

Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Written Testimony to the Committee on K12 Education Budget

Opponent House Bill 2218

Madame Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written and oral testimony in opposition of HB 2218.

I have been superintendent of schools in Coffeyville for the past eight years and served as assistant superintendent for seven years prior to that. Before my tenure I was a teacher and principal at Labette County schools, and prior to that I attended high school at Labette County. I tell you all of this to show I was born and raised in Southeast Kansas. My experience growing up, attending high school and working at Labette County schools was positive. What I heard about Coffeyville growing up and working just one county over was always negative. The town and school district of Coffeyville had an extremely negative reputation going back at least decades.

My tenure in Coffeyville has been full of challenges but many more positive experiences. I have chosen to live and work in Coffeyville due both the challenges and positive attributes. Our challenges in the district are many;

- A highly transient student population
- Generational poverty resulting in a high number of low-income students
- A rapidly rising ESOL population
- Many high-needs special education students
- An inadequate mental health system
- Lack of medical and dental services for students
- Lack of early childhood education programs

The Coffeyville School District has made great strides in the areas of medical, dental and mental health by thinking strategically and partnering with other organizations. The same is true with our early childhood education. These public-private partnerships have resulted in full-fledged, federally funded clinics at each of our campuses. Through various partnerships, including monies targeted by our legislators, we have several unique mental health opportunities available for our students.

Our highly transient student population is another challenge that is more difficult to manage. Already this year, we have had 177 students move into the district since our funding count day of September 20<sup>th</sup>. This is over 10% of our student population. One might think this is good news as even though we couldn't count these students this year, they would be counted next year. The problem is, we see this trend every year. Our enrollment ticks up throughout the fall and spring, then is back down in the fall. Of these students, 50% of those who came from private schools, online school and home-schools were behind by one or more grade levels. You can understand the inherent challenges of this, on top of our many other challenges.

Coffeyville Public Schools has a great relationship with our one local private school, Holy Name Catholic School. We provide staffing for Title services, bussing and meals. This partnership has been in place for many years and continues to benefit all students. We know their students will enroll in our schools in the 7th grade as they are a K-6<sup>th</sup> school. We appreciate their role in our community to provide for religious studies.

In closing, moving public school funds out of public schools decreases opportunities for the majority of students in my community and across our state. Giving public dollars to private and home schools with little to no accountability is a recipe with disastrous results. Public school officials may not always like all of the red tape we are required to keep up with, but most of the accountability measures put in place by legislators, the state board of education and the department of education, were put in place for very good reasons. Our youth are our future and we should be accountable both to and for them.

Thank you for your time and please reach out any time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Correll".

Dr. Craig A. Correll  
Superintendent of Schools  
USD 445 Coffeyville Public Schools