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HB 2139

Increasing the minimum expenditure amount for school districts for contracted goods and services without requiring sealed bids and the minimum expenditure amount for goods and services that the district superintendent may acquire on behalf of the school district

Proponent Written Only Testimony  
February 10, 2025

Chair Estes:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB2139, which would allow school districts the discretion to execute contracts up to \$50,000 at the superintendent's discretion—an increase from the current \$20,000 threshold. This bill is a step in the right direction, as it promotes government efficiency, reduces unnecessary administrative burdens, and maintains proper financial oversight. By increasing the threshold, school boards across the state can better focus on student achievement, strategic planning, and governance, rather than spending time reviewing routine purchasing consent items. This is a commonsense measure that aligns with conservative principles of fiscal responsibility and local control.

Under current statute, the \$20,000 cap forces routine, low-risk expenditures to undergo unnecessary administrative processes, consuming valuable time and resources. The time spent by board members, the board clerk, legal counsel, and administrative staff to process these approvals could be more effectively allocated to initiatives that directly impact students. To illustrate the inefficiency, our district processes approximately 30 contracts annually between \$20,000 and \$50,000, each requiring administrative review, bid processes where applicable, legal contract evaluation, and board agenda preparation. Increasing the threshold to \$50,000 would reduce this burden and improve operational efficiency, allowing staff to more quickly access materials and services, while ensuring taxpayer dollars are used effectively.

While I strongly support HB2139 as written, I encourage the committee to also consider an additional provision for larger districts. Wichita Public Schools oversees a nearly \$1 billion budget, supporting over 46,000 students. A \$50,000 threshold remains relatively low given our scale. I recommend that the committee consider allowing districts with more than 20,000 students or an annual budget exceeding \$400 million to operate utilizing a \$100,000 threshold. This provision would provide the largest districts in Kansas with the ability to function more efficiently while maintaining transparency and financial accountability. Alternatively, a scalable provision based on district size could ensure equitable application across the state. For Wichita Public Schools, increasing \$50,000 to \$100,000 would double the impact to approximately 60 contracts, and account for one third of our volume.

Importantly, this proposal does not diminish transparency or accountability. All expenditures remain subject to established procurement policies, competitive bidding requirements, and financial oversight mechanisms. It streamlines decision-making to align with the scale and operational needs of Kansas schools, allowing local leaders to make timely decisions in the best interest of their communities without excessive bureaucratic hurdles. I urge the committee to advance this bill and consider an amendment to provide additional flexibility for larger districts.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions the committee may have.