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### Shuler Education Center

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Director of Communications

## Testimony in Support of HB 2561 and HB 2697 (Transportation Funding Aid)

Members of the House K-12 Budget Committee,

Auburn-Washburn School District USD 437 supports HB 2561 and HB 2697, Transportation Funding Aid. The following provides background information and reasons to support both bills.

### Background Information

- Auburn-Washburn serves 6,324 students in 128 square miles located in southwest Topeka. We provide bus transportation to all students (including those living within 2.5 miles of school) at no cost because there are not safe pedestrian routes to/from our schools and student residences. Our buses travel nearly 1,000,000 miles each year transporting students to/from schools and school-related activities.
- Sixty buses are routed daily, and on average, we transport 50% of our middle and high school students (1,452 students) and 75% of our elementary school students (2,544 students) to/from school each day.
- According to the 2017 Performance Audit Report, page 12, Auburn-Washburn received \$248,157 in the current practice of funding the high density line of best fit.
- According to the 2015 Legislative Post Audit Report, page 17, committee members documented that Auburn-Washburn could save \$232,000 - \$335,000 annually by no longer transporting students who live within 2.5 miles of school, or, \$215,000 - \$250,000 by charging students who live within 2.5 miles of school for transportation services.

### Reasons to Support HB 2561 and HB 2697

- **Student Safety:** Our ten schools (7 elementary schools, 1 middle school, 1 high school, and 1 alternative program) are located on highly traveled streets without stoplights, crosswalks, or safe pedestrian routes. Even if there were crosswalks and crossing guards, traffic could not easily be controlled safely on heavily trafficked thoroughfares such as 29<sup>th</sup> Street or Wanamaker Road. Parents were asked to respond to the question about eliminating transportation in order to save costs for students living closer than 2.5 miles from their schools on a scientific survey conducted in April of 2015. This was, by far, the least popular option for reducing expenses. Student safety will always be our top priority.





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- **Attendance Rate:** The student attendance rate for Auburn-Washburn students in 2017 was 95.5% compared to the state average of 94.7%. According to a recent study from the University of California, students who rode the bus to/from school each day were 3% less likely to be chronically absent, or miss ten or more days of school compared to students who walked, biked, or were driven. Dr. Randy Watson, Commissioner of Education, has identified attendance as a risk factor when predicting student success.
- **Increasing Student Enrollment:** Student enrollment has increased in Auburn-Washburn each year for the past 20 plus years. As a result, the number of students riding buses has increased each year as well. We use a computerized routing system to route buses in the most efficient way possible. Even with the utilization of efficiency technologies, the cost of transportation has increased as our student enrollment has increased.

Summary

Student safety is the primary reason why Auburn-Washburn provides transportation to all students at no cost. Essentially, the dollars received from the current practice of funding the high density line of best fit have been used to safely transport all students to/from school. Student safety will always be our top priority. If passed, HB 2561 and HB 2697 would help our efforts greatly to ensure students are transported to/from school in the safest and most reliable way possible.

Thank you for your service and for considering this testimony in support of HB 2561 and HB 2697.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott McWilliams", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Dr. Scott McWilliams  
Superintendent of Schools

