended consequences and additional costs.

Fuel purchases are another important part of school district operations. Many small rural school districts, like ours, would not have the storage capacity to handle the volume needed if forced into a statewide contract. We currently partner with our local retailer and would be hard pressed to come up with the dollars to build the needed storage capacity to purchase from an outsider.

The procurement of food is a critical concern for our district. We currently operate our food service through contracts with OPAA!, a food management company, where we have had great success in the improvement of the nutrition program for our students. We have created efficiencies in collaboration with OPAA! and provide them access to our kitchens where their staff and ours work together to provide the quality service our board desires for our students. Would these efficiencies be lost if we were forced to go to a different bidder? We contract directly with a local vendor for all of our milk. Would this go to an outsider too? Many school districts work with local farmers to provide fresh produce in the promotion of healthier diets for

our students. Again, another example of where local vendors would be prohibited from working with their school districts to improve healthier food for our students.

Finally, our board works to support our local merchants whenever feasible. This pays dividends because our merchants reciprocate in the support of our schools. We are a community. We would regret the day that our failure to support a local merchant led to their closure. The state of Kansas wants us to buy in Kansas. Local chambers continually ask citizens to purchase local so that the value of a dollar spent can be increased incrementally as it flows through the community. **House Bill 2143** runs counter to this economic development tool. Local boards should maintain the flexibility to make their purchase decisions in the way they feel will best serve their students and their community. **House Bill 2143** should not become law.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Travis, Superintendent
USD 273 - Beloit