

Good Afternoon,

My name is Caleb McNally, and I am here today as a member of the USD 456 Marais des Cygnes Valley school board, tax payer, and most importantly as a parent. I have concerns with HB 2550 because I think it would be detrimental to our public school districts. This bill would put smaller schools, and schools with higher percentage of at risk students in harms way.

To start with, non-public schools are not held to the same level of accountability and transparency as public schools. It is possible that these students could be falling back academically and not doing as well in a private setting. This proposed legislation could take millions of public dollars out of the state's general fund pool to fund services for students whose special needs are not provided for by the state school finance formula.

Another concern I have is, private schools. Private schools are not required to accept all students and can discriminate in admissions, they can operate under different rules of transparency and accountability, and can also ask parents to waive their children's access to special education services. Is it possible that this is used as a recruiting tool for them for their athletic programs as well?

There are studies of voucher programs that found students who received vouchers showed no improvement in reading or math over those not in the program. School vouchers are not a proven strategy for improving student achievements. Studies of U.S. and international voucher programs show the risks to school systems outweigh insignificant gains in test scores and limited gains in graduation rates.

As parents and taxpayer, it seems that the prudent course of action would be to commit to continue and restore state efforts on the existing public education.

In closing, during the current pandemic, with rising inflation, and the uncertainty of the state's current fiscal situation it seems unreasonable that the legislature would divert public dollars to schools in a separate system.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Caleb McNally

